

INFLUENCE OF FAMILY VARIABLES ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG STUDENTS IN ORON EDUCATION ZONE OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of family variables on juvenile delinquency among students in Oron Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of all the 4527 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in all the 22 public secondary schools in Oron education zone during the 2014/2015 school year. The study adopted a non-experimental survey to assess family variables on juvenile delinquency among students. The Data collected from the respondents were coded and transferred into a spreadsheet and summarized. They were coded into the computer and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 11.0 while all the hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled "Family Variable and Juvenile Delinquency Questionnaire (FVJDQ)" and had three sections. A total of 360 (three hundred and sixty) Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students were selected for the study through simple random sampling technique. From the results of the data analysis, it was observed that family variable have significant influence on students' juvenile delinquency. The researcher concluded that students from intact homes are less delinquent compared to those from broken homes. One of the recommendations was the damaging effects of broken and separated family should be checked by parents in order to prevent the level of divorce, unplanned pregnancy and unprepared parenthood. Hence, the need to keep the family intact by parents.

Key words: *Family type, family size, juvenile delinquency, Oron Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State*

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian society today, more than ever before, has been bastardized and destroyed by effects of social vices. Our educational system has become plagued with frequent outburst of students' militant approaches towards resolving problems that seem to affect not only the students but also many other ordinary Nigerians. These anti social vices manifest in such behaviours as violent assaults on fellow students, teachers, and the school administration. These acts, to a great extent, tend to be regarded by students as fashionable and modern style of life in school. They culminate in intimidation of fellow students, teachers, school administration and

often lead to destruction of property and loss of lives. Juvenile delinquency in our schools covers such anti-social behaviours as: truancy, cheating, stealing, cultism, bullying, and drug abuse.

In recent years, gory tales of murder, arson, rape, maiming, burglary, robbery and several other various crimes have continued to pour out of our institutions of learning. These barbaric acts are sometimes credited to members of secret cults who have almost taken over not only higher institutions of learning, but recently even secondary schools. For example, in March 2011, there was an incident of cult clashes between “blue tock” and “junior axe” cult groups in Mainland Technical College, Oron, which led to destruction of school property and injuries to many innocent students. A similar case occurred in Comprehensive Secondary School, Enwang in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria in 2014.

The news media, both electronic and print, keep us informed of carnage, ravages and raids believed to be carried out by cultists. People’s reactions to these activities are as manifold as the cult groups are. People decry them, others rain abuses and curses on them, while others fear and dread them. The causes of juvenile delinquency have been attributed to the family variables such as family type and family size (Onyejiaku 1991). The Family is a strong socializing force of life. Children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflicts, or who are inadequately supervised, are at higher risk of becoming delinquent. In most cases, juvenile delinquents have been regarded as individuals who come from less-intact families known as broken homes. Demuth and Brown (2004) maintain that lack of supervision and the absence of close relationship between the teenagers and parents are some of the factors that may influence delinquency. According to Ibia (2006), juveniles from larger families are slightly more likely to engage in delinquency. This is because lack of proper discipline and upbringing will breed delinquency.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian educational system is seen to be infested with anti social vices that are gradually eroding the confidence in our schools producing people who are knowledgeable enough to be useful to themselves as well as the society in which they find themselves. It seems that most school adolescents today engage in battle against any meaningful efforts by the school authorities to promote academic excellence. Thus, our school adolescents engage in social vices such as thuggery, cultism, indecent dressing, rape, drug abuse, examination malpractice, pre-marital sexuality and truancy, resulting in high rates of school drop-out. It is disheartening to note that these high negative vices characterize the lives of our adolescents who are leaders of tomorrow both within and outside the school environment.

Scholars such as Asagwara (2009) and Esin (2014) have attributed the spate of social vices among school adolescents to the home factor of the students. These scholars argue that most of the emotional and behavior problems of adolescents are nurtured and cultivated at home during the pre-school formative years. Children’s personality, which include behaviour, interest and values are formed at home as they interact with parents and other significant persons.

Levia (2006) is of the view that juvenile delinquency is exhibited by a cadre of adolescents who are born into and groomed in a sub-culture of propinquity, poverty and psychological depression, ungoverned homes where the sub-culture of violence is nurtured and transmitted from generations through socialization. Is this observation culturally universal? Could the observed high social vices listed in the preceding paragraph among school adolescents in Oron education zone be attributable to the family variables of secondary school adolescents? This study is being conducted to provide answers to these questions as it focuses on the influence

of family variables on juvenile delinquency in Oron education zone of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of family variables on juvenile delinquency among students in Oron Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the extent to which:

- i. Family type differ in terms of students' juvenile delinquency
- ii. Family size influences students' juvenile delinquency

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does family type differ in terms of students' juvenile delinquency?
2. To what extent does the family size influence students' juvenile delinquency?

Statement of Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) Students from intact home do not differ significantly from those from broken home in terms of their delinquent behaviour.
- 2) There is no significant influence of family size on students' juvenile delinquency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Types and Juvenile Delinquency

The family is the very cradle of human society. It is the matrix of society with experience necessary to turn a new born infant into a full human being with values and standards and the ability to live harmoniously with other people (Leslie, 2004). Bollock (2001) said that the family has a bio-social dimension. This is because; the family does not only provide an individual with a biological entity, but also a social entity. The family gives a sense of belonging to an individual, as well as being the first agent of the child's socialization. The family therefore contributes immensely to an individual's development.

The family may or may not be an institution formed from marriage, because children may be born without a marriage being contracted. Nevertheless, the family has a social function for the survival of the individual and the society. Therefore, the family enables not only the process of procreation, but also enhances the learning values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and techniques of a given culture. The family as a basic social institution has different existing types. This means that a family may be described with reference to the structure of its organization. Children learn from parents the socially desirable ways of life. With adequate love, affection and concern for the well-being of the children harmonious living is cultivated and combined with necessary discipline. Thus, the children grown up and adjusted, are not easily influenced by peer-groups. Goode (1986) and Mead (1970) maintained that the intact family is technically the ideal type of family because of the stable emotional climate existing among the parents and the children.

Klein and Forehand (1997) suggests that the prediction of juvenile delinquency in early childhood depends on the type of maternal parenting skills that are imposed upon the child during early adolescence. Muehlenberg (2002) poses the question of how children from intact single parent family homes fare educationally compared to children from intact two parents families. A number of studies have been undertaken which show a very real connection between

delinquent and/or criminal behaviour, and single parent families. Wright and Wright's (1994) research shows that single parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more delinquent children than two parent families. Indeed the very absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing (Muehlenberb, 2002).

Sometimes the focus is taken off the mother and shifted towards the father. The lack of emphasis on the roles of fathering in childhood conduct problem is especially unfortunate given that there are several reasons why fathers are expected to be particularly significant in the initiation and persistence of offspring offending. For example, fathers are particularly likely to be involved with sons who are at higher risk than daughters of delinquent behaviour (Flouri & Buchannan 2002). Popenoe (1997), states that fatherlessness is a major force behind many disturbing societal social problems. However, where the relationship between the husband, wife and children is intrinsically unstable depending on the parental mode of discipline, the family may be affected psychologically and socially. Nevertheless, Douglas (2009) emphasized that "no society has yet found a satisfactory substitute for the nuclear family". This is in the sense that the members are more concerned with the wellbeing of each other because such family is more closely knit together than other family types.

The polygamy family structure comprises an adult man married to more than one wife according to Stephens (1973). In other words, it is the union between a man and more than one woman. Whatever situation may warrant him having other wives, the husband normally is required by societal norm to treat his wives and children equally. However, in this type of family, the even distribution of love, affection and general concern for the welfare of the wives and children may not be guaranteed. The personal interest of each wife and her children may result in the distrust of their husband or father. Therefore such homes are characterized by strife, confusion, lack of love and affection, and jealousy. Consequently, since there is no peace in the home, the children resort to delinquent behaviors by seeking pleasure, affection and peace from outside. The Broken Home is the family type or structure where either the father or mother is absent from the home. In this case, Douglas (2009) observed that the break could be in form of complete divorce, separation, death or instability. Goode's (1956) observation includes desertion. All these breaking have added complications of antagonism between husband and wife and the shifting of the child from one parent to another. This variably influences the child and determines his behaviour. When a family separates, the child is deprived of parental affection, concern, feelings of security, social opportunities and physical necessities of life.

Influence of Family Size on Juvenile Delinquency

The size of the family means the number of children within any given family which determines the quality of control and the interaction of the parents with their children. According to Morriah (1972), parents interact with children right from their early days in life. As such, in the process of caring for the children, parents inculcate discipline through effective control on the children. Therefore, the discipline imbibed by the children will depend to a large extent on the interaction between the parents and the children, which is contingent upon the size of the family.

Adams (2009) observed that it is the fundamental right of a child to be sheltered, fed well, cared for properly, clothed and trained in the expected behaviour of his society, from the period of childhood dependency to youthful age. But in a situation where there are many people living in the family with very much inadequate care, the child's right to healthy, good physical and psychological growth and development is infringed upon. Such a child is more or less likely

to engage in delinquent acts. In the same vein Daniels (1980), noted that the only relatively consistent characteristics of families of Juvenile Delinquents is the large number of children.

In a study, Heiberman (1970) compiled data concerning the effect of family size on children. He reported on his findings that children from small families have higher levels of intelligence, creativity, independence, energy and are healthier physically and mentally. The researcher therefore, concluded that for control and effective supervision of moral upbringing of children, parents need to control the number of children they have, as well as space the children. Goode (2008) posited that in an extended family system, which would lead to a large family, juvenile delinquency will be high due to behavioural problems associated with such family size. Similarly, Giddens (2006) observed that when close relatives other than married couples and their children leave together with each other, they will tend to learn different behavioural patterns including delinquency.

Burges and Locke (2006) studied family size through direct observation and intervention. They discovered that mothers in small families were able to provide direct instructions to their children with respect to specific set of tasks, because the number of children was manageable. This study therefore indicated that parental interaction with children from small family size enhances effective socialization process. In a study by Bossard (1955) on the effects of family size on socialization process, they divided the family into three groups. First the small family made up of one child or two children; second-medium family made up of three or four children; third-large family made up of five or more children. They found a difference between children from large families and those from medium and small families to be statistically significant at the 001 level. Another difference between small and medium families also found was that parents from small families give considerable attention to their children, since its limited size affords them a relatively greater opportunity to devote more of their time to each child than is possible in the large family. They are more concerned with the child's development and future achievement.

In a study by Denga (1981) of 100 families and 200 delinquents, the researcher found that juvenile delinquency is greater in polygamous than in monogamous families. Polygamous families had more children with the father playing a very passive role in providing for the psychological needs of the children, whereas in monogamous families both parents share the responsibility of bringing up the children. Further, polygamous homes have the tendency to produce more children than monogamous families. The strains and difficulties such as poverty and lack of parental affection in polygamous families are often as a result of dissipation or material and emotional needs of the children because of the large size of the family.

Methods

Research design

The research design adopted for this study was the survey design. The survey design is described as a non-experimental design in which the researcher studies a community or a group of people to bring out findings from samples collected from the population through questionnaire, interviews and observation (Udoh and Joseph, 2006).

Area of the study

The area covered in this study was Oron Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State, comprising Mbo, Okobo, Oron, UdungUko and UrueOffong/Oruko Local Government Areas.

Population of the study

The target population for this study was all the 4527 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in all the 22 public secondary schools in Oron Education Zone during the 2014/2015 school year. (State Secondary Education Board, Statistic Division, 2015).

Sampling technique

Three sampling techniques namely, simple random, proportionate to size and purposive, were used to select the sample for this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 3 (three) local government areas.

Sample

The sample for the study was made up of 360 (three hundred and sixty) senior secondary two (SS2) students comprising both males and females sampled from 8 (eight) public secondary schools in Oron Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire titled “Family Variable and Juvenile Delinquency Questionnaire (FVJDQ)”. However, the questionnaire was developed by the researcher with the help of the thesis supervisor and test expert from Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. The questionnaire was made up of fifty five (55) items. These items were sub-divide into three main sections “A, B and C”.

Validity of the instrument

The face validity of the instrument was carried out by giving the draft of the instrument to test and measurement expert lecturer in the Department and finally to my Supervisor to vet and offer corrections. Their comments were adhered to in preparing the final scale which was used for the study.

Reliability of the instrument

The reliability of these instruments was established using the Cronbach Alpha method of reliability estimate. The results of the Cronbach alpha reliability estimate as presented in Table 3 shows reliability indices ranging from 0.76 to 0.91.

Presentation of results

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that students from intact homes do not differ significantly from those from broken homes in terms of their delinquent behaviours. The independent variable of this hypothesis was categorized into two levels; intact and broken homes, while the dependent variable was juvenile delinquency. Independent t-test was used to analyze

TABLE 1
General Description of data/variables

S/no.	Variable	N	Mean	SD
1.	Family type	340	12.92	3.30

2.	Family size	340	11.98	2.93
3.	Family leadership style	340	11.38	2.96
4.	Family emotional climates	340	11.33	3.16
5.	Delinquent acts	340	59.40	10.59

TABLE 2:
Independent t-test of differences in family type and students' juvenile delinquency

Grouping variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Intact family	203	65.10	14.25	6.20	.000*
Broken Family	137	60.28	11.80	

*Significant at $p < .05$; $df = 338$; critical t-value = 1.96

The result of the independent t-test presented in Table 2 shows a calculated t-value of 6.20 which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 338 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant influence of family types on juvenile delinquency among secondary schools students was rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This implies that family type has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency ($t = 6.20$, $df = 2$ and 338 , $p < .05$).

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of family size on Juvenile Delinquency among secondary school students. The independent variable is family size categorized into two levels (small and large) size while the dependent variable was juvenile delinquency. Independent t-test was used to analyze the data. The result of the independent t-test analysis of data for hypothesis two is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Independent t-test of influence of family size on juvenile delinquency

Grouping variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Small family size	199	68.25	10.47	5.17	.000*
Large family size	141	70.55	11.81		

*Significant at $p < .05$; $df = 338$; critical t-value = 1.96

The result of the independent t-test presented in Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of 5.17 which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 338 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant difference between the family size and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This implies that family size has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency ($t = 5.17$, $df = 2$ and 338 , $p < .05$).

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis stated that students from intact homes do not differ from those from broken homes in terms of their delinquent behaviours. The result of the independent t-test presented in Table 2 indicates a calculated t-value of 6.20 which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 338 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. The study further indicated that students from broken homes are significantly higher in juvenile delinquency than those from intact homes. The finding agrees with the conclusion of Goode (1986) and Mead (2001), who in a related study opined that the intact family is technically the ideal type of family because of the stable emotional climate existing among the parents and the children. With this result, the null hypothesis stated was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of family size on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. The null hypothesis was rejected because the result shows that there is significant influence of family size on juvenile delinquency. ($t = 5.17$ $df = 2$ and 338 , $p < .05$) the large family size was proved to encourage juvenile delinquent. This finding is consistent with previous related literature by Daniel (1999) in his studies who found that the only relatively consistent characteristics of juvenile delinquency is a large number of children. In the finding concerning the effect of family size on children, Lieberman (2003), opined based on his findings that for effective control and supervision of moral upbringing of children, parents need to control the number of children they have as well as space the children.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that family variables have significant influence on students' juvenile delinquency. The researcher concluded that students from intact homes are less delinquent compared to those from broken homes. This may be attributed to lack of proper parental care and control because of the separation of one spouse. Furthermore, students from large families were observed by the researcher to have higher a level of juvenile delinquency than those from small sized families.

Recommendations

Consequence upon the results of the findings and conclusions reached in this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The damaging effects of broken and separated families should be checked by parents in order to prevent the level of divorce, unplanned pregnancy and parenthood. Hence, the need to keep the family intact by parents.

The family should be controlled and reduced to a smaller size by parents to enhance effective parental care, intimacy and supervision of the children.

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