

THE EFFECT OF PEER-GROUPING ON JUVENILE DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS IN AJEROMI IFELODUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The recent cases of ganging amongst the youth have been on the high side irrespective of the sensitization campaign in the nation at large. Some of these gangs formed have been sources of violence and some social behavioural instability that are ravaging our country Nigeria. This however made it quite imperative to carry out this research work. This study therefore investigated the effect of Peer-grouping on juvenile delinquent behaviours. The area is Ajeromi-Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos State. A sample of 200 students who were within the juvenile group age – brackets were randomly selected from 10 schools all in Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area. Questionnaire was used to gather data. Five null hypotheses were formulated for the research work. However, T-test statistics was used to test each of the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that, two formulated hypotheses were accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the female and male responses concerning peer-grouping. There is no significant difference in the gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviour.

These findings were situated within the already existing body of knowledge and their implication for counselling education were discussed while recommendations were made.

Key words: *Peer-grouping, Juvenile, Delinquent Behaviours, Gender.*

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency, a major public concern in Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area in Lagos State Nigeria, refers to illegal acts committed to youth younger than 18 years. These juveniles are products of interactions between individual and environmental factors, and their likes often are characterized by the presence of other problems, including drug abuse, mental health problems and school failure (Juvenen & Graham, 2015).

Delinquent behaviour by young people is a long standing subject of public and governmental concern (Makinde, 2004). Although ‘delinquency’ is hard to define. There is a widespread understanding of its core characteristics, main causes and effects. The concept of ‘peer-grouping’ effect is new and is not widely understood but the problems are extensive. This study however provides an overview of both juvenile delinquency behaviours and effect of peer-grouping and discusses how they relate to one another.

In addition, this study is going to consider some other factors which could be said to be responsible to juvenile delinquent behaviours other than peer-grouping such as; family, culture, conflict, moral development and eventually consider the epidemiology on juvenile delinquency very relevant in the course of this study.

However, it is possible that peer group encourages some degree of snobbery and undesirable behaviours like drug abuse, cultism, armed robbery, fraud, rape and prostitution as concluded by Olayinka and Omoegun (2002). Makinde (2004) sees to peer group as a common phenomenon in juvenile group. Adolescents are loyal to their peer and rely on them for support and understanding. The individual learns and copies certain things which are considered to be vogue from the members of the peer group (e.g.) speech habit, club membership, dressing styles, hair-do, goal setting and more than any other time, hetero-social involvements, to keep abreast of the time and social milieu. Within the school and non-social settings, there have been cases of juvenile delinquent behaviours when properly examined, the elements of peer-grouping among them is not far-fetched from the truth. This is to say that, this study will have to consider majorly 'the effects of peer-grouping' on juvenile delinquent behaviours and perhaps work out for solution to this unacceptable behaviour.

Coleman (1961) argued that peers become increasingly important during or before adolescent period at the expenses of parental influence. Coleman (1961) argued that peers are an important reference group for developing youth.

Ausubel, Monte & Suajian (1977) contend that as youths try to free themselves from parental control as they strive to achieve emotional and psychological independence as rapid social and physical maturation process take place, the peer group provides a means by which status can be earned.

Due to modern technology, peculiar problems quite unexpected from adolescents rear their heads to the amazement of the school authority (Makinde, 2007). For instance, when two secondary schools fight as a result of sports hooliganism or other forms of unhealthy rivalry, it is amazing to see the type of ammunitions that they possess. Some carry sharp knives, daggers and pen-knives some of which are hidden under their uniforms.

Sequel to the above, the fear of parents is that new entrants may join the bad ones in no time. According to the Makinde (2007), in the late 1990s, the teachers in Immaculate Heart High School at Maryland took it upon themselves to do on-the spot search of all the senior students. They could not believe their eyes when more than 75% of the students carried condoms! They would climb the advert lorry and dance away their sorrow. It could then be said that the causes of juvenile delinquency are not far-fetched. Some of them could be lack of adequate parenting (Sokan, 2014).

Therefore, the time is now when each school should be equipped with enough Counsellors to have a firm grip on the moral training and discipline of the adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

For sometimes now, delinquency has increased at an alarming rate in Nigeria (Ogunniyi, 2005). Different state governments at different times have evolved ways of handling various acts of youth indiscipline and other related maladaptive behaviours which if left unchecked will automatically lead to delinquency. Surprisingly, our youths now are not living up to the expectations from them as a result of negative peer influence (Ogunniyi, 2005). This however, recognizes that the youths are facing lots of problems, challenges and many others. The Government is not ignorant of this development which might likely cause delinquent behaviours among the youths at their earlier stage in life. Strike actions of all sorts have escalated the delinquent problems in Lagos metropolis. Boys and girls resorted to all sorts of things, some hawk goods trying to help parents to feed the family, others become conductors of buses during this period, they are exposed to all sorts of things like smoking, alcoholism and taking of drugs and at the end of the strike some may not want to go back to school.

It is also notable that, various efforts have been made by Ministry of Education, School Authority, NGO's and other organizations to address some of these problems. No wonder counselling units have been introduced in our Secondary Schools where the age brackets of juvenile (i.e.) (12 – 17) could be found majorly.

It cannot be overemphasized that the peace of any society and stability of any government depend largely on the co-existence of youth involvement in National building but where the youths have not been fully engaged in this course as it is presently, makes them to be left alone thereby becoming one of the major sources of instability to the nation at large (FGN, 1984).

It becomes quite obvious that, the activities of our youths at this period if not checked properly might result to the formation of numerous offending groups within the juvenile age group. It is important to note that, as it is contained in Eras Edition 10/11/2008 – <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/publications/eras>; juvenile delinquency became visible in Lagos from the mid-1920s. Before then there was no mention either in African Newspapers, like the Lagos Daily Times and the Nigeria Pioneer, or in Police reports of specific offences involving youths. The first indications of these offences appeared in the late 1920s. From the 1920s to the 1960s, three important features shaped the juvenile delinquency milieu: the increase in the number of young offenders; the affirmation of the existence of male offender youth group and the emergence of an organized network of juvenile prostitution. The senior resident in Lagos considered that the average number of cases involving juveniles convicted in Nigeria was only 30 a year between 1927 and 1930, but rose to 112 cases in 1934 and 158 cases in 1935. This has posed a great trait to the growth and stability of our country Nigeria hence, there is no record showing its decrease till date. This eventually led to the second feature of the period which is the emergence of youth criminal groups. There is only limited evidence of offences committed by youth gangs in early Colonial Lagos, but this period needs further research. Cases reported by the Nigerian Pioneer in 1923 and 1924 involved single young pickpockets operating in crowded places (the post office, railway stations and Tinubu Square). In 1926 the attention of the Nigeria Pioneer was called to the frequency of assaults on girls by young men and boys. The molestation which follows usually elicit retorts and a squabble follows (SIC). The Lagos Daily Times also reported certain bands of young men who parade certain portions of the town armed with sticks or whips.

This particular type of hooliganism shows no sign of decreasing and is particularly prevalent during Christmas week. In 1929 several reports reached the Lagos Daily Times according to Eras Edition (2008) about repeated attacks on Carter Bridge between Iddo Station (the terminal railway) and Lagos Island. They have developed collective strategies with shared responsibilities to minimize the risk of being arrested by the police according to Eras (2008). This has made the residents in Lagos to be living in fear because of insecurity of their lives and properties.

As a result of this, Government on her part has tried to set up most of the agencies to compliment the efforts of the Nigerian Police Force in handling such emanating ugly experiences in the area of study. Sadly to note, as Government tries to effectively bring positive checks on the increase of juvenile delinquent behaviours, so also the said juvenile group sees ways of averting being nabbed by the Law enforcement agency.

Therefore, this study focuses on the effect of peer-grouping on juvenile delinquent behaviours in the area of study in order to serve as a panacea to address issues of juvenile delinquency among our youths.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of peer-grouping on juvenile delinquent behaviours in Ajeromi Ifelodun Area of Lagos State.

It however stands as a guide to;

1. assessing the difference in responses of male and female students concerning peer-grouping.
2. evaluate the gender difference in involvement in delinquent behaviours.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following questions were considered.

1. To what extent would there be any difference in the responses of male and female students concerning peer-grouping?
2. To what extent would there be any gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing in this study:

1. There will be no significant difference in the responses of male and female students concerning peer-grouping.
2. There will be no significant gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The survey design was adopted for this study. Survey research according to Kerlinger, (1979) involves the study of large and small population or universe by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incident. In this study however, an attempt was made to find out the effect of peer-grouping on Juvenile delinquent behaviour.

Study Variables

The independent variable of the study is Peer- grouping whereas the dependent variable is the juvenile delinquent behaviour.

Area of Study

The research area was Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area in Lagos State of Nigeria. There was formerly 20 Local Government Areas in Lagos, 37 more Local Council Development Areas have been created making the number of Local Government in Lagos State 57 and Ajeromi Ifelodun happens to be one of them.

Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised all the Secondary School Students in Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos State. There are about 5,800 students/pupils in Ajeromi Ifelodun.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study was 200 randomly selected students. 100 male and 100 female students and pupils who fall within the age bracket on which the study is based upon that made up the sample.

The sample was selected using simple random sampling. The names of the students from each school were written on piece of paper and rolled into balls, the researcher picked 200 from tray to constitute the sample.

The Data Collection instrument used for the study was questionnaire. Having made the corrections the questionnaire was approved as having face and content validity.

Instrumentation

The instrument comprised of 25 items in number structured into 4 Likert- type formats and graded as follows for both positive and negative statement. Strongly Agreed (SA) =4, Agreed (A) =3, Disagreed (D) =2, Strongly Disagreed (SD)=1. All negative statements are rated from; Strongly Disagreed (SD) =1, Disagreed (D) =2, Agreed (A) =3, Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4. Each respondent score depends on his/her view about the statements.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument using split half method of the questionnaires.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher sought for the permission of the Head teachers and principals of the schools before the administration of the questionnaire. The assistance of some teachers and the students as well as few pupils in each school for their cooperation was sought for.

Method of Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using the T-test statistics.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypotheses One:

This hypotheses in the null form stated that there will be no significant difference in the responses of male and female students concerning peer-grouping. The result is shown in the table below:

Table 1:

The result of t-test analysis: Comparison of male and female students’ responses on peer-grouping.

Group	n	\bar{x}	s.d	d.f	t-cal	t-critical
Female	100	12.49	6.162	198	1.10	1.96
Male	100	12.17	2.161			

P < 0.05; df = 198, critical value 1.96

From the table above, it shows that the calculated t-value (1.10) is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 significance level. This implies that there is no significant difference between the female and male responses concerning peer-grouping.

Hypotheses Two:

The second hypothesis in the null form stated that there will be no significant difference in gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours. The result is shown in the table II below.

Table II:

The result of t-test analysis: Gender Involvement in juvenile Delinquent Behaviours.

Group	n	\bar{x}	s.d	d.f	t-cal	t-critical
Female	100	9.87	2.295	198	0.55	1.96
Male	100	9.95	2.492			

P < 0.05; df = 198, critical value 1.96

As indicated in the table above, the calculated value ($t = 0.15$) is less than the critical value (1.96) at 0.05 significant level.

This shows there is no significant difference in the Gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours.

Discussion of Findings.

The findings of this hypothesis One indicated that no significant difference exists in the responses of female and male students concerning peer-grouping.

This result confirms the assertion of Makinde (2007) who found that the concept of peer-grouping could be as a result of the coming together of the members within the same age bracket who feels apparently the same way, think the same way and can react in similar ways like the adolescent irrespective of their gender differences. Onyejiaku (1991) also contends that peer-group is conceived as a generation because peers are born within the same period, year or 'generation' and their relatives are referred to as intra-generation relations.

The findings in hypothesis two which stated that there will be no significant difference in Gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours indicated that there is no significant difference in the gender difference in involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours.

This means that both boys and girls do engage in delinquent behaviours. This assertion is in conformity with Adler *et al* (1995) who associated delinquency for boys and girls. The study showed that societal influence contributed a great deal to their involvement in delinquent acts. Due to this fact, juvenile groups irrespective of sex will not disturb the proper socialization of the group, but will end up with child belonging to a peer group, some of which are delinquent gang. These days it is believed that, there is no difference between the behaviour of boys and girls in our society.

Conclusion

On the basis of these results of data analysis and the discussion findings, it is hereby concluded that;

- Peer-grouping which might be responsible for juvenile delinquent behaviours could not be separated between male and female juvenile group. That is to say that both male and female are always involved as far as peer-grouping is concerned.
- Male and female children exhibit no gender difference in involvement in peer-grouping.

Recommendations

On the basis of the data analysis and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations were made.

- Parents should instill the fear of Almighty God in their children right from their juvenile group in the selection of their peer group members hence both male and female are always involved in peer-grouping. Therefore, equal parental care and monitoring is needed in our families towards our children so that, there will not be any need to say that, only the girls should be adequately monitored and not the boys or vice versa.
- Since both male and female are always involved in juvenile delinquent behaviours, the mass media generally and the television and film media in particular should encouraged to minimize the level of pornography films, drugs and violence portrayed and to display violence and exploitation unfavourably, the mass media should use its extensive social role and responsibility as well as its influence in communications relating to youthful drug and alcohol abuse. It should use its power for delinquency prevention by relaying consistent messages through a balanced approach so that, adaptive behaviours among our youths will be encouraged.

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