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School Maladjustment and Family Disruption as Determinants of Youth Criminality: A Study of Male Inmates in a Nigerian Prison

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Abstract

Youth criminality has been a source of concern for criminologists and scholars of social problems. In Nigeria, empirical studies on youth criminality are largely focused on economic and socio-demographic characteristics of offenders. There is a dearth of research linking school maladjustment and family disruption to youth criminality, and this spurred us to embark on this study. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. Male inmates detained for the various offences of violent crime in Abakalike prisons constituted the target population. A Questionnaire was used in the data collection and descriptive statistical analysis was done. Using the prison records as a guide, we employed simple random sampling technique in the selection of 212 respondents. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between maladjusted behaviour and youth criminality. Also, chi-square values of 59.002 and $p > 0.001$ show a positive connection between family problems and youth offending behaviour. There is thus an urgent call for a proactive and sustainable youth empowerment; the teeming unemployed youth should be engaged in meaningful national reorientation and income-yielding activities to discourage them from contemplating crime.

Keywords: Family problems, Male Inmates, School maladjustment, Youth criminality, Nigeria.

Introduction

Who is a youth in Nigeria? The National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) in 2001 provided a laconic but generally acceptable definition of a youth in the Nigerian context: youths are people aged between 18 and 35, and they constitute about 40% of the Nigerian population (NYDP, 2001). This suggests that youths are people in the prime of life and thus possess the requisite skills and capabilities needed in the maintenance of social order and progress in society. The youth remains the vanguard of societal development and are deeply involved in law enforcement and social control because of their natural peculiarities (i.e. robustness and vitality) and receptiveness to crime and security trends. Little wonder

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therefore that the NYDP described youths as the foundation of a society, whose energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through the creative talents and labour power of the youth, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation finds motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose; and because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured (NYDP, 2001; Anasi, 2012).

However, Nigerian youths have betrayed the society and abused the responsibilities and social roles entrusted in their care. They no longer possess the aforementioned attributes, but rather unwisely used them to commit various kinds of crime. In Nigeria, youth crime or youth criminality encompasses such a variety of antisocial conducts as burglary, truancy, cultism, kidnapping, political thuggery, rape and sexual assaults, assassination, vandalism, substance abuse, human trafficking, robbery, murder and other violent crimes. These offending behaviours are usually committed using agility, intense strength and great energies; traits common among youths. Adler, Mueller and Laufer (1991) agreed that the age of offenders is an important socio-demographic variable because it tends to define the type of crime to be involved in, the role to play and the decision for either continuity or to reclusify oneself. Onuoha (2010) and Odoemelam and Alozie (2014) revealed that criminal activities involving youths in Nigeria range from kidnapping, hostage-taking, murder, burglary, armed robbery to other violent crimes such as killing, battery and highway shooting.

Agnew (2003) suggested that the peak in criminal activities can be linked to essential features of adolescence and young adults (youths) in modern, industrial societies (as applicable in contemporary Nigeria). This is because adolescents are given most of the privileges and responsibilities of adults in these cultures as well as experience a reduction of supervision. The same source added that youths are predisposed to offending due to an increase in social and academic demands, participation in a large, more diverse, peer-oriented social world. Also included in Agnew's classification is an increased desire for adult privileges by adolescents, a reduced ability to cope in a legitimate manner, and an increased incentive to solve problems in a criminal manner. In general, Nigeria has continued to experience a high level of criminality and insecurity owing to the recalcitrant behaviours of the youth in recent times (Ubhenin & Enabunene, 2011; Ogbonnaya, Ogujiuba & Stiegler, 2014; Akanni, 2014).

In Nigeria, crimes of murder, rape, robbery, burglary, battery, aggravated assault, armed robbery and kidnapping are on the increase (Klein, 1999; Akanni, 2014). Youth criminality in the Western world was initially described as illicit behaviour under 'common law' crimes, a term that refers to legal traditions in the form of judges' decisions in Britain (Clinard & Meier, 2008). But common law crimes today include all violent offences such as murder, rape, armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping, and assault. These conventional violent crimes are heinous and threatening to Nigeria's socio-economic and political development (Odoemelam & Alozie, 2014). The sudden and unjustifiable rise of radical Islamic Fundamentalists and ethnic militias in the Northern Nigeria has posed serious security threats and challenges to the government and law-abiding citizens. It has threatened public safety and reawakened other youth militias in different parts of the country.

The act of militancy, vandalism and cultism perpetrated by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta's (MEND), Egbesu Boys and Movement for the Survival

of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the destruction of lives and property by the Boko Haram terrorist group, and the like in many parts of Nigeria are ever-green and prime examples of systemic youth criminality in the country. Members of these groups, according to Okengwu (2011), usually indulge in robbery, drug trade, illegal oil business (popularly known as oil bunkery), or kidnapping for fund-raising to support their unlawful cause. One then wonders the level of educational attainment and family backgrounds of youths who are involved in the said criminal activities in Nigeria; hence, the central concern of this study. In the light of this background discussion, the study sets out to investigate youth criminality, taking into consideration the role and influence of school maladjustment and family problems on its perpetration.

Statement of the Problem

Violent crimes, whether in the developed or developing countries (including Nigeria), are said to be common among youths. The popular fear about crime centres on offences such as theft, burglary, assault and rape—street crimes’ that are largely seen as the domain of young working class males. Media coverage of rising crime rates often focuses on ‘moral breakdown’ among young people and highlights such issues as vandalism, school truancy and drug use to illustrate the increasing ‘permissiveness’ in society (Giddens, 2006). The rate of youth criminality is worrisome and affects human freedom, economic enterprises, corporate managements, and international relationships (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011). In fact, youths in Nigeria have been implicated in series of armed robbery activities, violence, kidnapping, gang rapes, cultism, ritual acts, oil stealing/theft and destruction of pipeline (Arowosegbe, 2009; Onuoha, 2010; Nnam 2014a; Nnam, 2014b). There is no gainsaying the fact that many crimes committed in Nigeria by the youth are never reported to the police while those that were reported are never recorded (Olatunbosun & Oluduro, 2012). This implies that the reported cases of youth criminality or crime statistics (which mainly comes from the police) on youth crime in the country are only the tip of the iceberg.

The role of youths cannot be overemphasized, especially in a growing society like Nigeria. They are leaders of tomorrow; a population that would take over the management, administrations and restructuring of the society for better. Therefore, their future depends so much on many factors such as the nature, level and quality of educational attainment, good family upbringing, and strong and meaningful societal supports. Qualitative home and school training, and decent exposure to the internalisation of familial and societal values are necessary for proper adjustment and adaptation. Although good home and school training is a path to conformity, the fact should not be vitiated that many youths at school (whether properly or improperly socialised) are still involved in series of misconducts, ranging from fighting, name calling, truancy (see Okoli & Agada, 2014; Edegoh, Kenechkwu & Asemah, 2013) to involvement in violent criminal acts (Ubhenin & Enabunene, 2011).

Igbo (2007) admitted that 18-30 years age group accounts for most crimes in almost all societies. This is the youthful age when young men and women are full of energy and always on the look-out for excitement and trouble. People who fall within this age bracket may indulge in armed robbery, rape, burglary, arson, looting, and kidnapping. These are mostly offences that require stringent skills and great courage to accomplish. Nnam (2014b) profiled inmates detained for the offence of kidnapping in Abakaliki

(Ebonyi State) and Umuahia (Abia State) prisons in Nigeria based on their social and demographic characteristics. His findings revealed that fewer respondents, somewhat older inmates interviewed in the two prisons accounted for 4.6% of the total population while 95.3%, representing the interviewees within the age bracket of 21–35. The implication is that kidnapping and perhaps other (violent) criminal activities usually peaked at youthful age and hence gradually plummet as one is ageing out, desistance.

A number of youths may not finish school because of maladjusted behaviours and overwhelming family problems; most of them dropped out of school and consequently indulge in crime and delinquency. School maladjustment could result from students making caricature of the fellow schoolmates or the strong ones bullying the weak or vulnerable, which many youths may not tolerate and therefore may decide not to continue their education (Steinmetz, 1987 cited in Hess, Markson & Stein, 1992). Furthermore, family problems are factors that give rise to youth criminality. It involves a situation where some youths who hail from poverty-stricken families and money is always causing problem (in the family) among family members (Hess *et al.*, 1992). Thus, in-depth and critical understanding of the subject of discussion would be useful in addressing the core of the problem of this study. It is on this premise that the current study examines school maladjustment and family disruption as predisposing factors to youth criminality among inmates in Abakaliki prisons, located in Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of school maladjustment and family problems on youth criminality in Nigeria. Other specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the predictors of youth criminality among male inmates in Abakaliki prisons;
- To assess the relationship between school maladjustment and youth criminality among male inmates in Abakaliki prisons; and
- To establish a connection between family disruption and youth criminality among male inmates in Abakaliki prisons.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study using null-hypothesis technique. The nature of this study requires or calls for the application of null-hypothesis. As tenable in other related studies, the null-hypothesis assists researchers in “establishing a statistical base against which a situation (social problem) may be tested” (Leedy, 1980 p.27) and, indeed, a null-hypothesis is a hypothesis of no difference (Bailey, 1982).

Hypotheses1

There is no significant relationship between school maladjustment and youth criminality among male inmates in Abakaliki prisons.

Hypotheses2

There is no significant connection between family disruption and youth criminality among male inmates in Abakaliki prisons.

Theoretical Framework

This study integrated a number of sociological and criminological theories to account for the causal factors and processes of youth criminality. Integrated model approach to the study of crime and criminal behaviour is described as the pathway through which criminology is seeking to be both as simple and as general as possible (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000). Several criminologists and sociologists as well as other scholars of social problem strongly believe that there is no one form of crime or social problem that is best accounted for by a single theory or a specific model; that a combination of theories seems best to support a sociological/criminological analysis of crime (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1991; Thio, 1998; Otu, 2012; Nnam, 2014a; Agboti & Nnam, 2015; Nnam & Otu, 2016). Youth crime is caused by many factors, and as a result, is awash with many empirical and theoretical explanations.

Lanier and Henry (2004) contended that when a crime is an outcome of several different causes, an integrated framework is required to analyse the sequential chain of events. Lanier and his associate maintained that the purpose of integrating theories is to present an interaction of probabilities from different theoretical perspectives that could explain why some people commit crimes. Given the complexities of this social problem, an integration of some relevant theories that pragmatically underpins youth criminality now becomes necessary. Accordingly, frustration-aggression theory, social discontent theory, relative deprivation (which is a combination of anomie and social disorganisation models) theory, and social learning theories were integrated to form a framework for this study. For instance, the underlying principles of frustration-aggression theory include the fact that any aggressive behaviour which, to a large extent, could result in crime is traceable to previous social and environmental strains (frustration).

Akanni (2014) studied the history of youth terrorism, youth psychology and youth unemployment to ascertain whether these factors have relationships with frustration-aggression. Akanni's research mainly focused on factors that predispose individual youths to terrorism, but failed in essence to examine the youths' days or life at school and their family backgrounds. This shows that Akanni's study did not go beyond the historical perspectives of youths under his study; one of the gaps this present study sets out to close. It is an attempt to push back the frontiers of knowledge about the causes and spread of youth criminality. It is also the need to incorporate social discontent theory of Robert Gurr into this study for in-depth analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the variables. Social discontent, according to Gurr (1970), is a perceived discrepancy between men's 'value expectations' (i.e. goods and services people believe that they are entitled to) and 'value capabilities' (i.e. goods and services people think they are capable of achieving if giving the right opportunity).

Agboti and Nnam (2015) termed the goods and services as 'empowerment and motivation resources' and went a step further to argue that some people (mainly youths from the lower echelon) are socially excluded from the mainstream culture of good living. They added that such youth crime as political thuggery, armed robbery, cultism, arson, murder, kidnapping, and militancy can best be understood and explained in some depth within the purview of 'frustration-deprivation-discontent' philosophy. Associated with this account of youth criminality is the relative deprivation theory, which is a combination of the basic assumptions of anomie and social disorganisation theories. The principles of this theory are simple and direct; people are deprived of their rights and entitlements (such as

basics education, employment opportunities, improved and inclusive standard of living, welfare, proper socialisation and adequate parental care, assistance or supports). Some are exploited and extorted at will by people in power and advantageous positions.

Youths under this state of affairs may become tensed up and uncontrollable in their reactionary behaviour which could lead to crime and violent. Blau and Blau (1982), proponents of relative deprivation theory, stressed that people who feel deprived because of their race or economic class eventually develop a sense of injustice and discontent. The less fortunate among this class of people will begin to distrust the society that has nurtured social inequality and obstructed their chances of progressing by legitimate means, and as a result, may indulge in criminalities as adjustment and coping mechanisms (see also Siegel, 2008). It is on this common knowledge that Ikoh (2011) specifically decried that the long years of neglect by successive government to develop the Niger Delta region and the failure of the multinational oil companies to integrate the oil-producing communities into the oil economy has led to the feeling of deprivation and subsequent crises that made militancy and kidnapping pervasive crimes in Nigeria today.

Several studies point to the fact that jobless youths recruited by politicians as political thugs are abandoned after elections without retrieving the arms and ammunition that they were provided with for the purposes of electioneering campaigns and elections. The guns and ammunition now become operational tools for armed robbery, kidnapping and hired assassinations. Such transition from political thuggery to organised gang criminality and street hoodlums represent a realignment of interest and readjustment of economic strategies rather than a clear break from the original motive behind engaging in violence (Majekodumi, 2009; Odoh, 2010; Ikoh, 2011). When people are relatively deprived of essential goods and services (social exclusion), frustration and depression will invariably ensue and consequently lead to the acting out of their discontentment and aggression through all means, including crime and violence. Hence, the somewhat doused ugly incidence of militancy in the Niger Delta and kidnapping in the South-East regions of Nigeria is an indirect explanation and/or a backlash to the widespread social exclusion in these regions (Agboti & Nnam, 2015).

Badiora (2015) studied kidnapping in Nigeria using deprivation theory, linking the problem to the socio-political and socioeconomic inequalities. He discovered in his study that kidnapping and other security challenges in the country are mainly caused by youths under deprivations and consequent frustration and aggressions. However, Badiora placed emphasis on anger and violence or frustration-aggression without discussing the foundational root causes of such anger or aggression. Obviously, we must admit that Nigeria as a country and its citizenry are at the peril of perpetual poverty, hardship and other related problems. Granted that the harsh political economy and social structure of Nigeria is generally frustrating and negatively affects both the rich and the poor, young and old, but the fact should not be vitiated that the youth and the poor class are greatly on the receiving of it all (for a similar argument, see also Nnam & Otu, 2015).

Nwogwugwu, Alao and Egwuonwu (2012) examined the destructive behaviour of youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and reached the conclusion that the rate is alarming. They explored the involvement of youths in the destruction of oil installations, vandalism, and hijacking of ships and helicopters for kidnapping purposes and collection of ransoms. One thing becomes obvious in the study of Nwogwugwu and his associates: the offenders did not just start their criminal career; they learnt, internalised and shared it among people that maintain intimate relationships with them. This now brings us to the

social learning theory of Edwin Sutherland. In his differential association theory, for instance, Sutherland (1939) assented that criminal behaviour is neither biologically inherited nor created by individuals; it is learned. The learning occurs mainly within intimate social groups (such as schoolmates, playmates, peer group and family members—these are people who influence others to either conformity or nonconformity).

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to investigate school maladjustment and family disruption as determinants of youth criminality. Male inmates detained for the offence of violent crimes (kidnapping, cultism, burglary, murder, armed robbery, and assault and battery) in Abakaliki prisons, located in Ebonyi State of Nigeria constitutes the target population. Using the prison records as a guide, simple random sampling technique was used to draw a total sample size of 215 respondents. After a thorough vetting and screening of the completed and returned questionnaires, we discovered that 3 were not properly filled and were rejected. Thus, this brought the final sample size of this study to 212.

Data for this study were generated using structured questionnaire instrument. The instrument covered both the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the thematic issues, specific objectives of the study. The response format of the instrument is the modified Likert-Scale type with assigned values as follows: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Strongly Disagree = 2 and Disagree = 1. The instrument was validated by two Criminologists and an expert in research methods, while test-retest method of obtaining reliability of the instrument was used. The result of reliability co-efficient of 0.48 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment-Correlation. A letter stating clearly the central theme of the study was written to the Comptroller of prisons, and informed consent of our target audience was obtained before administering the questionnaires. Given the low educational level of our respondents, the content of the questionnaire was read and explained to them in Pidgin English and Igbo language since all of them were of Igbo extraction (South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria). Percentages and Chi-square (X^2) were used to analyse the data obtained from the field.

Results

1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The results of this study are presented in the tables below. Table 1 is on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The table shows that the majority of our respondents belong to the age categories of 21-23 years and 24-26 years with 28.3% respectively. This is followed by those within the age category of 27-29 years with 18.9%. Only 3.8% of the respondents belong to age bracket of 33-35years. On education, well above two-third of the respondents (86.8%) have primary (first school leaving certificate) education as their highest educational qualification; while 3.8% respectively have higher national diploma and no formal education. Majority of the respondents are Christians with 94.3% while 5.7% are Muslims. Above two-thirds of the research participants are single (77.4%), while only 22.6% of them are married. The occupation of the respondents varies, 43.4% are traders while 28.3% are self-employed. This is followed by 'Okada riders'

(commercial motorcyclists) who have 13.2% belonging to this category. Only 1.9% of the respondents are civil/public servants.

Table 1. Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	N	%
Age		
18- 20 years	24	11.3
21-23 years	60	28.3
24-26 years	60	28.3
27- 29 years	40	18.9
31-32 years	20	9.4
33-35 years	8	3.8
Total	212	100.0
Education		
FSLC	184	86.8
OND	12	5.7
HND	8	3.8
No formal education	8	3.8
Total	212	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	200	94.3
Islam	12	5.7
Total	212	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	48	22.6
Single	164	77.4
Total	212	100.0
Occupation		
Civil/Public servant	4	1.9
Trader	92	43.4
Self-Employed	60	28.3
Farming	12	5.7
Artisan	8	3.8
Taxi Driver	8	3.8
'Okada Rider' (Commercial Motorcyclists)	28	13.2
Total	212	100.0

2. Predictors of Youth Criminality among Male Inmates in Abakaliki Prisons

The table 2 shows the leading causes of youth criminality. It reveals that the main cause of youth criminality in the study area is unemployment, 73.6% strongly agree and only 5.7% disagree. Another major cause of youth criminality is greed, 67.9% strongly agree and only 7.5% disagree. This is followed by the use of youths in antisocial conducts by political godfathers—62.3% strongly agree that it is a cause of youth criminality while only 5.7% disagree. Substance abuse was also found to be the cause of youth criminality, with

47.2% of the respondents strongly agree, 37.7% agree, while 5.7% strongly disagree, 9.4% disagree.

Table 2. Predictors of Youth Criminality

Variables	N	%
Unemployment		
Strongly Agree	156	73.6
Agree	44	20.8
Disagree	12	5.7
Total	212	100.0
Greed		
Strongly Agree	144	67.9
Agree	52	24.5
Disagree	16	7.5
Total	212	100.0
Political Godfathers		
Strongly Agree	132	62.3
Agree	68	32.1
Disagree	12	5.7
Total	212	100.0
Substance Abuse		
Strongly Agree	100	47.2
Agree	80	37.7
Strongly Disagree	12	5.7
Disagree	20	9.4
Total	212	100.0

3. The Relationship between School Maladjustment and Youth Criminality

The relationship between maladjustment and youth criminality is another thing the paper sought to find answer to. The findings are shown in table 3. There is a positive relationship between maladjustment and youth criminality. At X^2 value 79.377 and p-value of 0.000 showed that there is a significant relationship between maladjustment and criminality. Furthermore, 34% and 35.8% of those who committed various offences strongly agreed and agreed respectively that their developed maladjustment behaviours contributed to their involvement in criminal activities.

4. The Connection between Family Disruption and Youth Criminality

The finding shows a significant connection between family disruption and youth criminality. This is shown in table 4. At X^2 value 59.002 and p-value 0.000 shows that there is a significant connection between family problems and youth criminality. In addition, 38.1% of those who committed various offences agreed that problems experienced at home contributed to their involvement in criminal activities.

Table 3. Relationships between School Maladjustment and Youth Criminality

Variables	Offences committed							Total (%)
	Murder (%)	Kidnapping (%)	Armed Robbery (%)	Cultism (%)	Burglary (%)	Rape (%)	Others (%)	
Maladjustment behaviour contributed to your being in prison								
Strongly Agree	20 (9.4)	8 (3.8)	12 (5.7)	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	72 (34.0)
Agree	24 (11.3)	8 (3.8)	32 (15.1)	4 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	76 (35.8)
Strongly Disagree	8(3.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	4 (1.9)	20 (9.4)
Disagree	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	16 (7.5)	4 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	44 (20.8)
Total	60 (28.3)	24 (11.3)	52 (24.5)	28 (13.2)	20 (9.4)	16 (7.5)	12 (5.7)	212 (100.0)

$X^2 = 79.377$, $df=18$, $P = .000$

Table 4. Family Disruption and Youth Criminality

Variables	Offences committed							Total (%)
	Murder (%)	Kidnapping (%)	Armed Robbery (%)	Cultism (%)	Burglary (%)	Rape (%)	Others (%)	
Relationships between Disruptive Family and your being in prison								
Strongly Agree	8 (3.8)	4 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	0(0.0)	8(3.8)	4 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	32 (15.1)
Agree	24 (11.3)	8(3.8)	16 (7.5)	8 (3.8)	4 (1.9)	0(0.0)	8 (3.8)	68 (38.1)
Strongly Disagree	12 (5.7)	4 (1.9)	12 (5.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4 (1.9)	0(0.0)	32 (15.1)
Disagree	16 (7.5)	8 (3.8)	20 (9.4)	20 (9.4)	8 (3.8)	8 (3.8)	0(0.0)	80 (37.7)
Total	60 (28.3)	24 (11.3)	52 (24.5)	28 (13.2)	20 (9.4)	16 (7.5)	12 (5.7)	212 (100.0)

$X^2 = 59.002$, $df=18$, $P = .000$

Test of Hypotheses

1. At $X^2 = 79.377$, $df=18$, $P = .000$ shows that there is a significant relationship between school maladjustment and youth criminality. We thereby reject the hypothesis, that, there is no significant relationship between maladjustment and youth criminality in Nigeria.

2. At $X^2 = 59.002$, $df=18$, $P = .000$ shows that there is a significant connection between family disruption/problems and youth criminality in Nigeria. We thereby reject

the hypothesis, that, there is no significant connection between family problems and youth criminality in Nigeria.

Discussion

The majority of our respondents were within the age bracket of 21–26 years. This is the age bracket when they are in their prime; a stage in human growth and development when peer influence is at its peak. No wonder most of the respondents belonged to this age bracket. Our result is also in agreement with the earlier findings of Adler *et al.* (1991), that age of offenders is an important variable that tend to define the type of crimes youths are involve in. Also, this corroborates the findings of Nnam (2014b) who found that a remarkable number of prison inmates belong to the age bracket of 21–35 years. Almost all the inmates have primary school education. This explains the fact that most of them might not have good source of livelihood and thus involve in illegitimate means for survival. The findings were supported by the theoretical framework for this study. The relative deprivation theory, for instance, asserts that when people are denied certain basic necessities of life, they tend to devise their own means of survival which might run contrary to the societal approved means.

Empirical evidence revealed that youth criminality is caused by many factors, ranging from unemployment, greed, substance abuse and the use of youths in illegal activities by political godfathers to inability of the youth population to muddle through the challenges and vicissitudes of schooling and family problems. These are major reasons why a majority of male youths are in the prison. For instance, a substantial percentage, number of our respondents strongly agreed that dysfunctional family background and maladjusted behaviour developed at school precipitate their involvement in kidnapping, cultism and burglary. Edegoh *et al.* (2013) stated that many Nigerian youths are in the prison for violent crimes ranging from armed robbery, pipeline oil breakages, kidnapping to politically-motivated violence, fraud and murder. In a situation where violent fighting and quarrel abound daily and youths learned from the family how to deal with issues violently, the affected individuals may develop keen interest in such attitudes. Some of them may accept it as a normal way of life, perfect in it and thus, consciously or unconsciously, act it out over time.

Another interesting result of this study is the direct link between unemployment and youth criminality. Unemployment is found to be the leading cause of crime among the youth population; two thirds of the respondents alluded to this variable. This is not surprising as unemployed youths must seek for a means of survival. The result of our study is in line with the previous studies which present that unemployment is responsible for the involvement of many youths in criminal activities (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011; Akanni, 2014; Agboti & Nnam, 2015; Nnam & Otu, 2015).

Our findings specifically showed that youth offending behaviour results from family problems in terms of improper socialisation and family instability, as well as the failure or inability of many affected youths to adjust to debilitating conditions they faced in their school days. Therefore, it is instructive to note that positive self-actualisation begins from the foundational upbringing, socialisation which takes place both at school and in the family. Thus, maladjustment developed at school and family problems affect the functional nurturing, cognitive reasoning and ideological balancing as well as growth and development of people. Clearly, it is established that the social issues of school

maladjustment and family disruption are determinants of youth criminality. Ewi (2010) are of the belief that when there is an investment in the education of youths and involvement in instilling strong family values, it is an investment in eradication of poverty and control of criminal activities. Okoli and Agada (2014) noted that one of the greatest ways to increase one's chances of overcoming criminal behavioural challenges is to create opportunities for youths in education and creation of strong family values.

Furthermore, this study shows that political godfathers are also responsible for the prevalence of youth criminality in the society. It is discovered that firearm availability among the population causes crime. How youths who are mostly unemployed or less gainfully employed acquired this essential paraphernalia of crime was discovered. Youths are usually provided with arms and ammunition by political godfathers during electioneering campaign as operational tools for harass, intimidate, maim and outwit their opponents in order to win elections at all cost. These arms are not taken away from them after election and no job or proper settlement is given to them by the godfathers. Overwhelmed by this frustrating situation, many youth who could not control their criminal urge then take to armed robbery, kidnapping and burglary for survival and/or as a career choice. Beside these findings, this study also revealed that there is a positive relationship between maladjustment developed at school and youth criminality. This maladjusted behaviour is usually informally learned and internalised within and outside the two institutions, the family and school. Thus, Nwogwugwu *et al.* (2012) agreed with us that destructive behaviour (maladjusted behaviour learned and internalised at school or in the family settings) exposes youths to criminal activities. From our findings, we established that both offenders' level of education and social experiences predict youth crime, though when these variables are negative or frustrating. Besides, the theory of differential association as articulated in our theoretical framework dovetails nicely with the findings of this study, that poor parenting or lack of consistency in parental/guardian care and learned criminogenic tendencies at school predispose youths to crime and delinquency.

Furthermore, this study found that there is a connection between family problems and youth criminality. Some youths are predisposed to crime and violence because of maladjustment syndrome developed at school and/or caused by dysfunctional familial relationships. It follows that adjustment problem, especially in the face of cruelty and aggression in the family or at school influence affected youths into criminalities, probably as an escape route. This is why our findings consistently revealed that 'school maladjustment' (i.e. the inability to muddle through difficulties at school in terms of sponsorship, intimidations, bullying, discrimination, name-calling, stereotype, and the like) and disjunctive family structure encourage youth criminality. No wonder some observers like Ewi (2010) argued that instilling strong family values will help control youth criminal activity, while Okoli and Agada (2014) advised that creating strongly family values will help overcome youth involvement in criminal activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study showed that many societal factors, which are embedded in school maladjustment and family disruption, contribute to youth criminality. Therefore, robust preventive and control interventions or programmes are necessary for a success war on all forms of youth offending behaviour in the study area: cultism, armed robbery, murder, and kidnapping. In this regard, any policy intervention should focus on job creation, employment and educational opportunities, secured environment and/or

creating atmosphere conducive for investors and entrepreneurs from within and outside Nigeria to increase viable business ventures. These were also unravelled in this study as major challenges confronting the youth, while pursuing the societal goals and expectations. Indeed, there is a dire need to create incisive and constructive life-improving opportunities for the youths and open free, equal and objective access to them for a better living. The core of the problem under investigation, if well implemented, will provide an insight into the causes and spread of youth criminality in Nigeria, thereby paving way for the advancement of forward-looking prevention and control measures to stem tide.

Since school maladjustment and family problems are predictors of youth criminality, then the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and members of the public should consider embarking upon timely and practical youth empowerment programmes and restoration of social and moral values, both, at school and in the home. This should be Nigeria's priority in the national economic summit, social engineering, political reconstruction and individual families' agenda. Youth criminality in Nigeria is so pervasive that crime researchers and crime fighters need to constantly explore and examine both the aetiology and epidemiology of this phenomenon from a broad-based background and interdisciplinary standpoint. The goal is to give this subject matter a scientific outlook and a wide coverage of its complexities for a possible solution. What is more, this study adopted integrated theoretical framework approached and sociology criminological perspective to not only support the existing body of knowledge on this complex social problem but also develop new ideas in addressing the issue.

Absolutely, no society grows normal when youths are virtually scrambling for vehicles to survive the strains of economic hardship. Confronted with strains and stresses of life in terms of poverty and social exclusion, unemployment and underemployment, hardship, limited legitimate opportunities, scarce resources and uneven distribution of few available resources, youths are forced to escape from their plight and predicaments using fair means or foul. Consequently upon this result, we strongly recommend a wider or national study on youth criminality in Nigeria. Although we assessed the influence of school maladjustment and family disruption on youth criminality in Nigeria and the findings read positive, the suggestion is hereby made for further studies using the same or different methods to expand human horizons on this social problem.

Moreover, to state the obvious, criminal activities cannot be allowed to invade the society without search for plausible understanding and explanation. Although one of the core responsibilities of a responsive government is to provide a variety of needs to its citizenry so as to guard against offending opportunities or even outright offending, the State should not be saddled with the sole duty of providing this welfare package. In order to win the war on youth criminality, it is incumbent on every Nigerian to make radical efforts to dismantle the glaring crime-inducing opportunities such as poverty, unemployment and 'godfatherism', as well as attempt to discourage or eliminate plight and social discontentment caused by dysfunctional political and social structure, as evidenced in the present government of Nigeria. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a total conscience overhauling, reinvigoration national values, and the need for the family and school institutions as core agents of socialisation to live up to expectations.

In addition, it is necessary to establish youth-focused and youth-sensitive programmes that are tailored towards solving specific needs of the unemployed and underemployed youths. They should be provided them with meaningful and engaging legitimate

occupation through formal, semi-formal or informal empowerment and self-reliance interventions, entrepreneurship, mobilisation and social security. If the majority of youths are engaged in sustainable means of livelihood, there will be a redirection in the course of events; that is, attention diversion from nonconformity to conformity and maximum level of desistance and aging out become realisable.

We must recognise the fact that our youths still need educational opportunities. Investing in the youth education is, to say the least, an investment for a sustained social order and progress, societal success and advancement, and safety of human society. When people, especially the youth population are properly trained, functional industries established and local and foreign investors attracted, we are either cutting off or minimising social vices in the society.

Qualitative education, whether formal, semi-formal or informal, is the hallmark of a better and safe society. However, education without meaningful opportunities for gainful employment, attitudinal change and moral rectitude after acquisition is like a nation with abundant resources—human and material—but lacks the analytical, administrative and planning acumen to judiciously share or allocate them. Since school maladjustment and family problem have strong correlation with youth criminality, we recommend the establishment of good learning environment and stable family structure for proper socialisation which will insulate people from flouting the law. Family responsibilities must also not be ignored. Since our studies showed that there is a strong link between crime-encouragers like unstable family and youth crime, both State and non-State actors and formal and informal agents of social control, should monitor at risk families and youths for assistance.

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