

Family Types and Juvenile Delinquency Issues among Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: Counseling Implications

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ABSTRACT The study focused on identifying the influence of family types on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria. Based on empirical findings, three research questions were raised along with three hypotheses to guide the study. Using the multistage random sampling technique, 200 students were selected for the study from five public secondary schools in Uyo metropolis. The self-report Family Delinquency Questionnaire (FADEQ) was used for data collection. Frequencies and simple percentages were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested statistically using the chi square statistic. The results indicate that three family variables namely: family stability, family cohesiveness, and family adaptability impact strongly on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis. The discussion was also put in the context of previous findings. Based on these findings, the counseling implications were proffered.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency refers to delinquent and criminal behaviour among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world. Although the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. The anti-social behaviours often associated with the juvenile delinquents' include vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, school drop-outs, to mention but a few. Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the wave of juvenile delinquency, the prospect of a better, safer and more prosperous society emerging in Nigeria will remain elusive.

The family is the foundation of human society.

Families are the strongest socializing forces of life. They teach children to eschew unacceptable behaviour, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours. Also, children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflicts, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquent. Adolescence is a time of expanding vulnerabilities and opportunities that accompany the widening social and geographical exposure to life beyond the school or family, but it starts with the family.

During the past century, significant changes in family arrangements have occurred, modern family structures vary widely. Its form is diversifying with, for example, the increase in one-parent families and non-marital unions as well as extended family arrangements. Differing family structures may directly impact on the stability of the family, home and the functioning of children and adolescents.

Family type refers to the way family members interact with each other, that is, levels of adaptability, cohesiveness and communication demon-

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strated by the family unit. In assessing family types for research and clinical practice, it is usually assumed that the difference between functional and dysfunctional families could be determined by two interrelated dimensions: cohesion and adaptability. Cohesion refers to the level of attachment and emotional bonding between family members. There are four graded levels to the cohesion dimension: disengaged, separated, connected and enmeshed. Families that are disengaged lack closeness and/or loyalty, and are characterized by high independence. At the other end of the scale of cohesion are families identified as enmeshed. These families are characterized by high levels of closeness, loyalty, and/or dependency. Adaptability is defined as the ability of the family to change in power structure, roles and relationships in order to adjust to situational stressors. It has four graded levels: rigid, structured, flexible and chaotic. Families with low levels of adaptability are considered rigid. Rigid family types are characterized by authoritarian leadership, infrequent role modification, strict negotiation and lack of change. Families with high levels of adaptability are considered chaotic. Chaotic family types manifest a lack of leadership, dramatic role shifts, erratic negotiation and are characterized by excessive change (Olson 1986; Green et al. 1991; Crowley 1998).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches indicate that various exposures to violence within the family or outside the family are important sources of delinquencies. In other words, if violence encompasses all emotional environmental aspects of the juvenile's life, he is more likely to engage in delinquent activities (Hagan and Foster 2001). Families behaviours particularly parental monitoring and disciplining seem to influence association with delinquent peers through out the juvenile period (Cashwell and Vacc 1994). A long history of research has further linked family dysfunction with future criminal offending, in part because parents monitor and provide nurturance to children. It is thought that the loosening of bonds among family members may result in more criminal involvement.

In most cases, delinquents have been viewed as individuals who come from less-intact families often referred to as "broken homes". Typically, the term "broken home" has been operationally

defined to mean children residing in single-parent households or any type of household other than a household in which both biological parents are present. In contrast, an "intact family" usually refers to a nuclear family arrangement in which both biological parents reside in the household with their biological children. "Intact family arrangements" differ from other modern day family arrangements including single-parent arrangements, two-parent arrangements involving a step-parent, extended family arrangements, and the adoptive or foster family arrangement (Kierkus and Bauer 2002).

A study by Demuth and Brown (2004), demonstrates that broken homes are associated with juvenile delinquency but also that family arrangements are not just a broken home issue. Specifically, the researchers found that levels of juvenile delinquency were much higher in teenagers residing with single fathers and lowest among teenagers who were part of a two-parent household. The researchers suggest that higher levels of delinquency among children residing with their fathers were due mainly to inadequate parental involvement in a teenager's life. Demuth and Brown drew the inference that overall, the lack of supervision and the absence of close relationships between the teenager and his parents are factors that influence delinquency. Hoffman and Johnson's (1998) findings corroborate Demuth and Brown's (2004), suggesting that a broken home is associated with juvenile delinquency. However, these researchers did not find any significant evidence of increased juvenile delinquency associated with whether the child resided with the father or mother.

Other researchers have found that many family characteristics and family environment influence juvenile delinquency behaviour. For example, the number of people in a family, inconsistent parenting, familial problems, child neglect, and the children's attachment to parents (Derzon and Lipsey 2000; Wasserman and Seracini 2001).

Changes in family arrangements emerge for reasons including separation, divorce, sudden death of a parent, unemployment, and sequel of substance abuse (Demuth and Brown 2004). Currently, at least five different family arrangements are recognized in the research literature. These include: two-parent arrangements, single-parent arrangements, extended family member arrangements, adoptive/foster family arrangements, and other family arrangements. In the two-

parent family arrangement, two parents in the household are responsible for child nurturing. These arrangements include intact families, that is, those with both biological parents in the household. However, this can also include a step-parent residing in the household. A second family arrangement or type is the single-parent family arrangement, which consists of a household in which a child resides with any relative-grand-parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or older siblings-other than the biological parents. In most cases, this arrangement indicates that neither birth parents is present. A further family arrangement is the foster/adoptive family arrangement in which neither birth parent is present. In the adoptive family arrangement, the family does not have blood ties to the child, but the child is legally adopted. The foster family arrangement also excludes the birth parents and a child may stay with families or individuals for extended periods of time. A fifth family arrangement referred to as "other family arrangements" may include - but are not limited to - children residing with gay or lesbian couples.

In the light of the foregoing, family is very important in creating a law abiding child; whereas truancy, and school drop-outs are disturbing issues confronting adolescents, parents, and teachers alike.

Continued efforts to decrease the number of delinquent acts have led many researchers to investigate the underlying factors that lead to juvenile delinquency. Researches indicate that the family environment is an important variable in the development of delinquency. Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998) discover that parental conflicts and parental aggressiveness predicted violent offending whereas lack of maternal affection and parental criminality predicted involvement in property crimes. In another study conducted by Gorman-Smith, data showed that children are more likely to resort to violence if there is violence within the relationships that they may share with their family (Gorman-Smith et al. 2001). Thornberry et al. (1999) found that children who live in homes with only one parent or in which marital relationships have been disrupted by divorce or separation are more likely to display a range of behavioural problems including delinquencies than children who are from two parent families. Wright and Wright (1994) study shows that single-parent families produce more delinquent children than two-parent families. In consonance with this,

Muehlenberg (2002) stresses, (based on research findings), that the very absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing. According to Wright and Wright (1994), two-parent families provide increase supervision and surveillance on property while single-parenthood increases the likelihood of delinquency and victimization simply by the fact that there is one less person to supervise adolescents' behaviour.

Many familial variables have further been studied in an attempt to better understand the aetiology of delinquency. Flannelly et al. (1999), report that adolescents without parental supervision during and after school hours are more likely to engage in delinquent acts. Featherstone et al. (1993), claim that youths from intact or two-parent families are less likely to report school problem than are children from single-parent families. Clark and Shields (1997), in their study found a correlation between familial communication and juvenile delinquency asserting that the level of communication within the family among its members may significantly contribute to delinquency. Cashwell and Vacc (1996) investigated the role of family cohesion and found that a cohesive family environment reduces the chances of delinquent behaviours. Similarly, Shields and Clark (1995) found that low levels of adaptability in the family results in higher levels of delinquency. It is apparent that there appears to be a relationship between family arrangements and delinquency in juvenile.

Further researches have produced the following manifestations of juvenile delinquencies in secondary schools in Nigeria. These include: cruelty, bullying, fighting, vandalism, roughness during games, use of foul language, stealing, lying, cheating, examination malpractice, gambling, truancy, drug abuse, noise-making, disobedience, stubbornness, apathy, untidiness, failure to wear correct school uniform, reading of pornographic materials, sexual immorality, mob action, loitering, and carrying of weapon. Bringing into perspective the preponderance of juvenile delinquency, Edelman (1995) discovers that about 1,234 youths run away from home and 2,255 teenagers drop-out of school each day. Every five minutes, a juvenile is arrested for some kind of violent crime, and every two hours a child is harmed with a weapon.

Without doubt, the problem of juvenile delinquency in secondary schools is a grave one. Going by statistical data available on the

frequency, intensity and diversity of juvenile delinquency, it appears that in the war against juvenile delinquency, the adult society is steadily loosing ground on every front. Furthermore, the family unit is collapsing and diversifying, thus steadily losing ground on every front. This research attempts to find out the relationship between family types and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Uyo, located in the eastern part of Nigeria. This research attempts to answer the question: How do variations in family arrangements relate to juvenile delinquency in Nigerian secondary schools? In other words, the aim of this research is to find out how family types influence juvenile delinquency. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to find out the correlation between family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency.

Hypotheses: The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this research:

1. There is no significant relationship between family stability and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between family cohesiveness and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.
3. There is no significant relationship between family adaptability and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.

METHOD

Participants: The study was conducted in secondary schools in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of juvenile secondary school students in Uyo main town at the time of the study. A total of 200 students with a mean age of 15 years were selected from 5 public secondary schools in Uyo metropolis. From each school, a total of 40 students were randomly selected by the researcher in all the schools.

Instrument: The instrument used for the study was the Self-report Family Delinquency Questionnaire (FADEQ) comprising three sections. The first section (SECTION A) has three items numbered 1 – 3 which dealt with personal data of the subjects. The second section (SECTION B) has ten items numbered 4 – 13, which dealt with information about the subjects' family based on family arrangement and social climate (family composition, family cohesion, level of communication, and emotional climate). The

third section (SECTION C) consisted 17 items numbered 14 – 30, which examined common symptoms of delinquency in the subjects. The subjects were required to tick from a list of options, the option to an item that was true in their case as individuals.

Validation and Reliability of Instrument: To ensure the face and content validities of the instrument, draft copies were given to a counseling psychologist and measurement evaluator to assess the suitability or otherwise of the items in the instrument. Experts' objective suggestions were integrated in the final copy. Furthermore, the items were compared with existing standardized test on issues pertaining to family influence on juvenile delinquency. Finally, the thirty items yielded a test-retest Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.88 for family stability, 0.67 for family cohesiveness, and 0.72 for family adaptability, this is an indication of reasonable stability.

Research Procedure: The research instruments were administered to the subjects in their respective schools with the assistance and cooperation of the school staff/personnel. In addition to instructions written on the questionnaire, the subjects were given verbal instructions and clarifications where necessary. Copies of the questionnaire were retrieved after completion without subjecting the respondents to time constraint. All the two hundred questionnaires administered were properly filled according to instructions and collected by the researchers.

Design and Statistics: This research is a cross-sectional survey and employed the ex-post-facto research design since the researcher is interested in discovering the already existing relationship between family types and juvenile delinquency issues among secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis. The data collected were collated and analyzed using simple percentage and chi-square. The three hypotheses formulated for the study were tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance with 2, 9, and 12 degrees of freedom respectively.

RESULTS

The findings in this research for all the hypotheses were presented here. The results are expressed using the descriptive and chi-square analysis.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between family stability and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.

From table Ia, it could be observed from the analysis that only 32% of the respondents that showed symptoms of delinquency are from intact families as opposed to 15% from single-parent families and 53% from other non-intact family arrangements. Thus it is clear that family stability has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

From Table 1b, the null hypothesis which predicted that family stability does not significantly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is upheld. This implies that family stability has a significant influence on the incidence of juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant relationship between family cohesiveness and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.

From Table 2a, the data analysis showed that out of the 114 respondents that have symptoms of delinquency, 47 or 41 per cent of the subject never spent valuable time with their parents, while 98 or 86 per cent never enjoyed parental supervision, and 80 or 70 per cent have never enjoyed close association with parents and other family members. Thus, it is clear that family cohesiveness has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

The result in Table 2b did not support the null hypothesis which predicted that family cohesiveness does not significantly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school student, hence it is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis which claimed that family cohesiveness significantly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school student is therefore upheld. This implies that family cohesiveness has a significant influence on the

Table 1a: Responses indicating frequencies and percentages of influence of family stability on the incidence of juvenile delinquency.

Issues	Family composition			
	Intact	Single- parent	Others	Total
Delinquent	37(32%)	17(15%)	60(53%)	114
Non-delinquent	43(50%)	13(15%)	30(35%)	86
Total	80(40%)	30(15%)	90(45%)	200

Table 1b: Summary of chi-square analysis showing the influence of family stability on the incidence of juvenile delinquency

f_o O	f_e E	$(O - E)^2$ /E	Calculated value of χ^2	Critical value	df
37	45.6	1.62	7.20	*5.99	2
17	17.1	0.00			
60	51.3	1.48			
43	34.4	2.15			
13	12.9	0.00			
30	38.7	1.96			

Note: *Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level (df =2; Critical=5.99)

incidence of juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

Hypothesis III: There is no significant relationship between family adaptability and juvenile delinquency among secondary schools in Uyo metropolis.

From table 3a, the data analysis showed that out of the 114 respondents that showed symptoms of delinquency, 69 representing 61 per cent of the subjects enjoyed little or healthy communication with their parents, while 88

Table 2a: Responses indicating frequencies and percentages of influence of family cohesiveness on the incidence of juvenile delinquency.

S. No.	Items	Yes, all the time	Yes, some- times	Yes, but rarely	No, never	Total
7	Do you usually spend time with your mum and dad together?	26 (23%)	13 (11%)	28 (25%)	47 (25%)	114
8	Are you usually left alone without being monitored by your parents or guardians?	33 (29%)	48 (42%)	17 (15%)	16 (14%)	114
9	Do you enjoy a close relationship with members of your family?	13 (11%)	33 (29%)	38 (33%)	30 (26%)	114
12	Do you eat together with your parents or guardians?	6 (5%)	20 (18%)	38 (33%)	50 (44%)	114
	Total	78	114	121	143	456

Table 2b: Summary of Chi-square analysis showing the influence of family cohesiveness on the incidence of juvenile delinquency

f_o O	f_e E	$(O - E)^2$ /E	Calculated value of χ^2	Critical value	df
26	19.5	2.17	79.00	*16.92	9
13	28.5	8.43			
28	30.3	0.17			
47	35.8	3.50			
33	19.5	9.35			
48	28.5	13.34			
17	30.3	5.84			
16	35.8	10.95			
13	19.5	2.17			
33	28.5	0.71			
38	30.3	1.96			
30	35.8	0.94			
6	19.5	9.35			
20	28.5	2.54			
38	30.3	1.96			
50	35.8	5.63			

Note: * Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level (df = 9; critical = 16.92).

subjects representing 77 per cent experienced a measure of violence in the family, and 81 per cent experienced some form of chaos in the family. Thus, it is clear that family adaptability has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

From table 3b, it is clear from the analysis that the null hypothesis which predicted that family adaptability does not significantly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students is also rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld. This implies that family adaptability has a significant influence on the incidence of juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of the results of this study is based

Table 3b: Summary of Chi-square analysis showing the influence of family adaptability on the incidence of juvenile delinquency

f_o O	f_e E	$(O - E)^2$ /E	Calculated value of χ^2	Critical value	df
22	35.00	4.83	82.67	*21.03	12
23	28.60	1.10			
38	26.20	5.31			
31	24.20	1.91			
52	35.00	8.26			
23	28.60	1.10			
13	26.20	6.65			
26	24.20	0.13			
48	35.00	4.83			
27	28.60	0.09			
16	26.20	3.97			
23	24.20	0.06			
11	35.00	16.46			
33	28.60	0.68			
48	26.20	18.14			
22	24.20	0.20			
42	35.00	1.40			
37	28.60	2.47			
16	26.20	3.97			
19	24.20	1.12			

Note: *Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level (df = 12; critical = 21.03).

primarily on the three hypotheses that were formulated for the research. From the data analyses, the result revealed that family instability has a strong influence on juvenile delinquency. This agrees with the findings (Heather and Farrington 2001; Amato and Sobolewski 2001) that family disruption predicted juvenile criminality. Gorman-Smith et al. (1999) in a study also showed that while single-parenthood had very little impact on delinquency, non-intact families, that is, family arrangements other than the ideal nuclear family arrangement have very significant influence on delinquency. Studies abound in extant literature (Wright and Wright 1994; Demuth and Browns 2004; Muehlenberg 2002) which has provided

Table 3a: Responses indicating frequencies and percentages of the influence of family adaptability on the incidence of juvenile delinquency

S. No.	Items	Yes, all the time	Yes, some- times	Yes, but rarely	No, never	Total
3	Do you feel free and comfortable talking to your parent/guardian about anything	22 (19%)	23 (20%)	38 (33%)	31 (27%)	114
6	Do you ever experience violence in your Home?	52 (46%)	23 (20%)	13 (33%)	26 (23%)	114
10	Do your parents or guardians quarrel?	48 (42%)	27 (24%)	16 (14%)	23 (20%)	114
11	Do your parents or guardians fight each other?	11 (10%)	33 (29%)	48 (42%)	22 (19%)	114
13	Do your siblings fight each other?	42 (37%)	37 (32%)	16 (14%)	19 (17%)	114
	Total	175	143	131	121	570

support for the assertion that broken home is associated with juvenile delinquency, a high incidence of juvenile delinquency was found among teenagers residing with their fathers which was attributed to the lack of supervision and the absence of close relationships between the teenagers and their parents as factors that predict juvenile delinquency. This corroborates the findings of this work.

The result of hypothesis two showed that family cohesiveness has a significant influence on delinquency among juveniles in secondary schools. This finding is in line with that of Terlouw and Junger-Tas (1992), who found that juveniles who had positive relations with their parents were considerably less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour than those who had negative relationships. Martens (1992), Harada (1995), Brook et al. (1999) have also reported findings that close bonds with parents and general close emotional ties within the family among its members reduce the likelihood that juveniles will become delinquent further substantiates this work. Furthermore the research by Wright and Wright (1994) has also lend credence to the importance of family cohesiveness in helping to stem down the incidence of juvenile delinquency, in their research it was revealed that single parent produce more delinquents than the two- parent families. Muehlenberg (2002) also supported the findings in the study on the basis of research findings that asserts that the absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing, because the delinquents succor in the presence of their group members which help to reinforce the delinquent tendency in them.

The result of hypothesis three showed that family adaptability has a significant influence on delinquency among secondary school students. This result is in consonance with the past findings (Shields and Clark 1995; Hagan and Forster 2001) who found that low levels of adaptability in the family result in higher levels of delinquency. The past studies have also added to the body of available evidence that if violence is prevalent in all of the emotional environmental aspects of the juvenile's life, he likely going to be involved in delinquent activities

COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

The counseling implications of the findings are also highlighted here: First, Counsellors

should utilize every opportunity to sensitize parents on the importance of creating a cohesive home environment, one in which parents and children share affection, where children are sufficiently supervised, and where there is discipline and not punishment.

Secondly, given every opportunity, counsellors should encourage parents to effectively socialize their wards, teaching them to eschew unacceptable behaviour, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. Parents should be intimated that their children learn best from what they see them do. In other words, parents should provide good example in conduct and speech for their children to emulate.

Finally, counsellors should let parents, guardians and caregivers appreciate the need to create a peaceful home, one with relative harmony conducive enough for the development of pro-social behaviour on the part of the children.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to find out how family types influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. Based on empirical findings, three variables namely family stability, family cohesion, and family adaptability were drawn on and from the results obtained, there was a cumulative effect such that the presence of more than one of these negative family attributes compounded the likelihood of delinquency.

Since children who are inadequately supervised by parents, whose parents fail to teach them the difference between right and wrong, whose parents do not monitor their whereabouts and activities, whose parents discipline them erratically and harshly, and those who experience some measure of violence in the home are more likely to become delinquent. It has therefore become apparent that a healthy home environment is the single most important factor necessary to keep children from becoming delinquent.

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