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A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT ON THE IMPACT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BILLIRI L.G.A

By

Pedi Alexander Wetkos

School of Education, College of Education, Billiri,

David Audu Mono

School of Education, College of Education, Billiri

And

Maxwell Shingtong

University of Jos

Abstract

The study explores the impact of juvenile delinquency on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Billiri, Gombe State. From the outlined objectives of the study, four (4) research questions were formulated to direct the study. The research adopted a descriptive survey design to study the population of four hundred and twenty-two (422) students from fourteen (14) government senior secondary schools in Billiri L.G.A, Gombe State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select two hundred and ten (210) senior (SS1-3) students from seven secondary schools in the study area from whom data was collected and generalizations made on the entire population of the study. A self-developed structured questionnaire titled “The Impact of Juvenile Delinquency on the Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary Students Questionnaire” was used for the collection of data. A simple percentage system was used to answer the four research questions raised. The study revealed that there are various behavioural patterns displayed by juvenile senior students; such as cheating and examination malpractice, fighting, disobedience and threats to teachers. Other indulgences include drug abuse and illicit substances, late coming to school and truancy, inappropriate dressing and shabby appearance at school amongst many others. The study also showed that home, school and societal factors are responsible for juvenile delinquency since no child is born delinquent. It is an environmental factor and these factors are inimical to learning and academic achievements in schools. Although our study showed that the menace of juvenile delinquency could be dealt with. The paper recommends that prevention of such adverse behaviour is far better than its cure.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Impact, Academic, Achievement and Secondary School

Introduction

Every individual desire to grow and become a functional member of the society. In the process of growth, he gains empowerment through learning in school and society. Bola (2013), observes that stakeholders in the education industry such as the government, school proprietors, teachers and parents have a role since they contribute hugely to the educational development of these learners. To ensure the high academic achievement of students in school, factors that impede on learning must be rid of. According to Esuabana (2017), there has always been a disparity in the

performance of students in school. While some students perform or achieve high grades, others perform poorly to the extent that some of the students are withdrawn. However various reasons have been advanced for the disparate performance among learners; some include intelligence level, socioeconomic background, school environment, student attitudes, sex of student and the like.

In every society, there are sets of norms which members are expected to adhere to for the common good of all. However, not every member of the society abides by these norms. Members who are under age that flaunt such norms are referred to as delinquents. Bello (2006) defines juvenile delinquency to be abnormal behaviours exhibited by people below the age of 18 years. And this trend is becoming alarming today. Stakeholders in the education sector are disturbed about this problem which affects mostly children of school-going age. That is why the menace of juvenile delinquency is being discussed on television, radio and other social media platforms. This problem seems to thrive despite efforts by religious bodies, moral instructors, parents, teachers and others to eliminate it. Adamu (2001) opines that the number of students affected by juvenile delinquency in schools is estimated to have increased in Nigeria among students of school going age. But Igbimoria (2010) views it differently, to her, juveniles in Nigeria do not operate in gangs, but there are instances of assault and vandalism committed by small groups of juveniles such as looting, stealing attacks, and threats. Some of these juvenile acts are encouraged during political campaigns and other tense occasions. Some of these crimes committed by juveniles which is a bridge of the law if committed by adults will be treated as crimes and serious punishments applied. The youths of this country are over 40% of the entire population, (Jide 2000). Among them are young adolescents, a bulk of the rest are in various secondary schools across the country. Although, we may say that the problem of juveniles can be understood concerning the discovery of new body features and it is a separate stage of life with hormonal imbalances which indicates why misbehavior of juveniles is different from adult crime. Many juvenile acts are committed in school such as smoking, harassment of teachers, bullying, drug abuse, cultism and other anti-social activities. These behaviours are very harmful to learning and obtaining high academic achievement.

One will wonder what is the result of juvenile delinquency if such anti-social behaviours are not limited to a particular geographical area in the world. Most of these delinquent behaviours are very ubiquitous and universal in scope. Although these acts have been accepted to be detrimental to the growth and proper development of children because of the negative consequences they extend on learning. Billiri in Gombe State is not completely free from such crimes perpetrated by under age children mostly of school-going age. Many people assert that juvenile delinquency is a result of the failure of parents and teachers to perform their expected role on learners at home and in schools.

Society is also to be blamed for enhancing such consumables that lead to the exhibition of such tendencies and behaviour among minors. This problem poses a serious concern to all rational minds in society especially among those who believe in healthy living and in harmonious development of the youth. It becomes obvious and necessary to promote a culture of discipline by teachers, parents, counsellors and religious leaders. A close observation of what is happening in secondary schools will show that juvenile delinquency is a serious obstacle to students' academic achievement. Observation has shown that young people are at risk of juvenile delinquency because they often live in different circumstances such as parental alcoholism, poverty, family breakdown, abusive conditions in the home, death of parents, lack of means of sustenance and necessities and other inherent challenges.

However, juvenile delinquency of a student has a strong effect on his/her learning process. The

scope of juvenile delinquency is one of the predominant factors that impede on the academic progress of a student and must be properly tackled with all sense of seriousness. Although young adolescents who engage in juvenile acts are not born with it naturally, most studies show that the surroundings in which a child is brought up largely influence them such as lack of discipline at home and in school. This deep problem does not only affect the victim of the delinquent but also affects the delinquent, his family and the entire society as a whole. The majority of them are not able to predict the effects of their crimes by themselves, but they are badly affected by these crimes. The adverse effect of these crimes affects their academic welfare because they are forced to miss academic activities or to attend such under some influence which retard performance. Elliot (2013) argues that most of the crimes done by juveniles are largely a result of failure on the part of primary groups to offer the children appropriate social guidance such as role model with other forms of social control which will ensure other forms of socially acceptable habits which are under the expectation of the society. To this end, Unicef (2022) categorized delinquents as

1. Unsocialized delinquency- this category of delinquent is violent, malicious and lacking in remorse. They are psychopaths and mostly dangerous in their conduct. The distinguishing features of the psychopathic group are very dangerous and full of young criminals
2. Socialized delinquents- they are the most common group of delinquents they keep bad company but are less dangerous. Their simple desire is to conform to peer pressure or norms. They are mostly a frustrated group of young adolescents

A rapid attention to what is happening in secondary school today will reveal that juvenile delinquency is a monster, menace and an obstacle to learning among secondary school students. There is therefore the need to address these antisocial problems within our young people and give them the leverage they need to learn and achieve high academic progress in schools.

Definition of terms

For this study, the following terms are defined and used in this instance.

Juvenile delinquency: Juvenile delinquency is the habitual committing of offences or crimes by young people, especially those below the age of 18 years at which criminal prosecution is possible. It is the act of participating in unlawful behaviours as a minor or younger person who is below the statutory age of 18 years. Bartol (2011), explained juvenile delinquency to mean the involvement of a child in extreme antisocial behavior. Children are supposed to be a sign of innocence and loyalty; they are involved in behaviour that is detrimental to the well-being of the society. Walter (2007) opines that the term juvenile delinquency refers to a large variety of behaviour that young people and adolescents engage in that society does not approve of. This is explained further to mean the failure of young children to meet certain obligations expected of them by the society in which they live. This applies to the violation of the criminal code and the pursuit of certain patterns of behavior in children or young adolescents.

Academic performance

"Academic" means the result of school work. For example, test scores. When "achievement" is used as a noun, it refers to the results obtained in a career. Wang (2021) believed that academic achievement can be equated with academic performance. In a study of personality traits and academic achievement of secondary school students, academic achievement was measured using students' midterm and final grades in language, mathematics, and foreign language subjects.

Academic achievement entails the ability of a student to attain the objectives of the educational system as prescribed by an institution. It includes the performance of such a student regarding grades, test scores and meeting the requirements for completing a certain level of education. This is reflected in the knowledge acquired and the ability to perform specific tasks and application of concepts which have been learned.

Statement of the problem

Despite proactive measures being put in place by the government and its law enforcement agencies regarding the fight against drug proliferation and abuse, this social menace has continued to dig deep into the lives of Nigerian youths. This cuts across diverse communities and in recent times noticeable across different tribes, cultures, and religions and it exists irrespective of gender disparity.

One can safely assert that most juvenile delinquents abuse drugs and their actions are usually not unassociated with the same. The relationship between these two socially interconnected factors indicates that an increase in one can be the cause or a result of the other. It is in light of this factor that the rate and extent of the continuous increase in cases of juvenile delinquency and school drop-out require a community-based study, irrespective of the extensive research already carried out on the phenomenon on a general basis. This study seeks to investigate the remote causes of juvenile delinquency and the relationship it has on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Billiri Local Government Area.

Objective (s) of the study

The objective of this research work is to critically find out the impact of juvenile delinquency on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Billiri LGA. Specifically, the study sought to find out the:

1. The various causes of juvenile delinquency in our schools
2. To identify the consequences of juvenile delinquency in our schools and society
3. To ascertain and assess the relationship between juvenile delinquency and the academic achievement of senior secondary school students
4. State the relationship between juvenile delinquency and learning
5. Proffer possible solutions to the problems identified

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are some of the vices associated with students in schools?
2. Are there some factors that trigger juvenile delinquency among secondary School students?
3. Is poor academic achievement by students in school associated with juvenile delinquency?
4. Are there proven ways by which juvenile delinquency could be curbed among senior secondary students in Billiri?

Methodology

The research design used for this study was a survey research design. Survey research is mainly concerned with the collection of data from a representative sample using a questionnaire, interview, observation and test. The intention is to describe the characteristics of the population (Awotunde and Ugodulunwa, 2004:34). In education mostly, this provides information on facts, opinions, and attitudes of individuals on problems or educational issues. Since the study is about the population of students in Billiri L.G.A, this design is very suitable and matches the study. The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary students in all the Government Secondary Schools in Billiri Local Government Area of Gombe State. There are fourteen (14) Government Secondary Schools in the Local Government Area with a population of four hundred and twenty-two (422) senior students for the 2022/2023 academic session.

Two hundred and ten (210) senior secondary students out of the four hundred and twenty-two

were selected from seven (7) randomly sampled schools in the study area, representing 50% of the total population of four hundred and twenty-two students including male and female students within the seven (7) schools. This is significant enough and justifiable for this study. The researcher used the following secondary schools from the study area as samples for the study: Government Science Secondary School Billiri, Government Day Secondary School, Ibinola, Government Day Secondary School Billiri, Government Day Secondary School Tal, Government Day Secondary School Todi, Government Day Secondary School Ayaba and Government Technical College Tanglang. The selection of these schools was done using a simple random sampling technique. The names of these schools were written on pieces of paper, the papers were folded and thoroughly mixed in a bowl after which the researcher picked them one after the other and were recorded. This procedure was equally adopted in the selection of the respondents for the study. This method of sampling gives every element in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample and it removes the possibility of a researcher's bias.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher's self-developed questionnaire, titled, "The Impact of Juvenile Delinquency on the Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Billir L.G.A." For the instrument to measure what it was intended to measure, it was subjected to content, face validity and reliability test. The respondents were presented with the option of ticking the statement that best expressed their opinion on the issues presented on the questionnaire. While the simple percentage was employed to analyze the data generated.

Results

Research Question 1. Are Juvenile Delinquent students associated with some negative vices in schools in Billiri L.G.A?

Table 1: Responses on the negative vices associated with juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	SD %	D %	Total %
1.	Examination malpractice and cheating	71(34%)	61(29%)	38(18%)	40(19%)	210(100%)
2.	Fighting, disobedience and threats	68(32%)	64(30%)	39(18%)	39(18%)	210(100%)
3.	Drug abuse and bullying	81(39%)	64(30%)	32(15%)	33(16%)	210(100%)
4.	Late coming and truancy	63(30%)	64(30%)	29(14%)	54(26%)	210(100%)
5.	In-appropriate dressing and shabby appearance	91(43%)	60(29%)	40(19%)	19(9%)	210(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Responses in Table 1 show that there are certain vices displayed in schools by delinquent students. 63% responded that juvenile delinquent students are easily associated with examination malpractice and cheating because they are not always studious and lack concentration. While 62% of the respondents also responded positively that acts such as fighting, disobedience to teachers, parents and other members of the school authority and threats are common among juvenile delinquent students. Drug abuse and bullying of younger students are also some of the common vices exhibited by this category of students as over 69% of our respondents responded in that direction. On late coming to school, truancy, inappropriate dressing and shabby appearance over 70% of the respondents responded positively. The responses revealed that juvenile delinquency cannot be separated from vices that are inimical to learning and such outward displays are signals of who delinquent learners are in schools.

Research Question 2. What are some of the factors that are responsible for Juvenile Delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri?

Table 2: Responses on the factors that are responsible for juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	SD %	D %	Total %
1.	Unchecked school and home environments.	72(34%)	59(28%)	40(19%)	37(18%)	210(100%)
2.	Peer pressure and negative influence	90(43%)	71(34%)	24(11%)	25(12%)	210(100%)
3.	Bad parenting, teacher's influence and moral decadence.	60(29%)	61(29%)	50(24%)	39(19%)	210(100%)
4.	Poor performance in school and lack of self-esteem among students.	55(26%)	52(25%)	61(29%)	42(20%)	210(100%)
5.	The pernicious influence of mass media and social media	59(28%)	57(27%)	50(24%)	44(21%)	210(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Responses in Table 2 show that juvenile delinquency is not an inborn trait. There are some factors that could trigger such unruly behavior in young people. In most cases, unchecked home and school environments are responsible for juvenile delinquency among students. 62% of the respondents responded positively while only 37% responded negatively. Some of the factors attributed to being responsible for juvenile delinquency include peer pressure, bad parenting, moral decadence in society and the harmful influence of Westernization and mass and social media on students. Most of the respondents responded positively in that direction.

Research Question 3. Juvenile delinquency is responsible for the poor achievement of most senior secondary School Students in schools in Billiri LGA.

Table 3: Responses on the relationship between juvenile delinquency and the academic achievement of senior secondary students in Billiri L.G.A

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	SD %	D %	Total %
1.	Drug abuse and consumption of illicit substances affect students' academic achievement in schools.	63(30%)	59(28%)	45(21%)	43(20%)	210(100%)
2.	Delinquent students suffer from a lack of concentration leading to poor performance	57(27%)	61(29%)	47(22%)	45(21%)	210(100%)
3.	Hard work, good character and a positive mindset enhance student performance.	70(33%)	59(28%)	31(15%)	50(24%)	210(100%)
4.	Student disposition, environment and parent's genetic influence determine performance in school	91(43%)	62(30%)	27(13%)	30(14%)	210(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Responses in Table 3 show although teaching and learning involve the teacher being ready while the learners are also expected to be ready for it to be effective. Where the teacher is very ready and determined to teach but if the student is not in a stable mental or behavioural state of mind to learn, learning may never take place. 58% of the respondents responded positively that since most juvenile delinquent students are associated with vice or the other such as taking drugs and other illicit substances such acts affect their academic performance negatively. This is so because delinquent students lack concentration in school which is key to effective learning leading to high academic achievement. This shows that students who are not into such delinquent acts stand a better chance of achieving high in school than those who are delinquents. 73% of the respondents revealed that for high academic achievement, students must exhibit concentration, hard work, good character, a positive mindset and be in the right environment. That is, hard work favourable environment with a good combination of parents' genetic makeup and high academic achievement are possible.

Research Question 4. Are there ways of preventing juvenile delinquency among Senior Secondary School Students in Billiri?

Table 4: Responses on whether there are ways of curbing juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	SD %	D %	Total %
1.	School and home counselling by teachers and parents.	65(31%)	68(32%)	39(19%)	37(18%)	210(100%)
2	Suspension, solitary confinement and expulsion of students.	55(26%)	54(26%)	51(24%)	50(24%)	210(100%)
3.	Discipline or punishment of recalcitrant students.	83(40%)	69(33%)	30(14%)	28(13%)	210(100%)
4	Serious engagement of students in Extracurricular activities.	56(27%)	51(24%)	51(24%)	52(25%)	210(100%)
5	Involvement of students in school decision-making processes	52(25%)	51(24%)	56(27%)	51(24%)	210(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Responses in Table 4 show that it is possible to curb juvenile delinquency or bring it down to the barest minimum. 63% of the respondents revealed that school and home counselling could be an effective way of dealing with students who have exhibited such negative tendencies. This implies that when such negative behaviours are noticed, teachers and parents must come together to deal with it. Other disciplinary measures should also be applied. 52% of the respondents agreed with such measures. Teachers and parents are encouraged to always keep an eye on their students and wards, where bad behaviours are noticed, they should be immediately tackled before it is allowed to fester and become intractable. 51% of respondents argued that when students are kept busy both at home and in school, it helps them to avoid peer pressure which leads to negative influence culminating in juvenile delinquency.

Discussion

The first objective was to look at the various manifestations of juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A, Gombe State. The study revealed that juvenile

delinquency is a big problem for learning in schools which manifests in the area of cheating and examination malpractice, fighting and bullying of junior students, disobedience and threats to teachers, drug abuse among students, truancy and late coming to school, inappropriate dressing and shabby appearance by students. All these are harmful to the school environment. This is consistent with Bartol (2011) who said juvenile delinquent students has a negative influence on other students in school.

The second objective was to look at some of the factors responsible for juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A in Gombe State. The study revealed that unchecked home and school environments, peer pressure, bad parenting, moral decadence in society, and pernicious influence of westernization with social and mass media are all factors that if allowed could lead to juvenile delinquency among senior secondary students. Therefore, parents are to watch out for such factors and ensure that they eradicate them from their homes and encourage teachers to do the same in school immediately after such behavioural anomalies are noticed.

The third objective of the study examined the relationship between juvenile delinquency and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Billiri L.G.A of Gombe State. The study showed that there is a serious relationship between juvenile delinquency and the academic achievement of senior secondary students because no matter how intelligent a student is in school, if such a student is involved in acts that are inimical to learning the student may not achieve anything significant. Behavioural problems such as drug abuse and consumption of illicit substances, truancy and lack of respect, lack of focus and concentration do not aid learning.

The fourth objective of the study was to find out if there are ways to curb the menace of juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students. The study revealed that there are some ways of dealing with delinquent students with the aim of assisting them to get over such behavioural tendencies such as school and home counselling setups, discipline and corporal punishment of recalcitrant students by teachers and parents, homework and assignments to make them busy, engagement in extra-curricular activities of their choice and also involving students in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The study investigated the impact of juvenile delinquency among senior secondary students in Billiri L.G.A of Gombe State. From the empirical pieces of evidence revealed, it is right to conclude that juvenile delinquency harms the academic achievement of students. Learning is a serious business that requires the holistic mindset of the learner. Any act or vice that derails the attention of the student and eats into his/her studious time does not aid in high academic achievement and so it should be dealt with appropriately for effective learning. Irrespective of how a student is gifted and book tough, the need for hard work, focus diligence, and dedication to learning cannot be over-emphasized for high academic success. For an effective fight against this social menace, there should be an extensive all-encompassing commitment from stakeholders and all possible measures must be explored to tackle and forestall further escalation of juvenile delinquency. Adequate awareness must be created so that all stakeholders will become aware of the various contributions they can make in creating a delinquent-free generation for the youths and the entire society.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, there is a need for a re-examination of our societal values by all stakeholders. Parents, teachers, the school system and the community at large all have distinct but interrelated roles to play in curbing socially unacceptable behaviours in young adults.

Parents should ensure that they leave no traces of defiant behaviours before their children. Children are very susceptible to the impact of such adverse behavior. The behaviours of children in most cases are the result of what their parents exhibit. There should be a strict behavior prism at home and as they relate with their peers. Adverse influences and behaviours are inimical to learning should be immediately dealt with before it is allowed to fester. They can also help in developing a strong positive self-concept in their children as this might help in serving as a social-psychological vaccination against delinquency. Parents should also create some sense of inner containment in their children, this will help protect them against peer pressures and possible influences outside the home environment.

Next to parental influence is the influence teachers have over the behaviours of their students. Young adults spend most of their time outside the home in school with their teachers. Teachers are therefore encouraged to be trained and developed intensively so as to present themselves as effective role models to their students. Teachers can also report unruly behaviours noticed in their students for early intervention. Such can help in preventing further degeneration of the behavioural patterns identified.

The school system should create early-age targeted interventions that can prevent the exposure of students to delinquent behaviours and ensure that counselling services are made available and constantly updated to meet up with prevailing situations. Students can be engaged in interesting and various school programs, such will keep them occupied with less free time to derail unwanted practices.

The community at large can also be involved by setting and observing strictly acceptable patterns of behavior in young adults. Where possible security enforcement can be used to provide corrective measures, which are age appropriate. As such will create a conducive environment for effective education of these young adults.

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