

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CATAclysmic INCIDENCE OF YOUTH CRIME IN ILORIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Youth crime is a very serious issue militating against peace and tranquility of Nigeria. It is a problem that has touched every aspect of Nigerian society. Many indications are obtainable about the effects and consequences surrounding youth crime in Nigeria today. Since Nigeria has one of the youngest populations in the world, there is a very serious concern about the future of the country in terms of crime management. Many socioeconomic factors can be presented as causes of youth crime. Some of these factors include unemployment and family instability. Unemployment is relatively a big issue in Nigeria today. There is no doubt that many Nigerian youth today are unemployed which unavoidably make them susceptible to criminal activities. Also, the problem of family instability cannot be left out. In essence, industrialization has come to stay and the responsibility of family institution as primary agent of socialization has been challenged. Many parents no longer have time for their children, enhancing the possibility of engaging in crime activities. 120 questionnaires were carefully administered in the three Local Government Areas of Ilorin Metropolis. The analysis of data was carried out using descriptive method as well as inferential statistics of correlation. The result of research findings reveals that family instability is a serious enigma exposing youth in Ilorin metropolis to crimes. Also, unemployment continues to wreak havoc on the metropolis prompting youth to engage in criminal activities in order to satisfy their financial necessities. Hence, this study recommends that more employment opportunities and empowerment programmes be made available for the youth, family institution should be taken serious since this institution provides ethical and moral standards which will help in preventing youth crime.

Keywords: crime, socio-economic, unemployment, youth, family

Introduction

Crime is by far, a precarious event which is indeed inimical and unwelcoming to human society. Crime historically evolves with man and unarguably, no society is insusceptible or excepted from experiencing crime (though the degree or extent varies from one society to another). Many smart and bright social thinkers, philosophers and researchers have attempted to astutely make sense of crime phenomenon and various literacy writings and scholarly articles have surfaced throughout ages. The reason is mainly because crime is an immoral and iniquitous behaviour which indeed represents a basic source of concern to human society.

In his book *Concept and Themes*, Salawu Bashir conceptualized crime as any deliberate act or behaviour that relatively violates the legal codes or rules of a given society. In this sense, legal codes entail a set of institutionalized norms, laws, values that are collectively or generally recognized by all and whose violations ultimately result to sanctions or punishments. Fleisher (1966) believes that since people think differently and behave disparately towards a collective conscious or sentient, there is a high tendency for some of them to drift into criminality or in a general term, criminality. Although forms and structures of crime vary from one society to another society, human beings essentially behave themselves in certain dimensions that awaken panel repression and collective resentment. In essence, it has been discerned that causes of crimes are intertwined and entangled with social and economic situations of the society. Family institution precisely has been significantly enfeebled as structural unemployment lessens the capacity to create a stable home. On another hand, people who are profitably employed are overwhelmed with long hour of work and consequently unable to maintain sufficient supervision of their children at home. The increasing rate of crime acts and activities especially among youth has intensified tension and anxiety among people in many countries and Nigeria is not excluded. Sir James Stephen (1829-1894) in his historic book *History of Criminal Law* (2000), gave a concise and comprehensive description of the concept of crime where he posited that crime is an omission or act of refusing to give absolute respect to the legal rules which unavoidably results to legal punishment. From this definition, we can justly conclude that crime is an act of human behaviour legitimately prohibited by the criminal law.

Edmark (2005) described crime as an act of human behaviour formally forbidden by law and punishable by imprisonment, fine and death. Alfred (2002) stretched this definition when he argued that not all acts that are

penalized or reprimanded under the law are really criminal. Abiodun (2018) also opined that crime as an act of perpetual or momentary fraud or force embarked on in pursuit of self or collective interest. The variety in the forms of crime is based on social class or status and is also predisposed to change overtime. Youth crime is in fact no longer new to our contemporary society. The act of crime which was initially referred as the menace of only selected few is today becoming very chronic social problem of Nigeria. The problem of crime is becoming very serious and unsmiling which has significantly extended beyond the usual profile of criminals and offenders, being adult, urban residence and at the moment includes youths and even adolescents who live in rural communities (Alfred, 2002).

Though, the term youth has been defined or described in many ways, Okafor (2011) believes that youth is the time when a person is relatively young, specifically a time before a child fully becomes an adult. In the view of Berger (2006), youthfulness cut across ages, pointing to culture as the basic determinant and what matters in describing youth. According to him, individual who feels youthful and energetic can display such qualities as spontaneity, impulsiveness energy and aliveness. Dirienzo et al (2001) categorized crime and delinquency in the sense that, some crimes are considered serious and other only attract 'minor' sanctions. He posited that crime can either be placed under misdemeanors or felonies. Misdemeanor crimes according to him are relatively minor offenses against the law which are usually penalized by small fine or prison sentence. Example of such crimes include but not limited to traffic offences, petty pilferage, prostitution, public drunkenness, noise among others. On the other hand, crimes that are placed under felonies consist of relatively serious criminal behaviours that attract grave punishment or sanction. Example of such crimes includes rape, trafficking, theft, hate speech, armed robbery among others. In this study, socio-economic factors are examined especially how these factors influence youths to engage in criminal activities. Socio-economic factors that would be considered in this respect include unemployment, peer group, family condition and social environment.

Statement of the problem

Crime among youth has indeed occupied a special place of concern for many societies today including Nigeria and various strategies, policies and measures have been put in place to minimize crime of any kind but unfortunately, the rate of crime among youth is increasing like never before. Though crimes like armed robbery, theft, rape, cybercrime, hoodwinking

prostitution, among others have existed long ago, they continue to ravage Nigerian society. Despite various strict measures such as long jail terms and death penalty initiated to curb crime among youths, crime events continue to accelerate. In the view of Awogbenle (2010), socio-economic problems which are on the rise on a daily basis are the basic contributors to the decision for the involvement of youth in criminal activities. It is important to note that Nigeria is yet to fully solve socioeconomic problems that can trigger youth crime. Hence, youth crime will continue to threaten the peace and stability of the country. For instance, there is a strong link between youth crime and unemployment as many evidences are available. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2010), the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between the period 2000 and 2009 disclosed that the number of unemployed citizens of Nigeria constituted about 13.0% in 2000; exactly 13.6% in 2001; 12.6% in the year 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; 13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in the year 2007; 14.9% in the year 2008 and 19.4% during 2009. In terms of age group, the report indicated that as at March 2009, for individuals between the 15 and 24 years, 41.6% were evidently unemployed; individuals between 25 and 44 years, 17% were unemployed. It should be expressed that since unemployment among Nigerian youth is quite alarming, there is a high tendency among the youth to engage in criminal behaviours.

It should be noted that measures to curb the rate of crime among youth are relatively inadequate and ineffective especially those measures undertaken by the law enforcement agency. In many instances, law enforcement agency is accused of inefficiency and even the bad agents among them are usually alleged of aiding serving and abetting criminals. Also, the facilities in the rehabilitation centres and prisons in Nigeria have not been equipped sufficiently to viably revive inmates. Also, peer include is also a very important social factor that can trigger youth to engage in criminal acts. In fact, peer group as a crucial agent of socialization is replacing the place of parent as a significant other. However, there are many literatures and articles available on unemployment, family instability and youth crime but only a very few articles are actually relating the phenomenon of youth crime with unemployment and family instability in Nigeria. Hence, this study will assess unemployment and family instability in relation to youth crime in Nigeria. The objective of the study include to:

- Assess the relationship between unemployment and criminal behaviour among youth in Ilorin metropolis;

- Investigate if Family instability can affect youth crime in Ilorin metropolis

Literature Review

Crime in Nigerian Society

Crime in Nigeria is indeed an extremely serious issue which needs to be tackled urgently and effectually. This is because crimes will not only contribute negatively to the progress and development of the country but also disrupt peace and wellness of her citizens if proper measures to minimize them are not properly and adequately initiated. It is very hard to admit that upsurge and force of crimes continues to shake the country heavily despite many strategies targeted to curb them. In the view of Adebayo (1999), Nigeria is a developing nation and has indeed assumed a special space in the global crime map. In Nigeria today many crimes can be easily noticed which are contributing to the downturn of the country. Crimes like armed robbery, rape, murder, theft of all kinds, housebreak, fraud and deception, corruption and bribery, drug and food defilement and adulteration, smuggling, gambling, kidnapping, cyber bullying, human and drug trafficking, money laundering, internet scam, advanced fee fraud popularly known as 419 and other illegal activities are so prevalent and need immediate and active reevaluation. Moreover, Crime is a serious menace to the political, economic and even social security of a country and a main factor associated with under-development; because it daunts both foreign and local investments, penitently reduces the quality of life and wellbeing, devastates both social and human capital, destroys relationship between states and citizens, thus discouraging effective democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to achieve peace and development.

Crime continues to affect the Nigeria negatively and there is a major concern about the future of Nigerian society. Reasons for the continual upsurge of crime in Nigeria include urbanization which is sharply dispersing more rapidly and widely than actual development in the economic and social condition of the country. Crime in Nigeria has become a very serious menace to public safety and wellbeing. It causes personal suffering, vast material and property damages, mental and emotional imbalances and crease great problem on the urban social system. Globally, every five years, more than 60% of city populations have been sufferers or victims of one type of crime or another while more than half of these crimes involved personal crime such as arson, cheating, fraudulence, forgery, 419 syndrome, etc.).

Youth Crime in Nigeria

Youth can basically be described as a stage between teen-age and adulthood in a postmodern era. In the view of Berger (2006), youth mainly cut across ages and culture is the basic determinant of what can be described as youth. National youth policy of Nigeria comprehensively describes youth as a stage of complex and multifaceted change in physical, intellectual and mental characteristics of individuals and also an era when individuals continue to search for the meaning and nature of life and existence. Many Nigerian youths today have been apprehended of committing different forms of crimes especially crimes like Internet fraud, bribery, assault, rape, house breaking, larceny, examination malpractice, forgery and culpable homicide, cultism, harassment, theft, robbery, arson, heavy drug addiction among other crimes. Youth crime has become a very serious concern in Nigerian society as the nation's population is relatively young. It should be expressed that crime is not limited or restricted to Nigeria alone. It is indeed a global phenomenon which must be tackled strictly and effectively in order to actualize movement for global development and growth. The pace and dimension of youth crime is largely extending and in the few of Hutch and Griffith (1992), crimes among youth has skyrocketed especially between 1980 and 1990. Many Nigerian youth especially those between the age of 18 and 40 years are apprehended on the daily basis because of one crime or another. A day cannot pass-by without reports coming from various news outlets about atrocities committed by young ones in Nigeria. There is no gainsaying that the rate of crime today comparatively is far more than the rate of crime before urbanization. Nigeria society is becoming come complex and complicated and the gap between the rich and the poor is becoming far wide (Omisakin, 1998). Socioeconomic factors especially factors like unemployment, family structure, peer influence, environment are very strong indicators that have been widely proven to encourage youth crime in Nigeria.

Unemployment and Youth Crime in Nigeria

One of the most important factors that can induce youth into committing crime is unemployment. The problem of unemployment today has sharply eaten deep into Nigerian social structure and there is a serious concern about the possible consequences that may result from this ordeal. According to The National Population Commission (2013), more than half of Nigeria population is basically made up of youth and the commission describes youth as individuals between the age of 15 and 35 years. We can justly infer from

this information by NPC that as the Nigeria population increases and there is little employment opportunities, there is a high tendency for the country's youth to be unemployed which can definitely increase youth crime. According to NPC (2013) estimate, the unemployed youth has risen to 11.1 million in the year 2012. This is very worrisome as the number of youth unemployment continues to upswing. Since the country's independence in the 1960, the unemployment rate among youth continues to move-up through 1990s and 2000s creating impasse and obstruction to the social growth and development of the country. Today, many potential graduates are unemployed crafting the potentiality to engage in criminal activities. Crimes like Yahoo-Yahoo (internal fraud), theft and prostitution among ladies is basically because of unemployment in the country. Gold (2003) believes that the departure from agricultural sector continues to haunt Nigeria today because the sector could have easily provided employment opportunities for job seekers in the country. Also, the absence of vocational training and poor entrepreneurship activities in the academic curricula for the youths contribute to unemployment problem.

In recent times, Ilorin city has encountered several forms of urban crime and unrest perpetuated by the youth in the metropolis. These crimes have taken the form of murder, shooting, robbery, cultism, harassment among others. Youth crime in Ilorin is largely due to urban problems like economic frustration, urban poverty and segregation resulting from chronic unemployment among young ones, social ethnic and political inequality, political conflicts and failure to punish perpetrators of crimes by the government. Recently, the phenomenon of secret cultism in higher institutions in Ilorin metropolis raised a very strong anxiety. Cases of frequent cult clashes have been reported. For instance, the Kwara state command in 2005 confirmed the death of a Buccaneer "Kunle Olomo" alias "K Roy" who was severely murdered at the motion ground of Kwara state polytechnic during a shootout between his group and the rival cult group. Also, on Sunday 12 October, 2013, two alleged secret cult group engaged in a bloody clash which actually took lives of three persons along Sango area where 36 people were detained by the operatives of the Kwara state command in connection with the clash. Apart from these instances, many cult and other crime activities have been recorded over the years.

Family Instability and Youth Crime

Family institution can be considered as a primary agent of socialization whose purpose is to impact discipline, norms, values and good characters on

the young ones. Parents are the first custodians and they are charged with very essential roles of ensuring that their children accept and conform to the established rules and societal norms and also be of good behaviour at any time. It should be expressed that nobody is born a criminal and it is because of ill-socialization and failure to impose proper indoctrination that elicit criminal behaviour among youths in Nigeria. Although various socioeconomic factors like unemployment, level of education, urbanization and complexity of urban life, peer influence among other have been asserted to contribute to criminal behaviours among youth, we cannot underestimate the influence of family instability in determining youth crime. Many studies and articles are available on family instability as determinant of criminal behaviour among youth. Studies of violence indicate that criminal acts are often learnt from family members. Numerous studies have shown that parents that usually abuse or harass their children are exposing them to crimes when they grow-up (Alabi, 2014). Family structure can create barrier for proper moral and social development in children. For instance, many findings show that children whose parents are divorced are likely to engage in criminal activities than children who parents are together and living happily well. In the view of Omisakin (1998), there is an abnormal declination of family authority as urbanization is greatly expanding which makes many parents unable to check the activities of their children.

Theoretical Framework

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) devised Anomie theory to express how industrialization has encouraged complexity and uncertainty in the social organization and system. He advanced this study in his book "The Division of Labour in Society" published in 1893. He argued that division of labour and extensive expansion of industrial-oriented society pose threats to social conformity and solidarity. Durkheim uses the word Anomie to explain the condition of lack of proper regulation and immorality in the contemporary society. He argues that the essential rules of human society dictating how individuals in the society should behave have been fragment owing to the harsh wave of urbanization. In this way, the condition of no norms and values will usually lead to deviant behaviour. In a simplest form, Durkheim's anomie implies breakdown or failure of social norms which affects how society is normally governed by such norms. Without active and effective social norms to control activities of individuals in the society, social problems like frustration, depression, criminal behaviour and anxiety are likely to occur. In the view of Dahrendorf (1976), social problems like poverty, unemployment and breakdown in the family structure have their roles in

criminal tendencies of young ones. Unemployed individuals who earnestly need financial backup can easily engage in criminal behaviour in order to satisfy their financial needs. This is largely applicable to Nigeria because many Nigerian youths are unemployed and also ravaging in poverty. The Nigerian government is not doing enough to alleviate youth sufferings and because of that, many youths have evidently engaged in all sorts of crimes. In applying anomie theory to the study, it can be stated that Nigerian social structure is now very complicated and complex which gives room for all sort of social problems like poverty, unemployment, overpopulation, congestion, theft and many more. Youth crimes have their causes and many of these causes are attributable to lapses in social organization brought about by rapid expansion of society industrially.

Methodology

The research study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis, the Kwara state capital. The city has three local government areas namely, Ilorin West, South and East. Ilorin West has its headquarters located in the town of Wara Osin Area. The LGA covers an area of about 105km² and as at 2006; it has the population of 364,657. Ilorin South Local Government covers 174km² of land and has its headquarters situated in the town of Fufu. Ilorin East covers 486km² and the Local Government's population is 204,310 as at 2006. The population of the three Local Governments comprises mainly of Yorubas and few other tribes. The method of research espoused for this study is the survey method of research. Simple random sampling method was employed to select forty (40) respondents from each of the three Local Government Areas of the metropolis making one hundred and twenty (120) respondents in total. The instrument of research adopted is questionnaire which was duly tested and confirmed for reliability.

Result

Table 1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of the respondents

| Variables | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 97 | 79.5 |
| Female | 23 | 19.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |
| Age | | |
| 15-20 | 15 | 12.5 |
| 21-25 | 45 | 37.5 |
| 26-30 | 36 | 30.0 |
| 31-35 | 12 | 10.0 |
| 36 and above | 12 | 10.0 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Married | 5 | 3.5 |
| Single | 113 | 94.2 |
| Divorce | 2 | 1.7 |
| Widow | - | - |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |
| Academic Qualification | | |
| NCE/OND | 50 | 41.6 |
| HND/B.Sc. and above | 39 | 32.5 |
| Secondary School Certificate and below | 31 | 25.9 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |
| Religion | | |
| Christianity | 49 | 40.8 |
| Islam | 71 | 59.1 |
| Traditional | - | - |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Source: field survey, 2020

Test of Hypothesis

H1: Socioeconomic factors cannot lead to youth crime in Ilorin

Table 2: Correlation of socioeconomic factors and youth crime

| | Unemployment can lead to criminal behaviour | Family instability can lead to criminal behaviour |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment can lead to criminal behaviour | 1 | .412 |
| Pearson Correlation | | .000 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | |
| N | 120 | 120 |
| Family instability can lead to criminal behaviour | .412 | 1 |
| Pearson Correlation | | .000 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | |
| N | 120 | 120 |

Table 1 represents demographic features of the respondents. Sex distribution shows that 97 (79.5%) of the respondents are male, while the remaining 23 (19.5%) are female respondents. 15 (12.5%) of the respondents in the age distribution are within age range 15-20 years, 45 (37.5%) of the respondents are within age range 21-25 years, 36 (30%) of the respondents are within age range 26-30 years, 12 (10.0%) of the respondents are within the age of 31-35 while the remaining 12 (10.0%) of the respondents are within age range 36 and above. Marital distribution reveals that 5 (3.5%) of the respondents are married, 113 (94.2%) of the respondents are still single, 2 (1.7%) of the respondents are divorced and none of the respondents is a widow. It can be clearly stated that majority of the respondents are single (94.2%) due to the fact that the research work focuses on young in Ilorin metropolis who are predispose to criminal behaviour. Further, academic qualification of the respondents indicates that 50 (41.6%) of the respondents have completed their NCE/OND programmes, 39 (32.5%) of the respondents have already obtained HND/B.Sc. certificates and 31 (25.9%) of the respondents have only obtained secondary school leaving certificates and below. Religion distribution of the respondent shows that 49 (40.8%) of the respondents are Christians, 71 (59.1%) of the respondents are Muslims.

Evaluating from the correlation analysis result presented in the table 2 above, it can be confidently deduced that there is a considerable amount of relationship between socioeconomic factors and youth crime in Ilorin metropolis. The value of 0.412 connotes that there is a significant relationship between the observed variables. In this wise, the null hypothesis which says socioeconomic factors cannot lead to youth crime in Ilorin metropolis will be rejected. 41% is the correlation coefficient which is a precise indication that relationship exists between the variables but not up

to 50%. From the result, the problem of family instability continues to overshadow proper upbringing and fortification of youth against criminal activities. Most of the respondents agreed to the impression that individual that was brought up in a family where peace and goodwill is not well pronounced will always find it difficult to abide with societal standards. Also, most of the respondents believe that the unrelenting menace of unemployment contributes chiefly to tendency of youth in Ilorin metropolis to engage in youth crime.

Conclusion

This study reveals that there is a relationship between youth crime and socio-economic correlates of the youth in Ilorin metropolis. Unemployment and family instability are socioeconomic factors considered for this study. It can be established that high rate of unemployment in the country has resulted to many youth involving in criminal activities which is antithetical to meaning social and moral development in Nigeria in general and Ilorin metropolis in particular. Also, Nigerian society has become more complex as a result of modernization which has decreased the socialization influence of family and stability of the institution. Hence, it can be established that instability of family institution has resulted to high pace of criminal behaviour among youth in Ilorin metropolis. The result of the findings revealed that criminal activities are very common among people between the age range of 21 and 25 (37%) and 26-30 years (30%) respectively. Thus, more attention should be paid to the needs of young ones especially moral and financial needs.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, a number of recommendations can be made on how to curb youth crime in the society;

1. Alleviating unemployment and poverty through social empowerment programmes and initiatives should be the utmost priority of the government and other concerned bodies. Since it can be deciphered from the study that the problem of unemployment constitutes largely to the decision to engage in criminal activities, addressing such problem will go a long way in shielding the youth from crimes.
2. Family institution should be taken serious because this institution is very important in providing moral and ethical standards which can help in preventing criminal behaviours among youth.

3. The criminal justice system such as police, court and remand homes should be more active and effective in executing their duties. Also, they should be supplied with viable and sufficient equipment and facilities that will enable them to make sense of their responsibilities.

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