



Influence of Parental Involvement on Adolescents' Juvenile Delinquency in Ahiazu-Mbaisi Local Government Area of Imo State: Implication for Counseling

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of parental involvement on adolescents' juvenile delinquency in Ahiazu Local Government Area of Imo State: Implications for Counseling. Parental involvement is the level of participation that a parent has on adolescents' upbringing. It also implies a wide range of behaviours but conventionally refers to parents and family members who invest most of their resources on their adolescents' education as to deviate them from the miles of delinquents. These investments are intended to improve the adolescents' learning as such can take place in or outside the home or school. Delinquent behaviour encompasses two broad dimensions: internalizing and externalizing. Internalizing disorders are directed inward and involve behavioural deficits, such as withdrawal, isolation, and depression. On the other hand, externalizing disorders are directed outward and involve behavioural excesses, such as disturbing others verbal and physical aggression, and acts of violence. One of the major findings of this study was the poor family environment that prevailed among the families of delinquent behaviour adolescents when compared with the positive family atmosphere among the non-delinquent behaviour adolescent families. This poor family environment was marked by family fights, less communication with the father, alcoholism, and incompetency in dealing with adolescent delinquent behaviour. The study recommends that ideally, schools should employ professionals, social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses to engage in prevention and intervention efforts. This interdisciplinary team, including teachers, could work together in developing plans for educating students and parents about the importance of family relationship in the development of these adolescents. Further, the professional team could design a strategic plan (incorporating such things as awareness programs, counseling, leadership development, and group activities) to reduce problematic behaviours and contribute to the adolescents' holistic development.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Adolescents, Juvenile Delinquency, Imo State

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement entails that regardless of family background and level or income, adolescents whose parents are involved in their social activities and growth are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programme, be promoted, earn credits, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and consequently negate the bias of juvenile delinquency. Parents often report feelings that children should take responsibility of some domestic duties, social activities, as such the parents should not try to help by guiding and directing them in these process (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Furthermore he stated that the structure of many schools today is a deterrent in assisting many adolescents. Bower and Griffin (2011) asserted that the key part to effective parent-involvement programme involves organizing schools so that at least one person knows each child well, keeping a "parent room" in the building, and sponsoring parent-to-parent communication and events. Parental involvement on the adolescents implies a wide range of behaviours but conventionally it refers to parents and family members who invest most of their resources in their adolescent education as to deviate them from the miles of delinquents. These investments are intended to improve the child's learning as such can take place in or outside the home

or school. Parental involvement is the level of participation that a parent has in the adolescents' education and school. Many parents today are quite involved, often volunteering to help in their children's classroom activities, communicating well with their children's teachers, assisting with their homework, and understanding their individual academic strengths and weaknesses. The evidence of these go a long way in pushing the adolescent away from juvenile delinquency.

Unfortunately, there are also many parents who are not directly involved with their adolescents' education. Epstein (2015) stated that parents are supposed to be enormously supportive to their adolescent in all ramifications by providing them with many things such as attitude and behaviour which include social, physical, mental and also emotional, home teaching, career counseling, financial support, textual material etc. Studies have shown that children who do well in school are those who their parents and/or other significant adults share in their parent education, and those who are not affected by various family issues such as finance, language barrier, lack of child and the likes (Epstein, 2015; Yan & Lin, 2015).

The adolescent years are a time of tremendous change, both for youth and their families. It is a time of finding one's identity as manifested by trying new ways of walking, styling hair, handwriting, or dancing. More significantly, it is a time of deciding who one is and what one stands for. This search for identity, and the new and different behaviours that accompany it, also creates changes and stresses in adolescents' families. Delinquency is a universal problem and it is seen all over the world without exceptions to any specific cultures or religions. Generally, delinquency refers to illegal acts, whether criminal or not, committed by youth under the age of 18. The term juvenile delinquency was officially developed in the United States in 1899, when the first code of juvenile delinquency was enacted in Chicago, Illinois (Shoemaker, 2005). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a delinquent act as "conduct that is out of accord with accepted behaviour or the law" (Merriam-Webster, 2006). A family may influence a person's behaviour either negatively or positively both at childhood and adulthood. An intact family can be said to be a functioning union between a mother and a father, so when a break up exist, the turmoil may affect a child to a greater extent. A functioning family is beneficial to a child than a dysfunctional one (Kimani, 2010). Family separation was a great contributor of child neglect which generally leads to child deviant behaviour. For example, leaving homes and addicted to vices and the like from parental and family neglect, lack of supervision and guidance.

If delinquent behaviour is viewed from a behaviour disorder perspective, it encompasses two broad dimensions: internalizing and externalizing. Internalizing disorders are directed inward and involve behavioural deficits, such as withdrawal, isolation, and depression. On the other hand, externalizing disorders are directed outward and involve behavioural excesses, such as disturbing others verbal and physical aggression, and acts of violence (Rao, 2013). For many young people today, traditional patterns guiding the relationships and transitions between family, school and work are being challenged. Social relations that ensure a smooth process of socialization are collapsing; lifestyle trajectories are becoming more varied and less predictable. The restructuring of the labour market, the extension of the maturity gap (the period of dependence of young adults on the family) and, arguably, the more limited opportunities to become an independent adult are all changes influencing relationships with family and friends, educational opportunities and choices, labour market participation, leisure activities and lifestyles.

In many cultures, the family has been seen as the central socializing institution responsible for instilling in youth a set of norms, values, beliefs, and ideals. The failure of families to accomplish this task may result in serious consequences for the individual as well as for the society at large (Patchin, 2006). Beginning from the 1950s, researchers have examined the relationship between families and delinquency. With respect to parental involvement, some studies show that more time spent with parents leads to less participation in crime and delinquency (Sheldon and Glueck, 2009). The more leisure time that an adolescent spends with parents, the less likely the adolescent is to deviate. Many adolescents who experience a divorce or are otherwise in nontraditional families may not be as close to their parents as adolescents in two biological parent families. They may experience weakened bonds with their parents and others, thus increasing the likelihood that they will engage in crime and delinquency. If an adolescent lives in a non-traditional family structure, this can impact the four elements of the bond. It is suggested that inadequate families fail to provide the attachments that could leverage adolescents into socialized lifestyles (Hirschi, 1999). If an adolescent is brought up in

a broken home, the adolescent is going to have a hard time socially and this may cause the adolescent to turn to deviant acts.

The peer groups also play an important role in the construction of delinquent behaviour. An adolescent is a part of society in which he lives and due to his immaturity, he is easily motivated by what he sees around him. It is his environment and social context that provokes his actions. It is also seen that adolescents in urban and semi-urban areas who belong to middle class families are found more prone to crimes such as theft, rape, and murder and this happens because there is an absence of proper environment both within a family as well as in a community level. In such situation parents fail to give a proper guidance (Sahmey, 2013).

Gupta (1995) states that there should be a good relationship between the mother and the child, so that the child will not develop mistrust and anger. If a child develops anger and mistrust then that child becomes a child without a conscience and behaves in an anti-social manner. Chowdhury (2004) maintain that there are two extreme hypotheses which specify the different roles of peers in developing the aggressive and antisocial behaviour of a delinquent child, and there are some individual characteristics which give rise to delinquency. Family is important throughout the period of early adolescence. During early adolescence, developmental transformations are likely to result in changes in adolescents' needs within the family (Pandey & Negi, 1995). Controlling parents and adolescents who strive for more independence are likely to clash with one another. In this context, parental influence among adolescents is mostly seen as a matter of concern. Researchers agree that "bad" parenting is very much a compelling cause for delinquent behaviour (Shah, Sukhla & Trivedi, 2004).

Parents who demonstrate extreme restlessness and destructiveness are more likely to play the part of antecedent to delinquency in their adolescents. When considering the development of an adolescent, the quality of parent-adolescent relationships is vital. Conventionally, the closeness of parent-adolescent relationships explained the beneficial effect of authoritative control. Yet it can be demonstrated that quality of parent-adolescent relationships explains adolescent antisocial behaviour. The quality of relationships could be defined as a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child in the long history of the relationships. Lavee and Brown (2008) found that family instability, deficient family cohesion, and lack of quality relationships between parents and adolescents resulted in adolescent substance abuse. The majority of adolescent criminal offenses are committed by males. This overrepresentation of males in juvenile delinquency is one of the most robust and stable findings in the literature (Odgers & Moretti, 2002). Starting from later childhood, boys show higher rates of conduct problems than girls. Girls may engage in criminal activities, but boys tend to commit more serious crimes such as aggravated assault, robbery, and murder. However, girls show a propensity towards indirect and verbal aggression. Some environments restrict certain behavioural responses of adolescents, while other environments tend to promote a wide range of behavioural adaptations. Notably, not much work is available on the delinquent's position about the role of the parents. A good amount of negligence can be seen when it comes to the nature of relationship the parents share with their children.

Parents and Adolescent Delinquency

In our society today, the family has been seen as the central socializing institution responsible for instilling in youth a set of norms, values, beliefs, and ideals. The failure of families to accomplish this task may result in serious consequences for the individual as well as for the society at large (Patchin, 2006). Sheldon and Glueck (2009) reported a significant relationship between families and delinquency. But in recent studies, parents and their role in preventing delinquency are given due importance (Anderson, 2002; Bank & Burraston, 2001; Heck & Walsh, 2000).

Parent-Adolescent Relationships and Delinquency

This section examines the role of family, with a specific focus on parents, to better understand the role of parental-adolescent relationships in juvenile delinquency. Family is important throughout the period of early adolescence. During early adolescence, the developmental transformations are likely to result in changes in adolescents' needs within the family. Controlling parents and adolescents who strive for more independence are likely to clash with one another. In this context, parental influence among adolescents is mostly seen as a matter of concern. Researchers agree that "bad" parenting is very much a compelling cause for delinquent behaviour (Unnever, Cullen, & Agnew, 2006). It is reported that parents who demonstrate extreme restlessness and destructiveness are more likely to play the part of antecedent to delinquency in their teenagers. Lack of emotional ties between parents

and adolescents also contributes to involvement in maladaptive behaviour. Brown (2008) found that family instability, deficient family cohesion, and lack of quality relationships between parents and children resulted in adolescent substance abuse.

Paradigms of Parental Negative Influence on Adolescents' Behaviour

Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (2006) identified four paradigms that outline how parents can negatively influence adolescent behaviour. They are, neglect; conflict; deviant behaviours and attitudes; and disruption. In this exploratory study, these paradigms have been taken into consideration with the intent of further validating the theoretical foundation established by control and strain theories. Neglect is one of the major causative factors in the delinquent behaviour of adolescents. Parents who do not have any control over their children inside and outside the home may foster delinquent tendencies (Nye, 2008). Examples of this lack of parental control include ignoring the delinquent behaviours of their children or being unprepared to address delinquent behaviours when they are acknowledged. Such behaviours may be seen among parents who are afraid to create tension in the family or parents who perceive violations as being trivial and who never punish the child. These parents may fail in setting boundaries and creating a proper structure for their children's behaviour. While adolescents from these types of parents love their parents, they often have trouble developing friendships and lack the ability to regulate their emotions (Cobb, 2011). Further, these behaviours place them at risk for frequent quarrels at school or incorporating delinquent behaviours in the process of attempting to win friends. There are two forms of neglect: lack of supervision and lack of involvement. The literature demonstrates that inadequate or neglectful supervision contributes to association with deviant peers. Patterson (2010) found that improper parental supervision results in deleterious effects on children. Also, parents who did not adequately supervise their children were unable to effectively control their children's behaviour through positive reinforcement and appropriate punishment. A meta-analysis found parental supervision to be among the most powerful predictors of juvenile delinquency (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2016). Attachment to parents along with parental involvement serves as protective factors in juvenile delinquency.

In contrast to the neglect paradigm, parents operating within the conflict paradigm will be using harsh, abusive, and aggressive measures towards their children (Patchin, 2006). This approach will likely result in rebellious behaviour among the adolescents and also escalate disruptive behaviour. The literature shows that the children of parents who discipline by using very harsh behaviour tend to look towards their peers for support and, later on, tend to display higher rates of delinquency and substance abuse. Parents who utilize these behaviours can be harsh in many different ways: physically, sexually, and emotionally. Even without causing physical injury to children, such parental abuse may impact children emotionally as well as cognitively. The literature also suggests that some children who experience a pattern of extreme discipline from their parents are more likely to have an increased risk for violence in adolescence or a greater risk of future delinquency. Also, parents who are inconsistent in their punishment pattern may influence children to become oppositional and confused as to what is acceptable and what is not.

The third paradigm, deviant behaviours and attitudes depicts that parents with a history of deviancy themselves are more likely to pass this behaviour on to their children. Studies have found that delinquents are more likely than non-delinquents to have been raised by fathers with criminal histories (Glueck & Glueck, 2002; Hirschi, 1999). Also, parental criminality is said to have increased the risk for violent crimes among children and adolescents. Again, parental deviance leads to children having deviant peers. It has also been demonstrated that youth of antisocial parents are at greater risk of violence or delinquency than the youth with the least antisocial parents (Eddy & Reid, 2002). These studies show an apparent link between parents with deviant behaviour and future deviant behaviour in their children. Causative factors are unclear, yet it is hypothesized that adolescents' delinquent behaviour is learned from their parents or that the environment where both parents and children were raised elicits delinquent behaviours. It has also been assumed that biological factors contribute to the development of antisocial behaviour. Based on the above literature review, it is evident that there is a connection between parents with a history of deviant behaviour and children with delinquency.

The fourth and final paradigm is family disruption, which can take various forms such as arguing, mental illness, and single parenting. In most studies, family disruption is linked to single parenthood, and delinquency is found to be common among these types of families (Juby & Farrington, 2001). However, there are negative consequences associated with families disrupted by desertion, divorce,

or death. Adolescents from single parent families are more likely to use drugs or engage in delinquent behaviours (Wells & Rankin, 1991).

Social Control Theory by Hirschi (1969)

In this study social control theory and general strain theory are utilized to explore and understand how parent-adolescent relationships shape and influence adolescent behaviour. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory states that social bonds and attachments are stronger protection against delinquency than other personality characteristics. Hirschi conceptualized social bonds between individuals and society as having four components: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Social control theory presents the opportunity to determine whether the bonds of attachment, involvement, and school and community measures explain serious delinquency and risky behaviour. The importance of social control theory is seen in the arguments of developmental theorists, who posit that changing features of social bonds explain the trajectories of delinquency (Laub & Sampson, 2003) and the process of desistance from crime throughout the life course. One of the most persistent explanations for delinquent behaviour is the breakdown of the family. Shoemaker (2005) found that attachments to parents are inversely related to delinquency the stronger the attachment to parents, the less risk there is for adolescent delinquent behaviour. The theory postulates that the internal patterns of interaction within the family are more important than structural factors in the family. So these family interactions, mostly between parents and adolescents, may play a vital role in explaining delinquent behavior. Also, an intimate communication within the family can lessen the risk of adolescents engaging in delinquent behaviour. Social control theory has also been used to explain various aspects of delinquency, such as predicting the levels of self-reported delinquency, and the onset of gang membership (Thomberry, 2006).

General Strain Theory by Agnew (2006)

General strain theory maintains that people commit crime because of pressure or strain. Agnew (2006) argued that strain comes from diverse sources as opposed to a single factor such as economic strain. Agnew (2006) presented three types of strain that can lead to crime: (1) the inability to achieve a goal, (2) the removal of positive stimuli or losing something that is valued, and (3) the presentation of negative stimuli. These negative stimuli, or the loss of positive stimuli may lead to negative affective states, such as anger, fear, frustration, or depression, which in turn may lead to crime (Agnew, 2006).

Adolescents often find themselves in environments (e.g., family and school) in which they have limited control. Resulting pressures may lead to frustration, and adolescents may try to escape or get involved in criminal activities. He also found that aversive family and school environments have a direct effect on delinquency. Agnew (2006) also found that punitive parents, mean teachers, and dissatisfaction with school contribute to higher levels of anger and ultimately lead to greater delinquency. He further asserted that the dimensions of strain that included negative life events, life hassles, negative relations with adults, parental fighting, living in unsafe neighborhoods, unpopularity with the opposite sex, occupational strain, and clothing strain. He also wrote about other strategies or ways of coping with the strain besides committing crime. Included were cognitive, emotional, and behavioural coping strategies that tend to lessen strain on a person. General strain theory is based on the idea that "when people are treated badly they may get upset and engage in crime" (McCluskey, 2002). The theory identifies two methods for measuring strain in an individual's life: a subjective approach and an objective approach. In the subjective approach, the research participants are directly asked whether they dislike the way they are treated. In the objective approach, I ask about predetermined causes of strain. The importance of an individual's reaction guided the current study, and a subjective, qualitative approach was used to collect data. General strain theory has also been used to explain the higher representation of males in crime than females. Agnew (2006) compared the different levels and types of male/ female strain and found that females show much more strain than males. They also found that females are more concerned with creating and maintaining close bonds and relationships with others, which leads to lower rates of property and violent crime. On the other hand, males are concerned with material success, leading to higher rates of property and violent crimes. Females faced negative treatment such as discrimination and were found to have high demands from family that restricted their behaviour. Males were more likely to be less tolerant, resulting in their getting involved in more conflicts. In relation to goals, females were more likely to be self-destructive when they failed to achieve goals, while males turned towards violent behaviour and crime (Agnew & Broidy, 2007). Agnew and Broidy (2007) also found substantial differences in

emotional responses to strain among males and females. Based on the above data, it can be hypothesized that boys show more violent behaviour than the girls.

Implication for Counselling

It is pertinent for counsellors to ensure they motivate parents to be actively involved in the activities of their children. Some strategies that can mitigate the detects of delinquents may include, but are not limited to, allowing parents to participate in governance activities, developing parent outreach training programs, completing needs assessments, planning involvement support for parents whose children who have special needs (e.g., English proficiency, gifted and talented, special education), hosting family nights (e.g., meeting teachers at the public library, using the school library and computer labs with their children), creating student nutrition workshops, promoting parent-discussion groups, or publishing parent-oriented newsletters. The challenge to the counselor is the attempt to bridge this gap. Finally, the findings from this study exemplify that all stakeholders believe that parental involvement is critical in bridging the juvenile delinquency of adolescents' in Ahiazu Local Government Area of Imo State.

CONCLUSION

One of the major findings of this study was the poor family environment that prevailed among the families of delinquent behaviour adolescents when compared with the positive family atmosphere among the non-delinquent behaviour adolescent families. This poor family environment was marked by family fights, less communication with the father, alcoholism, and incompetency in dealing with adolescent delinquent behaviour. Additionally, there were fathers who supported delinquency by encouraging their sons to fight back, as well as fathers who went so far as to fight with their son's peers. These situations point to the need for prevention and intervention among these adolescents and their families at both the family and school level. There should be a systematic family assessment conducted to evaluate the overall family environment. However, there have been no professional prevention, or intervention activities within schools in Nigeria or among the families in the state. In the school, teachers were the only professionals who dealt with the delinquent behaviour of these adolescent boys, and it was obvious that the delinquent behaviour persists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study in detail recommends that ideally, schools should employ professionals, social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses to engage in prevention and intervention efforts. This interdisciplinary team, including teachers, could work together in developing plans for educating students and parents about the importance of family relationship in the development of these adolescents. Further, the professional team could design a strategic plan (incorporating such things as awareness programs, counseling, leadership development, and group activities) to reduce problematic behaviours and contribute to the students' holistic development. Also, family should be considered the primary and most influential system for any individual. Consequently, there should be more unique policies and models to strengthen his system in order to develop more responsible and contributing individuals for the society at large. Professionals, as well as policy makers, should listen to the voices of adolescents, such as those who participated in this study, to understand their needs and wishes, meet those needs, and help create more empowered families

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