



Coping Strategy of Delinquent behaviour Among Adolescent in Secondary School in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of IMO State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated coping strategy of delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The sample of 300 students was used for the study using stratified random sampling technique. Two research questions were answered while two hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire tagged "Coping Strategy of Delinquent Behaviour among Adolescent (CSDBA)". The data collected were analyzed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. From the analysis, it was found out that aggression as coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school to a great extent. Also, lack of emotional control as coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school to a great extent in Mbaitoli local government area of Imo state. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Classroom teachers should understand that adolescents with aggressive behaviour are prone to delinquent behaviour; therefore, teachers should know how to go along with them in their classes in order to have a full control of their class.

Key Words: Coping strategy, delinquent behaviour, aggression, lack of emotional control and adolescent.

1.1 Introduction

In the highly sophisticated world of the 21st century where there are increasingly new opportunities that could dispose individuals to various unwholesome attitude, adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviour is bound to be on the increase because of vulnerability of the stage of life they are passing through. Adolescence stage is a period when individuals navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood, thereby exposing them to different life experiences with attendant temptation of engaging in unacceptable behaviours. The involvement of adolescents in delinquent behaviour could predicate on variety of factors which may include biological, social and psychological among others.

Delinquent behaviour is a serious problem that occurs during adolescence period. It is an umbrella term used to describe any form of negative, inappropriate or unapproved behaviour in any given society. Idamokoro (2015) noted that there are two main categories of delinquent behaviours which Nigerian adolescents often engaged in. These are criminal and status offences. The criminal offences include stealing, arson rape, drug offences, murder, burglary, pick pocket, and armed robbery while status offences include running away from home, malingering, truancy and others. Behaviour could be tagged delinquent when it is contrary to the prevailing norms for an approved social conduct.

According to Mason (2015), delinquency, is defined as the behaviour consequent to the failure of personal and social control to produce behaviour in conformity with the norms of the social system to which legal penalties are attached. Juvenile delinquency is a legal term for behaviour of children and adolescent that in adults would be judged criminal under law. Juvenile delinquency is largely the result of failure of primary groups to offer the child appropriate non-delinquent social role models or to provide the child with forms of social control which will ensure acceptance of those social roles which are preferred in accordance with his needs (Sarason 2013). However, the behaviour is considered to be a delinquent when it is long-lasting and when it violates the rights of others, when it goes against accepted norms of behaviour and disrupts the child's or family's everyday life (Hinshaw & Lee, 2013). Burt and Donnellan (2019) classified delinquent behaviour into three subtypes which are physical aggression, social aggression, and rule-breaking. Physical aggression includes fighting, physical bullying, getting angry and threatening others. Social aggression means those behaviours that are harmful to those who are in social relationships. This type of behaviour includes gossiping, spreading rumors, purposefully trying to destroy one's reputation, and trying to hurt one's feelings by being negative toward their appearance, actions and beliefs. Rule-breaking includes theft, absenteeism from school, vandalism and littering of the surroundings.

These behaviours are common features that could be found among in-school adolescents and create disharmonious relationships which could precipitate disorderliness in school environment. In-school adolescents with this behaviour may display a pattern of disruptive and violent characteristics and have problems following school rules and regulation (Hinshaw & Lee, 2013). In-school adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviour is on the increase and has been a source of worry to many Nigerians (Animashaun, 2014). Such delinquent behaviour ranges from absenteeism from school, gambling, lateness to school, theft, cheating, destruction of property, disobedience, underage drinking, examination malpractice, vandalism, smoking, street fighting, cultism, rape, rioting and others.

Wickliffe (2012) stated the significant factors underlying delinquency among adolescents as: broken home, inadequate education, inappropriate leisure time, influence of unwholesome mass media, instability of home, lack of proper discipline, vocational preparation, over protection by parents, parental conflict, parental rejection, poor living conditions, poor sex education both at home and in school, severe emotional disturbance and wrong companion. Issues of delinquent behaviour have become a thing of great concern to Nigerian secondary schools.

The word "cope" is derived from the Latin word "*colpus*" meaning "to alter" and, as defined in the Webster's Dictionary, is usually used in the psychological paradigm to denote "dealing with and attempting to overcome problems and difficulties." In psychology, the word coping, in addition to this behavioral application, has been used as a broad heuristic in several other domains including as a thought process, as a personality characteristic, and in social context. Historically, the term "coping" was officially utilized by Psychological Abstracts only in 1967. Coping was first reified as a thought process in psychology and can be traced back to the concept of defense mechanisms described in the psychoanalytical model by the famous Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).

Perhaps the most widely cited definition of coping continues to be that of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), almost 30 years since it was first presented. This definition highlights several features of coping, including the role of both cognitive and behavioural processes, and a focus on responses to demands that are appraised as stressful, in that they tax or exceed the resources of the individual. With an increasing focus on coping processes in children and adolescents, several definitions following the seminal work of Lazarus and Folkman have shifted towards a focus on childhood and adolescence (Compas, 2011). For example, Skinner and Wellborn (1994) have conceptualized coping as 'action regulation under stress', and defined it as 'how people mobilize, guide, manage, energize, and direct behavior, emotion, and orientation, or how they fail to do so'. More recently, Compas, (2011) defined coping as 'conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behavior, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances'. However, in spite of their increased emphasis on coping in children and adolescents, these definitions do not include explicit developmental elements. Coping strategies can be positive or negative. While some persons may apply positive coping strategies when experiencing difficulties, others may apply negative coping strategies which can aggravate the problem. Delinquent behaviour may be worsening if adolescents apply negative coping strategies such as aggression, lack of emotional control, restlessness, impulsiveness etc.

Aggressive behaviour among adolescents takes various forms. It can be physical or verbal. Physical aggression refers to inflicting injury on others, while verbal aggression entails using words that are intended to harm another person. Aggressive behaviour among adolescents sometimes takes the form of an over-reaction, screaming, shouting or becoming very agitated as a result of a very minor setback (Eziyi and Odoemelam, 2015). It also takes the form of quarrelling, insubordination, bullying, revolution, destruction of school property, protest, angry shouts of rebellion etc.

Agunwa and Owan, (2019) explain aggression as a behavior whose primary or sole purpose or function is to injure another person or organism whether physically or psychologically. Myers (2019) defined as aggression as physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone. Thus aggression is any act that hurts harms or destroys. Aggression can occur in various forms such as words or deeds. The issue of media on aggression has been a source of major concern to families, government and social scientist. They border on the effect of violence in television and films on the viewer's aggression especially children. The aggression and violence which children and adult are exposed to through media includes; murder, assault, robbery, kidnapping, fighting, wrestling and boxing.

Wood, Wood and Boyd (2019) defined it as "the intentional infliction of physical or psychological harm on others". From this definition, it is obvious that for an act to be classified as an aggressive behaviour, the infliction of physical or psychological harm on others has to be intentional. Hence, unintended and accidental infliction of harm on others may not be rightly classified as aggressive behaviour. Adolescents tend to be aggressive for different reasons. Some exhibit aggressive behaviours in order to gain an elevation of status (Wikipedia, 2014), while some others exhibit aggressive behaviours in order to be feared by other students. Furthermore, some adolescents in the school are aggressive to maintain their membership to a certain peer group, while some are aggressive to show superiority and to be respected by other students. Aggressive behaviour may also be as a result of innate drives, frustration or as a form of defence mechanism when the ego is threatened (Freud, 2020)

Emotions are a big part of life for us all. In any day we can experience many different emotions that come with their highs and lows. Some of these are easy to deal with, while others are more intense and difficult to manage. It's normal to struggle with your emotions at times, and everyone has this experience. However, if you have difficulties controlling your emotions for a long period of time, it can lead to mental health problems. If someone has a lot of problems controlling their emotions, over a long period of time, this is called emotional dysfunction. This is a psychological difficulty. Emotional dysfunction is thought to be a big part of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, personality disorders, psychosis and post-traumatic stress disorder. Fortunately, we can learn to control our emotions in healthy ways, at any stage in our lives.

The most important thing to understand about emotions is that they all have a purpose they are designed to give us information, what we call emotion messages. These messages are supposed to bring our attention to important things that are happening in our lives; whether it is a big event (e.g. the birth of a child), or something smaller and more day-to-day (e.g. getting a parking ticket). For example, intense feelings of love tell us we need to care for our child. Anger about a parking ticket tells us to avoid that situation in the future. Imagine what would happen without these messages! It's common for

people to think of emotions as “good” or “bad”, or “positive” and “negative”, but that just isn't the case. All emotions have a helpful role to play, though they can be pleasant or unpleasant.

Since the early 1990s, empirical interest in emotion control increased and different theories on emotion control processes emerged, of which the process model of emotion control has been most influential (Gross, 2015). In this model, emotion control refers to all the processes that are involved in changing the duration and intensity of feelings, and emotion-related physiological states and behaviors. These processes can be conscious and controlled, but also unconscious and automatic. The process model is closely connected to the modal model of emotions, which describes an emotional experience as the result of the nature of a situation, the attention that is paid to this situation, the appraisal of the meaning of this situation, and the emotional response tendency that determines the behavioral, physiological, and experiential component of the emotion.

In this regard, the researcher wants to investigate on the coping strategy of delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Delinquency is a disturbing issue confronting adolescents, parents and teachers and society alike. Taken together the increase in the number and severity of such acts and their overwhelming cost for the society validities the notion that delinquency has become a prominent national issue. In all its ramifications, delinquency has destructive and dysfunctional effects on the lives of individuals involved. Delinquency becomes problematic because it affects the delinquent academic achievement and diverts resources into efforts at social control when those resources could be more carefully diverted elsewhere. Those extra-curricular activities, which keep students busy in and outside school hours and helped in training up their minds for better things are no longer practiced. No wonder the saying that “The idle mind is the devils’ workshop” hence the various kinds of delinquent acts among the undergraduate students, ranging from examination mal-practices, students unrest, rape, cultism to mention but a few.

Delinquent behaviours seem to be a plaque eating deep into the fabric of our nation. When secondary school students engage in delinquent behaviours that are inimical to social norms, this could lead them to become miscreants. Some of them could grow up to street fighters, assassins, political thug, hoodlums, just to mention a few. Students who engage in delinquent behaviours may not be entirely free from hurts, cuts and injuries. Delinquent behaviour may escalate to the level of fight and some may sustain injuries through it, and some may be maimed for life. Academically, they will end-up having poor grades, been expelled from the school and interrupting school calendar. These delinquent behaviours of course constitute important impediment to the effective learning of the students. The implication of adolescent’s delinquent behaviors on national development such as unattractive destination for tourists, low foreign investment, unemployment, poverty and hunger, insecurity of life and property etc. This therefore raises the urgent need to investigate coping strategy of delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate coping strategy of delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State. The study specifically intends to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between aggressions as coping strategy on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.
2. Determine the relationship between lack of emotional control on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between aggressions as coping strategy on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area?
2. What is the relationship between lack of emotional control as coping strategy on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between aggressions as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant relationship between lack of emotional control as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

1.6 Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The area of study is Mbaitoli local government area of Imo state. The population of the study was 300 which consists senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students from the local government area. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the study. The stratified sampling was first applied. First, the 15 secondary school in Mabitoli Local Government Area was stratified based on the secondary school to 5 strata. Three secondary schools was a stratum. In each of the stratum, a 10% will be applied to determine the required secondary schools for the study and this will be summed up to be 5 secondary schools will be collected proportionately. Self-constructed instrument titled; "coping strategy of delinquent behaviour among adolescent", comprises in a 4-point Likert scale format was used as instrument for collecting data from the respondents. The instrument was validated and has high face, content and constructs validity and is suitable for the study. The reliability coefficient of the entire instrument was determined and found to be 0.82 using Pearson product moment. Data analysis was carried out using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics using SPSS version 23 and presented on a single table for both research questions and hypotheses. It was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1.7 Presentation of Data

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between aggressions as coping strategy on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between aggressions as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

Table 1: Analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	P-value
Delinquent Behaviour	300	36.60	6.05	0.501	298	0.00
Aggression	300	30.25	5.50			sig.

Table 1 shows that aggression has significant relationship with delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school, $r = 0.501$, $p < 0.05$. The mean and standard deviation for aggression are 30.25 and 5.50 respectively. With this result, aggression has a positive relationship with delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between lack of emotional control as coping strategy on delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between lack of emotional control as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

Table 2: Analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	P-value
Delinquent Behaviour	300	36.60	6.05	0.937	298	0.00
Lack of Emotional control	300	33.14	5.76			sig.

Table 2 shows that lack of emotional control has significant relationship with delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school, $r = 0.937$, $p < 0.05$. The mean and standard deviation for lack of emotional control are 33.14 and 5.76 respectively. With this result, lack of emotional control has a positive relationship with delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

1.8 Summary of Findings

From the analysis in the above tables, the researcher found out that;

1. Aggression as a coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.
2. Lack of emotional control as coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school in Mbaitoli Local Government Area.

1.9 Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one indicates that there is a significant relationship between aggressions as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school. This implies that adolescents that apply aggression as their coping strategy may indulge in delinquent behaviour. Agreeing with the finding of this study is that of Haslinda, Adriana, Nobaya and Syamsyihana (2015) who measured the level of aggressive and delinquent behaviour, identify the most common delinquent behaviours, and examine the associations of aggressive and delinquent behaviour with demographic

factors and individual characteristics among a sample of high risk Malaysian youth. The results indicate that although the sample consisted of high risk youth, participants scored low in delinquent behaviour and moderate in aggressive behaviour. The findings also show significant associations between delinquent behaviour levels with both age and ethnicity; but no significant associations with gender or religion. Results indicate that common perceptions about at-risk youth may run contrary to reality; despite being at-risk, the respondents displayed lower-than-expected levels of delinquency, and moderate aggressive behaviour.

The result of hypothesis two indicates that there is a significant relationship between lack of emotional control as coping strategy and delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school. This implies that adolescents who lack emotional control will likely indulge in delinquents acts. Emotion control people behaviour and influence their judgments and decisions. So adolescents with poor emotional control will automatically make poor decisions that prone to delinquent behaviours. Agreeing with this finding is that of Iga, and Dewi (2012) who examined the Relationship between emotional control Level and Delinquency Behavior among Teenagers using data collection tools in the form of psychological scale, with the results of research that the higher the score on self-control, the lower the tendency of behavior Mischief in adolescents. Another study on emotional control related to delinquent behavior has been done by Neni (2009) which shows the results of his research that perceptions of effectiveness of interpersonal communication of parents and emotional control provide effective contribution of 51.1% to adolescent reduction in delinquent behaviour, with donation Effective of each variable is 35,2% for perception of effectiveness of interpersonal communication of parent and 15,9% for emotional control.

1.10 Conclusions

Aggression as coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school to a great extent. This implies that adolescents with higher aggressive tendencies will be prone to delinquent behaviour more than those with lower aggressive tendencies.

Lack of emotional control as coping strategy significantly influences delinquent behaviour among adolescent in secondary school to a great extent. This means that adolescents with lower emotional self-control will likely involve in delinquent behaviour compared to their counterpart's higher emotional control.

1.11 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for reduction of delinquent behaviour.

1. Classroom teachers should understand that adolescents with aggressive behaviour are prone to delinquent behaviour; therefore, teachers should know how to go along with them in their classes in order to have a full control of their class.
2. Seminars should be organized for adolescents to enable them understand the importance of emotional control in reducing delinquent behaviour.
3. Enlightenment campaign should be carried out on the negative effect of delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Mbaitoli Local Government Area by National Orientation Agency of Nigeria and Non-Government Organizations.

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