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A SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW OF ISSUES ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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Abstract

Juvenile Justice System is a crucial part in the Criminal Justice Systems of every nation of the world. The proper management of the Juvenile Justice system is a clear indication that such nations are preparing for future generation that will give hope, peace and prosperity. This paper, therefore, examines issues on Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice System. The paper explains the meanings of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Delinquents. The causes of Juvenile Delinquency are adequately examined rightly from the family level, school and the public. Some sociological theories are employed to explain the theoretical causes of delinquency among the youngsters and their delinquent acts are viewed from masculine and feminine patterns. Issues like Police and the delinquents, Courts and the delinquents and Reformatory Homes and the delinquents are thoroughly explained. Furthermore preventive interventions from the family, school, cognitive – behaviour and community levels are equally explained. It also examines issues on Nigeria and Juvenile matters.

Finally, it recommends that families must be assisted by the government, schools must incorporate teachings on Juvenile Delinquency in their curricula and provide good counseling departments and ready assistance to the less privileged students; the communities in the country should be encourage to provide recreational facilities for the youths and encourage the youths to join social clubs and associations and that the governments should train and equip the Police, Court and Reformatory Homes to handle the Juvenile Justice system in such a way that it will meet the international standards.

Key Words: Juvenile, Delinquency, Delinquents, Minors, Justice System.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is fast becoming one of larges problems facing many societies due to many different factors ranging from parental factors to bullying at schools all which has led to different theoretical notions by different scholars (Mulvey, et.al 1997). FBI (2001) reports that juvenile crime is a serious problem in modern American society as a result of the up surging in the statistics of the young people that are engaging in crime.

Juvenile delinquency, however, is a complex problem that is difficult to understand and to explain. Part of the reason is that it shares a relationship with many other social institutions including law enforcement, the juvenile and adult courts, the media, families and schools (Brown 1998). It is erroneous to believe that juvenile delinquency exists in a vacuum, stands alone, has no

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connection to another component of society and that it is a problem that is easily solved (Brown, 1998).

Juvenile delinquency, instead is a complex problem that exacts a substantial and continuing toll on our society (Mulvey et al,1997). Brown (1998) opines that juvenile delinquency is one of the many serious social problems some children confront on a regular basis and that there physical, psychological and financial cost to society. The consequences of delinquency will forever change the lives of the offenders and their victims.

Brown (1998) posits that the concern about juvenile crime is widely shared by the federal, state and local government officials and by the public. Hence, radical steps have to be taken in order to curb this problem.

THE MEANINGS OF JUVELINE DELINQUENCY AND JUVELINE DELIQUENTS

According to Wikipedia (2008), juvenile delinquency refers to criminal acts performed by Juveniles. Jones (2008) defines juvenile delinquency as 'an antisocial or criminal act performed by an individual under the age of eighteen.

Longman dictionary (1995) defines delinquency as "an illegal or immoral behavior, especially by the young person who behaves in a way that is illegal or that the society does not approve of'. Hence, delinquency is criminal or antisocial behaviour of juvenile.

At this point, it is imperative to ask the question: who are Juveniles? Juvenile according to Encarta Dictionary (2008) are the minors in the society. It is a legal term fro those under the age of authority. This varies form country to country but is usually between the ages of 18 and 21. Brown (1998) explains that Juveniles have been presumed to lack the criminal intent to commit willful crimes; hence juvenile law is designed primarily to protect and redirect young offenders rather than to punish them.

Juvenile delinquents in a simple term mean 'adolescents engaging in anti-social behaviour that violates the social codes of the society'. This includes acts ranging from simple disrespect all the way up to murder (Regoli et al, 2006). Wikipedia (1990) sees a Juvenile delinquent as one who repeatedly commits crime. Regoli et al (2006) explain that everyone involved in the juvenile justice system believes that juveniles may not fully grasp the short and long-term significance of criminal acts. As a result, they agreed that adolescents who are delinquent should generally be treated apart form the adult justice system.

Regoli et al (2006) posit that there are a number of different personal, family and social dynamics that appear to increase the chances that an adolescent will become involved in delinquency. Sociologists and Psychologists have suggested some factors which are responsible for the involvement of under age in deviant behaviours. Some of these factors will be critically examined, to have a clear picture of the reasons why the young people participate in criminal activities.

FACTORS THAT CAUSE AND AID JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The inclination towards crime often arises from factors at home. LWVCJJ (2008) explains that troublesome and delinquent children are more likely to come from trouble families and neighborhoods. Regoli et.al (2006) argues that many of the studies that have been made to determine the causes of Juvenile delinquency focused mainly on family relationships. In one study, Comparing delinquent youth and non-delinquent youth showed that over ninety percent of the delinquents had unhappy homes and felt discontented with their life circumstances (Regoli et. al, 2006).

The followings are the areas through which families can cause and aid juvenile delinquency:

1. SPLITED FAMILY : Alfaro (1978) argues that broken homes is a serious factor that can affect the pro-social behaviour of the underage. The young child or the underage child is most

dependent on his family for security and protection, children suffer acute crisis related to the broken homes and the emotional problem that appears later on may encourage the underage to take on delinquent behaviours.

Very similar to broken homes is single – parent families. Children in poor single-parent families, especially those headed by teenage mothers clearly face special difficulties. As a result of this, children from single parent families are more likely to become delinquent than children from two parent families (Alfaro, 1978).

2. WORKING CLASS PARENTS : Working class parents is another major effect of poor families' upbringing that can affect the pro-social behaviour of the underage. Working class parents who go to work and come back late at night or who work from dawn to dusk indirectly expose the under age to juvenile delinquency because the parents are too busy to study and take note the children behaviours. The situations have become worsened as a result of increasing numbers of women in the work place which have reduced the numbers of adults who provide interaction, structure and supervision in a child's life (Alfaro, 1978; Regoli et al, 2006).

3. ONFUSION ABOUT PARENT ROLES AND PARENT CONTROL: Confusion about parental roles and parental adequate control over the lives of the children is another factor which disposes children to delinquency. Family dysfunction and poor parental supervision and socialization are major influences on children's subsequent delinquency (Regoli et al, 2006).

Alfaro (1978) argues that parents who do not pay attention or do not see any thing wrong in their children watching irrelevant programmes which are non-educative also expose their children who are underage into juvenile crime.

4. SIBLING INFLUENCE: Regoli et al (2006) argue that studies have shown that other family members also help determine whether a teen engages in delinquency. It has been discovered that younger siblings often want to follow the path charted by older siblings. This works well if the older siblings are pursuing productive activities. But older siblings who are involved in delinquency may easily draw their siblings into similar acts.

Siblings' violence is another factor which often encourages delinquency. Alfaro (1978) notes that fight between siblings end in cut lips, bruises and occasionally black eyes. According to Alfaro (1978), four out of five of these children reportedly carried out at least one violent act each year.

5. CHILD ABUSE: Child abuse is the deliberate attack on a child by a parent or other care givers which results into physical, psychological and emotional injuries (Page low; 1984). The claim frequently encountered in both popular and scientific literature on child maltreatment is that abused and neglected children are expected to become delinquent at adolescence and /or become criminal adult (Pagelow; 1984).

Thio (2006) reports that the victims of abuse were extremely likely to be reported for escapist crimes such as runaway, truancy, keeping late hour etc.

LWVCJJ (2008) reports that mandated reports of child abuse have increased markedly over the past decade. Witnessing or being a victim of violence at a very early age can have a demonstrable long-term effect on a child's decision to use physical force and become delinquent.

In a correlative idea, Pagelow (1984) found that children, who are target of abuse, especially when the aggressors are both mother and father, are much likely to engage in deviant behaviour and likely to exhibit sadness and anxiety. Pagelow (1984) explains that these abusing parents were themselves abused as children..

SCHOOL AND PEER GROUPS

Regoli et al (2006) argue that schools build upon the foundation laid by the home (parents). At school, the child comes across mates form different homes. As a matter of fact, the school is a representation of the larger society where pupils with various backgrounds meet to

interact and influence one another. Regoli et al (2006) opine that school aids juvenile delinquencies if it fails to make its own impact by building up morals and educational qualities of a child, the child may eventually become a nuisance to the community.

In schools, teachers wield power and students exercise little control over their education. The teacher is the task master whose job is to impose the curriculum upon students. Under this circumstance, it is not surprising that students find school to be hostile (Regoli et al, 2006)

Loss of teacher authority that is primarily the result of 'open' classrooms leads to school crime. Although the open education movement has spawned flexible scheduling, more electives, and lighter course loads, in many instances, such freedoms and flexible scheduling give students more periods during which they have no class to attend. This lack of control makes it easier for students to get away with deviant behaviour such as drug use, violence, and vandalism (Regoli et al, 2006).

Regoli et al (2006) further argue that regimentation and revenge is another school factor that can cause delinquency. Students who do well at school are popular with peers and participate in extracurricular activities probably, consider school rules merely a minor annoyance, but students who fare poorly academically, are not popular and participate little, feel that school does not have joy to offer and consequently regard its rules as oppressive and intolerable. These students find school frustrating, develop hostility towards it and often drift into trouble.

Some Criminologists have singled out tracking as a cause of delinquency. Tracking is the grouping of students into curricular categories, such as the college preparatory, general, vocational, business and remedial tracks. The philosophy of tracking is to make classes as academically homogenous as possible but the negative side of tracking is that it might be used as a form of discrimination which often lead to hostility and resultantly into delinquency (Regoli et al, 2006).

Lastly, Regoli et al 2006 argue that school reproduces the social class structure of society for the benefit of the economic elite. As schools perpetuate inequality, some students react by turning to crime. Most of the young delinquents who are thieves, rogues, lawbreakers, cocaine and heroine pushers, drunkards etc are mostly drop out (LWVCJJ, 2008; Regoli et al 2006).

Peer group influence is another related factor which causes and aids delinquency. Regoli et al (2006) opine that for many juveniles, the most important social institution, the one they spend time with and are closest to emotionally is the family. But to others it is their peer group. The peer group is a group of youths of similar age and interest that often can empower young people in their sense of feeling. Furthermore, Regoli et al (2006) explain that studies have found that close or best friends appear to have significantly greater influence on teen behaviour and that a youth is about twice as likely to engage in delinquency if his or her close friends engaged in it.

Kremer and Levy (2003) when studying the effect of college roommate drinking on non-drinkers, find evidence of a large reinforcing peer effect. The general pattern of this evidence is that exposure to peers with a history of having committed a particular offence has a strong influence on those individuals who have not. Hence, the influence of peer group in juvenile delinquency can not be denied.

POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOPELESSNESS

LWVCJJ (2008) observes that Juvenile delinquency can be as a result of poverty, unemployment, or being hopeless about their conditions. This is particularly present among those in the lower class who mostly live in the rural areas.

AVAILABILITY OF GUNS, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

LWVCJJ (2008), reports that alcohol is involved in about half of the hospital-reported firearm injuries in North America. Illegal drugs have similar consequences and serve as a source of income in an underground economy associated with violence especially among the youths.

MEDIA VIOLENCE

LWVCJJ (2008) also reports that media glorification of violence and avoidance of this in its real life consequences is another factor which triggers violence and other delinquencies among the youths.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Some theories in Sociology had been propounded to explain the incidences of delinquencies among the youngsters. The following theories will be examined in giving explanations to the reasons why youths commit crime:

1. RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY : Wikipedia (2008) explains that classical criminology stresses that causes of crime lie within the individual offender, rather than in their external environment. The theory emphasizes that offenders are motivated by rational self-interest, and the importance of free will and personal responsibility is stressed. Wikipedia (2008) states that people weigh the pros and cons of committing a crime, and offend when the former outweigh the latter. However the theory fails to take into cognizance, the influence a young persons' peers can have on them and the fact that some youths may be less able to accurately foresee the consequences of their actions and others.

2. STRAIN THEORY: Strain theory states that when an individual has goals but is unable to achieve the goals set before him in a legitimate way, the individual will find illegitimate ways of achieving his /her goals (Jones, 2008).

In summary, strain theory holds that crime is caused by the difficulty those in poverty have in achieving socially valued goals by legitimate means. As those with for instance, poor educational attainment have difficulty achieving wealth and status by securing well paid employment, they are more likely to use criminal means to obtain these goals. (Wikipedia, 2008).

The theory explains the reasons why youths from poor families and drop out youths may eventually venture into crime business to achieve the social goals like youths from economically rich families and those who have sound education have achieved.

However, Wikipedia (2008) examines the weaknesses of the theory. The theory fails to explain why children of low –income family, who have poor educational attainment do not commit crime and why children from high-income family with good educational attainment still go ahead to commit crime. Moreover, strain theory fails to explain other types of crime a part from economically motivated theory. It fails to explain violent crime, the type of youth crime which causes most anxiety to the public (Wikipedia, 2008).

Merton suggests five ways through which people show their adaptations to the achievement of social goals through socially approved means.

- (1) conformity – person accepts the goals and means to achieve the goals set by society.
- (2) Innovation – Individual accepts the goal but uses illegitimate means to achieve goal.
- (3) Ritualism – individual that rejects goal but will work towards lower standard goals that have been approved.
- (4) Retreatism – person who reject both the goals and the means.
- (5) Rebellion – person who in a sense crates his /her own society.

Delinquent youths will be found among innovation group. These are robbers, pocket pickers, drug dealers, and prostitutes etc who disapproved the social means (legitimate ways) of achieving cultural goals. Youths in retreatism group are living in the society but not for the society. They have totally segregated themselves from the rest of the society because they believe

that society have nothing good to offer them. These are the youths that have taken into alcohol, drugs etc.

Finally, youths who are political activists fall under the category of rebellion. They do not believe the goals of the society and the approved ways of achieving them but rather create their own goals and means in replacement (Jones, 2008).

3. SUBCULTURAL THEORY: Sub cultural theory explains that inability of youths to achieve socially valued status and goals results in groups of people forming deviant or delinquent subcultures, which have their own values and norms. (Wikipedia, 2008).

Within these groups criminal behaviour may actually be valued and increase a youth's status. The notion of delinquent subculture is relevant for crimes that are not economically motivated. Male gang members could be argued to have their own values, such as respect fighting ability and daring (Walklate, 2003).

However, there is no explanation of why youths unable to achieve socially valued goals should necessarily choose criminal substitutes. And there are also doubts about whether young people consciously reject main stream values (Brown, 1998).

4. LABELING THEORY: Labeling theory states that once young people have been labeled as criminal they are more likely to offend (Eadie & Morley, 2003). The idea is that when a person is labeled a criminal by the justice system and the public, that person begins to believe that he/she is really a criminal and identifies her /himself with that identity (Wikipedia, 2008; Jones, 2008).

Jones (2008) explains further, that individual will look for the types of reactions that their behaviour receives from other. Once an individual has been labeled he/she becomes a social out cast and begins to rebel, in order to live up to his/her identifying label.

Walklate (2003) opines that labeling theorist say that male children from poor families are more likely to be labeled deviant, and that this may partially explain why there are more lower-class young male offenders.

5. DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION: The theory of differential association also deals with young people in a group context, and looks at how peer pressure and the existence of gangs could lead them into crime. It suggests young people are motivated to commit crimes by delinquent peers, and learn criminal skills from them (Wikipedia, 2008).

The theory presents evidence that young people with criminal friends are more likely to commit crimes themselves but however, there is the question of how the delinquent peer group became delinquent initially (Wikipedia; 2008).

6. SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY : The social control theory also known as social bond theory explains that there are different bonds that an individual must take that will determine whether or not he/she will commit offences. The first one is an attachment, meaning that the socialization of an individual depends on an individual's personal interest in another human being. The second one is a commitment, which means that a lack of commitment towards norms and social laws can lead to delinquent behaviour. The third bond is involvement. This means that an individual who participates in positive activities would not have the time to commit criminal acts and the fourth and final bond is belief. When a person does not live in an area that holds the same values or when he/she believes the law is unfair, one tends to rebel and commit criminal act (Jones, 2008).

DELINQUENT ACTS IN BOYS AND GIRLS

Every year, large numbers of adolescents are involved in some form of delinquency. In fact, of all segments of society, adolescents are the most likely to break the law and it is a mistake to believe that delinquency is merely a problem among older male teens, urban teens, teens of

colour, teens with limited opportunities or teens who are poor. Teens delinquency no longer adheres to any race, sex, age or economic barriers (Regoli et al, 2006).

According to Regoli et al (2006), the most frequent crimes of the youths are: breaking curfew, running away, arson, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, burglary, larceny – theft, stolen property, robbery, underage drinking, illegal drug possession and sales, and the selling of prescription medications. In an occasional time, adolescents may also take part in more odious crimes such as assault, rape and murder.

There is, however, sharp contrasts between the types of delinquency boys and girls commit. The offences of girls are almost petty thefts like shoplifting and public order offences such as public drunkenness and prostitution are typical female delinquency (Giddens, 1997).

Shelden (2008) argues that girls are quite often arrested for offences that are not actual crimes like robbery or burglary. Instead, the offences like running away from home, being incorrigible, or being beyond parental control are known with girls. These are called 'Status Offences' and they have long played a major roles in bringing girls into the juvenile system.

Giddens (1997) argues that offences of girls rarely involve violence. However, there are some occasions and situation that teenage girls do become perpetrators of violent acts. OJJDP (2008) reports that peer violence may occur from girls when they fight to gain status, defend sexual reputation and self defence against sexual harassment. Family violence may also occur, especially against parents (most of the occasions, mother) as a form of self defence and expression of anger violence within the school is also recorded against girls. When girls fight in schools, they may do so as result of teacher labeling, in self-defence, or out of a general sense of hopelessness. Finally, violence within disadvantaged neighborhood is also common. Girls in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to perpetrate violence against other because of increased risk of victimization, parental inability to counteract negative community influences, and lack of opportunities of success.

For the boys' common offences, Steffensmier and Allan (2008) list possession of stolen property, vandalism, weapons offences, homicide, robbery, rape aggravated assaults and property offences which have been traditionally considered masculine offences.

POLICE AND THE DELIQUENTS

Police are very crucial in the criminal justice system of every country of the world. It is the police that will firstly come into contact with any offence committed. When the police determine that a crime has been committed and have a suspect, they have the option of referring the juvenile to the prosecutor's office and returning the juvenile to his/her parent or requesting that the juvenile be detained (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2007).

According to Findlaw (2007), When a child is arrested for commission of an offence, the officer in charge of the police station in which the child is detained shall as soon as may be inform.

- (a) the guardian of the child, if he can be found, of such arrest, the time, date and name of the juvenile court before which the child should be produced and
- (b) the concerned probation officer to enable him to obtain such information about the child and other material circumstances which may be of assistance to the Juvenile Court for making.
- (c) Where a child accused of non-bail able offence is arrested, he shall without any delay and in no case later than twenty-four hours from such arrest, be produced before the Juvenile Court.

The officer's discretionary decision to arrest a juvenile suspected of a crime is based on many factors. Some of the factors are legal and others are not legal: the seriousness of the offence,

a youth's prior record, presence of evidence, and characteristics of the juvenile, such as race, sex, age, and attitude, all affect how an officer will respond to a situation (Microsoft –Encarta, 2008).

Discretionary decisions by the police, especially decisions that appear to be arbitrary or discretionary, have led to relational problems between youth and police. And this generates many tensions, making the work of police difficult. The researches show that a third of urban youth says police often use abusive language when talking with young people and the young females indicate male police officer flirted, whistled, or came on them unnecessarily. As a result, police agencies must take steps to improve relations between 'Kids' and 'Cops' through community – Oriented policing (Micro-soft – Encarta, 2008).

JUVENILE COURTS AND THE DELIQUENTS

A juvenile court or young offender court 'a court of law having special authority to try and pass judgment for crimes committed by children or adolescents who have not attained the age of majority' (Wikipedia, 2006). However, Adebayo (2008) defines Juvenile Court as 'the system of justice which provides for the protection and safety of the public and each minor under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Courts'

Wikipedia (2006) explains that juvenile courts exist because of a widespread belief that children are not always fully responsible for their actions, and that neither they nor society are best served by treating young children like adults.

The juvenile courts categorize juveniles into three: those who are charged with criminal conduct, those who haven been neglected, and those who have been accused of status offences such as truancy or disobedience with reasonable parenting. Therefore, the juvenile courts are there to provide rehabilitation instead of punishment (providing treatment instead of depriving them of their liberty and protecting them against self-incrimination) (Wikipedia, 2006).

In a juvenile court, it is possible to have formal charges being avoided. The followings are the official factors which can lead to formal charges being avoided in Juvenile Courts:

- (1) The severity of the offence. A serious crime is more likely to be charged.
- (2) The minor's age. Older children are likely to be charged officially
- (3) The minor's past record. Formal charges are more likely when a minor has been previously involved with juvenile court.
- (4) The strength of the evidence that the minor committed a crime.
- (5) The minor's gender. Boys are more likely to be charged than girls
- (6) The minor's history. A minor with history of problems at home or at school is more likely to be charged.
- (7) The parent's or guardian's apparent ability to control the minor. The greater the lack of parental control, the more likely the minor will be charged. (Wikipedia, 2006).

The followings are the steps involved in handling the juvenile offence:

- (1) Intake: The purpose of intake is to screen cases to determine how they will be handled. If a juvenile is detained and a petition is filled, the case is referred to court. In case of minor offences, the case may be referred for informal hearing through the youth accountability board or through the probation department.
- (2) Arraignment : this is the initial hearing for the purpose of informing the juvenile and parents of the charges and their rights. The judge will also decide where and under what conditions the juvenile will stay until the next hearing.

- (3) Evidentiary hearing: Evidentiary hearing is the same as a trial, except their juvenile do not have right to a jury. At this hearing, the judge listens to everyone's testimony and determines whether the acts charge actually happened.
- (4) Sentencing: At the sentencing hearing the judge will decided what services will be ordered and what conditions the juvenile and parents must fulfill.
- (5) Disposition: The two main dispositions the juvenile courts may order are probation or commitment to the department of juvenile corrections. The probation is the disposition made in most juvenile court cases (the judge will order that the juvenile live with a responsible adults, usually the parents and order that certain condition be followed (3rd Judicial District, 2006).

3rd Judicial District (2006) explains that in some occasions, judge may determine that the juvenile needs treatment that is not available in the community or that the community needs to be protected from the juvenile behaviour. In such case, the juvenile may be placed in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Correction which may then place then juvenile in foster care, a group home, a hospital, secure confinement, or placement in another state.

However, in some cases, judge may determine that the juvenile is not going to respond to the juvenile system and presents enough of a danger to the community that the juvenile should be treated as an adult. Here, the prosecutor must prove the case beyond reasonable doubt, that the child should be treated as an adult. In this case, the juvenile will be ordered into the adult system, he/she will be subjected to any punishment available in adult court (3rd Judicial District; 2006).

Adebayo (2008), protests that the juvenile court System has been unable to cure all the problems of our younger generation and that the system that is turning the clock back to a time when troubled children were abused, is not a solution.

Adebayo (2008) advocates that juvenile court system should provide the troubled children with an educational opportunity to succeed in the future and that the system should provide children in trouble with individualized services to help steer them in the right direction.

REFORMATORY HOMES /CENTRES AND THE DELIQUENTS

A reformatory is a juvenile prison were legal minors are sent by juvenile court or general courts to spend a custodian sentence, separate from the bad example of and abuse by adult (often hardened) convicts (Wikipedia, 2008) reformatory is a penal institution meant to 'reform or rehabilitate' the persons assign to it (Wikipedia, 2005) it is an institution for the discipline, reformation and training of young or first offenders that is why it is call reform school.

The Juvenile Justice System tries to treat and rehabilitate youngsters who become involved in delinquency. The methods can be categorized as community treatment, residential treatment, non-residential community treatment and institutionalization (Microsoft – Encarta, 2007).

In most instances, community treatment involves placing the child on probation, when the child is not believed to be harmful to other. He or she is placed under the supervision of an officer of the juvenile court and must abide by the specific rules that are worked out between the officer and the child. In some instance, it may take the form of restitution or some form of work or public service (Microsoft –Encarta, 2007).

Residential treatment is another method of rehabilitating youngsters who become involved in delinquency. It takes place in a group home where the juvenile is provided with psychological and vocational counseling. It may also involve forestry camps and work farms. However, in case of non-residential community based treatment, the minor offenders do not reside at the facility but instead they live at home and receive treatment from mental health, Clinics or similar services (Microsoft. Encarta, 2007).

EcNet (2008) calls residential and non-residential programmes Group Home Treatment and Foster Family Homes respectively. Group Home Treatment (residential) programmes were rated as successful. They were successful than those with no treatment or with time spent in a juvenile detention centre. They are recommended at early stages of delinquent behaviour and finally, the programmes are good because they reduce the cost of juvenile justice.

In case of Foster Family Homes, they are of hidden benefits for delinquents who are emotionally or psychiatrically impaired. Family care providers (non residential) were said to be able to manage delinquents in a home setting and that their behaviours improved. It is a viable alternative for delinquents and could be used more often (ECNet, 2008)

According to Microsoft-Encarta (2007), institutionalization is the most severe form of treatment for juvenile offenders. The child is incarcerated in a secure facility and denied freedom to come and go in the community. The institution is responsible for the child's counseling, education, recreation, room and board and other daily activities.

ECNet(2008) explains that the main goal of these youth institutionalized centre for serious offenders is to provide high –quality tailored programming. There was a three-day orientation programme and after care program to assist in the transition back to society. The youths received classes and formal counseling instead of being locked up in cells. They were part of the community.

While at these institutionalized centers, youths earned privileges as they progressed. Among the privileges being allowed were paying jobs, family visits at the centre, a weekends at home. This method shows promises, and more attention should be paid to the youths prosocial behaviour when they return to the community (ECNet, 2008). Regoli et al (2006) explain that nearly all juvenile correctional facilities are organized around the following major programming areas.

- (1) Treatment and Counseling: Treatment approaches built on the medical model views delinquency as a disease and that juvenile delinquents could be cured of their problems. This involves the treatment of the psychiatric problems of the delinquents and proper counseling form the experts in psychology.
- (2) Education: most incarcerated youths had high rate of absenteeism, suspension, or expulsion from schools. Hence, institutions have to attend to the academic needs by providing basic literacy classes.
- (3) Vocational Training: Vocational Training in Juvenile correctional facilities reflects 'industrial schools' or 'training schools'. Under this vocational training, boys are usually involved in auto repair, wood working, drafting, small engine repair, computer programming and repair, printing and metal working. Girls are more likely to be included in secretarial training, cosmetology, and library services and data entry.
- (4) Recreation: most of the juvenile institutions provide a wide range of recreational activities such as basket ball, softball, volleyball, billiards, art, music, table games, and sometimes swimming. These will alleviate stress, foster interpersonal skills and as alternatives to drug and alcohol use.

Finally, Regolis et. al (2006) advise that adequate living space, security (to prevent escapes and to provide a safe environment for both juveniles and staff), controlling suicidal behaviours and basic health care must be provided in the juvenile confinement to achieve the actualization of the objectives of the institutions.

PREVENTING DELINQUENCIES IN JUVENILE

Wikipedia (2008) opines that delinquency prevention is the broad term for all efforts aimed at preventing youth from becoming involved in criminal or other antisocial activity and

that increasingly, governments are recognizing the importance of allocating resources for the prevention of delinquency.

With the development of delinquency in youth being influenced by numerous factors, prevention efforts are therefore, comprehensive in scope (Wikipedia, 2008). These prevention efforts involved: family – Based preventive interventions, school-based preventive interventions, cognitive Behavioural interventions, and community – based preventive interventions.

FAMILY-BASED PREVENTIVE INTERVENTIONS

The family is one of the most logical starting places for prevention efforts as a result of empirical evidence relating family functioning to various forms of adolescent antisocial behaviour (Mulvey et al, 1997).

Mulvey et al (1997) explains that under this scheme, preventive efforts have generally been of two types:

- (a) Those that focus on training parents in family management techniques. Several studies have supported the efficacy of parent training for reducing problem behaviours of conduct disordered youth. Under this method, the findings reveal that siblings of behaviour disordered youths were less likely to exhibit problem behaviours and delinquency.
- (b) Those that focus on family support interventions. These provide a broad array of social support services, including day care, medical care, counseling, family needs assessment and referrals to other social service agencies. These will assist the poor families and prevent delinquency.

SCHOOL – BASED PREVENTIVE INTERVENTIONS

According to Mulvey et al (1997), the second major social system historically charged with responsibility for socializing youth is school. A large body of research has shown that low IQ, learning disability, poor attitudes towards school, and school failures are related to and often precede official and self-reports of delinquent behaviour.

Although, according to Mulvey et al (1997), schools traditionally have provided individual focused prevention services such as free lunches, health screening, counseling, and remedial and special education. However, the best known school-based preventive intervention undoubtedly is Project Head Start. The program's intent was to prevent academic problems among economically disadvantaged children by providing a broad range of social services centred around a creative preschool curriculum. The findings indicate that programs of this type may have profound impact on participants, with delinquency prevention one of the ultimate outcomes.

COGNITIVE – BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS

Cognitive behavioural interventions are based on the idea that conduct disorders such as delinquency can result from inability to develop and maintain positive social relationships due to deficits in social skills (Mulvey et al, 1997).

According to Mulvey and his associates, this can be described in two ways:

- (a) Interpersonal cognitive problem solving. This focuses on processes such as interpreting social cues, generating alternative solutions to social problem situations, evaluating the likely outcomes of different solutions and means –ends thinking.
- (b) Behavioural social –skills training programs: These focus on teaching specific behaviour such as entering a peer group, accepting criticism, giving compliments, and resisting peer pressure in committing delinquency.

COMMUNITY –BASED PREVENTIVE INTERVENTIONS

Mulvey et al (1997) argue that community disorganization is related to higher crime rates. Current interventions that focus on increasing community involvement to prevent crime generally are limited to neighbourhood watch organizations or patrols. Such programs have been shown to reduce crime and fear of crime.

Mulvey et al (1997) argue further that some community based programs have been established for the premise that adolescents experiencing trouble need a supportive place to find help with a variety of problems.

One important of such programs is youth recreation. Youth recreational facilities are created to provide constructive activities for youth and reduce their involvement in antisocial activity. According to Mulvey (1997), studies have shown a relationship between participation in organized athletic programs and lower levels of delinquent activity, especially for working class boys.

In a related community –based preventive intervention, Morash et al (1991) argue that preventive programs require placing an individual in favourable environment where he/she would be less tempted to imitate violent behaviour. One of the examples of such environment is the social services of the church. Morash et al (1997) argue further, that social services of the church can do much and some of them do in providing more experimental, intensive and therapeutic assistance to delinquents than public resources customarily are equipped to perform.

NIGERIA AND JUVENILE MATTERS

Chukwuma et al (2002) explain that Nigeria is currently undertaking a reform to its child laws to bring the country in line with the principles and rights contained in the united Nations convention on the rights of the child. This process has resulted in a draft Child Rights Bill that has been signed into law.

It is a comprehensive piece of legislation encompassing all aspects relating to the welfare and care of the child as well as Child Justice (Chukwuma et al, 2002).

The study undertaken by constitutional rights project reveals the followings:

1. Some children had been detained for periods of between four eight years.
2. Approximately 60% of children in police cells were their for truancy and being beyond parental control.
3. Only a small percentage of child offenders had committed serious offence.
4. Large proportion of children were not legally represented during their trials (Chukwuma, et al, 2002).

In the further studies conducted, the constitutional rights project equally gives the followings as outcomes of the studies conducted in six geopolitical zones in Nigeria:

1. Most children are found in juvenile detention centers, but a large numbers are found in prisons where they are detained and tried with adults.
2. The Juvenile Detention Centers have educational and vocational facilities but lack adequately trained personnel and learning materials. (Chukwuma et al, 2002).

Chukwuma et al (2002) explain further, that National Policy on Child Justice Administration is meant to contribute to the overall objective of the government of Nigeria in establishing an effective system of justice for children in conflict with the law within the context of international and regional documents.

The policy handles issues such as:

1. The age of criminal responsibility
2. Pre-trial Juvenile Justice
3. The constitution, functions and procedure of the Juvenile Court.
4. Disposition measure available to the juvenile courts; and
5. Non-judicial Child Justice Prevention Policies and Programmes
6. The strategies for improving and reforming child justice administration in Nigeria.

The National Conference on Juvenile Justice Administration was held in July, 2002. This resulted in the establishment of a National Working Group on Juvenile Justice Administration which as a result of their findings makes the following recommendations:

1. Funding allocation receiving priority.
2. The provision and maintenance of adequate facilities for children deprived of their liberty;
3. Appropriate training for officials and the appointment of specialist such as psychologists and social workers;
4. Speedier trials for children awaiting trial
5. The establishment of at least one Juvenile Detention Centre per state and
6. The development of crime prevention strategies (Chukwuma et al, 2002).

The successful implementation of these recommendations by the government of this county is yet to be visible into commendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Notwithstanding, the followings are the recommendation of this paper on how to address the issues of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria as a nation:

1. Governments at the local, state and federal levels must put in places programmes to assist the less privileged families to alleviate the problem of poverty.
2. Programmes must be established to assist parents in acquiring good parenting skills that will give them good parental controls over their children' behaviours. This will equally smooth the relationships between parents and their children.
3. Schools curricula must be re—designed to include the teaching of the causes, effects and preventions of delinquencies among children. This will familiarize the children with, especially, the evils inherent in turning to delinquency.
4. Every school must have formidable counseling units to assist the children who have one problem or the other.
5. Schools should embark on Juvenile Delinquency Preventive service such as free lunch, free health screening, remedial and special education. This will assist the less privileged children at the school level.
6. Schools must always liaise with the parents to oversee the general behaviours of their students or pupils.
7. Every community should be encouraged to establish recreational facilities like football pitches, volley ball courts, handball courts, table tennis games e.t.c to keep the children busy and prevent them from delinquency.

8. Clubs and associations like Boys Scout, Boys Brigade, Girls Guild, Red Cross, Rotaract Club e.t.c must be encouraged among our youths. This will dissuade them from delinquency and equally provide the opportunity to learn spirit of good behaviour.
9. A separate Police Department must be established to handle the matters on delinquency. Some Police Officer must be trained, specially, to deal with issues of delinquency. Periodic Training Policy must be encouraged.
10. There must be special Courts at the local, state and federal levels to try juvenile cases without any delay.
11. Judges of these courts must be encouraged to undergo training, seminars and workshops on Juvenile Justice System, especially at the international level. This will give them the opportunity to handle the judicial matters on juvenile in a way that will meet the international standards.
12. In every state, there must be at least a Youth Detention Centre. Such Youth Detention Centre must be adequately equipped to treat and counsel the delinquent youths. Educational, vocational and recreational facilities must be sufficiently provided.
13. The activities of these Youth Detention Centers must be monitored by the governments to ensure compliance with international standard.
14. Alternative rehabilitative procedures like Probation, Group Home Treatment and Foster Family Home should be given trials like those of the developed countries of the world.
15. Government (federal, states and locals) should be ready to commit resources (money and in terms of personnel) to Juvenile Justice System of this country.
16. Finally, there should be a stand by committee at the Federal and States' levels that will constantly monitor, assess and implement policies on Juvenile Justice System in this country.

CONCLUSION

The Juvenile Justice System has reinforced the message that children are not adults. Children do not have the life experience that adults are expected to possess. Children are constantly learning, and in the process they sometimes make mistakes, because that is how they learn. It has taught forgiveness and perseverance, and that we should never give up on our children.

No matter the crime, we still have a moral obligation to try and rehabilitate. We should note that these young offenders are in a time where there can be changes in life. We need to work more vigorously in this area, bearing in minds that these young adolescents are the future of the next generation.

Hence, we need the Juvenile System that must be redesigned to deter youth from committing additional crimes and become career criminals not the system that will subject young offenders to dehumanization. The full achievement of this will stand the test of time.

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