THE CORRELATION BETWEEN POVERTY AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency could be caused by environmental contingencies that are beyond the control of the youths and therefore resulted in their behaving the opposite way to the socially approved way of behaving. Juvenile delinquent behaviours among secondary school students from low socio-economic status homes were compared to those of students from high socio-economic status homes. A total of 150 senior secondary students, comprising of 75 female students from 2 Federal government secondary schools were used in the study. The Likert-type of Questionnaires with four-point scale were administered to collect vital data for this study. Two research hypotheses were tested and both of them were upheld as they were supported by the results. It was found out that a significant difference exist between the involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours of students from high socio-economic status family compared to those from low socio-economic status family. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistical method of data analysis was used in testing the research hypothesis. Recommendation were given as to how to lessen juvenile delinquency.

INTRODUCTION

Different schools of thought have defined delinquency in different ways, this is as a result of the fact that many anti-social and dis-social activities and behaviour constitutes delinquency and what constitute delinquency, vary with time, place, cultural and political conditions.
Elliot (1969) defines a Delinquent as a person who has fallen out of the mainstream of his culture, and is deficient in socially acceptable and adaptive behaviour.

Psychologically, delinquency is seen as a deficiency in the formation of super ego. A delinquent child is seen as one who has failed to internalize the societal norms and code of conduct set by the family and society: Thus the delinquent child is a non-conformist to societal social norms, folkways, and expectations.

For the purpose of this study, all the delinquent behaviours include all those socially maladjusted and anti-social behaviours which are prevalent in our society. Delinquent behaviours in our schools include bullying, stealing, smoking, absenteeism, gambling, drunkenness, drug abuse, truancy, hooliganism, forgery, lateness, vandalism, thuggery, ganster, examination malpractices impersonation and prostitution.

Juvenile delinquency may be regarded as a reflection of maladjustment because people who are well adjusted do not become delinquents, they might commit the offence like any other person but they are regarded as being delinquent if they do not know when and how to control their excesses.

Socio-economic Status: refers to the socio-economic position of an individual or family in a given society. For the purpose of this research work socio-economic status is measure by parents and the type of environment in which they are living.
The word 'juvenile' has been given many definitions at different occasions and in different realms of study. But the believe of Gold and Mann (1972) that the term 'juvenile' should be limited to the adolescent age, which is 12 to 19 years is upheld in this study.

Schwartz (1989) recognises that heritable personality traits can be altered to a finite degree through environmental pressures such as parental disciplinary practices, but ultimately there tend to be a compromise between the child's biological predispositions and the rearing styles of the child's parents.

Whereas, the psycho-social viewpoint of delinquency focuses upon this important variables in the development of anti-social behaviours. Inadequate socialization in the family and environmental conditions outside the home reinforces delinquent behaviour.

According to McKissack (1985), the general consensus among investigators in this area of research is that children will probably reject their parents as figures to identify with and are likely to exhibit impulsive behaviour with little or no capacity to learn from the consequences of their conduct if they are exposed to poverty.

Many investigators of delinquency who align themselves with psycho-social viewpoint believe that certain early experiences in the family may predispose a child to develop delinquent patterns of conduct if the child is exposed to delinquent producing forces due to lack of basic essentials such as food and shelter.
The common trend running psycho-social theories and research is the assumption that delinquent producing families often engage in dysfunctional patterns of behaviour. These maladaptive family systems generally fail to cope with various crisis within the family, such as the delinquency of a child. In addition, the stress within these families creates a social atmosphere which makes it difficult for youngsters to satisfy their needs within the family and this motivates them to try and find fulfilment for their needs elsewhere.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

There is a progression in adolescents indulgence in delinquent behaviour nowadays. Such behaviours are going beyond the normal exuberances adolescents are known for, ranging from all sorts of acts of indisciplining such as stealing and cheating in schools bullying, truancy, prostitution and so on.

There is a general apprehension that this menace have defied all logic due to helpless attitude of various authorities concerned has poised as a serious problem for the society at large.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency. Also to investigate the level of relationship between boys and girls who indulge in delinquent acts.
RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

To be able to find out the roles of the home in the problem of Juvenile Delinquency, two research hypotheses were tested.

Research Hypothesis I: There will be a correlation between delinquent behaviours of the students and poverty.

Research Hypothesis II: There will be a correlation between the gender of the students and their involvement in delinquent behaviours.

METHODOLOGY

Sample. From the population of secondary school students in Lagos state, 150 were randomly selected from 2 Federal secondary schools in Lagos as sample for this study. All of them were in Senior Secondary School class 2. Out of this number, 75 were male while 75 were females. 64 were from high socio-economic status families while 86 were students from low socio-economic status. Their mean age was 16.5 years.

Research Instrument: A four-point Likert type of questionnaire was constructed by the researcher for the purpose of eliciting data for this study. It has two parts. The first part has to do with the demographic information concerning the respondents such as age, sex, family background, and educational background.
The second part was made up of 15 items regarding the level of involvement of the respondent in different types of delinquent acts. The respondents were to tick (✓) whether each of the statement describe them or not. For example very much like me (4 points) while very much unlike me carried 1 point. The higher the scores the greater the level of delinquency.

It was pilot tested to establish it validity and reliability. It was both face and content validity (.88) and it test-retest reliability yielded $r = .73$

**PROCEDURE:** Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students to respond to in their classrooms. The researcher personally administer the questionnaires and explained to the students that it was not a class test and that there would not be any right or wrong answer. They instructed that it was not necessary for them to write down their names on the questionnaire. They were all allowed to complete the questionnaire.

The copies were later collected for analysis.

**RESULTS**

**Test of Research Hypotheses**

Research Hypothesis I which stated There will be a correlation between delinquent behaviours of the students and poverty was tested by using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and the outcome is as stated in Table I.
TABLE I: CORRELATION BETWEEN DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILIES OF THE STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>(r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS FAMILIES</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS FAMILIES</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18.83</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(df = 148\)

The result of \(r = 0.71\) shows a very high correlation index. Therefore the research hypothesis I is accepted.

Test of Research Hypothesis II:

Research Hypothesis II which stated that there will be a correlation between the gender of the students and their involvement in delinquent behaviours was also tested with the aid of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis and the result is shown in Table II.

TABLE II: CORRELATION BETWEEN DELINQUENCY BEHAVIOURS AND GENDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})Scores</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>(r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>21.14</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17.08</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(df = 148\)

since \(r\) observed of 0.85 shows a very high correlation index. Based on these results, research hypothesis II is also accepted.
DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that a very high correlation exist between poverty and juvenile delinquent behaviours \((r = 0.71)\) is in agreement with God and Mann (1972); Olufunayo (1997) and Elliot (1969) that lack of the essentials of life have been identified as a strong force behind juvenile delinquency. There is a saying that 'an hungry man is an angry man'. Poverty can reinforce anti-social behavioural dispositions.

The second finding concerning gender showed that male gender has high correlation with juvenile delinquent behaviours. This result is in support of Barren (1992); Burgess (1991); Brown (1996) and Oslen (1998) all agree that the male gender is more prone to delinquent behavioural attitudes than their female counterparts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to minimise the high rate of juvenile delinquency in our society, it is recommended to both the Federal and State governments to offer free adult education to the parents both in the rural and urban areas. Various educative posters could conspicuously be displayed in all public places on how to prevent and check any form of malpractices and anti-social behaviour of their children.

Poverty-alleviation programmes should be embarked upon by the government and the individuals also dignity of labour should be emphasized. There is the need for parents not only the mothers but the fathers also to come into grip with their
responsible to their children. Despite various changes in the society that have made the role of mothers to be a little bit complex because they have to work, they should still create the time to see to the welfare of their children. They should make sure that they give adequate and necessary information and direction to their wards.

There is the stability of homes as another factor for ensuring a low level of incidence of delinquency; Therefore, the government should keep on educating the spouses on the importance of having a small sized family, that they can adequately take care of because most of the fightings in many homes are engineered by factors related to finance. Therefore, having a small family will reduce the cost of maintaining a home and consequently reduced the incidence of breakdown of families.

This has implications for both pre-marital counselling and marriage/family counselling.
REFERENCES


