

An Analysis of the Offences Committed by Youths in Selected Remand Homes in South West Nigeria, Implication for School Administrators

Dr. (Mrs) O. A. Adegun

*Institute of Education
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
Jireadegun@yahoo.com, +2348066798555*

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n1p375

Abstract

This study analysed the offences committed by youths who are in remand homes in the South West zone Prison arrangement in Nigeria and its implication for school administrators. The analyses are based on the type of offence, the seriousness the society attached to the prevalence of the offences and the causes of the offences. The South-West Prison arrangement for juvenile offenders in Nigeria is made up of Ilorin as the headquarters and all the other remand homes in the six states of the South West. The prevalence of serious offences among the youths in the Nigerian society today appears to be embarrassing to parents and educators that solutions via researches are urgently needed. The sample for the study consisted of all the inmates in the remand homes in Akure (Ondo State), Abeokuta (Ogun State) and Ilorin (Kwara State). All inmates in the remand homes were selected because their number was few. The total number according to the inmates superintendent was 100 and their ages spread between 10 to 18 years. The Expo-facto research design was used for the study. The research instrument were structured interview and a recording profoma which were applied to gather data using person to person contact with researcher and inmate superintendent six research questions were raised for the study. Simple percentage scores, frequency counts, pictograms and charts was used to analyse the questions. The result from the descriptive analyses showed that youths commit such offences as stealing, loitering around, burglary and violent behaviour among others. It was discovered that stealing is the commonest offence committed by youths. Broken homes, poverty, peer influence and lack of proper monitoring are the causes of these offences. It was recommended that youths should be well catered for and properly monitored by the parents, teachers and the school. Schools should also make efforts to offer support programmes that can cater for the needs of youths in their custody. The school system should inculcate right, morals and values in the young ones.

Key words: *Offences, Youths, Remand Homes and Deviant Behaviours*

1. Introduction

In a human population, the youth stage is the middle rung in the ladder of life, it links the infancy and 'adulthood' stages together (Webster 2004). The youths often constitute a heavy percentage of the total population of a nation. It is also the rural energetic section of the society that could be used to develop the society if properly trained. The achievement of a vibrant and desirable society is hinged on youth development and any stumbling block to this could constitute a hindrance to youth education and hence national development. When there is a growing crime rate among the youths there is hence a serious problem that must be tackled. A proportion of Nigerian youths that should be in the Senior Secondary Schools or tertiary institutions commit various sorts of crime ranging from stealing textbooks, examination malpractices to rape and cultism, Teachers at the various levels find it difficult to manage and direct the expected acts and socially prone behaviours of youths successfully without disturbances. The problems of crises leading to closure of schools are indirectly caused by youths who are crime prone.

The issue of youths engaging in crimes today and the inability to find concrete solutions to them constitute a serious problem worthy of investigation. The daily newspapers are filled with the news of youth committing very serious crimes. Many reported that young people are at the root of various crimes committed in the Nigerian Society either as accomplices or as principal actors. If the youth as part of the society "make up" is becoming troublesome, the whole society could be in danger. The various offences committed by youths as identified by Hirschi (2002) Simatwa (2012) are homicide, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny and based on the Nigerian society include stealing, loitering about and burglary, murder, abortion, keeping five arms, sexual harassment among others. The causes of these offences according to researchers are unemployment, broken home, peer influence personality traits and bad environment (Hirschi, 2002).

The Nigeria educational system provides procedures and materials for the education of her youths. These include good curricular for learning, instructional facilities, enabling environment and manpower. With all these good plans and provisions, the goal for youthful education may not be achieved because of certain emerging problems. Among many problems facing youthful education in Nigeria today are lack of interest in serious studies, the desire to get rich quickly, inclination to criminal activities and a host of other related problems.

The rate of offence among the youths going to jail, remand homes and detention camps is increasing astronomically nowadays (Powel and Hawkins, 1996). Fax and Pierce (1994) reported cases of between 10 years to 15 years old stabbing their colleagues to death at school, robbing elderly people of valuable things at home and committing many serious offences that could only be associated with adult in the time past.

The seriousness of youth offences today calls for urgent solution. There is the need to know these offences that are rampant among the youths, reasons why these youths commit offences and the various backgrounds and condition that favour criminality among youths in order to proffer meaningful solutions. The study of this nature will assist the school administrators and managers to know how to administer schools in terms of disciplinary measures to be put in place, moral instructions to be given and guidance and counselling needs of the students. The school administrators could plan for meaningful and interesting activities that will engage the youths in school so as to prevent them from having time or interest at going into criminal activities.

The studies of Hopkins (1983) revealed that offences are categorized as delinquent behaviours especially when the youth is between ages 12 and 13 years. Webster (2004) defined delinquent behaviour as anti social behaviour that is beyond parents control and therefore subject to legal action Gottfredson (1987) established the Nigerian version of delinquent behaviour as an aggressive type of behaviour which does not agree with societal norms and expectations.

Misoula (2006) noted that youth offences ranged from stealing, assault and gambling. He maintained that crime in Nigeria for the last few years was becoming more brutal, more irrational, more random and more frightening due to the activities of youths. Although delinquencies and crimes are great problems with their continuous shattering effects on the education system and the society and the alarming rate at which those maladaptive behaviours are being committed by youths are becoming more embarrassing to schools and the society. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) and Aladeloye (2000) Established that when there is lack of social constraints due to attachment to parental control or commitment to good home background or involvement and strong belief in a good religious circle, youths are said to find themselves free to engage in virtually any deviant behaviour that presents itself. In contrast to empirical findings some competing theories assumed specialization. They claimed that deviant either learned to engage in a particular type of delinquent behaviour or adopt a particular delinquent act (Hirschi 2002). Deviants were thought to specialize in drug use, property offences, criminal violence, or some other type of deviant activity. Consistent with Hirschi (2002) contention, delinquent acts tend to be correlated. This means that although deviant behaviours may show a small degree of specialization, there is strong tendency for persons who engage in one type of delinquent behaviour to engage in other types as well. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) referred to smoking, drug use, driving fast cars, gambling and engaging in sexual promiscuity as an analogy of offences committed by youths.

Relevant surveys of the Nigerian society showed that the common offences committed by youths are examination malpractices. Impersonation, copying of pre-written texts brought to examination halls (WAEC 1992, 2000). A cursory look at the news media showed a rising trend in the commitment of these crimes like rape, cultism, street fighting, robberies, rioting, drug pushing, assassinations, assault and murder. Saturday Tribune of 1st January 2006) reported cases of robbery among the youths. The Punch of 22nd October 2003 and 16th August 2006 reported that cultism is a great problem in the various institutions of learning in Nigeria today.

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) and Erickson (1968) discovered that the natural tendencies of these coupled with the physiological complexes at this time would be the reasons why youth commit offences. While Farrington (2007) put the major causes of crimes among the youths as low income and poor housing of parents youths living in deteriorated areas, low school attainment, poor parental supervision and broken homes. Others like Hirschi (2002) Thornlindson and Benniburg (2006) agreed with these findings. Other domestic factors according to Hirschi (2002) producing delinquency include authoritarian attitudes of parents, finish tendency in parents and collapse of family relationship leading to frequent disputes between the parents

The sex of youth is another notable factor expressed by Engle (2005), Silva (2007) as responsible for youth crime. They established that boys commit crimes more often than girls. According to Engel (2005) males are troubled by Neuro development disorder while females are not, tough both males and females are exposed to social interactions which affect them equally but only males are exposed to the neuro-developmental disorders based on the problem of this study, therefore it is necessary to investigate the offences committed by youths in the study area. This could help to solve some major problems facing the education system in Nigeria. This study therefore sought to find answers to the following questions which are pertinent to the study.

1. What are the various types of offences committed by the youths in the remand homes in South West Nigeria?
2. How common are the offences committed by the youths in the remand homes?
3. What categories of offenders are in the remand homes in South West Nigeria
4. What are the offences associated with the category of offenders in the remand home.
5. What are the causes of the offences committed by youths in the remand homes?
6. Is there any pattern of relationship between categories of offenders and their causes?

2. Method

The research made use of an ex-post factor research design this design. This the capacity to observe some existing consequences and search back through data to detect plausible casual factors. The population of this study consisted of all youths both male and female in remand homes in the south western part of Nigeria. The superintendents of the remand homes are also included. They are concentrated in Akure (Ondo State); Ibadan (Oyo State), Abeokuta (Ogun State), Ikeja (Lagos State) and Ilorin (Kwara State).

The sample counted of 100 youths in the remand homes at Akure 29, (Ondo State), Abeokuta, 31 (Ogun State) and Ilorin 40 (Kwara State) 3 superintendents were also involved. The multistage sampling procedure was employed in selecting the sample for the study. All the inmates from the selected towns were used as samples. Since the inmates were usually very few, it was not necessary again to select out of them but to use all of them. The researcher also considered that the offences committed by the youths were more important than those who commit them and hence nobody could be left out.

A structured interview (SI) was used in this study to gather necessary data. An interview schedule used to guide that interview was designed to bring about details on the type of crime and other information necessary for the study from an inmate superintendent who used the main records of the remand home. It was observed that all remand homes keep detail records of their inmates and hence a structured interview with a good schedule is a useful instrument for as study like this. The interview schedule was subjected to screening by experts. The interview schedule did not need any testing for internal consistency since the item in it were not subjectable to rating or scoring of any form. The interview did not need any reliability testing as it was a person to person interaction.

The researcher personally visited the remand homes at Akure (Ondo State) Abeokuta (Ogun State) and Ilorin (Kwara State) to interact with the inmate superintendents of the homes. The researchers saw the inmates (youths) but was not allowed to exchange words with them according to their rules. The records were brought out and details concerning the inmates used for the study were obtained via interview, in the interview, questions like types of offences committed by youths for the past five years were asked, the rate of occurrence of the offences were asked also. The religion and sex of youths were also requested. The superintendents met were those who have been on the job in their various remand homes for the past five years. The data collected were subjected to appropriate descriptive statistics. Frequency count, percentages and charts were used for the descriptive analysis.

3. Results

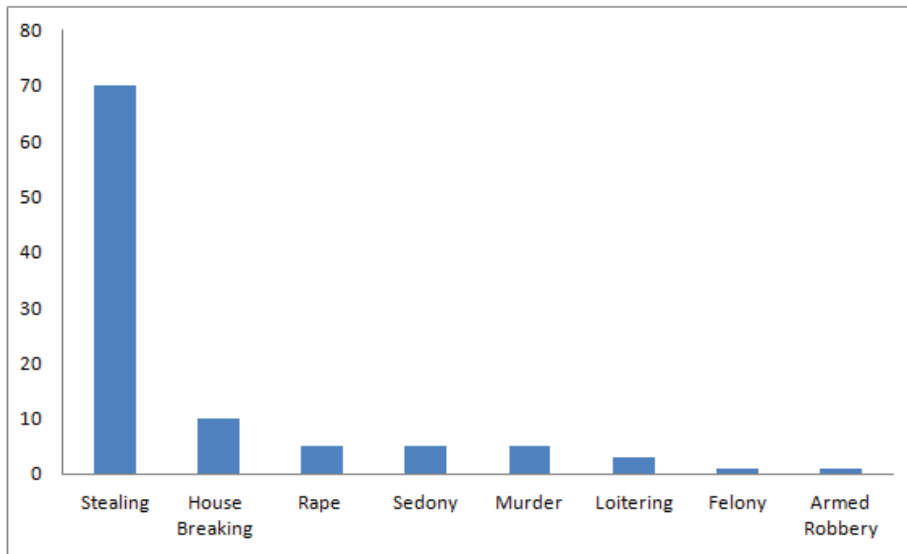
Question 1: What are the various types of offences committed by youths in the remand homes in south West Nigeria?

According to the information gathered in the structured interview from three remand homes located in the region, the offences committed by the youths are listed below and are also illustrated in the pictorial diagram I below (see fig. 1)

Types of offences committed by youths

1. Stealing
2. House Breaking
3. Rape
4. Sodomy
5. Murder
6. Loitering about (Truancy)
7. Felony (assisting adults to do house breaking and robbery)
8. Armed Robbery

Figure 1: Bar Charts showing type of youthful offences with percentages showing how often each occur when compared

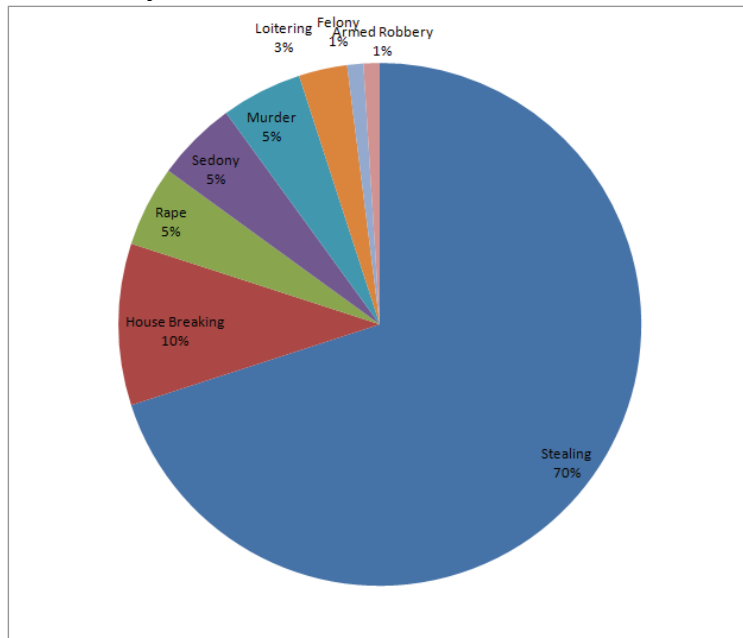


The commonest offence is hence stealing which shares 70% of the total offences committed.

Question 2: How common are to offences committed by youths in the remand homes?

From the records in the remand homes, the numbers of youths that are remanded on the account of stealing during the period of investigation is the highest. These form 70% of the total number. Further most investigation into the records of the five previous years showed similar trends. Stealing is always to commonest offences. The prevalence of other offences can be seen as listed in figure 2.

Fig. 2: Prevalence of Offences Committed by Youths in Remand Homes



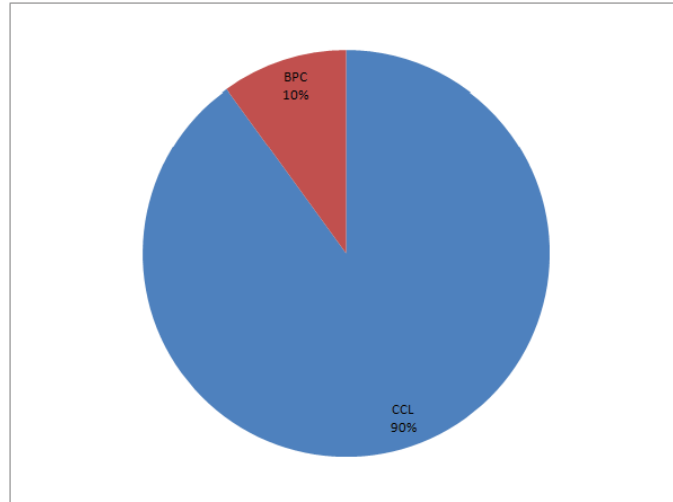
Question 3: What categories of offenders are in the remand homes?

According to the structural interview there are two main categories of offenders in the remand homes. They are:

1. Children in conflict with the Law (CCL) 90%
2. Youths who are beyond parental control (BPC) 10%

Children in conflict with the Law (CCL) from the bulk of people in remand homes in the zone. They are real offenders according to Nigeria Law. The other group, the beyond parental control (BPC) are really not offenders according to the Nigerian Law but have been brought by their parents to the homes to be kept there because they are stubborn at home.

Fig. 3: Categories of Offenders in Remand Homes CCL



Question 4: What are the offences associated with the category of offenders in the remand homes:

Group 1:

Children in conflict with the Law (CCL) commit stealing, house breaking, rape, felony, murder and armed robbery.

Group 2:

Youths beyond parental control commit and troublesome acts at home.

Those who are in group 1 are considered as real offender who are awaiting trials and until they are tried in the law courts, they remain in the homes. They youths in group 2 are never tried since the Law does not consider them as real offenders. They are released when their parents want them back.

Figure 4: Category of offenders and the offences associated with them

Category	Offences
1. CCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stealing 70 (70%) House Breaking 10 (10%) Rape 5 (5%) Felony 1 (1%) Murder 5 (5%) Armed Robbery 1 (1%)
2. BPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loitering about 3 (3%) Truancy from School 2 (2%) Deviants 2 (2%) Troublesome at home 1 (1%)

From figure 4 the group 1 offenders, that is, those in conflict with the law are the major serious offenders as they commit the most offences which are sensitive to the laws of the land. The other group that is the BPC group are mild offenders their offences are not culpable

Question 5: What are the causes of the offences committed by youths in remand homes?

From the structured interview, the various causes are listed as shown in figure 5.

Table 2: Causes of offences in rank order from highest cause to the lowest. According to table 2, the various causes are:

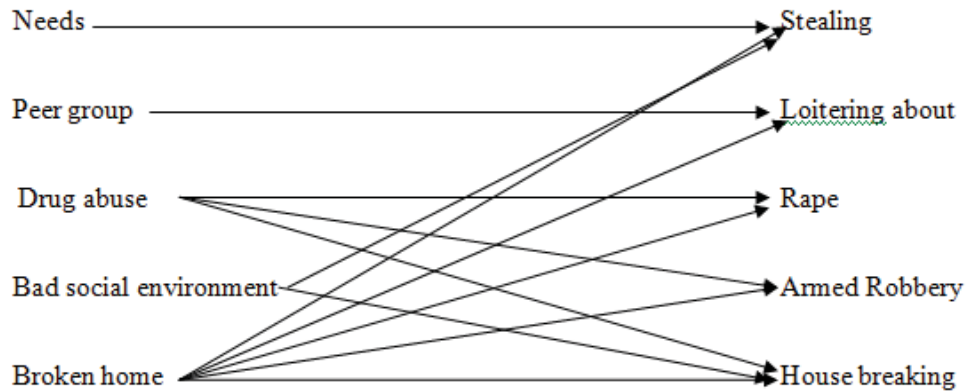
S/N	Causes	Rate	Percentage (%)	Rank order from highest to lowest
1	Broken home	40	40	1
2	Lack of Parental care or neglect	22	22	2
3	Need	18	18	3
4	Social Environment	10	10	4
5	Peer Group Influence	6	6	5
6	Drug Abuse	3	3	6
7	Spiritual Undertone	1	1	7

The most important cause of youthful offence is broken home followed by lack of parental care which is associated with parental unemployment and then needs.

Question 6: Is there any pattern of relationship between offences and their causes?

According to the data collected, the root cause of most offences are broken homes, Youths from broken homes were found to commit all manner of offences listed. The other smaller causes that were found to be responsible for committing of the offences listed have the following patterns.

Figure 5: Pattern of relationship between offences and their causes



3. Discussion

The study found out that the offences committed by youths are mostly stealing, house breaking, rape, sodomy, murder, loitering, felony and armed robbery. The commonest of the offences is stealing, according to the study. Stealing is a means of providing for what the youths lack at home. This may be as a result of parents' failure to provide the needed care like good food, clothes, money and others that make them commit such offence. Poverty on the part of the parents can also result to neglect of their responsibilities. This finding supports the findings of Tahir, Kauser, Tousif, Nazir, Arshad and Aneega Butt (2011). They found out that the most common crimes committed by youth were theft, murder, abortion, robbery, offences related to intoxicants, offences related to weapons and firing with criminal intent.

The majority of youths in the remand homes engage in offences that deal with conflict with the law (CCL) that is the law of the Nation such as stealing, house breaking, rape, felony, murder, armed robbery and many others. These are crimes that are punishable by the Law. The reason for the deviant behaviours could be due to the psychological problems common to this age and also to the prevailing social and home problems. The studies of Hopkins (1983), Webster 2004 stressed that a delinquent behaviour is an anti social behaviour that is beyond parental control and

therefore subject to legal action, Aladeloye (2000) also established that when there is lack of social constraints due to attachment to parental control or commitment to good home background or involvement and strong belief in a good religion circle, youths are said to find themselves free to engage in virtually any deviant behaviour that presents itself.

Broken homes are found to be greatest or highest reason why youths commit offences. Fagan (1995), Hirschi (2002) and Home Office; U.K (2004) among many came to the conclusion that broken homes and poor homes are among the prominent reasons that could lead to youths crimes. There are also evidences according to Farrington (2007) that children from broken homes may not get proper monitoring and that those from poor homes may not get proper feeding and get necessary provisions for day to day living including school needs and hence they tend to find alternative means to provide these necessities. The alternative means are usually criminal in nature.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of this study it is concluded that stealing is the commonest offence committed by youths and that broken homes are the highest cause of the offences. Lack of basic needs which could be caused by lack of parental care and monitoring are mostly responsible for why youths commit offences.

Based on the findings it is recommended that parents should provide for the needs of their children and monitor them properly. School administrators should find a way of assisting children from poor homes by providing them with basic needs. School administrators should liaise with state social service officers and welfare divisions to chart means of proper monitoring and caring for youths from broken homes. The youths can as well be exposed to proper mentoring by the older people who could serve to them as role models. This can significantly reduce the criminal act in them, reduce violent behaviour, decrease the likelihood of drug use, improve school attendance and performance and also improve relationships with parents and friends. The school environment should be beautifully designed. This can make the youths interested in schooling and eventually reduce crime and fear. An effectively designed environment can also improve the overall quality of life.

References

- Aladeloye, E. T. (2000), *Causes and Effects of Juvenile Delinquency in Schools*. Unpublished M.Ed Thesis University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
- Engle Y. (2005), *The Religious and Spiritual lives of America Teenagers*. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20(2): 263-283.
- Erickson, E. H. 1968, *Identity: Youth an Crisis* New Norton.
- Fagan, P. F. (1995), *The real causes of violent crime, the breakdown of marriage, family and community*. U.S. The heritage Foundation.
- Farrington, D. (2007), *Understanding and Preventing youth crime*, Cambridge University, Joseph Rowntree Foundations.
- Foy J. A. and Pierce, G. (1994) *American Killers are Getting Younger USA, Today*, 24-26.
- Gottfredson, D.C. (1987), *An organisation Development Approach to Reducing School Disorder* *American Review* 11(6): 739-763.
- Gottfredson, M. R. and Hirschi, T. (1990) *General Theory of Crime California: Stanford University Press*.
- Hirschi, T. (2002) *Causes of Delinquency* <http://www.Heritage.Org>: Transaction Publishers.
- <http://www.com.missoula>. US (2006) *Youth delinquency U.S. Missoula Country Home Page*.
- Piaget, J and Inhelder, B (1969). *The Psychology of the Child* N.Y. Basic Books.
- Powell, K. E and Hawkins D F. (1996) *Youth Violence Prevention: Descriptions and Baseline Data from 13 Evaluation Projects*. A supplement to *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 12.
- Silva, P. A. (2007) *Sex difference in antisocial behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simatwa, M.W. (2012) *Management of Student Discipline in Secondary Schools in Kenya, a case study of Bungoma country*. *Educational Research* 3(2) 172-189.
- Tahir, M.W., Kauser, R., Tousif, S., Nazir M.A., Etslan Arshad, A and Butt A. (2011) *Crime Trends Among Youth in Gujrat, Pakistan*. *African Journal of Law and Criminology* 1(2) 39-49.
- Thorlindson, T. and Bernburg, J.G. (2006) *Community Structure Social Disorganisation and Adolescent Property Crime*. Unpublished paper of the American Sociological Association Montreal, Quebec, Canada <http://www/academic>.
- <http://www.narco.org> UK (2001) *Why Youths Commit Crimes*. Youth Crime. htm
- WAEC (1992) "Report on the Activities of WAEC" A paper presented to the 16th Plenary Session of JCCE at Katsina July 1992.
- Webster, Dictionary (2004 Ed) "Youth" London: Page 11.

