

FAMILY DYNAMICS AS DETERMINANTS OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ASARI-TORU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated family dynamics as determinants of delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. The instrument titled Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviours Scale" (ADBS) was used for data collection. Four Hundred and Forty Five (445) respondents drawn from SS1 and SS2 classes formed the sample from ten government senior secondary schools. Ex-post facto research designs was used for the study. Reliability coefficient of 0.69 was obtained for the instrument which indicated high level of reliability. ANOVA, means and standard deviations were used to analyze the data. Findings were that parent socio-economic status has influence on students' delinquent behaviours. While on the other hand, family size was found not to have any significant influence on delinquency. Based on the findings, it was recommended that parents, guardians, classroom teachers, guidance counselors and other individuals involved should help raise children/wards in a ways that promotes the collective interest of the society..

Keywords: Family dynamics, Family size, Delinquent behavior and In-school adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

The frequency of delinquent behaviours among students of secondary schools in both private and government schools in Nigeria is alarming and point to nothing but doom to the future of the country. Studies on delinquent behaviours have mostly centered on the use of dirty language, truancy, smoking and substance abuse (Clinard & Meier, 2008). Instances of students using filthy languages, stealing, pilfering, bullying fellow students and threatening teachers in public schools have become rampant. It seems that schools are helpless with regards to students' delinquent behaviours; and the educational authority does not have effective measures in place in dealing with these problems. Some teachers attribute the cause of students' delinquent behaviours to teachers lacking the right to use physical punishment, as it is forbidden in the current educational regulations. In addition, physical punishment violates students' human rights and only temporarily curbs students' delinquent behaviours. Manifestation of delinquent behaviours is one of the major problems associated with adolescents in secondary schools today. The pervading incidence of delinquency among adolescent is alarming and calls for serious consideration.

The word 'adolescence' is used to describe the transition stage between childhood and adulthood (Summers & Bakken, 2006). This means that adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. Colman (2003) sees it as period of development from the onset of puberty to the attainment of adulthood beginning with the appearance of secondary sexual

characteristics, usually between 11 and 13 years of age, continuing through the teenage years and terminating legally at the age of maturity, usually 18 years of age. An individual in the period of adolescence is called an adolescent.

Juvenile delinquency is considered to be the participation in illegal behaviour by minors (adolescents) (Oladele, 2005). While a delinquent refers to a person who commits a misdemeanor.

Bullying, which is one of the most common delinquent behaviors among adolescents refers to the repeated and habitual use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate or aggressively dominate others. One essential prerequisite is the perception by the bully or by others of an imbalance of social or physical power which distinguishes bullying from conflict. Behaviours used to assert such domination can include verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion and such acts may be directed repeatedly towards particular targets. Rationalizations for such behaviour sometimes include difference of social class, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, body language, personality, reputation, lineage, strength, size or ability (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001). Stealing another delinquent behavior involves taking of other people's property or possessions without the consent of the owners. Stealing constitute a major problem in the society. It is considered a delinquent behaviour because it ignores established rules, regulations and moral standard of the society.

Studies have shown that family dynamics such as family size, parenting styles, parent socio-economic status are important factors in explaining delinquency among adolescents. Agbakwuru (2012) opined that as a social setting, the values structure and dynamics of the family significantly affects its members' behaviours, attitudes, interests and general well-being. The family is the main source of physical and psychological well-being. The family is seen as the primary institution that socializes the young and provides surveillance over their behaviour (Agulanna in Okorodudu, 2010).

Adolescent's family size is very vital in studying the behaviour of adolescents. In this vein, Onyekuru and Oladayo (2012) opined that size of a family determines the level of attention children receive from their parents at home. They observed that some parents with a small family still renegade in their responsibility to their children. On the other hand, an excessively large family could be problematic due to low income of parents who may not be able to provide for all the children the basic needs of life. This could lead some of these children to indulge in behaviours that are antisocial. Kosemani (2002) observed that child rearing practices of different socio-economic background affects the child's education, thought forms and behaviour pattern. She noted that while some children are privileged to be raised in high socioeconomic status homes, some are being raised in middle or low socioeconomic status homes and these have great negative effect on their behaviour, thinking pattern and attitude in general.

Statement of the Problem

Delinquent behaviours account for series of problems encountered in the teaching and learning process, especially in the school context but also in the family and the society at large. Delinquent behaviours like cheating, stealing, fighting, drug abuse/addiction, truancy, sexual promiscuity, lateness to classes and bullying have contributed in no small measure to the erosion that is gradually washing away the quality and beauty of secondary schools in Nigeria, which of course spells dooms for various aspects of national life. Delinquent

behaviours like bullying and stealing accounts for one of the major factors that affect the academic performance of school children because both the bullied and the bullies are usually depressed and anxious. Bullying among student if not checked properly can lead to absenteeism and other menace. Both school authorities and government ministries must work harder to stop this behaviour. If nothing is done, the nation will face a total erosion of discipline and moral standard. This in turn will pose a great danger to the economy, unity and progress of the country. Hence, the problem of the study is to investigate the influence of family dynamics on bullying and stealing among in-school adolescents in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does family size influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents?
2. To what extent does parent socio-economic status influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for the study. They were tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. Family size does not significantly influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents?
2. Parent socio-economic status does not significantly influence delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the ex-post-facto design by analyzing data from some variables which are already in place in order to find out how some of them influence or are related to other variables. The population of the study consisted of all SS1 and SS2 students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. As at the time of the study there were 890 SS1 and SS2 students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. (Source: State Ministry of Education report, 2015).

A sample size of 445 students was drawn for the study. This sample was drawn using a combination of simple random as well as the proportionate stratified sampling technique. The simple random technique was used to select 10 schools from the study area, while proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select the final sample based on the population of each school which resulted in a total of 445 respondents. The instrument for data collection was the Adolescents Delinquent Behaviours Scale (ADBS) developed by the researchers. The instrument was in two sections A and B. Section A elicited information on the independent variables; family size and parent socio-economic status, while section B elicited information on delinquent behaviors (bullying and stealing) which was the dependent variable. Section B was designed using a 4-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The responses in the instrument are weighted 4,3,2,1 for positively keyed items, and 1,2,3,4 for negatively worded items. The instrument contained 10 items in all with five items each of the delinquent behaviours of bullying and stealing. The validity of the instrument was determined through experts' assessment. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach alpha method with reliability of 0.69 indicating a high reliability. Mean and standard deviation

were used to answer research questions 1 and 2 while one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test their corresponding hypotheses.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent does family size influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents?

Hypothesis One: Family size does not significantly influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents.

In order to answer the research question and test its corresponding null hypothesis, the data obtained was subjected to mean, standard deviations and analysis of variance. The result obtained are summarized and presented in table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and analysis of variance of influence of family size on delinquent behaviours

Family Size	N	\bar{x}	SD				
1-3	169	61.25	7.83				
4-6	203	66.96	5.59				
7-10	73	45.30	6.43				
Analysis of Variance							
	Sum of Sq.	d.f	Mean Sq	F	α	Sig.	Result
Between Group	25188.134	2	12594.067				Insignificant (Accept Ho)
Within group	3564538.617	442	8064.567	1.56			
Total	44807.964	444			0.05	0.211	

In table 1, means and standard deviations values for the various family size groups (1-3, 4-6 and 7-10) were 61.25 (SD = 7.83), 66.96 (SD = 5.59), and 45.30 (SD = 6.43) respectively. These mean values indicate that family size of 4-6 has more influence on delinquent behaviours followed by 1-3 and lastly 7-10 family size. The analysis of variance also reveals sum of squares of 25188.134 and 3564538.617 respectively for between and within groups. F value is 1.56, while the sig. value is 0.211. Therefore, since the p-value obtained (0.211) is greater than 0.05 alpha, the null hypothesis was accepted; meaning that family size has no significant influence on delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents in Asari-Toru L.G.A of Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does parent socio-economic status influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents?

Hypothesis Two: Parent socio-economic status does not significantly influence delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents.

In order to answer the research question and test its corresponding null hypothesis, the data obtained was subjected to mean, and standard deviations and analysis of variance. The result obtained are summarized and presented in table 2.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and analysis of variance of influence of parent socio-economic status on delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents

Parental socio-economic status	N	\bar{x}	SD				
High	188	56.02	9.96				
Middle	111	52.16	10.62				
Low	146	61.99	7.20				
Analysis of Variance							
	Sum Of sq.	d.f	Mean Sq	F	α	Sig.	Result
Between Group	6299.126	2	3149.563	36.15	0.05	0.000	Significant (Reject Ho)
Within group	38508.838	442	87.124				
Total	44807.964	444					

In Table 2, 188, 111 and 146 in-school adolescents were identified as belonging to high, middle and low socio-economic status homes respectively. Their means and standard deviations values in parenthesis were 56.02 (SD = 9.96), 52.16 (SD = 10.62) and 61.99 (SD = 7.20) respectively. From their mean scores, it is observable that low socio-economic status homes influence deviant behaviour most followed by high socio-economic status homes and middle status homes. The analysis of variance also reveals sum of squares for between and within groups to be 6299.126 and 38508.838 respectively. Mean square were 3149.563 and 87.124 respectively. F-value was 36.15 while sig. value stood at 0.000. Hence, from this p-value obtained which was 0.000 is less than the chosen alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that socio-economic status has a significant influence on delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents in Asari-Toru L.G.A of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

From research findings one, it was revealed that family size has no significant influence on delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents. This result means that the number of siblings including the parents does not determine adolescents from such homes displaying delinquent behaviour. This finding however may come as a result that most of the respondent are aware of the importance of discipline in their lives. It indicates that irrespective of the number of people in the family, if the father or mother is well disciplined, it may be difficult for children coming from such homes to be delinquents. The findings is however a bit surprising to these researchers because it was assumed that crowded family normally loose a grip of the children especially in the Asari-Toru Local Government Area which the present study was conducted. To support the present findings Mitchel (2002) reported that family size has no significant influence on delinquent behaviours among adolescent. Contrary to this finding, the study carried out by Ifreke (2008) reported that family size has a significant influence on youth restiveness in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Also, Tunde (2009) reported that family size has a significant influence on adolescents' anti-social behaviours.

In research findings two, it is revealed that socio-economic status has a significant relationship with delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescent in Asari- Toru Local Government Area. This finding implies that the economic class an individual belongs to can determine their behaviour at times. From this, it could be seen that children from high social class whose parents have the money to provide for them may be involved in behaviours like clubbing, partying, drugs and the likes. It explains why they may have the money to involve in substance abuse and buy whatever thing they may like. From the analysis, it is also

revealed that low socio-economic homes influence delinquent behaviour more than others. This could be explained by the fact that children from such homes who have no money and social status may in an attempt to help themselves get involved in activities like stealing, shop-lifting, etc just to help themselves. This finding could come as a result that many of the respondents are quit away of the importance of money or status in shaping behaviour. It may be that an individual is well behaved but when handed a position of authority of high status, he may start to act in a indifferent way. Children such parents may start displaying anti-social behaviours just because their parents are well placed. This findings is in agreement with that reported by Dickson (2006) who noted that individuals from low social class tends to be more involved in stealing while those in high economic class are more prone to gangsterism, drugs, clubbing etc. Also Okoh (2008) and Osah-Edoh and Alutu (2011) also reported that socio-economic status has a significant relationship with delinquent behaviours manifested in various forms by adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

- (1) Parents should at all times be encouraged to do their best to provide at least the basic needs of their children. This as hoped will minimize bad behaviours like stealing etc. on the other hand, highly placed parents should always check and monitor the activities of their children. This will also help in reducing prodigality in them.
- (2) In all, adequate in-school and out-school counseling should be encouraged and promoted by counselors as well as government. This will help in checkmating the excesses of delinquents in the society.

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