SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS PREDISPOSING SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS TO DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF STUDENTS FROM UVWIE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE

Joy Efegwrene Okarie and Azuka N. G. Alutu

Abstract

This study aims at investigating the socio-cultural factors that predispose secondary school adolescents to delinquent behaviour. The study was carried out among public senior secondary school students in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. The study is a survey research which adopts an ex-post-facto design. This design is most appropriate for this study since the researcher would have no control over the independent variables. The simple random sampling technique was adopted. Two hundred and forty six (246) students, within the ages of 14 to 20 years were randomly selected from six senior secondary schools. The instrument for data collection was a Questionnaire on Adolescent Delinquent Behaviour (QADB). The instrument was validated by test experts and the reliability/internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the cronbach alpha method which yielded a coefficient of 0.84. Three hypotheses were raised and tested at .05 level of significance. The result of this study shows that socio-cultural environment, parent socio-economic background/status and peer group influence predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour. Recommendations were made to parents, society, school authority, school counselors and teachers.

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. It is a time during which patterns of behaviour and relationships, which have their lifetime effects on the individual and society begin. There is no specified age limit for the adolescent period but most literatures suggest a period between the age of 12 and the late teens, when physical growth is nearly completed. The beginning of adolescence is not defined in legal terms, but in physical, social and biological terms; a person is legally an adult at the age of 21. The concept of adolescence is socio-cultural and variation exists from culture to culture. In most western cultures, adolescence is believed to begin with the physical and developmental changes that occur in the individual and end when the individual has assumed adult roles. In the Nigerian context, adolescence approximately coincides with the period of secondary school education and the early part of tertiary education. During this period, the school is expected to transmit the values of the society to the succeeding generation of youths, thus perpetrating the basic facets of our culture. The informal education received by adolescents at home tends to complement the school's effort. Adolescents generally need parents and teachers who emphatically understand them with the problems they face as a result of rapid physical growth and sexual maturation. The school, through its personnel, however, attempts to guide and facilitate the total development of in-school adolescents (Alutu, 2007). According to Aluede and Adomeh (2002), psychologists have defined adolescence as the period of a rebirth that culminates on the stressful and stormy experiences for the individual. It is also described as the period of self-discovery and the period marked by general intellectual development. They also state that adolescence is an "enigma," a "paradox," an "impossible possibility" and a "possible possibility". Hence, adolescents should be carefully studied in order to relate cordially with them.

Delinquent behaviour is an anti-social behaviour that is at odd with accepted societal norms. Delinquent behaviour problems are some of the difficulties encountered by adolescents in senior secondary schools. In most cases they turn into anti-social acts either as a result of their feeling of hostility and or the influence of drugs in their lives. They have disregard for property and rights of others and they always show their anger towards the society by destroying the property of others.
and violating established orders of the society. It is a well-known fact that delinquency rates soar during the period of adolescence (Odebunmi, 1992). School offences are those acts that run counter to school rules and regulations and result to indiscipline and general disorder in a school. Some common school offences include: truancy, fighting/bullying, lying, stealing and disobedience or insubordination (Alutu, 2007).

Onosode (2008) noted that what constitutes violations of an established order differs from society to society, because of the differing values each society sets its own sets of norms and values that must be strictly adhered to by its members and anybody who violates such norms and mores is seen as a delinquent. The high rate of delinquencies in the Niger delta area in general and Uvwie Local Government inclusive is quite alarming. In recent times, it is taken as normal phenomena among adolescents to cause violence and this affects the quality of our societal norms and moral values. This also brings degradation in the social life of our adolescents. Researchers have shown that the society, just like the parents has elaborate influence on the child. The child grows up in the community, speaks the language of the people and gets involved in other cultural activities of the society, ways of greeting, dressing, dancing, performing folk music and telling tales of the people can be learned simultaneously, from members of the society such as the peer group, the school, the mass media and the church. All these factors go a long way in affecting the behavioural pattern of the child as he grows into adolescent and adulthood. According to Alhasan (1998), the society has become multi-complex and adolescent roles, very diffuse and confused, with knowledge explosion, material wealth pursuit, plurality of society and estrangement from extended family system, the hypocrisy of adult standards, and the fallacy of physical maturity along side with economic independence. The adolescent has a great battle to fight with the dilemma of indefinite status, so they must essentially give up childhood, resolve identity issues, and gain insight into what adult role they must play by progressive adaptations and adjustment, through a purposeful training.

WHO (2006) and Foreman (2007) emphasized that peer group pressure is one of the factors affecting adolescents delinquent behaviour. There is a high pressure on the adolescent to conform to the etiquette of the peer group, since they need independence from parents, they interact with their peer to look upon each other for support and guidance, vows to correct the mistakes of the older generation as a result they are pressurized to smoke, drink alcohol and get into sexual activities, even into drugs. According to them, peer pressure can be described as the influence and pressures adolescents feel from their mates. Peer group provides opportunities for practising new behaviours, while peer pressure can range from positive influences as academic and athletic achievement, to negative influence such as drug use and abuse, cultism, etc.

Alutu (2002), noted that an important agent of socialization is the mass media; that study has shown that mass media have some positive and negative influence on the children and adolescents alike. She reported that Bandura (1983) and Bradley (1975) carried out an experiment on the relationship between television viewing and aggressive behaviour. They noted that children subjected to scenes of violence during the experiment, exhibit more violent behaviour than children in the control group who were not exposed to violence scenes. However, most information from the media tends to widen the academic horizon of the child, spreads up their intellectual and social growth and serves as a role model for their future careers.

Another prevailing socio-cultural condition which forces poor behaviour into adolescents is poverty. Many studies have been done on the influence of the socio-economic status of parents on their children's academic achievement. Alutu (2007) noted that evidence from research carried out shows that most school dropouts hold negative attitudes towards themselves, have a history of low school grades, failure and absenteeism. However, inadequate finances and low level intelligence have been reported to be two important reasons for high dropout rates in schools but they do not appear to be major causes. Many of these drop-outs are delinquent; a few have no record of delinquency. Agulanna and Nwanchukwu (2001), admitted that the students socio-economic status is likely to have a profound impact on their attitudes and behaviour in school and in the society. Children who had experienced early socio-economic hardship are found to display aggressive and antisocial behaviour later
in life. A poor socio-economic home is susceptible to delinquency. Failure of families to meet children's basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter results in much misbehaviour at home and in the society.

According to Alutu (2002) and Adedayo (2001), education, as a vehicle for social change is formally received in the school. The school takes over from the parents after the initial primary socialization in the family. The school offers the child the first extended relationship with the outside world. The school system enhances adolescent's culture/society. Since the child spends most of his/her time in the school, the teacher becomes the role model of the child. The teacher’s behaviour can either influence the child positively or negatively

**Statement of the Problem**

At present, there is a growing public concern about the health and well-being of Nigerian adolescents. There are serious indications that the nation's adolescents are in a state of crisis. The disturbing parameters include rising level of violence and deaths resulting from armed robbery incidents and cultism in the campuses across the country. Others are delinquent problems of senior secondary schools adolescents which are manifest in diverse ways namely: criminality, sexual behaviour problems, rebellion against parents and school authority, cigarette addiction, alcoholism and drugs abuse, educational and school related problems such as low literacy and mathematical competence as seen in their poor performance in internationally moderated West African School Certificate Examination. The prevalence of various forms of examination malpractices, increase in school dropout rates, immorality, high incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, are kinds of delinquent behaviours that perpetrate themselves from one generation to another in the present dispensation.

As a result of all these undesirable behaviours, the adults in the society perceived the adolescents more as a heritage of complex problems than a promise for future national development. Consequently, when adults compare the present adolescents with their counterparts some three or four decades ago, they lament that something has gone wrong. In order to help find a solution to these problems, the current study attempts a probe into the root causes of the present malaise with a view to proffering intervention strategies to control or combat them. The focus of the study therefore is to ascertain the social factors that could predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour.

**Hypotheses**

1. Peer group influence could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour.
2. Socio-cultural environment could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour.
3. Parents' socio-economic status could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether socio-cultural factors could predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour in senior secondary schools and to suggest possible solutions to the problems.

**Method of the Study**

This study is a survey research which adopts an ex-post-facto design to find out whether factors such as peer group, socio-cultural environment, socio-economic status of parents could significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour and their implication for counselling.
Population and Sample

The population of this study is all adolescents in public senior secondary schools in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State (age ranges from 14 - 20 years). The simple random sampling technique was adopted and a total of two hundred and forty-six (246) students were selected from six senior secondary schools. All the senior secondary schools in the local government area were grouped into Uvwie East and Uvwie West according to their location and three public schools were randomly selected from each group. Forty-one students were also randomly selected from each school giving a total of two hundred and forty-six.

Instrument Used for Data Collection

The instrument used in this study is a Questionnaire on Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviour (QADB), which is a 4-point likert scale instrument ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree to strongly disagree. The instrument was administered to students personally by the researchers with the help of some teachers in the selected schools.

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis 1: Peer Group Influence Could Not Significantly Predispose Adolescents to Delinquent Behaviour

Table 1: One Sample t-test of Peer Group Influence on Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Test value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Group Influence</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>-25.64</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a = .05, p<.05

Table 1 Shows a t value of -25.64 with a p value of .000 at alpha level of .05, the p value is less than the alpha level. So the null hypothesis which states, "Peer group influence could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour" is rejected. Therefore, peer group influence predisposes adolescents to delinquent behaviour. Since the mean of 10.18 values is less than the test value of 12.5, it shows that the adolescents who are more influenced by their peers are more involved in delinquent behaviour. These findings are in agreement with those of WHO (2006) and Foreman (2007) which concluded that strong peer influence is related to delinquent behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: Socio-Cultural Environment Could Not Significantly Predispose Adolescents to Delinquent Behaviour.

Table 2: One Sample t-test of Socio-Cultural Environment on Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Test value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Cultural environment</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>-25.64</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a = .05, p<.05
Table 2

Shows a t value of -25.64 with a p value of .000 at and alpha level of .05, the p value is less than the alpha level. So the null hypothesis which states, "Socio-cultural environment could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour" is rejected. Therefore, socio-cultural environment predisposes adolescents to delinquent behaviour. Since the mean of 7.24 value is less than the test value of 12.5, it shows that those adolescents who are more influenced by social-cultural environment are more predisposed to delinquent behaviour. This study is in agreement with the findings of Alhasan (1998), Nwachukwu (2001), and Alutu (2002) which also concluded that socio-cultural environment influences student involvement in delinquent behaviour.


Table 3: One Sample t-test of Socio-economic Status on Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents Socio-Economic Status</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>15.22</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>-15.38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a = .05, p<.05

Table 3

Shows a t value of -15.38 with a p value of .000 at and alpha level of .05, the p value is less than the alpha level. So the null hypothesis which states, "Parents' socio-economic status could not significantly predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour" is rejected. Therefore, parent socio-economic status predisposes adolescents to delinquent behaviour. Since the mean of 15.22 values is less than the test value of 20, it shows that low socio-economic status of parents predisposes to delinquent behaviour. This finding is in agreement with Agulanna and Nwanchukwu (2001) who in their studies reported that adolescents of low parental socio-economic status are more violent as they tend to strive for self actualization due to deprivation as a result of low economic status of their parents. This makes them less committed to academic achievement and more involved in delinquent behaviour.

Conclusions

The following conclusion was reached from the findings: Students who are more influenced by their peers are more involved in delinquent behaviour and students who are influenced by socio-cultural environments are more predisposed to delinquent behaviour. Also, low socio-economic status of parents predisposes adolescents to delinquent behaviour.

Recommendation

In view of the findings of this study the researchers recommend that the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) should organize workshops for adolescents on cultural diversity. The need to harness culture as an instrument for developing socially acceptable behaviour should be emphasized. Subsequently, through these seminars and workshops, the negative peer influence will be drastically reduced and this will in turn improve the tone of our schools.
References


