Family Structure as Correlates of Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated family structure as correlates of adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted. Population of the study was 3,880 SSS 2 students in all the 15 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. Sample size of the study was 363 (166 male and 197 female) SSS 2 students which was determined using the Taro Yamane’s sample size formula, while simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from 3 randomly chosen schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. Data were collected with two self-structured instruments titled “Family Structure Questionnaire” and “Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire”. The face and content validities of the instruments were ascertained by two experts, while Test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.74 and 0.70 for Family Structure Questionnaire and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire respectively. Data collected were analyzed and tested using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that single parent family, step-family and grandparent had positive and significant relationships with adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. It was recommended that parents should avoid every act that could result to broken marriages or homes, and thereby expose the children to some form of promiscuous life, and adolescents in a single family should be allowed to grow under the close watch and tutelage of their grandparents’ family instead of their step-family.

Keywords: Family structure, single parent family, step-family, grandparent, adolescents’ delinquent behaviour

INTRODUCTION
The incidence of delinquent behaviour amongst adolescents in the society seems alarming in recent times, and if the situation is not well handled especially at the family level, the society may be hell fire on earth. This is because delinquency does not conform to the demands of normative behaviour in any given society. Delinquent is something improper. Nwankwo, Kenijika and Ekeh (2006) viewed delinquent act as a deviation from the social codes of a group or society. Delinquent behaviour is thus, an act or
behaviour exhibited by the adolescents that is not generally in conformity with the norm of the land. A person who fails to perform his/her legal obligations or deviates from the stipulated law that guides the codes of conduct of the society is seen as a delinquent.

Observations tend to indicate that adolescents are the major culprits of delinquency or delinquent behaviour in the society nowadays. This could be because adolescent is a period of experimentation or a period of enormous changes in life. Adolescents are those in the age brackets of 16 and 26 who constituted the 2006 population census in Nigeria (Awoyemi, 2016). Thus, the adolescent period is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, and the period where behaviour pattern called the ‘self’ actually surfaced which an individual may carry throughout his/her life time. As Nwankwo, Kemjika and Ekeh (2006) rightly noted, adolescents are faced with many problems, which include normal development problems and delinquent ones. Examples of adolescents’ delinquent behaviours include sexual promiscuity, violent act, drug addiction and abuse, truancy, cultism, etc. Achieving socially accepted behaviour is one of the development tasks of adolescents (Nnachi, 2008), hence the contribution of the family is important. To this effect, the family structure has a role to play or contribution to make.

The family structure is the pattern of relationship a family is fashioned. The structure changes as the relationship is affected by certain factors. Otite and Ogionwo (2001) observed divorce as one of the factors that restructures the family systems. To Nwankwo (2005), it is a common experience that growing children sooner or later begin to behave or imitate some aspects of their parents’ behaviour. This is an indication that delinquent behaviour could to a large extent be determined by family structure. Different types of family structure exists in the society, among which include nuclear family, single parent family and grandparent family. This study, however, focused on single parent, grand-parent and step-families as they relate with adolescents’ delinquent behaviour.

Single parent family is the family structure in which only one parent takes the responsibility of raising a child or children due to the absence of the partner in the family. Some studies such as Hagan cited in Singh and Kiran (2014) have revealed that children from single parent family may have lower level of control than children from a biological household. Single parenting affects children mentality, emotionally as well as psychologically (Singh & Kiran, 2014). Research findings indicates that adolescent from single parent families engage in the highest rates of problem behaviours when compared to other family structures (Gruffin, Botin, Scheir & Miller in Hoskins, 2014). Also, Thornberry in Singh and Kiran (2014) observed that children who live in homes with only one parent in which marital relationship have been disrupted by divorce or separation are more likely to display a range of behaviour problems including delinquency than children in two parent family.

Step-family is another important family structure in this study. Step-family involves two separate families merging into one new unit, which mainly occur due to divorce or polygamous marriage. Kimani (2010) reported that children brought up in a step-parent home had a strong inclination towards substance abuse, but the correlation was even greater for stealing and refusing school, all in child delinquency. This could indicate that adolescents in step-families lack the much need parental attention, especially in terms of engagement, child-parent relationship and supervision for their sound moral growth and development. In agreement, Hoskins (2014) observed that step-fathers do not serve as effective caretakers of non-biological children. Hoskins further noted that cohabiting step-father figures provide limited benefit when contrasted with single-mother families where no father figure was present.

Grandparent family structure occurs either due to the early death of the biological parents, abandonment by biological parents or being unfit parents of children. According to Hoskin (2014), over the years there have been a growing number of adolescents who spend their lives with grandparents. Observation has shown that often times, grandparent tend to serve as positive influence in the lives of their grandchildren since they are good at functioning as caregiver, playmate, advisor and friend to the grandchildren. In disagreement with this observation, Kimani (2010) find out that children brought up by grandparent family structure have strong correlation with substance abuse and stealing.

From the above background, it can be observed that family structure could relate with adolescents’ delinquent behaviour. However, it seems that not much empirical studies have been done on the
relationship between family structure and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State, hence the need for this study. This study therefore, investigated family structure as correlates of adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Statement of the Problem**
Observations have shown that there is rampant incidence of sexual promiscuity, truancy and violent acts amongst adolescents in secondary schools which is yielding a harvest of assault, rape, teenage pregnancy, abortion, school dropout etc. This ugly situation could have contributed largely to the inability of some adolescents to acquire basic education and moral edge that would make them become meaningful and responsible citizens of the society. However, some people especially educators tend to attribute adolescents’ delinquency to family structure, and this calls for thorough research. The problem of the study can also be posed in question form as: Is there any relationship between family structure and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour? This study provided answers to the above problem. Hence, the study investigated the relationship between family structure and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Purpose of the Study**
The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between family structure and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour. Specifically, the study investigated:
(a) The relationship between single parent family and adolescent’s delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.
(b) The relationship between step family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.
(c) The relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Research Questions**
The following research questions guided the study:
1. What is the relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State?

**Hypotheses**
The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:
1. There is no significant relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**RESEARCH METHODS**
The study adopted correlational research design because the study investigated the relationship between family structure and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour. The population of the study consisted of all the 3,880 (1,769 male, 2,111 female) SSS 2 students in all the 15 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. The sample size comprises of 363 (166 male and 197 female) SSS 2 students which was determined using the Taro Yamane’s sample size formula, while the simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents (students) from 3 randomly chosen schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. Two self-structured instruments titled “Family Structure Questionnaire” and “Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour
Questionnaire” were used for data collection. Both the Family Structure Questionnaire and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A of both questionnaire centered on the respondents’ bio-data. While section B of the Family Structure Questionnaire contains 8 items which elicits information on respondents’ family structure, the section B of the Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire contains 8 items which elicits information on the adolescents’ delinquent behaviour respectively. The instruments were prepared on a four-point scale of Strongly Disagreed (1-point), Disagreed (2-points), Agreed (3-points) and Strongly Agreed (4-points). Two experts in Counselling Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation respectively validated the instruments, while the Test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.74 and 0.70 for Family Structure Questionnaire and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire respectively. Data collected were coded, analyzed and tested using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Correlation Analysis of Single Parent Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>20.57</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 above, it can be observed that the relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State is positive at \( r = 0.768 \). The positive relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour was accounted for by 76.8 %.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Step-Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step-Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.47</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above shows that there is positive relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State \( (r = 0.914) \). Also, the relationship that exists between step-parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour is high and accounted for by 91.4 %.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Grandparent Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.75</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 above indicates that the relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State is high and positive with \( r = 0.984 \), hence the relationship was accounted for by 98.4%.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between single parent family and adolescents delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Table 4: Significant Relationship Between Single Parent Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r-cal</th>
<th>r-crit</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>20.57</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 363

Data presented in Table 4 above revealed that the \( r \)-calculated value of 0.768 is greater than the \( r \)-critical value of 0.087 at 0.05 significance level and degree of freedom of 361. Since the \( r \)-calculated value (0.768) > \( r \)-critical value (0.087), the null hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behavior in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Table 5: Significant Relationship Between Step-Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r-cal</th>
<th>r-crit</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step-Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.47</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 363

From Table 5 above, it can be observed that the \( r \)-calculated value of 0.914 is greater than the \( r \)-critical value of 0.087 at 0.05 significance level and degree of freedom of 361. Since the \( r \)-calculated value (0.914) > \( r \)-critical value (0.087), the null hypothesis 2 is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between step-family and adolescents’ delinquent behavior in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between grand-parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Table 6: Significant Relationship Between Grand-Parent Family and Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r-cal</th>
<th>r-crit</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand-Parent Family</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.75</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ Delinquent Behaviour</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 363
Data presented in Table 6 above revealed that the r-calculated value of 0.984 is greater than the r critical value of 0.087 at 0.05 significance level and degree of freedom of 361. Since the r-calculated value (0.768) > r-critical value (0.087), the null hypothesis 3 is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behavior in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

Results for research question 1 and hypothesis 1 as presented in Table 1 and 4 indicated that there is positive and significant relationship between single parent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding corroborates Thornberry cited in Singh and Kiran (2014) who revealed that children who live in homes with only one parent in which marital relationship have been disrupted by divorce or separation are more likely to display a range of behaviour problems including delinquency than children in two parent family. Single parenting affects children mentality, emotionally as well as psychologically (Singh & Kiran, 2014). Hagan cited in Singh and Kiran (2014) equally noted that children from single parent family may have lower level of control than children from a biological household.

Results for research question 2 and hypothesis 2 as presented in Table 2 and 5 revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between step family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. This confirms Kimani’s (2010) report that children brought up in a step parent home had a strong inclination towards substance abuse but the correlation was even greater for stealing and refusing school, all in child delinquency. This agrees with Hoskins (2014) who observed that step-fathers do not serve as effective caretakers of non-biological children. This is an indicative that adolescents in step-families lack the much need parental attention, especially in terms of engagement, child-parent relationship and supervision for their sound moral growth and development.

Results in Table 3 and 6 for research question 3 and hypothesis 3 showed that there is positive and significant relationship between grandparent family and adolescents’ delinquent behaviour in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding could be because often times, grandparent tends to serve as positive influence in the lives of their grandchildren since they are good at functioning as caregiver, playmate, advisor and friend to the grandchildren. Thus, over the years there have been a growing number of adolescents who spend their lives with grandparents (Hoskin, 2014). Contrarily, Kimani (2010) revealed that children brought up by grandparent family structure have strong correlation with substance abuse and stealing.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that delinquent behaviours such as sexual promiscuity, drug addiction and abuse, truancy, cultism, etc. which are observed among adolescents in the society nowadays are to a large extent attributed to family structure. Therefore, achieving socially accepted behaviour amongst adolescents in today’s society requires the family to be intact, and as well play its main traditional role of moral upbringing of the children/adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents should avoid every act that could result to broken marriages or homes, and thereby expose the children to some form of promiscuous life.
2. Adolescents in a single family should be allowed to grow under the close watch and tutelage of their grandparents’ family instead of their step-family.
REFERENCES