



Poverty, Family Status, and Crime: Insights from Gwagwalada, Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

The increasing rate of youth criminality has become a social menace from the global level to the local level. This study set out to examine the relationship between family status and youth criminality in Gwagwalada area council, FCT, Nigeria. The research is linked to social control theory on how social bonds and relationships within families influence deviant behaviour in individuals, including criminal activities. Using stratified sampling, 380 respondents were selected, and questionnaires were distributed to them. The result from the findings reveals that negative characters of parents are likely to instigate criminal behaviours among the youth. Again, it was discovered that single parenting is most likely to produce youths with criminal tendencies in society. Additionally, poverty promotes criminality. The study recommends that governments and other stakeholders should develop programs aimed at sensitizing parents on their roles and responsibilities and the youth should also be economically empowered and trained to be responsible and have a positive thinking irrespective of their family status in society.

Keywords: Family, Socio-economic Status, Criminality, Crime, Youth, empowerment, poverty.

1. INTRODUCTION

The family is the nucleus of every society. It is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, and other legal ties. It has often been regarded as the cornerstone of the society. In pre-modern and modern societies, it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization and one that carries out vital tasks such as socializing the children this socialization process can be passive or active. By passive, the parents do not give word-to-word-conscious tutorials but just go about their daily routine. While active the parents must be conscious by putting more effort into educating the children. Children learn faster by imitating what they see than what they hear (Ibrahim and Sule, 2023). This can have a negative or positive impact on the children. The negative impact can lead to criminality.

According to Dambazau (2011), crime is "an act of commission, which attracts sanctions, such as fine, imprisonment, or even death" Crime is an act an offence committed, and the act is punishable by the country's laws. It is an unlawful act punishable by a State. Crime varies from place to place and from time to time. For instance, what was considered a crime in our society before may not be counted as a crime today and what is considered a crime in Nigeria may not be considered a crime in Western nations or other nations.

In 2016, the statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics ranked Lagos, Abuja, Delta, Kano, Plateau, Ondo, Oyo, Adamawa, and Gombe States as the States with high rates of criminality among the youth. The problem here is that these youth are also potential parents and the leaders of tomorrow if they are not properly brought up by their families they cannot be able to train their children and lead society as better leaders because it is said you can only give what you have and not otherwise. This indeed is a serious problem to reflect on. The objective of this research is to establish the effects of family socioeconomic status on criminality among the youths in Gwagwalada Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria and to proffer a solution to this menace which has become a cankerworm to the society. The research will be of utmost importance to every member of society as the findings of this work will address issues revolving around the various statuses of the family as well as the effects of criminality on youth.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Family

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, Economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children of own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults (Murdock, 1949). It's the domestic group in which parents and children live together, and in its elementary form it consists of a couple with their children (Meier, 1979)

Horton and Hunt (1976) defined family as "a kinship grouping which provides for the rearing of children and certain other human needs ". Otite and Ogonwo (1981) see the family as a biosocial group with kinship and social aspects.

Sanni, et al (2010) defined family as the "foundation of human society and the strongest socializing forces of life". They went further and identified some of the functions of the family in all societies such as socializing the younger generation by teaching the children to eschew unacceptable behaviors, to delay gratification and to respect the rights of others. They also mentioned that families can also teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours.

Most of these definitions of the family are outdated with the recent changes in our societies. Thus, the family can be defined as a relationship which includes husband and wife, immediate offspring and unavoidable relations.

2.1.2 Family Socio-economic Status

This is the role held within the family by each family member. There are various types of family statuses as identified below:

Reference Person. This is an individual who serves as the central figure around whom the family dynamics of all other members are established. He can be a father, mother or any other person in the family. But in the nuclear families, it is typically recommended that the father serves as the reference person, or in the absence of the father, the mother. In extended families, the father or a prominent male figure is usually designated as the reference person.

Leader of the group: This is the individual who most clearly delineates the family connections within the nuclear family; typically, the father or the mother or any other person recommended as the leader by the family member. The reference person serves as the leader of their nucleus if they are part of one. **Individuals outside of the family, including reference persons in non-nuclear families.** **Members of the Nuclear Family:** These are the other individuals within each nuclear family. On economic status, a member is of high status if economically empowered with bank savings (Magaji and Yahaya; Okoroafor, Magaji and Eze, 2018), has investments in securities (Chinedu, Magaji and Musa, 2021), is employed in the gainful job (Magaji, Musa and Salisu, 2022), is financially included (Igwe, Magaji and Darma, 2021; Magaji Darma and Igwe, 2021), has assets and assets management skill (Magaji, 2004; Magaji, Abubakar and Tahir, 2015), and is not poor (Magaji, 2008; Magaji, 2007; Shaba, Yelwa, Obansa, and Magaji, 2018; Musa, Magaji, Abdulmalik and Eke, 2022).

2.1.3 Criminality

The concept was rooted in crime which means behaviour that is contrary to criminal law or forbidden by criminal law.

It is difficult to give a precise definition of the term crime. The reasons are numerous, but one of the major reasons is the fact that crime varies from place to place and from time to time. That is, what constitutes a crime in one society, for instance, may not be considered a crime in another society, and what is considered a crime today may differ in the next ten years.

The Nigerian criminal code which uses the word offence as a synonym for crime defined it in section 2 as "an act or omission which renders person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment..."

Tappan as reported by Igbo (2006) defined crime as "an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law, committed without defense or justification, and sanctioned by the state as a felony or misdemeanor". United Nations Research Institute (1995) observed that: Crime, in the sense of a breach of a legal prohibition, is a universal concept, but what constitutes a crime and how seriously it should be regarded, varies enormously from one society to another. Perceptions of crime are not determined by any indicator of the degree of injury or damage but by cultural values and power relations. More so, crime is an act of commission, which attracts sanctions, such as fines, imprisonment, or even death (Dambazau, 2011).

We can therefore define crime as an act which violates the culture, and beliefs of a State and is scolded by the State and which is sanctioned and punishable by the State authority.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1. The Social Control theory was developed by Travis Hirschi (1969). It explores the causes of individual engagement in criminal behaviour. The theory states that individuals act in certain ways because of the influence of society. If an individual is attached to society, or to important individuals (parents, friends, etc.) in that society, they will act in positive, constructive ways. On the other hand, if individuals are not attached to society, they will act in destructive ways, including criminal behaviour. Social controls are developed in childhood by parents and teachers who associate positive behaviour with rewards and negative behaviours with punishments. As individuals age and as their paradigm changes, their acceptance of these social controls shifts

as well. The essential beliefs created through this process, as well as the related values, mores, and interpersonal relationships and commitments, create the framework for personal motivators that encourage people to follow laws".

2.3 Empirical Review

Aniekan and Udot (2020) examine the impact of the family on crime in Nigeria and highlight how adherence or deviation from family values has contributed to an increase in criminal activities. Their study specifically examined the Ibibio people of South-South Nigeria. This research utilised a qualitative survey approach and applied the socio-structural explanation of crime. Their research unveiled that familism prioritises loyalty, trustworthiness, honesty, unity, advancement, and safeguarding of family principles. The text highlights that evolving cultural perspectives on family values have resulted in the formation of novel crime environments. The researchers determined that the increase in police presence, the resort to taking matters into one's own hands, and the enforcement of conformity in response to the growing crime issue have led to the formation of new forms of anti-social behaviour that are not explicitly addressed in current crime management strategies. They also emphasised the importance of effectively developing the criminal justice system to address the rising tendencies.

Folorunsho, et al. (2024) argue that effectively tackling juvenile delinquency among teenagers in Nigeria requires a meticulous examination of parenting techniques and family structures. Considering that parents play a vital role as primary caretakers and influential figures in shaping their children's social development, the significance of their responsibilities cannot be underestimated. They stressed that when parents try to be positive role models for their children, it increases the chances of achieving the best and desired results. Unfortunately, a significant portion of parents have adopted parenting methods that unintentionally expose their children to different types of juvenile delinquency. Their article examines the correlation between parenting styles and adolescent criminality, providing insight into the associations between family structure and delinquent conduct. Furthermore, the study examined the correlation between marital conflict and adolescent criminality, as well as the consequences of being raised by a single parent. Their findings emphasised that a significant proportion of delinquent behaviours among teenagers can be traced to family conflict and the parenting styles used. Their findings promoted a shift in thinking towards parenting techniques that are more efficient and beneficial. Furthermore, it highlighted the necessity for the government and key institutions to prioritise the institution of the family in their policies and initiatives.

According to Okoro and Zamani (2022), there has been a significant rise in criminal activity within the Nigerian family environment and Correctional Centres, despite the presence of negative repercussions. Their research investigates the impact of demographic variables and family environment on criminal behaviour among Nigerian prisoners in the Anambra and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Correctional Centres. The impact of the environment on crime rates among Nigerian convicts in Anambra and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Correctional Centres. The word "the" is a definite article used to indicate a specific noun or noun phrase.

The combined inmate population of 4 Correctional Centres amounted to 2,971 individuals. They implemented an online sample size calculator and determined that the appropriate sample size was 333. A single hypothesis was examined. The hypothesis results showed that there is an inverse link between components of family environment and crime. Specifically, interpersonal interaction ($r = -0.259$, $P < 0.01$), system maintenance ($r = -0.204$, $P < 0.01$), and personal growth ($r = -0.294$, $P < 0.01$) were found to be negatively correlated with crime. The study found that the family environment is independently associated with criminality. The study suggests that the government should establish a family environment management agency within the Ministry of Humanitarian and Social Development. This agency would offer effective family services, including training, retraining, and capacity building for parents or carers. The focus of these services would be on improving interpersonal relations, maintaining a healthy family system, and promoting the personal growth and development of children.

2.4 Gap in research

The previous studies failed to account for the relationship between family status and youth criminality specifically in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT Nigeria. Thus, this research will bridge this gap.

3.1 Research Design

Given the nature of this research, we have employed the cross-sectional survey research design to arrive at a valid result. This design approach entails collecting data on certain variables in a study population at a given period, as well as allowing for an analysis of the whole subject matter (Duruji, 2012). The cross-sectional method is therefore suitable for retrieving opinions on how family status initiates youth crime.

3.2 Area of Study

The Gwagwalada metro is the headquarters of Gwagwalada Area Council, of the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. It has a population of 158,618 and the official population of Gwagwalada metro in 2024 according to NPC is 537,000 which is a 5.92% increase from 2023. The population of the Area Council has grown to over 1, 000,000 people. Gwagwalada Area Council has an area of 1069.589 km². (National Bureau of Statistics 2007)

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of individuals residing in Gwagwalada Area Council, Federal Capital Territory and the population was put at 158,618 (NPC,2024)

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study will utilize random sampling to examine the variables. The study sample size will be determined using the Taro Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level.

The sample size for this study was established using the Yamani (1968) formula for estimating sample size, as follows: According to the National Census in 2024, 158,618 persons make up the population of the study area.

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where,

n= signifies the sample size

N=signifies the population under study

e=signifies the margin error (5%)

When submitted, we have;

$$n = \frac{158618}{1 + 158618(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{158618}{1 + 158618(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{158618}{1 + 396}$$

$$n = \frac{158618}{397}$$

n= 400

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 400.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The major instrument used for collecting data was the questionnaire. It was constructed based on the research questions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section of the questionnaire was based on demographic characteristics of the research subjects whereas the second section elicited information on the substantive issues of the study.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

To this, descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distribution were used to interpret the data.

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

In this study, the respondents were drawn from Quarters Ward Gwagwalada inside Gwagwalada metro, Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT. The following analysis was based on the three hundred and eighty (380) copies returned questionnaires administered to the respondents in line with the five research questions which are; demographic characteristics of respondents, the extent to which family status influences criminal behaviour in Quarters Ward, Gwagwalada Area Council FCT.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Sex Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	180	47.4
Male	200	52.6
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 indicates that the female respondents were 180 representing 47.4% of the total population while the male population was 200 respondents constituting 52.6% of the sample. This indicates that both sexes were well represented in the sample. The study is gender sensitive.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-22	100	26.3
23-27	174	45.8
28-32	78	20.5
33-37	13	3.4
38 & above	15	4.0
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 above shows that; 100 respondents constituting (26.3%) were within the age bracket of 18-22, 174 (45.8%) respondents were within the age bracket of 23-27, 78 (20.5%) respondents were within the age bracket of 28-32, 13 (3.4%) respondents were within the age bracket of 33-37, 15 (4.0%) were within the age bracket of 38 & above. This shows that the majority of the respondents in the sample were those within the youth age

Table 3: Religion Status of the Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	278	73
Islam	87	23
Traditionalist	15	4
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 3 shows that; 278 (73%) respondents were Christians, 87 (23%) respondents were Muslim and 15 (4%) respondents were traditionalists. This shows that the majority of the respondents were Christian

Table 4: Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	50	13
Single	315	83
Divorced	15	4
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 shows that; 50 (13%) respondents were married, 315(83%) respondents were single and 15 (4%) respondents were divorced. This shows that the majority of the respondents were single.

Table 5: Education Status of the Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Informal	20	5.3
First School Leaving Certificate	24	6
J.S.C.E	26	7
C.O.E	17	4.5
Polytechnic	31	8.2
University	257	68
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 5 above shows that; 20 (5.3%) respondents had informal education, 24 (6%) respondents had first school leaving certificate, 5 (1%) respondents were J.S.C.E holders, 26 (7%) respondents were S.S.C.E holders, 17 (4.5%) respondents C.O.E, 31 (8.2%) respondents were polytechnic students, and 257 (68%) respondents attended university. This shows that university students were the majority.

Table 6: Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Self-employed	123	32
Civil servant	59	16
Unemployed	198	52
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 6 shows that; 123 (32%) respondents were self-employed, 59 (16%) respondents were civil servants, and 198 (52%) respondents were unemployed. This shows that the majority were unemployed.

Table 7: Marital Status of Parents

Parents' Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married and living together	155	41
Separated	26	7
Divorced	11	3
Mother deceased	74	19
Father deceased	106	28
Both parents deceased	8	2
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 7 indicates that; 155 (41%) respondents were married and living together, 26 (7%) respondents were separated, 11 (3%) respondents were divorced, 74 (19%) respondents had deceased mother, 106 (28%) respondents had deceased father, 8 (2%) respondents had both parents deceased. This shows that the majority were married and living together.

Table 8: Employment Status of Parents

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Both parents working	182	48
Only father working	60	16
Only mother working	110	29

None working	28	7
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 8 shows that; 182 (47%) respondents had both parents working, 60 (16%) respondents had only a father working, 110 (29%) had only a mother working, and 28 (7%) had none working. This shows that most of the respondents had both parents working.

Table 9: The Family Members who mostly Stay with the Child at Home

Who do you live with at Home?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Both mother and father	164	43
With mother only	77	20
With father only	53	14
Mother and stepfather	13	3
Father and stepmother	30	8
With a relative (grandparents, aunt, uncle, etc.)	21	6
With friends	7	2
Alone	15	4

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 9 indicates that; 164 (43%) respondents lived with both mother and father, 77 (20%) respondents lived with only mother, 53 (14%) respondents lived with only father, 13 (3%) respondents lived with mother and step-father, 30(8%) respondents lived with father and step-mother, 21 (6%) respondents lives with a relative, 7 (2%) respondents lived with friends and 15 (4%) lived alone.

Table 10: Impact of Both Parents in Preventing Criminal Behavior

Impact of Both Parents Present in Preventing Criminal Behaviors	Frequency	Percentage
Very great extent	124	33
Great extent	176	46
No extent	11	3
Little extent	52	14
Very little extent	17	4
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 10 indicates that; 124 (33%) respondents thought that the presence of both parents prevents criminal behaviour to a very great extent, 176 (46%) respondents stated great extent, 11 (3%) respondents stated no extent, 52 (15%) respondents stated little extent, 17 (4%) respondents stated very little extent. This shows that the majority were of great extent.

Table 11: Single Parenting and Anti-Social Behavior

Impact of Single Parenting on Anti-social Behavior	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very great extent	114	30
Great extent	172	45.3
No extent	5	1.3
Little extent	73	19.2
Very little extent	16	4.2

Total	380	100
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Fieldwork, 2024

Table 11 shows that; 114 (30%) respondents believe that single parenting is responsible for major anti-social behaviour to a very great extent, 172 (45.3%) respondents stated great extent, 5 (1.3%) stated on extent, 73 (19.2) stated little extent, 16 (4.2%) stated very little extent. This shows that the majority started great extent.

Table 12: Aggressive Parenting and Juvenile Delinquency

Extent Aggressive Parenting leads to Youth Criminality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very great extent	118	13
Great extent	170	45
No extent	20	5
Little extent	57	15
Very little extent	15	4
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 12 indicates that; 1128 (31%) asserted that to a very great extent, parents who are too aggressive with their children can lead to youth criminality, 170 (45%) respondents asserted that to a great extent, 20 (5%) respondents asserted that no extent, 57 (15%) respondents asserted little extent, 15 (4%) respondents asserted very little extent. This shows that the majority stated that it's to a great extent.

Table 13: Domestic Violence and Anti-Social Behavior and Aggression

How Domestic Violence Can Lead to Anti-Social Behavior and Aggression	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very great extent	170	45
Greta extent	158	42
No extent	8	2
Little extent	32	8
Very little extent	12	3
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 13 shows that; 170 (45%) respondents thought that witnessing domestic violence led to anti-social behaviour and aggression to a very great extent, 158 (42%) respondents stated great extent, 8 (2%) respondents stated no extent, 32 (8%) respondents stated little extent, 12 (3%) respondents stated very little extent. This shows that the majority stated a very great extent.

Table 14: Victim of Crime

Victim of youth crime	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	260	68
No	120	32
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 14 shows that; 260 (68%) respondents said they have been witnesses to a youth crime while 120 (32%) indicated that they have not been witnesses to a youth crime.

Table 15: Knowing Anyone Who Involved in Criminal Case

Do you happen to know anyone involved in a criminal case?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Yes	260	68
No	38	10
I don't know	82	22
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 15 shows that; 260 (68%) acknowledged that they know someone involved in a criminal case, 38 (10%) respondents said no, and 82 (22%) respondents stated that they do not know anyone involved in a criminal case.

Table 16: If yes, are the Parents Alive?

Is the person's both parents alive	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Only father	48	13
Only mother	54	14
Both parents	12	3.2
None	3	0.8
I don't know	263	69
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 16 above indicates that; 48 (13%) respondents said that only the person's father is alive, 54 (15%) respondents said only their mother is alive, 12 (3.2%) respondents stated both parents are alive, 3 (0.8%) respondents said none, 263 (69%) respondents stated they don't know.

Table 17: If yes, what is the Marital Status of the Parents?

Is the person's parent still married together	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	72	19
No	95	25
I don't know	213	56
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 17 indicates that 72 (19%) of the respondents said the person's parents are still married, 95 (25%) respondents said no and 213 (56%) said they don't know.

Table 18: Job Status of the Parents

Is the person's parent working	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	119	31
No	124	33
I don't know	137	36
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 18 indicates that; 119 (31%) respondents stated both parents were working while 124 (33%) respondents said no, both parents were not working, and 137 (36%) respondents said they did not know.

Table 19: Lifestyle of the Father

Does the father come home drunk	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	11.1

No	33	8.9
I don't know	305	80
Total	380	100

Fieldwork, 2024

Table 19 above shows that; (11.1%) respondents stated yes, the father comes home drunk, 33 (8.9%) respondents stated no, and 305 (80%) respondents stated do not know.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzed the effects of family status on youth crime inside Gwagwalada metro Gwagwalada Area Council, F.C.T Nigeria. The study found that the attitudes of parents towards their children can instigate criminality in the children. Hence, the positive character of parents is a requisite factor necessary to protect youth against crime. The findings also show that characteristics of parents and parental neglect are major initiators of youth criminality. Again, the results from the study disclose that youth who experience irregularities in their family's arrangement are at a greater susceptibility to criminality. This is because family irregularities distort the racialization of good home training, which predisposes youth in family settings to criminality. Furthermore, good parental attitude, and good child training, breeds good conduct on youths and goes a long way to deter them from criminality. Additionally, economic status such as job availability for the parents affects parenting positively.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government, counsellors, and agencies should develop programs aimed at sensitizing parents and caregivers on parent roles and obligations as well as ways of building a healthy family environment for the breeding of law-abiding youths.
- ii. Government, social workers, and counsellors should develop sensitization programs and use the media as well as to educate youths on the need to be law-abiding and responsible irrespective of their family status because the success or failure of a man is not determined by the situation, he finds himself but by his mindset.
- iii. Also, youths who have been caught in stealing and property snatching should be incorporated into a "vigilante group" and charged with the responsibility of looking out for the security of the community. They should receive a reward if the community does not experience crime for a period and a penalty if the reverse is the case. More specifically there should be good youth empowerment and poverty eradication programs by the government.

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that there is a need for the family (nuclear) to rise to the performance of its primary role of positive socialization and to be good role models to their children to insulate them from criminal behaviour.

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