

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE

Onwo, Amaka Ogochukwu

**Department of Sociology/Anthropology,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.**

E-mail: amakaogochukwu2@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between parent's socio-economic status and juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Delinquency has been variously portrayed as a condition of drift, maladjustment, pathology, disturbance, moral depravity and unruly behaviour and socio-economic factors play prominent roles in determining behaviours of children in the society. Functionalism was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study adopted concurrent mixed method research design. Multi-stage sampling procedure which incorporated cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw a sample of 200 respondents from the total population. Questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data while In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide was used to elicit qualitative data from interviewees. Quantitative data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Manual content analysis anchored on the thematic method was used in the analysis of qualitative data. The findings revealed that parent's level of income, level of occupation and level of education have strong nexus with children's involvement in delinquent acts. The study therefore recommends that parents should always monitor the activities of their children both at home and in schools through their teachers. Again, parents should endeavour not to overlook their children's anti-social behaviours, such behaviours should be corrected immediately.

Key Words: *Socio-economic status, children, delinquency, parents, juvenile*

Introduction

Juvenile delinquents are minors usually defined as being between the ages of 10 and 17 years who have committed some acts that violate the law of conduct. These acts are not called crimes as they would for adults instead they are called trial. The juvenile has an adjudication after which the juvenile receives a disposition and a sentence (Agbowuro, Umeh & Solomon, 2016). Millions of people worldwide even in some countries once considered safe seem to have a haunting fear of crime and violence in recent times. The once cherished sense of personal safety appears antiquated and national security is being supplanted by deep anxiety and global terrorism. With regards to a United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Report in 2008 about the state of children and crime, it noted that the increasing numbers of young Britons are dying at gunpoint and perpetrators of gun crime are juveniles. Findings have shown that the

parents' socio-economic status in different countries is linked to the increase or high rate of juvenile delinquency in the country.

The continuing patterns of delinquency include a long list of status offences. Juvenile crime is a perennial public concern, it includes theft, smoking, consuming alcohol, bullying in school, running away from home and school (Agbowuro et al, 2016). These include the parent's level of income, level of education of parents and the type of occupation the parents engage in. Ulrich (2008) observed that factors which may lead to an increasing rate in juvenile delinquency include breakdown in families, percentage of families in poverty due to the parents' poor socio-economic status.

In Awka South Local Government Area, it has been observed that high rate of juvenile delinquency may be attributed to the parent's socio-economic status due to the differences in their social status as a result of which the children engage in delinquent acts such as running away from home, truancy, being beyond parental control, drug abuse, insubordination to parents and elders, pick pocketing, forming bad gangs, associating with disreputable persons like criminals and prostitutes. In addition, the issues of juvenile delinquency have focused on children from disadvantaged families ignoring the fact that children from affluent homes also engage in delinquent acts. More families consist of one-parent households or two working parents.

Consequently, children are likely to have less supervision at home than was common in the traditional family structure. This lack of parental supervision due to the parents' type of occupation is thought to be an influence on juvenile rate. The seeming unavailability of our families to curb the menace of delinquency is not unconnected with the unprecedented global inflation that has had alarming influence on families resulting in breakdown of social bonds in the family (Ekpo & Ajake, 2013). Juveniles' parents of the lower socio-economic status do not have enough income to sustain or provide for their children. Therefore children's involvement in anti-social acts or delinquent behaviours is a function of their parents' socio-economic status.

Finally, social status or class and life style have encouraged parents to lose control and interest in the well-being of their children. The need to imbibe culture and moral values from the society through the family are relegated to the background. The socio-economic status of parents such as level of income, level of education and type of occupation brings about negative consequences that are felt to be part of the celebrated increase in juvenile delinquency in Nigeria and Awka South Local Government Area in particular especially among the youth.

Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency is a social problem which is affected by large social events and transformations such as economic crisis, wars and political conflicts. With regard to social patterns of rapidly changing societies, one of the most threatening and significant topics that are frequently discussed is delinquency. Juvenile delinquency has elicited many images of the child. The definition of juvenile delinquency as well as concern about its manifestation and control are influenced by a configuration of historical, political, social and economic condition. There is also confusion about how to deal with problems of adjustment to the various pressures encountered by children and young persons.

However, there has been an increase in the problems of juvenile delinquency and deviance among children. A good number of parents, both fathers and mothers are working class parents and the care of their young children are left in the hands of nannies or house helps. Some of the children are sent to school at a very tender age as young as two when the child ought to be breast fed. Again, parents have other engagements apart from their work place which occupy their time and this also necessitates their inability to spend more time with their children. A majority of mothers work outside the home, parents may have meetings to attend in the evenings and social engagements in the weekends. Parents of young people are often blamed for the delinquent behaviour of their children.

Moreover, media and information technology have also contributed to the celebrated increase in juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State. The audio-visual impact of mass media as an agent of socialization has resulted to the high rate of recorded juvenile delinquency, this is often seen in families with high social status and income. Children are re-socialized by the mass media as well as peer group with whom the child spends most of his time with. The peer group is a very powerful factor that has led to the increase in the rate of juvenile delinquency. This is because the child always spends time with his friends or peer group either at school or around the neighbourhood from which he learns some delinquent acts like pick pocketing, drinking of alcohol, insubordination to parents and elders, being beyond parental control, prostitution and so on as a result of poor parental supervision or lack of parental control.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include:

1. To ascertain how parents' level of income can influence juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.
2. To examine the various ways parents' level of education can influence involvement of children in juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

3. To find out how parents' level of occupation can influence juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Literature Review

Juvenile delinquency refers to violation of criminal codes regulating the behaviour of young persons in the society. The concept of juveniles is sometimes used interchangeably with other concepts like a child, an adolescent and a youth (Adegoke, 2015). Delinquency includes behaviour that would be considered criminal if committed by adults such as setting of fire or stealing. It also includes acts that are not necessarily criminal in adults, such as truancy and running away from home. Today, the legal attitude toward the juvenile lawbreaker is that a child too young to distinguish properly between right and wrong or fully to appreciate the nature of his acts ought not to be criminally responsible for what he does or fails to do. Juvenile delinquents account for a great number of the illegal acts committed in the society especially those that involve taking another's belonging. Stealing among the juveniles in the society has become a pressing issue which has affected the well being of the society.

Yoerger (2003) revealed that what the child learns is acquired in interaction with parents and siblings at home. According to Bogenschneider (2009), children of parents with low socio-economic status often experience trouble with law, many were uninvolved in school and established low verbal ability, poor academic records and serious reading problems. The children of parents with poor socio-economic status or background face different challenges in life. The lower the number of years of schooling a child completes, the more likely it is that juvenile delinquency occurs. Thus children with less education and therefore fewer occupational opportunities often involve in delinquent acts. Children who are delinquents were subjected to abuse and neglect and sustained their first arrest at younger ages (Widom & Maxfield, 2011).

In addition, family income or poor parental socio-economic status is a major factor that influences parental support and involvement in their children's education or in factors related to school achievements. Children who regard their parents as warm, firm and involved in their education earn better grades than their class mates with uninvolved or uneducated parents (Deslandes & Daniel, 2007). Economic pressure often limits or prevents parents' support or involvement in the education of their children. Children who have a combination of risk factors such as poverty, uneducated and unemployed parents are at greater risk of poor academic performance and other negative child development outcomes than children from high family background, educated and employed parents. Children who are exposed early to violence and poverty or conflict often engage in violent and aggressive acts which most at times take their lives.

Again, in a study conducted by Ebuehi (2011) on sixty students of the Approved Shelter Girls' School, Idi-Araba, Lagos State in Nigeria, results of the study showed that the respondents were within the ages of 10 and 18 years, 70% had attained primary school education. Of the 53% that dropped out of school, 45.6% did so because of the family's financial problems due to the parent's low level of income. Of all the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents explored, only their educational level was found to be significantly associated with delinquent acts. Parent's educational level, maternal alcohol consumption and kind of treatment received from parents were significantly associated with delinquency. The study therefore concluded that poor parental supervision, parents' socio-economic status and peer pressure played key roles in delinquency among the juveniles. The study also suggested that an effective prevention and control of juvenile delinquency will require collective efforts involving all stakeholders (family, government, and non-governmental organizations) in child development.

Theoretical Thrust

The proponents of functionalism include Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. Functionalism as a theory studies the society as a system with different parts which work together to form a whole. These parts work inter-relationally via its contribution to the maintenance of the whole. Functionalists take as their starting point the very notion that society itself is a system. Therefore, functionalists are interested in the parts of the society, particularly the major institutions of the society such as the family, religion, economy, politics or state and education. Functionalists argued that the family, educational institution, economic and political institutions are the main parts of the society which can be seen as a structure made up of inter-connected or interrelated roles. They believed that a change in any single element would produce general disturbance in the whole society. In the same vein, the outcome of the changes in family pattern leads to the increase in the rate of juvenile delinquency.

Therefore, when parents in families fail to perform their functions as a result of their high socio-economic status or nature of their occupation, the result would be that their children will become delinquents. This could be as a result of lack of supervision by the parents who are always at their workplaces. For instance, with the recent recession in Nigerian economy, many women who used to play roles of full time housewives in homes have emerging new needs to augment the income of their husbands and to contribute to the family upkeep. Also, an increasing number of mothers with pre-school children enter the paid labour force and new arrangements are required to take care of the children while their parents are at work. Yet, facilities at licensed Day Care Center in Nigeria are painfully inadequate. Therefore, many thousands of these children especially those from low income homes are currently receiving inadequate attention and care and this may contribute significantly to the nation's juvenile delinquency profile tomorrow.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted concurrent mixed methods research design. The study area is Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State. According to National Population Commission census (2006), Awka South Local Government Area has a total population of 189,654 with a total number of 96,902 males and 92,752 females but Projected to be 250,000 in 2016. Multi stage sampling procedure which incorporates cluster sampling technique and balloting method of simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 200 from Awka and Amawbia for the study and six participants who were not part of the respondents administered questionnaire were selected for the in-depth interview. The study used both quantitative and qualitative instruments of data collection. The questionnaire however formed the quantitative instrument for the study while the IDI complemented the quantitative data. The data collected were processed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while qualitative data obtained from the In-depth Interview (IDI) were analyzed using the manual thematic content analysis.

Results/Findings

The socio-demographic data of the respondents are presented in table 1 below

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	101	51.3
Female	96	48.7
Total	197	100
Age		
15-24	36	18.3
25-34	35	17.8
35-44	52	26.4
45-54	26	13.1
55-64	27	13.7
65 and above	21	10.7
Total	197	100
Marital Status		
Single	64	32.4
Married	92	46.7
Widowed	21	10.7
Divorced	9	4.6
Separated	11	5.6
Total	197	100
Educational Qualification		
No. formal education	15	7.6
FSLC	36	18.3
WASSCE, NECO, GCE	66	33.5
	24	12.1

OND, NCE,	47	23.9
HND, B.Sc	9	4.6
M.Sc, Ph.D	197	100
Total		
Religion	191	97
Christian	2	1.0
Muslim		
African Traditional Religion	4	2.0
Atheist	0	0
Total	197	100
Occupation		
Farming	14	7.1
Trading	59	29.9
Civil Service	52	26.4
Self-Employed	47	12.8
Unemployed	9	4.6
Students	40	20.3
Politician	1	0.5
Others	8	4.1
Total	197	100
Income		
0-200,000	27	16.9
201,000-400,000	32	20
401,000-600,000	29	18.1
601,000-800,000	43	26.9
801,000 and above	29	18.1
Total	160	100.0

The table shows that males constituted 51.3% of the total respondents while 48.7% were females. A majority of the respondents fall within the age groups of 35-44 and 25-34. Another outstanding feature of the sample is that with regards to marital status, majority of the respondents (46.7%) were married while 32.4% of them were single. In terms of religious affiliation, the table shows that an over whelming majority of the respondents (97%) were Christians while 2.0% of the respondents practice African traditional religion. The result on the respondents' occupation revealed that majority of the respondents are into trading (29.9%) while 7.1% are farmers, civil servants 52(26.4%), students 40(20.3%) and 9(4.6%) of the respondents were unemployed. Finally, the income per annum of the respondents shows that a quite number of the respondents earn between 401,000-600,000, 29(18.1%) per annum. Furthermore, 32(20%) of the respondents earn between 201,000-400,000 per annum while 27(16.9%) of the respondents earn 0-200,000 per annum and 43(26%) of the respondents earn 601,000-800,000 per annum. The implication of this finding is that most parents in Awka South Local Government Area are either into trading

or in civil service which indicates the possibility of these parents leaving their children to be taken care of by another either at school or in the home.

Table 2: Respondents' views on parents' level of income and juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Children are exposed to money early in life	65	33%
Excess money is given to the children by their parents	53	26.9%
The parents lay great emphasis on money	44	22.3%
All of the above	33	16.8%
Others	2	1.0%
Total	197	100%

Table 2 above shows that 33% of the respondents were of the opinion that children are exposed to money early in life, 26.9% maintained that excess money is given to the children by their parents while 22.3% of the respondents said that the parents lay great emphasis on money. The implication of this finding is that children's early exposure to money influences their involvement in delinquent acts. This is to say that when a child is given unnecessary access to money early in life, there is every tendency that the child will indulge in illicit acts like pick pocketing, theft and so on in order to maintain such life style as he grows up. One of the IDI respondents from Awka noted that:

"Parents give excess money to their children and when stopped half way may lead to stealing on the child's part" (Female, 35 years, Banker, Awka)

Another IDI respondent from Awka added that:

"Children of parents with high level of income engage more in delinquent acts because of their quest for money". (Female, 56 years, Trader, Awka).

Table 3: Respondents' views on the category of children that engage more in juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Children whose parents had no formal education	28	14.2%
Children whose parents had only primary education	12	6.0%
Children whose parents had tertiary education	88	44.7%
Children whose parents are uneducated	47	23.9%
All of the above	22	11.2%
Total	197	100%

The table above shows that 14.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that children whose parents had no formal education engage more in juvenile delinquency, 6.0% maintained that children whose parents had only primary education engage more in delinquent acts, 44.7% posited that children whose parents had tertiary education engage more in delinquent acts.

One of the IDI respondents from Amawbia noted that:

"Highly educated parents pay little or no attention to their children's upbringing. Today, uneducated parents train their children more and well" (Male, 52 years, Driver, Amawbia).

Table 4: Respondent's views on parent's level of occupation and juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	130	66%
No	64	32.5%
Don't know	3	1.5%
Total	197	100%

Table 4 indicates that 66% were of the opinion that children's involvement in juvenile delinquency is associated with their parent's level of occupation. This finding shows that children's involvement in delinquent acts is related to the kind of occupation their parents are engaged in. The implication of this finding is that working class parents spend little or no time with their children. The children are either left under the care of nannies, house helps or teachers with little or no supervision.

One of the IDI respondents from Amawbia stated:

Bankers never have time for their children. They leave as early as 7:00am in the morning and leave their children with the house helps only to come back around 8:00pm. Just tell me why these kind of children will not become delinquents since they spend most of their time with the house help who know little or nothing about child upbringing. (Male, 32 years, Banker, Amawbia).

Another IDI respondent from Awka added thus:

A friend of mine who is a banker did not even know that her child was sick because of the nature of her job. She barely spends time with her children because she believes that her nanny is doing a good job. In the same vein, a child

can become a delinquent without the parent's knowledge
(Female, 35 years, Civil servant, Awka).

Discussion of Findings

It was generally observed that majority of the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between parent's socio-economic status and childrens' involvement in delinquent acts. This finding differs from the findings of Muola and Ngesa (2009) who argued that there is a weak relationship between juvenile delinquency and socio-economic status of parents but maintained that there is a relationship between family functions, social status and juvenile delinquency.

However, parents' level of income, level of occupation and level of education are perceived by respondents as significantly influencing children's involvement in juvenile delinquency in Awka South Local Government area in Anambra state. These findings are in line with the findings of Ebuehi (2011) where the parents' socio-economic status was posited to be one of the major determinants of the attitude of children towards delinquency. It was also observed that among the indicators of socio-economic status (income, education and occupation) that the income level of parents had the strongest influence on children.

It was also revealed that parent's involvement in occupational position which deprives them of proper supervision and upbringing of their children will necessitate their children's involvement in delinquent acts. These kind of parents neglect their children in a bid to meet up with their economic needs in the home, such parental neglect later permeates the child's entire schooling life and he easily falls prey to the myriads of competing socializing forces in the school and at home from the house help or nannies most of which are in negative direction.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parent's socio-economic status on juvenile delinquency. Parents socio-economic status is based on their level of income, level of education and level of occupation and these play a very vital role in shaping the behaviour of children in the society. The highly educated parents spend more time working in offices and establishments and have little or no time for their children. It is generally observed that parents who are not formally educated and with low level of occupation often spend time in instilling discipline in their children. The implication is that childrens' involvement in delinquent acts is determined mostly by financial position of their parents. Children who are exposed to money early are perceived to be more involved in juvenile delinquency. Lack of parental supervision, peer pressure and lack of attention by parents are still playing negative impact on the behaviour of children in our society.

When children are not well taken care of, the family is already showing them the way to delinquent behaviours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:-

1. Parents should realize that their children need their support because the affection they receive from their parents revolves round their cognitive domain, thus in their academic performances, attitudes, behaviours, and interests.
2. Parents should also monitor the activities of their children both in the home and in school through their teachers.
3. Parents are encouraged not to lose grip of their children's anti-social behaviours. Children should not be left alone to choose any behaviour they like because such may be inappropriate. Parents should not overlook their children's anti-social behaviours, such behaviours should be corrected immediately.
4. The success of socialization process is said to be the determinant of juvenile behaviour. This means that if the agents of socialization are used positively, juveniles will come up with positive behaviours that are relevant to the family and society. In other words, parents should show profound affection, provide profound care to their children which are fundamental to human beings.
5. Parents and children should try as much as possible to establish open communication with one another as this will avail the parents the opportunity to monitor and control the peer groups their children associate with. It will go a long way in discouraging them from moving with bad eggs.

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