

EMERGING AND CONTINUING TRENDS OF DEVIANCE SUBCULTURE AND IDENTITIES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS*.

Philip Nnameziri Ndubueze
(Ph.D. Criminology and Criminal Justice Student)
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Email: philipndubueze@yahoo.com

Abstract

Deviance is a continuing problem in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. The deviant subculture has undergone some metamorphoses in the past one decade. The growth of cyber technologies has led to the emergence of a new deviant sub-culture on Nigerian campuses. Cultism and drug addiction that characterized the 1980's and 1990's seems to have been overtaken by cyber deviance and academic corruption/fraud. Although, undergraduate deviance has been an age long problem, it is critically under researched in Nigeria. Most sociological and criminological researches on deviance have tended to focus largely on deviance in the larger society, thereby neglecting the perennial problem of deviance in institutions of higher learning. This paper attempts to fill that gap by identifying some emerging and continuing patterns of deviance in Nigerian tertiary institutions and strategies for managing them.

Key Words: campus, deviance, institutions of higher learning, Nigeria, society, subculture.

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning are reputed for their crucial role for breeding geniuses and making path breaking discoveries in science, arts and other spheres of learning. They are known for upholding the highest standards of excellence and morality. Today, these cherished values are eroded and compromised as deviant sub-culture and identities pervade these institutions. The deviance problem has taken an epidemic proportion and is escalating in many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The growing emphasis on paper qualification by the Nigerian society has led to the increasing demand for higher education certificates, which is perceived as a veritable tool for status mobility. The desperation of the new generation of students to acquire certificate rather than knowledge and the sympathy of some corrupt elements in the academia have culminated in the compromising of standards. Graves (2008:1) argues that "today's college students are growing up in a society where ethical values are declining and scandals involving dishonesty in government, business, and other organizations are widespread". Clearly, the attitude of mind of the deviant undergraduate reflects the level of decay in the moral structure of his/her society.

Furthermore, prostitution is another fall out of the declining moral values of society. This deviant habit is now common in many campuses, albeit covert. Unlike in the larger society where the profession of prostitution is a full-time affair for career prostitutes, on campuses it is usually done on a part time basis. This high risk behaviour has some deep-seated implications for the undergraduate who is rightly conceived as would-be wife and mother. While avocational prostitution is considered a pastime for some female undergraduates, others drift into it in the wake of severe economic pressure for sheer financial gains. Similarly, the growth of digital technology has led to the

emergence of new patterns of deviance hitherto unknown in Nigeria. Cyber deviance is now widespread on Nigerian campuses as many undergraduates now access the internet with relative ease. Gambling and internet addiction are some of the fall outs of cyber technology.

The drift into deviance by a fraction of a generation that is being groomed to take over from her precursor constitutes a serious challenge for society. While, undergraduate deviance makes an interesting subject of social inquiry, there is a dearth of researches on this subject in Nigeria. Much of what is seen in the literature are studies from Europe and America. For decades institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have been confronted with the problem of deviance. However, the patterns of deviance have varied over time. This paper identifies some new forms of deviance that have emerged and some old forms of deviance that have become pervasive in Nigerian institutions of higher learning in the past one decade or so.

Defining Deviance

Defining deviance is problematic as the concept of deviance is relative, cultural, geographical and time specific. Deviance is “a shifting, ambiguous, and volatile concept. Precisely, who or what is deviant depends upon a firm understanding of the norms and labelling process in particular social concepts” (Marshall, 1998:156). According to Schafer (2003: 188). “Deviance involves the violation of group norms, which may or may not be formalized into law. It is a comprehensive concept that includes not only criminal behaviours but also many actions not subject to prosecution”. Becker (1963) in defining deviance contends that deviance is a function of societal definition. He argues that social groups create deviance by making rules that when they are violated constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of the rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’. The deviant is one whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label”. It violates societal or group standards and expectations (Wickman, 1991).

There is a consensus among scholars that the concept of deviance is society or group-specific and cannot be viewed from strait jacket glasses (see: Becker, 1963, Marshall, 1998 Schafer, 2003, Wickman, 1991). Every social group is governed by some kind of law, albeit formal, semi-formal, informal, or written/unwritten. Members by virtue of their membership are expected to abide by such laws. Where any member by design or default flouts such a law, he or she is regarded by the group as a deviant. The deviant is also punished. This punishment may be a mere disapproving frown or something stiff.

Emerging and Continuing Trends of Campus Deviance in Nigerian

Campus deviance could be overt or covert. Overt campus deviance includes those deviant activities that take place under the full glare of the campus community. Covert campus deviance refers to the deviant activities that take place behind the scene and not in the full glare of the campus public. Any attempt to sort the various forms of campus deviance and put them in separate compartment may prove futile. This is because an overt form of deviance for example, can swing to a covert form. Thus, a clear cut distinction may be difficult to arrive at. Deviant subculture and identities take the following patterns on Nigerian campuses. While the list of deviant behaviours on

Nigerian campuses may not be exhaustive, this paper attempts to isolate the a few emerging and continuing patterns.

Academic Corruption

Sorting is one form of academic corruption that is common today in Nigeria. Sorting refers to a situation where a student gives a thing or service of value to a member of staff with a view to getting an unmerited favour. According to Assobie (2005:24) "Sorting takes many forms. The commonest and most effective is often material incentive or sexual gratification in return for high grades. The teacher who succumb to such offer in most cases use the instrument of continuous assessment to award arbitrary grades...". Similarly, Rumyantseva (2005) identified "Student-faculty exchange" (i.e. student - lecturer exchange) and "student- administrator exchange" as forms of academic corruption. He pointed out that Student-faculty exchange occurs when:

- i. A student offers money for examination grade that the lecturer accepts and gives good grade to the student, even though he/she does not know the course;
- ii. A lecturer sells a student a term paper; and
- iii. A lecturer gives low grade to a student who knows the course and recommends private tutoring. He/she passes the student later not minding how much the student has learnt.
- iv. Student-administrator exchange occurs when:
- v. An administrator "helps" a slow learner to get good grades in all courses by ordering concerned lecturers to grade the student favourably. The administrator is paid a "service fee" by the student; and
- vi. Administrator charges student's family a fee for guaranteed admission to the institution.

Academic corruption has always been viewed from the lecturer-student angle. Thus, the non-academic staff –student dimension has often been neglected. However, some non-academic staff also engage in corrupt practices on campus. For example, a secretary may without authorization disclose some classified (sensitive and secret) academic information to a student for a fee. Also, academic corruption can be driven by non-pecuniary motives like: tribal, religious , nepotic, ethnic and other primordial sentiments. Sorting is one form of academic corruption that is becoming widespread. Weak student rather than study hard to pass their examinations, rely on their 'bottom power' or money to get good grades. Such students end up graduating shallow and not properly grounded in their disciplines. Sorting is a strong deviation from the norms and values of the academia, the principles of scholarship and the objectives of learning. It is counter-productive and has a way of boomeranging on the students, parents, lecturers, administrators, and the larger society.

Academic Fraud

The academia which is supposed to be the centre of excellence has been infiltrated by people who want to circumvent standards and procedures in order to achieve their selfish and particularistic interests. Many overt and covert fraudulent activities that run contrary to the values the academia seek to promote occur on many campuses. Plagiarism, fictitious citation/referencing, ghost researching and ghost attendance are common forms of academic frauds in our institutions of higher learning. Park (2003:1) decries the endemic nature of academic fraud when he observes that "There is mounting evidence that students cheating in general and plagiarism in particular, are

becoming more widespread". A research conducted by Don McCabe in collaboration with Duke University found that 70% of the 50,000 undergraduate students surveyed admit to cheating while 44% of the 10,000 lecturers surveyed acknowledged that students cheat in their courses but they did not report them to the university authorities (McCabe, cited in Graves, 2008).

The various types of academic fraud that are prevalent in Nigerian institutions of higher learning as identified by Ndubueze (2010) are presented in the table below:

Table 1: A Typology of Academic Fraud

Activity	Description	Forms
a.) Plagiarism	This occurs when a student uses an author's idea or work usually in an assignment, term paper, test, exam or final year project without acknowledging, crediting or referencing the source (s).	Plagiarism can take the following forms: independent, assisted, and fraternal or peer. Independent plagiarism occurs when a student is solely involved in plagiarising someone else's work. Assisted plagiarism refers to a situation where another student provides the plagiarised work used by a student. Fraternal plagiarism is when a group of students plagiarise a work. This third category is common with group assignments and projects. Peer plagiarism occurs when a student copies another student's work and presents it as his /her own.
b.) Fictitious Citation/ Referencing	This occurs when a student cites or references a source that does not exist in his/her assignment, term paper, test or exam.	This can take two forms: Purposive Error and Inadvertent Error. Purposive error occurs when the student knowingly cites a fictitious reference to mislead, deceive or impress the lecturer. *Inadvertent error occurs when the student unknowingly cites fictitious references. This may be due to loss of memory or wrong entry in the draft of the work, misspelling of author's name or citing the wrong year of publication.
c.) Ghost Researching	This is when a student hires another student, a graduated student or lecturer to write his or her assignment, term paper or final year project for him or her. This is usually done for a fee.	Ghost researching could be internal or external. Internal ghost researching occurs when both the student and the mercenary belong to the same academic community. External ghost researching is when the mercenary is either from another school or has graduated. Some departments have ways of checkmating ghost researching. One method devised by most academic departments to checkmate ghost researching is seminar and final year project defence by students.
d.) Ghost Attendance	This is when a student contracts another student usually his/her classmate to sign the class attendance register, write a test or an examination for him or her. This may be done for a fee or for friendship sake.	There are two types of ghost attendance. Class ghost attendance and test/exam ghost attendance. In class ghost attendance, the contracted student signs the class attendance sheet for a student who is absent in class. In test/exam class attendance, the contracted student who might be the student's classmate or a 'senior' student impersonates the absentee student. This is usually done in first year classes or general courses where the classes are usually large. This last category when committed during examinations, is regarded as exam malpractice and is severely punished. In some institutions, students are required to show the invigilator(s) their photo identity card before being admitted into the exam hall. This measure is used to check ghost attendance (impersonation) in examinations.

Technically, inadvertent error may not be considered fraud as it is not usually done on

purpose. The concerned student is often not aware of the error.

Avocational Prostitution

Martin and Law (2006:421) defines prostitution as “The exchange of money for sex...it involves at least two parties: the prostitute, who accepts money in exchange for engaging in sexual activity (or in virtue of whose sexual activity money is paid to a third party profiteer), and the prostitute user who pays money in order to engage in sexual activity with the prostitute”. Marshall (1998) observes that prostitution usually involve women to men scenario, but pointed out that male prostitution particularly to male client, is not uncommon. Avocational prostitution is the engagement of a person in a part-time prostitution career. Avocational prostitutes differ from career or professional prostitutes whose main business is prostitution. Criminologists regard prostitution as a victimless crime. This is because the client is usually the victim. This also explains why it is hardly reported to the police. Some wealthy men flock around the campus at night to ‘shop’ for girls that they will hang out with. Some female students are vulnerable and enjoy the patronage of these ‘sugar daddies’ that lavish their stupendous wealth on them in exchange for sex. This deviant activity is common at weekends, as some of these students are picked by their ‘clients’ and dropped off the next morning. Avocational prostitution is more prevalent on campuses located within towns. Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are some of the risk usually associated with prostitution.

Cyber Deviance

Cyber deviance also known as on-line deviance refers to the use of the internet as a tool for perpetrating deviant activities. These deviant acts may in actual fact include the traditional deviant acts or other acts that are on-line specific. Cyber deviant activities common on campus include, cyber stalking, cyber harassment, internet gambling, pornography, spam email, credit/debit card fraud, hacking, cracking and so on. The Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities has reportedly identified cyber crime among undergraduates of Nigerian universities as constituting a new nuisance that has overtaken examination malpractices and cultism (see *The Punch*, 2010: 8). Modern cyber technologies have made it possible for computers from which deviant activities are carried out to be traced. Thus, the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Cyber Café Operators collaborate with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to track down and prosecute cyber crime suspects.

Gambling Addiction

Gambling addiction occurs when a person feel compelled to always gamble. This is another deviant act that is committed on campuses. According to Fong and Rosental (2008:2) “A problem gambler is a person who spends time and money gambling in such a way that it is harmful to him or her. A severe problem gambler is known as compulsive or pathological gambler”. They identified the main symptom of the problem gambler as loss of control over gambling and described this loss of control as: The escalation of gambling, as a result of the need to take greater risks to maintain a certain level of excitement or try to win back money. The urge to win more when they are ahead. Sometimes, luck runs out and they keep gambling until they lose all their money. They will say they won’t gamble again but find themselves doing that again, however hard they try. With the growth of cyber technology in Nigeria, gambling can

be done on the internet. Gambling addiction can ruin a student's academics and career later in life.

Internet Addiction (Compulsive Browsing)

An internet addict or compulsive browser is a person who always has a strong compulsion to surf the internet, even when it is not necessary. He/she spends hours sitting on the net just to catch some fun and feel good. Young (2009), who coined the term "Internet Addiction Disorder" (see Brian & Wiemer-Hastings, 2005) describes internet addiction as "A new and often unrecognized clinical disorder that can cause relational, occupational, and social problems. Pathological gambling is compared to problematic internet use because of overlapping diagnostic criteria. As computers are used with great frequency, detection and diagnosis of internet addiction is often difficult. Symptoms of a possible problem may be masked by legitimate use of the internet" (Young, 2009:1). Brian and Wiemer-Hastings (2005:1) had earlier expressed a similar view: "Research on internet addiction has shown that users can become addicted to it. Addiction to the internet shows some of the negative aspects of substance addiction and has been shown to lead to consequences such as failing school, family and relationship problem". Some undergraduates spend time on the net chatting, when they should be in class attending lectures or in the library studying. This attitude is un-healthy as it impacts negatively on the student's academic performance.

Deviance Subculture and Identities: Intervention Strategies

Deviance by its nature has the tendency to escalate if not checked. Campus authorities over decades have attempted to contain the spread of deviance sub-culture and identities on their campuses. While some of their strategies have been proactive, many have been reactive. However, the early identification of deviance and understanding of its dynamics is a *sine qua non* for effective interventions. If some potential red flags are identified and nipped in the bud some campus deviant behaviours will be effectively curtailed. Interventions can come from the following fronts:

The Penal Approach

Some deviant activities are proscribed by the campus authorities and are clearly spelt out in the student handbook. A high conformity rate can be achieved if authorities set up an effective mechanism for detecting and punishing deviations. The instrument of punishment should be applied swiftly, irrespective of tribe, religion, ideology, creed, status, or any other sentiments. Punishment should also follow due process and no innocent student should by default or design be punished. However, before applying punishment, the institution owe it a responsibility to properly orientate its student on the expected code of behaviour. The Students' Affairs Department should organize an orientation programme for freshers and periodic re-orientation seminars for old students.

The Social Approach

Some undergraduate drift into deviance as a pastime. Campus authorities should provide adequate recreational and sporting facilities for students. These facilities should be accessible to all student and they should be encourages to use them. Games/sporting competitions should be organized from time to time and prizes awarded. These activities that used to be popular on campuses seem to be fading out. It seems to be reserved for the sports men and women and those in the Physical and

Health Education Department.

The Religious Approach

Campus authorities should create an atmosphere that is conducive for every student to practice his/her religion. All known religions will encourage their faithfuls to respect constituted authorities. When people are truly religious, the tendency to drift into deviance and criminality will be drastically reduced. Deviance more often than not contravenes the tenets taught by many religious organizations. A deviant undergraduate will not be areligious.

The Academic Approach

Students should be given many assignments, term papers, seminar papers to keep them busy and fully engaged. This has a way of dissuading them from certain deviant activities. Under the pressure from this academic load most undergraduates will not have time to spare for deviant activities. At least those who pursue deviance as a pastime. This approach will build some kind of tension around the world of the undergraduate, a tension to meet assignments and term paper submission deadlines.

Conclusion

Deviance sub-culture and identities have become an issue of serious concern in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. However, not much attention has been devoted to this subject by sociologists and criminologists and in Nigeria. This paper identified some emerging and continuing patterns of deviance in Nigerian campuses. Academic corruption, academic fraud, avocational prostitution, gambling addiction and compulsive browsing which erode the culture of excellence and high moral standard for which higher institutions are reputed were identified. Strategic and pro-active intervention is required to save the up-coming generation and institutions from moral catastrophe. Some of these intervention strategies were discussed in this paper.

References

- Assobie, H.A. (2005). *The University as a Moral Force: Exploring the Sovereignty of Truth*. A Paper Delivered on October 7, at the 2005 Founders Day Lecture at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Nsukka: Great AP Press Publishers.
- Becker, H.S. (1963). *Outsiders*. New York. Free Press.
- Brian D. Ng & Wiemer-Hastings,P (2005). *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*. April 28(2): 110-113. doi:10.1089/cpb.2005.8.110.
- Fong, T.W & Rosental, R.J. (2008). *Freedom from Problem Gambling*. California: UGLA Gambling Studies Programme and California Office of Problem and Pathological Gambling Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, State of California.
- Graves, S. M (2008).Students Cheating Habits: A Predictor of Workplace Deviance. *Journal of Diversity Management*, 3 (1), 15-22.
- Marshall, G. (1998). *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford University

Press.

Martin, E. A. & Law, J. (2006). *Oxford Dictionary of Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ndubueze, P.N. (2010). *The Undergraduates' Companion*. Lagos: Nice Press.

Park (2003). In other (People's) Words: Plagiarism by University Students – Literature and Lessons, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28 (5), 471 – 488.

Rumyantseva, N. L. (2005). Taxonomy of Corruption in Higher Education. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 80 (1), 81 – 92.

The Punch (2010, April 10) VCs to Tackle Cyber Crime among Students. 17, (20, 578), 8.

Wickman, P. M. (1991). Deviance. Pp. 85-87 in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology*, 4th ed., by Dushkin Publishing Group, Guilford, CT: Dushkin.

Young, K. (2009). Internet Addiction: Diagnosis and Treatment Consideration. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*. December, 2009, 39 (4) 241 – 246. Doi.10.1007/s10879-009-9120-X.