



Broken Home and Criminal Tendency among Youths in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Introduction

A broken home is typically defined as a household without two biological parents, often due to factors such as divorce, separation, or parental incarceration (Duffy, Keown, and Smyth, 2017). Families provide the primary environment for socialization. Children raised in homes characterized by instability, such as those resulting from divorce or separation, may develop antisocial behaviours. Family disintegration leads to emotional and psychological distress, which often manifests as aggression, delinquency, or criminality in adolescents (Awe, 2020). Adolescents raised in broken homes are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviour compared to those raised in intact families (Acock, 2020). This is due to a lack of parental supervision, emotional support, and guidance, which are crucial factors in preventing criminal tendencies (Becker & Kaplan, 2017).

Globally, most especially in many European countries, individuals who experienced family breakdown during childhood were more likely to engage in criminal activities later in life (Schmidt, 2021). There is a clear pattern of increased criminal tendency among those from broken homes, emphasizing the importance of family stability in preventing delinquent behaviour (Schmidt, 2021). In Asia, the impact of broken homes on criminal involvement is in different cultural contexts. Children from broken homes in Asian countries were at a higher risk of developing criminal tendencies compared to those from intact families, underscoring the global relevance of the relationship between family structure and delinquency (Li et al, 2020). Recent statistics from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) further support the connection between broken homes and criminal behaviour on a global scale (UNODC, 2021). According to the UNODC's World Crime Trends Report (2021), a significant proportion of offenders across countries have experienced family disruption, with rates of family breakdown varying by region and socio-economic factors. These underscore the need for cross-cultural research and interventions that address the impact of broken homes on criminal tendency worldwide.

Effective strategies to support children and families facing adversity, promote positive family dynamics, and prevent delinquent behaviour are crucial in mitigating the consequences of family disruption on individuals and society as a whole (Becker & Kaplan, 2017). The trauma associated with family breakdown, such as parental conflict or absence, can lead to feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem in children. Psychological issues may prompt individuals to seek acceptance and identity through negative channels, including gang involvement and delinquency (Tayo and Richard, 2022).

In Nigeria, peer influence, socio-economic strain, and lack of access to adequate resources partially mediated the relationship between broken homes and criminal behaviour (Oyedepo, 2021). This is consistent with the present reality regarding the country (Ogunleye, 2023). Broken homes frequently result in economic hardships. A study by Olukoya (2021) highlights that the financial strain often faced by single-parent families can lead to neglect of children, making them more vulnerable to peer influence and exposure to criminal elements. This socioeconomic disadvantage can drive some youths to commit crimes out of necessity. There is a link between broken homes and increased criminal behaviour among youths in Nigeria (Olukoya, 2021).

Children from broken homes are more likely to seek validation from peers, which may lead them to associate with delinquent groups. Peer pressure can significantly impact youths' choices, often leading them toward criminal activities, particularly in urban areas within Ekiti State (Ogunleye, 2023). Addressing the issue of criminal tendencies associated with broken homes requires a multifaceted approach. Community programs that offer support to single-parent families, mentorship for at-risk youths, and educational opportunities can provide positive alternatives. These interventions are crucial for mitigating the risks associated with broken homes and reducing criminal behaviour among youths (Adebayo, 2024).

The phenomenon of broken homes is increasingly prevalent due to factors such as divorce, separation, and the socio-economic challenges faced by families. National Bureau of Statistics (2023), stated that there has been a notable rise in divorce rates over the years, which often results in single-parent households or fragmented family structures. Understanding the implications of broken homes on youth behaviour is crucial to addressing the underlying social issues affecting this demographic. Children from broken homes may face unique emotional and psychological challenges, including feelings of abandonment, insecurity, and identity crisis (Olukoya, 2021).

Ikere Ekiti has experienced fluctuations in crime rates, with increasing incidents of youth involvement in delinquent behaviour such as theft, drug abuse, and gang-related activities. Establishing a direct link between broken homes and criminal tendencies can provide valuable insights into the root causes of youth crime in the local context. This understanding is essential for developing targeted interventions aimed at reducing delinquent behaviour. Hence, the rationale for this study. Broken homes—characterized by parental separation, divorce, or single parenthood—have been identified globally as significant precursors to various social issues, including juvenile delinquency and other forms of criminal behaviour. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reported that youth crime rates have steadily increased worldwide, with broken family structures contributing significantly to these alarming trends.

Studies indicate that children from broken homes are at a greater risk of engaging in criminal activities. For instance, a longitudinal study by Hagan and Palloni (2021) revealed that children living in single-parent homes are 1.5 times more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour compared to those from intact families. This trend is further corroborated by a global survey conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), which found that approximately 40% of youth involved in criminal activities reported experiencing family disruptions during childhood.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020), children from broken homes are statistically more likely to engage in criminal activities. The OECD report on family structure and child outcomes also highlights that children from single-parent families experience higher risks of behavioural problems (OECD, 2021). A report by the African Union (2022) estimated that about 50% of children across the continent are living in non-traditional families, with significant implications for youth behaviour. In countries such as South Africa, findings from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC, 2021) indicated that youths from broken homes were significantly more likely to engage in criminal conduct, with almost 55% of incarcerated youth reporting family instability as a contributing factor. The African Union (AU, 2018) noted a surge in crime rates among youths in family-disrupted environments. For instance, a study conducted in Kenya revealed that youth from broken homes had a higher propensity to engage in crime compared to their peers from intact families (Okello & Folefac, 2020).

In Nigeria, the situation mirrors broader global and African trends, with increasing reports of juvenile delinquency linked to broken family structures. The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) highlighted that about 34% of Nigerian children live in single-parent homes—a figure that correlates with rising youth crime rates, reported to be increasing by approximately 20% annually (Nigerian Police Force Report, 2022). The NBS further reveals that the majority of crimes committed by youths, including theft and assault, are disproportionately higher among those from broken homes. Reports from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) indicate that over 20% of Nigerian children live in homes with only one parent.

The Ekiti State Ministry of Youths and Sports Development reported an uptick in youth involvement in criminal activities linked to domestic issues (Ekiti State Government, 2023). The absence of parental guidance is cited as a key factor influencing these behaviours, with many youths reporting feelings of neglect and a lack of direction. A study by Adebayo et al. (2022) found a strong relationship between family fragmentation and youth criminality in urban areas, with Ikere Ekiti being no exception. The prevalence of youth gangs and crimes such as theft and assault correlates with the increasing number of broken homes within the state (Adebayo et al., 2022). Ikere Ekiti, the capital city of Ekiti State, presents a unique microcosm within Nigeria where these issues are acutely felt. Approximately 45% of youths in Ikere Ekiti come from broken homes, with significant associations drawn between family structure and criminal behavior (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2023). The Ekiti State Bureau of Statistics reported a 30% rise in youth-related offenses from 2021 to 2022, underscoring how family breakdowns contribute to a sense of disillusionment and increased vulnerability to crime among young people in the region.

Most studies focus broadly on Nigeria or Africa without delving into specific nuances of Ikere Ekiti. Local studies with both quantitative and qualitative insights are sparse, limiting the understanding of unique socio-cultural dynamics at play (Oluwaseun et al., 2020). Most studies often examine the issue in isolation, failing to consider the complex interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors such as poverty, education, and peer pressure that contribute to criminal tendencies (Akinyede & Ige, 2021). However, the study seeks to better understand the mechanisms underlying the association between broken homes and criminal behaviour, including the roles of parental conflict, emotional neglect, and the absence of positive role models. The study would address the identified gaps in previous studies through localized and quantitative approaches that would provide essential insights that can inform targeted interventions aimed at mitigating youth crime and enhancing community resilience.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objectives of this study are to examine broken home and criminal tendency among youths in Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State. The specific objectives are to;

1. identify the nature of criminal behaviour among youths from broken home in Ikere Ekiti.
2. examine how parental absence contribute to the likelihood of delinquent behaviour in adolescents in Ikere Ekiti.
3. assess how socio-economic factor in broken home contribute to criminal tendency among youths in Ikere Ekiti.
4. investigate how broken home incline criminal tendency among youths in Ikere Ekiti.
5. examine the role of social support system in relating to criminal behaviour among youths in Ikere Ekiti.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications of the Study

Description of a Broken Home

A broken home has been redefined in contemporary literature not just as a family where one or both parents are absent due to death, divorce, or separation, but also as one characterized by emotional disconnection and lack of communication, even when both parents are physically present. According to Adediran and Eze (2022), the term "broken home" encompasses situations where there is persistent conflict, emotional neglect, or absence of parental bonding, making the home an unhealthy environment for child development. This view aligns with earlier assertions that the mere physical presence of parents does not guarantee familial harmony. Instead, homes where parents act like cohabitants without emotional ties or shared responsibilities mirror the dysfunction of families affected by physical separation (Okonkwo & Ogunyemi, 2021). Such conditions often lead to emotional isolation and developmental challenges in children.

Further classifications of broken homes consider the depth and permanence of the disintegration. As observed by Ibrahim and Sanni (2023), broken homes can be partial—where emotional unity is missing despite physical cohabitation—or complete, where both emotional and physical ties have deteriorated. They also highlight that some separations are temporary, like judicial separations, while others are irreversible, such as divorce. The degeneration of a home, according to contemporary scholars, often stems from the internal breakdown of its members—emotionally, psychologically, or socially—without

their full awareness (Akinlolu & Bello, 2020). These dynamics underscore the complexity of defining broken homes, emphasizing the need to look beyond legal or structural definitions and consider the psychological and emotional landscapes within the household.

Causes of Broken Homes

The concept of a broken home has evolved to encompass various conditions that disrupt family stability, including parental death, divorce, desertion, separation, and prolonged absence. Recent studies reaffirm that the death of a key family member, particularly the breadwinner, creates significant emotional and financial voids that can destabilize the household if unaddressed (Oladele & Akinyemi, 2021). The inability of the home to function effectively after such a loss highlights how critical each member's role is to family cohesion (Eze & Nwosu, 2022). Divorce, legally terminating the marital union, is a primary cause of family breakdown, leading to emotional and legal fragmentation. Contemporary research distinguishes between judicial and legislative divorce and notes that the dissolution of marriage often complicates family dynamics, particularly affecting children's welfare and legal status (Adewale & Ojo, 2023; Bello & Okeke, 2022).

Desertion, characterized by the unjustified abandonment of family responsibilities, further undermines family unity and trust. Modern analyses classify desertion into types such as constructive, criminal, and obstinate, each severely damaging the family's emotional and functional bonds (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023). Unlike divorce, desertion often occurs without legal proceedings but has equally profound negative effects on the home environment. Separation, although not legally ending a marriage, introduces instability by physically dividing spouses while maintaining legal ties. Research highlights that prolonged separations, including judicial separation, increase the risk of family disintegration, especially when reconciliation efforts fail or are absent (Adegboye & Salami, 2022). These relational disruptions contribute significantly to the erosion of family structures and the emergence of dysfunctional homes.

Additional factors influencing the breakdown of homes include prolonged absences due to work or relocation, cultural and religious differences, and marriages founded on unstable reasons such as coercion or financial gain. Studies reveal that prolonged parental absence diminishes emotional support and involvement in family life, weakening cohesion (Akinola & Thomas, 2023). Cultural and religious disparities between spouses may create persistent conflicts, increasing the likelihood of separation or divorce (Nnamani & Eze, 2021). Furthermore, marriages lacking genuine emotional foundations, such as those based on external pressures or unplanned circumstances, are more vulnerable to failure (Owolabi & Martins, 2024). Collectively, these factors contribute to the multifaceted nature of broken homes, underscoring the importance of addressing emotional, cultural, and legal aspects to support family stability.

Causes of Criminality among Youth from Broken Homes

Family instability and structure play critical roles in shaping youth criminal behavior, with children from unstable homes often experiencing neglect, inadequate supervision, and lack of emotional support. These conditions contribute to low self-esteem, social isolation, and mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety, increasing vulnerability to antisocial behavior (Eze & Okafor, 2023). Exposure to parental violence and antisocial conduct normalizes aggression, making criminal activity more likely among youth. Financial hardship further exacerbates this risk, as economic struggles push young people toward theft or other survival crimes, especially where social safety nets and institutional support are weak (Adebayo & Chukwu, 2024). In Nigeria, persistent poverty, unemployment, and widening economic inequality heighten feelings of frustration and hopelessness, limiting access to education and jobs, and thereby fueling youth involvement in crime (Oluwole & Nwankwo, 2022). Additionally, societal pressures that idolize wealth and power can drive individuals to crime in pursuit of status and acceptance.

Social and environmental factors, as explained by Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory, demonstrate how criminal behavior is learned through interaction with deviant peers and dysfunctional environments (Ibrahim & Musa, 2023). Dysfunctional family settings, exposure to abuse, and association with criminal peers contribute to the internalization of antisocial norms. Communities plagued by poverty, unemployment, and high crime rates foster social disorganization, which, combined with cultural expectations of success "by any means," encourage criminal conduct when legitimate opportunities are lacking (Okeke & Eze, 2023). Moreover, rapid urbanization, overcrowding, and poor living conditions escalate social tensions and weaken community controls, while the widespread availability of small arms—especially in conflict-prone regions like the Niger Delta—heightens violence and trauma exposure, contributing to desensitization and sociopathic behaviors among youth (Adesina & Olatunji, 2024). Together, these intertwined social, economic, and environmental pressures perpetuate cycles of criminality among vulnerable populations in Nigeria.

Types of Crime Common among Youth from Broken Homes

Youth from broken homes frequently face heightened emotional, psychological, and social challenges that increase their susceptibility to criminal behavior. Property crimes such as theft, burglary, and vandalism are common, often driven by economic hardship, lack of parental supervision, and emotional distress (Ibrahim & Okeke, 2023). The absence of supportive family structures may compel these youths to resort to illegal means to meet their needs, while feelings of frustration and anger can lead to destructive acts like vandalism. Violent crimes—including assault, robbery, and homicide—are also more prevalent among youths exposed to domestic violence, neglect, or emotional abuse in childhood, as these adverse experiences foster maladaptive cognitive patterns and sociopathic tendencies (Eze & Nwafor, 2024). Without stable, nurturing parental figures, unresolved trauma can manifest in aggressive and violent behaviors.

Substance abuse is a significant coping mechanism for many youths from broken homes, exacerbated by emotional stress, trauma, and lack of guidance (Adeyemi & Bako, 2023). The absence of responsible adults to provide support often leads them to use drugs and alcohol to numb feelings of loneliness or despair. Gang involvement also offers a misplaced sense of belonging, protection, and status, exploiting youths who seek validation and emotional connection (Chukwu & Omolade, 2024). Additionally, engagement in cybercrimes and sexual offenses has risen among these youths, attracted by perceived low risk and financial gain, especially in contexts of poverty and moral neglect (Okafor & Usman, 2023). Truancy and vagrancy are also common, driven by emotional neglect and disengagement from societal norms, including education, which further marginalizes them and increases the likelihood of deviant behavior (Oluwole & Eze, 2022).

Theoretical framework

Social control theory was adopted as the theoretical framework.

The relationship between broken homes and youth criminal tendencies can be effectively explained through Hirschi's (1969) Social Control Theory, which posits that strong social bonds discourage individuals from engaging in deviant behavior. Hirschi identifies four key elements of social bonds—attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief—that help individuals conform to societal norms. According to this theory, when these bonds are strong, especially the emotional attachment to parents, individuals are less likely to engage in criminal activities. In broken homes, however, these bonds are often weakened due to disrupted family structures, such as divorce or the absence of a parent. This weakening of emotional ties and reduced parental supervision can diminish a youth's sense of social responsibility, increase alienation, and consequently raise the likelihood of deviant behavior.

Research further supports the idea that the quantity and quality of time spent with parents are crucial factors in preventing delinquency. Adolescents who have more interactions and leisure time with their parents are less likely to participate in criminal or deviant acts. Reduced parental involvement—common in broken homes—can result in adolescents withholding information and distancing themselves from authority figures, which undermines discipline and social conformity. Moreover, frequent parental supervision has been shown to offer protection against negative behaviors such as substance use. Thus, when family structures fail to provide the necessary emotional support, supervision, and engagement, adolescents are more likely to seek alternative, often deviant, paths to meet their psychological and social needs.

The theory was adopted to be suitable in explaining broken home and criminal tendency among youths in Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The social control theory postulates that social bonds decrease the likelihood of engaging in crime and deviance. Parents play a very important role in the lives of children. Firstly, they serve as role models for their children, parents are expected to guide and nurture their children in accordance with the socially accepted norms, laws, customs, and traditions. A parent's duty is to show his/her child the way to the light, they can do this through various means, some of which are: religion, education, morals, etc. A child learns from his parents first before the society. The family is the foundation of which society is built, and every member of the family holds a pivotal position in a child's life. Once a child loses any part of his family, in this case of this study, it will result to distortion in the family structure of which the child belongs to. This distortion could result to a child engaging in illicit and criminal actions to either cope with daily societal demands, or maintaining status quo.

Research Methods

The study employed an exploratory-descriptive and cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship between broken homes and criminal tendencies among youths. The descriptive design enabled the collection of detailed information about the characteristics and patterns of criminal behavior, while the exploratory aspect allowed for the discovery of new insights not immediately obvious in existing literature. The research was conducted within a specific timeframe, thus categorized as cross-sectional. The research was carried out in Ikere Ekiti Local Government Area, which has a rich administrative history and a large, dense population as indicated by the World Population Review (2024). The area comprises both urban and rural settlements and serves as the state capital of Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The study population consisted of parents, guardians, and youths in Ikere Ekiti who either come from broken homes or have close connections to individuals from such backgrounds. The sampling approach involved a combination of simple random and convenience sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used to select five residential areas from Ikere Ekiti through a balloting system, ensuring equal representation, while convenience sampling helped select 100 respondents—parents, guardians, and youths—based on their availability and willingness to participate. The questionnaire used was validated by the research supervisor for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to ensure reliability and to identify areas needing improvement.

Primary data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires comprising both closed and open-ended questions. These were segmented into six sections addressing various dimensions of the research, including the nature of criminal behavior, parental absence, socio-economic influence, and social support systems. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. This method allowed the researcher to present and interpret the data in a clear and accessible manner that directly addressed the research objectives.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Nature of criminal behaviour among youths from a broken home in Ikere Ekiti.

What types of criminal behaviour do you believe are most frequently exhibited by youths from broken homes in Ikere Ekiti	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Theft	15	15.0
Drug-related offences	18	18.0
Violence	30	30.0
Vandalism	37	37.0
Total	100	100.0
How often do you observe or hear about youths from broken homes engaging in criminal behaviour in your community?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Very frequently	35	35.0

Frequently	19	19.0
Occasionally	24	24.0
Rarely	22	22.0
Total	100	100.0
In your opinion, what motivates youths from broken homes to engage in criminal activities	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Family neglect	18	18.0
Peer pressure	28	28.0
Economic necessity	26	26.0
Boredom or lack of constructive activities	22	22.0
Emotional Issues	5	5.0
Idleness	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0
What forms of delinquent behaviour do you think youths from broken homes engage in more frequently compared to their peers from intact families	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Theft	20	20.0
Substance abuse	59	59.0
Physical violence	17	17.0
Truancy (Skipping School)	3	3.0
Sexual misconduct	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0
What demography of youth from broken home has criminal tendency	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Male	27	27.0
Female	48	48.0
Youth from poor homes	22	22.0
Youth from wealthy homes	2	2.0
Adult	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 1 reported the nature of criminal behaviour among youths from broken homes in Ikere Ekiti, with notable insights into the types, frequency, and motivations behind such behaviours, as well as the demographic tendencies observed. Regarding the types of criminal behaviour most frequently exhibited by youths from broken homes, vandalism was the most reported activity, accounting for 37% of responses. Violence followed with 30%, while drug-related offences and theft were reported at 18% and 15%, respectively. This indicates that property-related offenses, such as vandalism, and interpersonal violence are prevalent within this demographic. The frequency of criminal behaviour among youths from broken homes was also assessed. A significant proportion of respondents (35%) indicated that such behaviours are observed "very frequently" in their community, while 19% noted they occur "frequently." A smaller percentage reported observing such behaviour "occasionally" (24%) or "rarely" (22%). This suggests that criminal behaviour among this group is a visible and recurring issue within the community. When exploring the motivations behind criminal activities among youths from broken homes, peer pressure emerged as the leading factor, cited by 28% of respondents. Economic necessity followed closely, accounting for 26% of responses, while boredom or lack of constructive activities was mentioned by 22%. Family neglect was identified by 18% of respondents, highlighting the role of inadequate parental support. Emotional issues and idleness were less frequently mentioned, at 5% and 1%, respectively. These findings underscore the complex interplay of social and economic factors in influencing criminal behaviour. In terms of specific delinquent behaviours, substance abuse was identified as the most common, reported by 59% of respondents. Theft accounted for 20%, while physical violence represented 17%. Truancy and sexual misconduct were less frequently reported, at 3% and 1%, respectively. This indicates that substance abuse is a significant issue among youths from broken homes, likely driven by a combination of peer influence and emotional challenges. The demographic characteristics of youths from broken homes with a tendency for criminal behaviour revealed interesting patterns. Female youths were reported more frequently (48%) than males (27%) as being prone to criminal tendencies. Youths from poor homes also constituted a notable proportion (22%), while those from wealthy homes and adults were minimally represented, at 2% and 1%, respectively. This demographic distribution suggests that socioeconomic factors and gender may influence the likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Parental absence and the likelihood of delinquent behaviour in adolescents in Ikere Ekiti

To what extent do you believe that the absence of a parent increases the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviour?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Very high extent	22	22.0
High extent	29	29.0
Moderate extent	28	28.0
Low extent	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0
What types of delinquent behaviors do you think are most likely to occur among adolescents with absent parents?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Theft	28	28.0
Substance abuse	23	23.0
Violence	29	29.0
Truancy	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0
In your opinion, what is the main reason adolescents with absent parents may engage in delinquent behavior?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Lack of supervision and guidance	18	18.0
financial hardship and necessity	7	7.0
Desire for attention or acceptance from peers	29	29.0
Emotional issues(e.g., anger, depression)	45	45.0
Boredom/Lack of recreational activities	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0
Which of the following crime are known among youth with single parenting?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Vandalism	18	18.0
Cultism	66	66.0
Suicide ideation	10	10.0
Substance abuse	5	5.0
Homicide	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 2 reported the relationship between parental absence and the likelihood of delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Ikere Ekiti. A significant proportion of respondents acknowledged the role of parental absence in increasing the likelihood of delinquent behaviour. About 29% of respondents believed the influence was to a high extent, while 28% indicated a moderate extent. Additionally, 22% perceived the impact to be very high, and 21% noted a low extent. These findings suggest a broad recognition of the issue, although opinions differ on the intensity of the impact. This variation may reflect differing perceptions of the resilience of adolescents or the availability of alternative support systems in the community. The study identified various delinquent behaviours commonly associated with adolescents from absent-parent households. Violence was the most frequently mentioned, accounting for 29% of responses, followed by theft (28%) and substance abuse (23%). Truancy, at 20%, also emerged as a notable concern. These behaviours indicate a tendency for these adolescents to engage in both interpersonal and property-related offences, driven by various underlying factors stemming from the absence of parental guidance and supervision. Respondents highlighted emotional issues, such as anger and depression, as the leading cause of delinquent behaviour, accounting for 45% of responses. A desire for attention or acceptance from peers was another significant factor, cited by 29% of respondents. Additionally, 18% attributed the behaviour to a lack of supervision and guidance, while financial hardship and boredom were noted by 7% and 1%, respectively. These findings reveal the emotional vulnerabilities and social pressures faced by adolescents from absent-parent homes, further compounding their risk of engaging in delinquent activities. The study also examined specific crimes commonly associated with adolescents from single-parent homes. Cultism emerged as the most prevalent, with 66% of respondents identifying it as a key issue. Vandalism followed at 18%, while suicide ideation and substance abuse were noted by 10% and 5% of respondents, respectively. Homicide was reported by only 1% of respondents. The high rate of cultism suggests that these adolescents may be seeking a sense of belonging and identity in negative peer groups, exacerbated by the absence of positive parental influence. The findings demonstrate a strong link between parental absence and the likelihood of delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Ikere Ekiti. Emotional issues, lack of supervision, and peer influence were identified as significant drivers, with cultism and violence being particularly concerning forms of delinquency.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Socio-economic Factor in broken Home and Criminal Tendency among Youths in Ikere Ekiti.

How would you describe the family's socio-economic status of a youth from a broken home in Ikere Ekiti?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
High income	92	92.0
Middle income	4	4.0
Low income	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0
Which of the following criminality would a youth from a high-income family be fond of?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Vandalism	13	13.0
Homicide	21	21.0
Violence	29	29.0
Suicide ideation	37	37.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 3 findings reveal that the socio-economic status of youths from broken homes in Ikere Ekiti is predominantly high-income. An overwhelming 92% of respondents identified youths from broken homes as belonging to high-income families, while only 4% each fell into the middle-income and low-income categories. This distribution suggests that broken homes are not limited to lower socio-economic backgrounds and highlights the unique challenges faced by youths from affluent families in such circumstances. Regarding the types of criminal behaviours associated with youths from high-income families, the study found suicide ideation to be the most frequently observed issue, with 37% of respondents identifying it as a common concern. This underscores the psychological and emotional struggles that these youths may face despite financial privilege. Violence ranked second at 29%, indicating tendencies toward aggressive behaviour or interpersonal conflicts. Homicide and vandalism were also noted, accounting for 21% and 13% of responses, respectively. These behaviours suggest that socio-economic privilege does not shield youths from engaging in criminal activities, which may instead stem from emotional neglect, family conflicts, or other pressures unique to high-income households. These findings emphasize the nuanced relationship between socio-economic factors and criminal tendencies among youths from broken homes. While financial stability may mitigate certain risks, it does not eliminate the emotional and psychological vulnerabilities that contribute to delinquent behaviour. Addressing these challenges requires tailored interventions focusing on emotional support, mental health awareness, and family counselling to mitigate the risks associated with growing up in broken high-income households.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Broken home and criminal tendency among youths in Ikere Ekiti

Do you think there is a correlation between coming from a broken home and engaging in criminal activities?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Strongly agree	19	19.0
Agree	40	40.0
Neutral	33	33.0
Disagree	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
If yes, what do you think are the possible reasons for this correlation?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Lack of parental supervision	9	9.0
Emotional trauma from parental separation	69	69.0
lack of proper role models	15	15.0
Peer pressure	6	6.0
Psychology support	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

The findings on Table 4 indicate varied perceptions regarding the correlation between coming from a broken home and engaging in criminal activities. A significant portion of respondents, 40%, agree that there is a correlation, while 19% strongly agree. This suggests that the majority of respondents recognize some connection between broken homes and criminal tendencies. However, 33% remain neutral, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence about the relationship, and 8% disagree, implying that they do not perceive a direct link. When examining the reasons for this perceived correlation, emotional trauma resulting from parental separation emerged as the dominant factor, cited by 69% of respondents. This underscores the profound psychological impact that familial instability can have on youths, potentially predisposing them to delinquent behaviours. Lack of proper role models was identified by 15% of respondents, highlighting the importance of guidance and positive influences during formative years. A smaller proportion, 9%, pointed to a lack

of parental supervision as a contributing factor, while 6% attributed the correlation to peer pressure. Only 1% mentioned the need for psychological support, which may indicate a gap in awareness about the importance of mental health resources. These results highlight the complex interplay of emotional, social, and environmental factors contributing to criminal tendencies among youths from broken homes.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by the role of Social Support System in relating to Criminal Behavior among Youths in Ikere Ekiti

Do you feel supported by your family members and friends in times of need?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Yes	45	45.0
No	55	55.0
Total	100	100.0
Have you ever felt isolated or disconnected from your social support system?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Yes	58	58.0
No	42	42.0
Total	100	100.0
Do you believe that having a strong social support system can help prevent youths from engaging in criminal activities?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Strongly agree	18	18.0
Agree	31	31.0
Neutral	8	8.0
Disagree	29	29.0
Strongly disagree	14	14.0
Total	100	100.0
In what ways do you think social support can positively impact the criminal behaviour of youths in Ikere Ekiti?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Providing emotional support	17	17.0
Offering guidance and advice	18	18.0
Creating a sense of belonging and community	33	33.0
Providing economic resources and opportunities	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0
How can the community and local organizations improve social support for youths in Ikere Ekiti to help prevent criminal behaviour?	FREQUENCY (N=100)	PERCENT (%)
Establishing youth support groups	17	17.0
Offering counselling services	22	22.0
Providing mentorship programs	50	50.0
Creating safe spaces for recreation and socializing	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

The findings on table 5 reveal the complex relationship between social support systems and criminal behaviour among youths in Ikere Ekiti. When asked if they felt supported by family and friends during times of need, 45% of respondents affirmed, while a majority of 55% expressed that they did not feel supported. This indicates a significant gap in perceived familial and social support, which could contribute to the vulnerability of youths to negative influences. Similarly, 58% reported feeling isolated or disconnected from their social support system, further underscoring the need for stronger, more inclusive support structures. The role of social support systems in preventing criminal behaviour was recognized by many respondents. A combined 49% either strongly agreed (18%) or agreed (31%) that a strong social support system can deter youths from engaging in criminal activities. However, a notable 29% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed, suggesting that not all respondents view social support as a definitive preventive measure. Additionally, 8% remained neutral, reflecting some uncertainty about the extent of social support's impact on criminal tendencies. Respondents identified various ways in which social support could positively influence youth behaviour. Creating a sense of belonging and community was highlighted by 33% of respondents as the most impactful form of support, closely followed by providing economic resources and opportunities, mentioned by 32%. Offering guidance and advice (18%) and providing emotional support (17%) were also seen as significant contributors to reducing delinquent behaviours. These findings suggest

that both emotional and practical forms of support play critical roles in shaping positive youth outcomes. Regarding community and organizational interventions, mentorship programs were overwhelmingly identified as the most effective strategy, with 50% of respondents emphasizing their importance. Offering counselling services was also seen as a valuable initiative by 22% of respondents, while 17% recommended establishing youth support groups. Only 11% suggested creating safe spaces for recreation and socializing, which indicates that structured programs are perceived as more beneficial than unstructured recreational opportunities. Overall, the results highlight the importance of robust social support systems in mitigating criminal behaviour among youths in Ikere Ekiti. Strengthening familial bonds, fostering a sense of community, and implementing targeted interventions such as mentorship programs and counselling services are essential steps in addressing the challenges faced by at-risk youths.

Discussion of Findings

The findings highlight a multifaceted relationship between broken homes, socio-economic status, and youth criminality in Ikere Ekiti. Youths from broken homes are commonly involved in crimes such as vandalism and violence, with recurring instances of delinquency linked to peer pressure, economic hardship, boredom, family neglect, and substance abuse. A significant number of these youths lack parental supervision and emotional support, which increases their susceptibility to negative influences, including cultism. Interestingly, many of these adolescents come from high-income families, debunking the stereotype that broken homes are exclusive to lower-income groups. Despite their financial advantage, these youths face emotional struggles such as depression and suicidal thoughts, indicating that family instability affects behavior regardless of socio-economic status.

Moreover, emotional trauma from family breakdown, absence of role models, and inadequate guidance further reinforce criminal tendencies among these youths. The study emphasizes that emotional and psychological support, along with effective parenting, is crucial in deterring delinquency. A strong social support system, including mentorship and counseling programs, is seen as vital in fostering a sense of belonging and guiding youths away from crime. Respondents stress that structured interventions and community-based programs are necessary to address the root causes of youth criminality. Ultimately, the study underscores that addressing youth delinquency in Ikere Ekiti requires a holistic approach that combines emotional care, parental involvement, socio-economic support, and targeted youth programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that criminal behavior among youths from broken homes in Ikere Ekiti is a significant concern, with key issues such as vandalism, violence, and substance abuse being prevalent. These behaviors are strongly influenced by a combination of social, economic, and emotional factors. Parental absence, in particular, plays a critical role in increasing the likelihood of delinquency, with emotional trauma from parental separation being a key contributing factor. While youths from broken homes are often seen as coming from affluent families, this socio-economic status does not shield them from emotional neglect, which in turn leads to criminal behaviour. The role of social support systems, such as family and community support, is pivotal in preventing these negative outcomes. However, many youths report feeling isolated and unsupported, highlighting the need for stronger social support frameworks.

By implementing the following recommendations, it is possible to create a supportive environment that helps prevent criminal behaviour among youths in Ikere Ekiti, fostering healthier communities and promoting positive youth development.

1. Efforts should be made to reinforce family structures and provide support for parents, especially those from broken homes, through counselling and family therapy. This can help address the emotional needs of youths and mitigate the risk of delinquent behaviour.
2. Establishing community support programs, such as youth mentorship, counselling services, and peer support groups, can offer guidance and positive role models. These initiatives can help youths navigate challenges and develop healthier coping mechanisms.
3. Providing recreational activities, life skills training, and educational programs can engage youths in constructive pursuits and reduce the risk of boredom and idle behaviour, which often leads to delinquency.
4. Given the emotional issues faced by many youths, particularly those from broken homes, there should be a focus on mental health support. Counselling services should be made more accessible to help youths cope with emotional trauma, anger, and depression, which often manifest in delinquent behaviour.
5. Government and local authorities should implement policies that promote family welfare, provide support for single-parent households, and create safe spaces for youths to engage in positive activities. Investments in mental health services and youth development programs are essential to reducing crime rates.

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