

# **THE IMPACT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY ON FAMILIES: A CASE STUDY OF ORUMBA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

by

**Akwobi, Rosemary Chika**  
**Department of Home Economics**  
**Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe**

## **Abstract**

*The study was conducted to ascertain the impact of juvenile delinquency on families. Specifically the study sought to identify the causes of juvenile delinquency, the behaviours that constitute delinquent act, the psychological cum social factors that lead to delinquent act, the effects of juvenile delinquency on the family and society as well as the prevention of juvenile delinquency. The design of the research was descriptive survey in which questionnaires were administered to the subjects. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using Likert four-point scale to obtain the mean scores. The findings revealed that frustration arising from home, emotional disturbance, lack of encouragement by parents and teachers, neglect by parents, inter alia, lead to delinquent behaviours. Also embedded in the findings are ways of preventing juvenile delinquency which include provision of employment opportunities for the youths, establishment of juvenile courts and so on.*

## **Introduction**

Many youths live in neighborhood where it is common to start experimenting with drugs and alcohol at an early age. They are bombarded with media programmes on sex. The number of teenage pregnancies has increased sharply and many children born to underage mothers have low birth weights and are extremely vulnerable to health problems. Teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school and face economic disadvantages that hinder their future. Early sexual experimentation has also increased the proportion of youth who contract sexually transmitted diseases, increasing the threat of AIDs for millions of youth.

Youths also live in families undergoing tremendous strain. Although all young people face stress as they mature; the risks are greatest for the poor, members of racial and ethnic minorities and recent immigrants. Those children usually attend the most under-funded schools, receive inadequate healthcare and have the fewest opportunities to achieve conventional success. Problems in the home, the school and

the neighborhood coupled with health and development hazards, have placed a significant portion of youth at risk. The youth culture stresses rebelliousness, freedom and searching for new identities (Siegel and Senna, 2001).

Adolescence is unquestionably a time of transition. During this period the self or basic personality is still undergoing a metamorphosis and is vulnerable to a host of external determinants as well as internal physiological changes. The adolescent period is a time when children are extremely vulnerable to pressures caused by social problems as well as their own sense of uncertainty and frustration. Some may turn to drugs and alcohol and join with other like-minded youths in becoming heavily involved in substance abuse. Others may join a teenage gang that provides a sense of belonging, achievement and poor support. Others may engage in individual acts of mindless destruction and vandalism. These criminal behaviours committed by minors are collectively referred to as juvenile delinquency (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001).

### **The Concept of Delinquency**

Academic Dictionary of Psychology defined delinquency as the act of violating law, minor offences against the legal code especially by a minor. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defined delinquency as conduct that is out of accord with accepted behaviour or the law. Siegel et al (2001) asserts that the term delinquency refers to underage minors who violate the law. Wikipedia (2009) reiterates that juvenile delinquency refers to criminal acts performed by juvenile.

### **Method**

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The area of the study was Orumba North Local Government Area. The sample for the study comprised 210 Senior secondary school students, teachers and parents. (100 students, 58 teachers and 52 parents) selected through purposive sampling. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The researcher prepared six question items with many sections or options which were based on the research questions. The question items were constructed on a four-point scale. The instrument was face validated by one lecturer in Measurement and Evaluation and two lecturers in Home Economics. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents and the data collected were analyzed using mean and the mean score of 2.50 is the cut-off point or mark. Therefore mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted while mean scores less than 2.50 were rejected.

**Table 1: Mean responses on the causes of juvenile delinquency**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Ignorance	3.28	Accepted
2	Poverty	2.70	Accepted
3	Lack of parental upbringing	3.22	Accepted
4	Negative family influence	2.98	Accepted
5	Negative peer influence	3.32	Accepted

Table 1 above shows that ignorance, poverty, lack of parental upbringing, negative family influence and negative peer influence all cause juvenile delinquency. These are serial No 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. They scored 3.28, 2.70, 3.22, 2.98 and 3.32 respectively.

**Table 2: Mean responses on the behaviours that constitute delinquent acts.**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Stealing	3.62	Accepted
2	Vandalism	2.80	Accepted
3	Alcoholism	3.41	Accepted
4	Sexual misconduct	3.68	Accepted
5	Examination malpractice	2.46	Rejected
6	Cultism	3.03	Accepted
7	Truancy	3.15	Accepted
8	Drug abuse	3.14	Accepted
9	Rape	2.55	Accepted
10	Armed robbery	3.26	Accepted
11	Forgery	2.89	Accepted

Table 2 above shows that the behaviours that constitute delinquent act include stealing, vandalism, alcoholism, sexual misconduct, cultism, truancy, drug abuse, rape, armed robbery and forgery. These are serial No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11. They scored 3.62, 2.80, 3.41, 3.68, 3.03, 3.15, 3.14, 2.55, 3.26 and 2.89. Item No, 5 scored below 2.50 and were rejected.

**Table 3: Mean responses on psychological factors that lead to juvenile delinquency.**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Emotional disturbance	3.28	Accepted
2	Lack of encouragement by parents	3.32	Accepted
3	Neglect by parents	2.98	Accepted
4	Greed	2.70	Accepted
5	Insubordination	3.22	Accepted
6	Lack of care by parents.	2.84	Accepted

Table 3 above shows that emotional disturbance, lack of encouragement by parents, neglect by parents, greed, insubordination, and lack of care from parents are psychological factors that lead to juvenile delinquency. These are serial No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. They scored 3.28, 3.32, 2.98, 2.70, 3.22 and 2.84.

**Table 4: Mean responses on sociological causes of juvenile delinquency.**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Peer group influence	3.95	Accepted
2	Lack of supervision by parents	2.93	Accepted
3	Lack of disciplinary by parents	3.64	Accepted
4	Broken homes	3.80	Accepted
5	Poor upbringing	3.17	Accepted

6	Poverty	3.68	Accepted
---	---------	------	----------

Table 4 above shows that peer group influence, lack of supervision by parents, lack of disciplinary by parents, broken homes, poor upbringing and poverty are the sociological causes of juvenile delinquency. These are serial No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. They scored 3.95, 2.93, 3.64, 3.80, 3.17 and 3.68.

**Table 5: Mean responses on the effects of juvenile delinquency on families.**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Unhappy home	3.37	Accepted
2	Unharmonious home	3.73	Accepted
3	Harboring of bad gang	3.93	Accepted
4	Negative influence on the siblings	3.66	Accepted
5	Tarnishing the image of the family	3.37	Accepted
6	Poor academic performance of the delinquent	3.75	Accepted
7	Insecurity of life	4.63	Accepted
8	Loss of property	3.38	Accepted
9	Lawlessness	3.08	Accepted
10	Violence	3.64	Accepted

Table 5 above shows that the effects of juvenile delinquency on families include: unhappy home, unharmonious home, harboring of bag gang, negative influence on the siblings, tarnishing the image of the family, poor academic performance of the delinquent, insecurity of life, loss of property, lawlessness and violence. These are serial No 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10. They scored 3.37, 3.73, 3.93, 3.66, 3.37, 3.75, 3.63, 3.38, 3.08 and 3.64.

**Table 6: Mean responses on preventive measures against juvenile delinquency**

S/N	Item description	Mean(X)	Decision
1	Moral instruction by parents	3.40	Accepted
2	Love, care and adequate provision of necessities in the family	3.65	Accepted
3	Cordial and warm relationship between parents and children	3.47	Accepted
4	Ensuring quality education of children	3.61	Accepted
5	Helping the children to get employment	2.64	Accepted
6	Providing counselling services for the youths	3.94	Accepted

Table 6 above shows that preventive measures against juvenile delinquency include: moral instruction by parents, love, care and adequate provision of necessities in the family, cordial and warm relationship between parents and children, ensuring quality education of children, helping the children to get employment and providing counselling services for the youths. These are serial No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. They scored 3.40, 3.65, 3.47, 3.61, 2.64 and 3.94.

**Discussion**

The result of the study reveals that many indices cause juvenile delinquency. This is in consonance with Hirsch (2000) assertion that delinquency increases with each of the following “lack of parental communication and sympathy, laxity in parental supervision and absence of adult role models. Also Ogbaji (2002) supports this view by stating that three quarters of the total number of delinquents are found in homes that are poor or very poor. Also in line with Miler (2006) who observed that absence of good family relationship in character formation results in juvenile delinquency.

The result of the study also shows that there is array of behaviours that constitute delinquent acts. Nolen-Hoeksema (2001) gave credence to this finding by affirming that juvenile delinquents turn to drugs and alcohol, commit various crimes, and engage in individual acts of mindless destruction and vandalism.

The study also reveal some preventive measures that can be taken against juvenile delinquency such as moral instruction by parents, cordial relationship between parents and children, ensuring quality and wholesome education of children,

providing counselling services for the youths inter alia. In support of this view, Ndu (2010) maintains that to effect a change on this social problem, preventive measures such as restating improper roles, inculcating unending ethos of labour and conduct, educational programmes that mar youth restiveness and unemployment as well as administering counselling services.

### **Conclusion**

The problems of youths in modern society have become a major national concern. Juveniles who engage in criminal acts are placed under the control of the law enforcement, court and correctional agencies that comprise the juvenile justice system. They may be taken into custody by the police, have their cases heard in a juvenile or family court and placed on a residential facility that treats troubled children. The question that arises is if there are various pathways to crime and delinquency, are there traits back to conformity? Increasingly governments are recognizing the importance of allocating resources for the prevention of delinquency. Preventive and remedial services include activities such as substance abuse education and treatment, family counselling, youth monitoring, parenting education, educational support and youth sheltering.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Organizations, communities and government should work in collaboration with each other to prevent juvenile delinquency.
- ii. Government should provide employment or job opportunities for youths.
- iii. Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory in school system (primary, secondary and tertiary) with greater emphasis on skill acquisition.
- iv. Moral instruction should be re-introduced in schools, both private and public.

### **References**

- Hirsch, T. (2000). *Causes of Delinquency and its origin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merriam-Webster (2000). *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (10<sup>th</sup> edition). U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster Inc.
- Miller, M. C. (2006). *Understanding and preventing juvenile delinquency*. New York: Abingdon Press.

- Ndu, J. C. (2010). Nature of juvenile delinquency in Nigerian secondary schools, causes and remedies. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2001). *Abnormal psychology*. New York: McGraw Hill;ls Companies Inc.
- Ogbaji, B. C. (2002). Juvenile delinquency and its origin. *Champion Newspaper* 15(22), January 15.
- Ramalingam, P. (2006). *Academics Dictionary of Psychology*. New Delhi: Academic Publishers.
- Siegel, L. J. and Senna, J. J. (2001). *Juvenile delinquency theory, practice and law*. U.S.A.: West Publishing Company.
- Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (2009). *Juvenile delinquency*. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) Accessed 20/07/12.