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Dissecting probable indicators of juvenile delinquency among Gweru Urban adolescents in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Society today is still naïve that some children are no longer innocent, beautiful souls but callous and dangerous to the community. The escalating crime incidents by juveniles make it imperative to concede the rampant prevalence of juvenile delinquency. This research sought to identify the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency in the milieu of the unprecedented global trend. The study used a mixed-method approach guided by the pragmatist research paradigm. A descriptive research design enhanced an appreciation of participants' multiple realities based on their lived experiences premised on qualitative and quantitative research. Random sampling was used in selecting 209 students to complete a translated questionnaire. An interview was used to collect data from teachers and parents selected purposively. Data was analysed using frequency count. Data from interviews was thematically analysed. Significant findings were that mental illness, social conditions such as neighbourhood location, home conditions such as family size, school conditions such as strictness of school and environmental factors were the indicators of juvenile delinquency. After-school programs to increase school time counselling services at schools were some of the recommendations by key informants on curbing juvenile delinquency. The overall conclusion is that probable indicators of juvenile delinquency result from several factors such as individual, home, social environment, and school.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency, probable indicator, determinants, adolescents, pragmatism.

1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency has gradually, over the years, been a cancerous global trend. According to the United Nations (UN) on children deprived of liberty, about 410 000 children are detained in the criminal justice system every year globally (Fambisayi and Moyo, 2020). Zimbabwe has, in the previous years, experienced an economic decline due to deindustrialisation, which has seen many children culminate in conflict with the law. Mlambo (2015) notes that by the beginning of 2015, Zimbabwe had become a predominantly informal economy country or, in popular parlance, a nation of vendors. The economic situation has left many families disadvantaged and many children living in child-headed families, leading most children into criminal acts such as robbery, theft and sex-workers, all for survival. Majome (2019) articulates that in Zimbabwe nationwide, children were among the scores of suspects arrested for violence and looting in the aftermath of January 14, 2018, protests sparked by shock fuel increases. The researchers, as eyewitnesses of the 2018 protests, observed that most of these children were conscious of what they were doing, as illustrated by one minor who ran with a bagful of looted books, food, and money and bellowed at the bystanders who tried interrogating him: "ndisiyei ndini ndinoziva nhamo iri kumba kwedu (leave me alone, I know the suffering in our home)". Most juveniles in congruous life circumstances have been resorting to illicit actions to fend for themselves and their families in some instances.

Ou and Reynolds (2012) conducted a Chicago longitudinal research with 733 male participants on *Childhood Predictors of Young Adult Male Crime.* The average age of the participants was 26 years, and longitudinal data was collected from birth from sources like school records and criminal records. The

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results of the indicated that 20.4 % of Black males had been incarcerated compared to 2.8% of White males and 9% of Hispanic males. 45% of the participants had a guilty conviction, and 36.4% had a felony conviction by age 26. Findings in this study were common, that is, AFDC (Family Public and Receipt) participation by child's aged 3, negative early home environment, maltreatment experiences at age 4-13 years, trouble-making behaviour at 9-12 years and 10-14 years affected by school environment which endorsed delinquency. Other predictors that were established responsible for a child's social competence, that is, both incarceration and felony by child's age, included mother unemployment, four or more children in a household and mother not having completed high school. Hence, this research shows that a parent's economic status, maltreatment and living conditions are debatably concerns that could lead a juvenile to have criminal predispositions.

Djodonou et al. (2016) conducted a study *in Benin* with 117 children aged 11 to 18 years. The researchers collected data through face-to-face interviews, the ASSIST-WHO, Family Assessment Device and Parental Acceptance and Rejection Scales. Their findings were that 76.9% of the participants were school dropouts, 30.8% were from broken homes, 42.2% had engaged in psychoactive substance abuse consumption, 48.7% had absent mothers, 44.4% had absent fathers, and 53.9% were orphans. They highlighted that the major offences that were committed by juveniles included theft being at the top with 46.2%, followed by rape at second place with 19.7%. Substance abuse, school drop out, and absence of either parents or broken homes were some leading factors in criminal conduct among adolescents in Benin.

Sixpence (2019) testified that 130 adolescents had been detained and charged with disorderly conduct and criminal nuisance in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The teenagers were at a Vuzu party where they engaged in binge drinking, drug abuse and risky illicit sex with teenagers in privacy without adult supervision. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) (2015), as illustrated by Langa (2016) in their annual report presented in parliament by the then Vice-President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa, described Harare as having the highest number of juvenile violations, i.e., 273 cases, Chitungwiza 164, Bulawayo 151, Gweru 69 and Murehwa 34. The cases involved public fighting, assault, physical and abuse theft. Out of the total cases of 691, 17% were referred for prosecution. Lindwa (2019) highlights statistics by the Department of Correctional Services for Western Cape, South Africa, whereby nine children under eighteen, 799 between 18-21 years and 2405 between 21 and 25 years were detained as inmates in Brandvlei Youth, Drunkenstein, Medium B, Pollsmoor Medium A and Mosselbaai Prisons. The number of juveniles was 387, which raised grave concern for the Minister of Community Safety, Albert Fritz. According to a Herald article (2021), two boys from Epworth, Harare in Zimbabwe, aged 11 and 10, were caught cutting off Telone, dropping wire in Hatfield, Harare, and 5kgs of copper and other wires were recovered from their satchel. The above cases is undoubtedly sufficient to consider juvenile delinquency as a prevalent problem in Africa at large and in Zimbabwe particularly.

Given the cases, it is apparent that juvenile delinquency is persistently of grave concern. Juveniles in this generation tend to be developing with high criminal predispositions. Criminality is evolving with time and age. Consequently, it is vital to pay particular attention to the current generation. In certain households, parents have turned into victims of abuse from their children. Herman (2019) narrates an ordeal of Jenn, who has an abusive son who said, 'he threatened to slap me in the face, he called me all sorts of horrible names. After an incident like that, it's hard to go to sleep. Thinking, 'is he going to come in and attack us while we are sleeping?' The essence of the community is progressively dissolving; peace, harmony, and love for one another are deteriorating, and adults have even feared these juveniles who have gone out of control, disrespectful, lawless, and wild. Some of the minors have become narcissistic, heartless, cold, and inhuman, as they are never conscientious about the effects of their actions towards others. This was exemplified by the 2014 case where a 14-year-old Gweru, Zimbabwe boy, killed the housemaid by bludgeoning her with a hoe and hid her body in the family toilet (Manjome, 2019).

According to Chikiwa (n.d. p. 1), Inspector Ncube stated that, "It is worrisome that juveniles are slowly becoming inhuman and have lost respect for life. Ubuntu has been lost among these children". Some juveniles have become callous, not scared of committing murder, rape, theft, abusing drugs and perpetrating assault. Chara (2022) highlights myriad cases of child-on-child sexual abuse; a 13-year-old boy from Tsholotsho, Zimbabwe, raped a nine-year-old cousin, a 9-year-old Bindura, Zimbabwe was six months pregnant after being allegedly raped by two 17-year-old brothers and a four-year-old Harare, Zimbabwe girl was raped by a boy aged 11. In another case, Masara (2019) reported that a 14-year-old boy in Binga, Zimbabwe, allegedly severely assaulted his sister (6) and threw her into a river, resulting in her drowning. In most cases, minors were arrested, but their parents had been protective to prevent their arrest, showing failure as parents. Beyond the deplorable conduct of the teenagers, arrests were tacit fire-fighting attempts by police at the instigation of parents and residents of Bulawayo, aimed at stopping illicit sexual behaviour and drug and alcohol abuse by adolescents (Sixpence, 2019). Despite the attempts of discipline through punishment and arrest by law enforcers and parents' efforts to keep their children under control, juvenile delinquency seems to be unquenchable. Juvenile delinquency is like a wildfire spreading in Zimbabwe and must be fought with skill and expertise before it is too late.

The nation is in jeopardy of producing a breed of future citizens that are irresponsible, insensitive, and dangerous to the community. Children from a tender age emerge to have criminal capacity, as evidenced by Bhattacharyya (2023), who purports that in 2007, India earned a world record for having the youngest serial killer who committed three brutal murders at seven years old. Schools, homes, and communities have become insecure because of juvenile criminals such as murderers, rapists, thieves, drug abusers etc. The challenge of juvenile delinquency needs the "nip nine in the bud" strategy. That is; it needs to be dealt with from the roots for it to be reduced. Consequently, there is a prevalent imperative to explore the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Zimbabwe as most studies focused on specific causes of juvenile delinquency, especially among delinquents.

1.1 Research questions

The study explores probable indicators of juvenile delinquency among Gweru Urban adolescents in Zimbabwe focusing on the following research question:

- What are the leading offences usually committed by juveniles?
- What are the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency?

2. Theocratical framework

The study adopted Bronfenbrenner's Socio-Ecological Model of Human Development. The Bronfenbrenner Socio-Ecological Model of Human Development (Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is built on the notion that behaviour can be understood in the context of the interplay of the person and the environment, that is, the bi-directional relationship between the individual and his environment whereby the individual exerts influence on the environment and the person adapts to their environment and the processes therein. The model focused on the four interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosyatem, and macrosystem. It is, therefore, critical to understand each system has interdependence and how each part of the system affects the other, which can serve as a guide in ascertaining the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency.

Main (2023) notes that environmental factors such as socioeconomic status, family resources, and neighbourhood quality can shape the individual's experience within the microsystem. The mesosystem is elucidated by Jones and Roundy (2022) as the level that consists of interactions between different parts of a person's microsystem. Main (2023) states that the exosystem encompasses the broader social and environmental contexts that indirectly impact an individual's

development. May-Varas (2023) denotes that the macrosystem captures the overarching pattern of macro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture or subculture, with reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each broader system".

The relevance of Bronfenbrenner's Socio-Ecological Model of Human Development as the best theoretical framework for a study on juvenile delinquency in Gweru Urban, Zimbabwe, is underscored by its holistic approach to human development, emphasising the interaction between individuals and their environment. This model is particularly pertinent as it elucidates how a myriad of interrelated systems — the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem — converge to influence an individual's behaviour and development, offering a comprehensive lens to interpret the multifaceted indicators of juvenile delinquency. In the context of the study, the model facilitates a nuanced understanding of how individual factors like mental illness interlink with broader social, familial, educational, and environmental conditions to potentially cultivate delinquent behaviours among adolescents. By adopting this model, the study gains the capacity to unravel the intricate web of influences and interactions within the adolescents' ecosystems, thereby providing a robust scaffold to explore and comprehend the probable indicators and underlying causes of juvenile delinquency in the specific milieu of Gweru Urban adolescents in Zimbabwe.

3. Methodology

Research methods employed to implement the study are discussed below, i.e., research paradigm, research design, selected participants and instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research paradigm

The pragmatist research paradigm guided the research. According to Allemang et al. (2022), the pragmatist paradigm is based upon utilising the best methods to investigate real-world problems, allowing for multiple sources of data and knowledge to answer research questions on probable indicators of juvenile delinquency among Gweru urban adolescents. Pragmatism was used as it gave room for the collection of both numerical and narrative data.

Kanshik and Walsh (2019) denote that pragmatism is flexible, it allows the use of qualitative and quantitative methods and researchers can select a research design and methodology most appropriate to address the research questions. The researchers focused on the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency among Gweru Urban adolescents and used appropriate approaches available to understand it. In this research, quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to have a robust data pool. This supports the argument that Creswell (2014) provided that collection of diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than quantitative or qualitative data alone.

3.2 Research design and participants

A descriptive survey design was implemented to explore the potential indicators of juvenile delinquency. As highlighted by the University of Southern California Libraries (2016), a descriptive design addresses the who, what, when, where, and how of a specific research problem, thereby enabling an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. The utilisation of a survey was strategically chosen by the researchers to meticulously illustrate the complexities surrounding the potential indicators of juvenile delinquency. It was selected primarily to encompass a broader demographic, ensuring comprehensive insights. The survey method also assured anonymity, encouraging candid responses from juveniles, devoid of fear of judgment or criminalisation, thus promoting a more cooperative and authentic interaction with the participants. The target demographic incorporated a comprehensive ensemble from Gweru urban secondary and high schools, involving adolescents aged 13-20, parents, and teachers. Informants were identified based

on the manifestation of signs of juvenile delinquency, as elucidated by the responses garnered from section B of the questionnaire.

3.4 Selection of participants and instrumentation

As pragmatism is flexible, both probability and non-probability sampling were utilised. Simple random sampling was used to select four wards out of 18 wards in the Gweru urban constituency. Participants were then randomly selected, and the total sample size was approximately 240 students aged between 13 and 20 years. Random sampling was used because the researchers desired to cover a larger population in a short space of time. A 3-part questionnaire was administered, section A was for Socio-demographic data, and section B was for identifying commonly committed crimes by juveniles using the translated Portuguese Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale for Adolescents adopted from Pechorro et al. (2019) and Section C had open-ended questions whereby the respondents had to give their opinions.

To gather quantitative data, interviews were systematically conducted with teachers and parents. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to meticulously select interviewees, comprising eight senior teachers and four parents. Robinson (2014) defines purposive sampling as a deliberate selection of informants predicated on their capability to provide detailed insights into a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon. Teachers and parents were deemed optimal for the interviews owing to their rich reservoir of pertinent information, senior teachers, due to their integral roles in student disciplinary proceedings, and parents, as they are the immediate caregivers of children. These individuals were integral in identifying probable indicators of delinquency and providing valuable recommendations. The interview method was indispensable for the comprehensive elucidation of responses necessitated by the study.

3.5 Methods of data analysis

Analytical methodologies, both statistical and thematic, were employed to scrutinise the research findings meticulously. Microsoft Excel, accompanied by the frequency count method from SPSS 20, facilitated the presentation and nuanced analysis of numerical data, which was subsequently illustrated through tables, graphs, and pie charts. Data amassed through interviews were meticulously transcribed into notes and systematically coded, with acute consideration given to participants' reflections and perceptions as derived from interview recordings. This meticulous process allowed for the identification of overarching themes within the data trends and patterns. This methodological approach streamlined the analysis of interview data, as recurrent topics or ideas were amalgamated, enabling the generation of coherent and insightful narrative accounts.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The study was guided by stringent ethical considerations, prominently featuring the assurance of anonymity, which was preserved by refraining from collecting personal details or ward names on questionnaires. The researchers executed comprehensive debriefing, elucidating the nature, purpose, and guidelines of the study, while clarifying the participants' rights and articulating the prospective benefits of the study to both the community and the participants. Informed consent was meticulously procured, manifesting as 'Loco parentis', where legal obligations were levied upon the parents to consent for their children's participation in the study. Consent was acquired in writing from students, teachers, and parents to underscore the intentionality and understanding of their participation. The researchers provided unequivocal assurance that sensitive and private information divulged would be strictly confined to study purposes. Every piece of obtained data was safeguarded with utmost confidentiality and secrecy to elicit genuine and candid responses, especially from participants exhibiting juvenile delinquency tendencies.

4. Data presentation of findings

The researchers expected at least 240 respondents to answer the questionnaire, but only 209 responded to the online survey. Sixty-seven respondents were identified using the ASRDS. Section B of the questionnaire was used to scategorise the delinquents using Pechorro et.al.'s (2019) Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale (ASRDS). In this study, the ASRDS used a 4-point scoring scale: Never=1, Rarely=2, Often=3 and Very often=4. Delinquents were those who had high scores after the scores were added.

4.1 Types of delinquent activities by juveniles

Section B of the questionnaire focused on the types of crimes categorised into, stealing-related offences, vehicle-related offences, drug-related offences, physical aggression offences, vandalism offences and public disorder offences.

Table 1: *The Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale frequency rate table.*

Delinquent activities	Never	Rarely	Often	Very often
	%	%	%	%
1. Stole less than US$1?		20.9	35.8	43.3
2. Stole other people's stuff (example: mobile phone)?		10.4	16.4	73.1
3. Stole things in a store?		14.9	31.3	53.7
4. Drove a car or motorcycle at more than 120 km/h?		6.0	28.4	65.7
5. Passed a red traffic light when driving a car or motorcycle?		28.4	17.9	53.7
6. Stole a car or motorcycle?		58.2	10.4	31.3
7. Participated in car or motorcycle races?	9.0		16.4	74.6
8. Drove without a driver's license?	10.4		13.4	76.1
9. Drove a stolen car or motorcycle?	6.0	4.5	13.4	76.1
10. Bought alcoholic beverages?	3.0	9.0	19.4	68.7
11. Drank alcoholic beverages in public place (example: in discos)?		3.0	31.3	65.7
12. Smoked hashish ("ganza") or marijuana ("herb")?	3.0	10.4	20.9	65.7
13. Used hard drugs (example: ecstasy, cocaine or heroin)?		37.3	25.4	37.3
14. Sold drugs to other people?	9.0	20.9	17.9	52.2
15. Drove a car or motorcycle when drunk?	7.5	28.4	11.9	52.2
16. Participated in a robbery using force or a weapon?	17.9	32.8	20.9	28.4
17. Used force to get things from other people (example: money)?	4.5	13.4	35.8	46.3
18. Involved in a car or motorcycle accident and then ran away?		58.2	11.9	29.9

19. Got armed or used any type of weapon (example: knife, pistol)?	9.0	1.5	14.9	74.6
20. Spoiled school material on purpose (example: chair, door)?	9.0		14.9	76.1
21. Purposely spoil public things (example: garden, dustbin)?	7.5	3.0	13.4	76.1
22. Purposely spoil other people's things (example: car, breaking windows)?	3.0	9.0	20.9	67.2
23. Set a fire on purpose?		3.0	32.8	64.2
24. Paint graffiti in public places?	3.0	10.4	22.4	64.2
25. Get involved in group struggles?		37.3	26.9	35.8
26. Hit anyone?	9.0	20.9	17.9	52.2
27. Got suspended or expelled from school?	7.5	28.4	11.9	52.2
28. Seen pornographic films?	17.9	32.8	20.9	28.4
29. Made phone calls to threaten or insult someone?	4.5	13.4	35.8	46.3
30. Not paid for a ticket (example: on public transport)?		14.9	32.8	52.2
31. Missed classes without justification?		6.0	28.4	65.7
32. Ran away from home?		28.4	17.9	53.7

Note. The table demonstrates elements adopted from the Portuguese Adapted Self-Report Delinquency scale.
No harm = *low=* *elevated=* *high=* *severe=*

Table 1 shows the frequencies according to respondents. The highest frequency recorded was 76.1%, whereas the lowest frequency was 1.5%. The colours in the table indicate the level of delinquency according to colours. Blank space in the table indicates no responses, which means no harm, and the red box represents the epitome of delinquent activities by youth. The higher the frequency the more the offence was committed and vice versa.

Section B's last part was used to determine the probable indicators of juvenile delinquents. Open-ended questions were used to probe the respondents to explain further, hence giving a comprehensive response.

4.1.1 Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?

Figure 8 below shows the findings of delinquents diagnosed with mental illness. From the research findings, 12 % indicated that they had been diagnosed with mental illness, while 88% indicated they had no mental illness. 88 % indicated they had no mental illnesses, which could insinuate that most students do not have any access to psychological services through which they could be diagnosed.

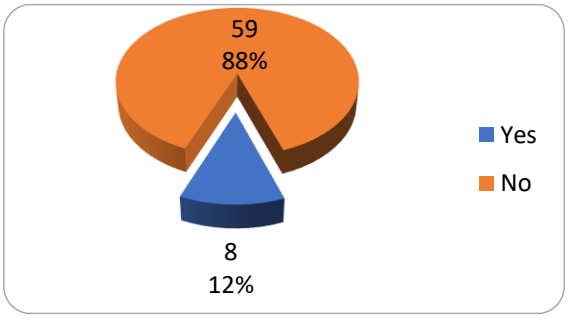


Figure 1: *Mental illness diagnosis*

The respondents indicated that they were diagnosed with depression; the second mental illness was alcoholism, then obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), mood, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

4.1.2 Homelessness and delinquency

Figure 2 below indicates that most of the respondents were not homeless. 5 % indicated that they were homeless, whereas 95% had a place to call home. This could indicate that only a few adolescents run away or are chased from home and that homelessness, at least in the given sample, was not related to juvenile delinquency.

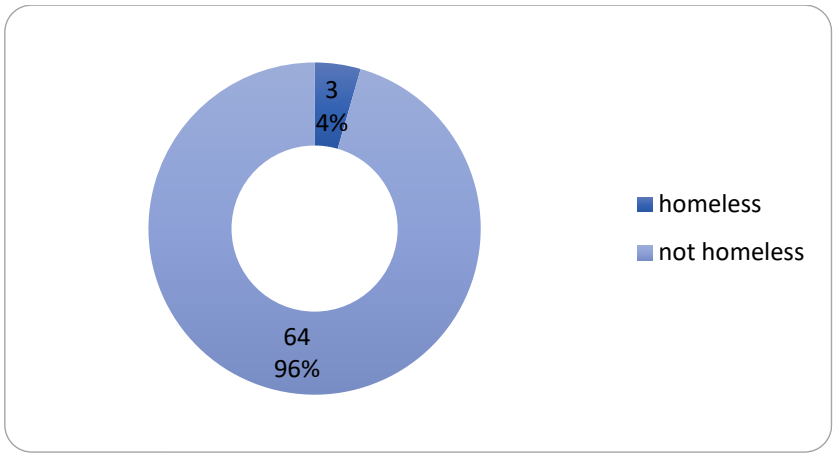


Figure 2: *Homelessness state of delinquents*

4.1.3 Class position in last term

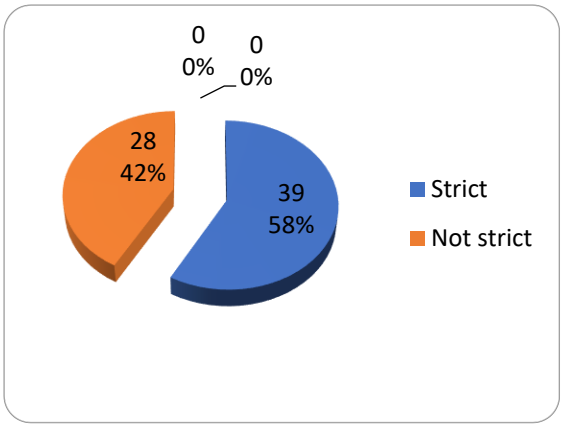
The question on class position received varying responses, as shown in Table 2. Students were asked to indicate their term passes by the time of the study. The table below indicates that most participants (14 children) who were in the advanced level (A' Level) attained less than 2 A' Level points. Of those still in the Ordinary Level (O' Level), 26 students indicated that they had less than 5 O' Level subjects, while those rated in class positions had 2 students who scored number 25 and number 33. Most juvenile delinquents performed poorly academically.

Table 2: *Class position*

A' Level Points	Frequency	O' Level Subjects	Frequency	Class position	Frequency
0	5	1	7	3	1
1	3	2	11	25	1
2	6	3	8	33	1
5	3	5	4		
9	1				

4.1.4 School environment

43 (64%) of the juvenile delinquents agreed that their teachers were strict, while 24 (36%) revealed that their teachers were not strict, as indicated by Figure 3 below. 39 (58%) of the respondents testified that their schools were too strict, whereas 28 (42%) reported that the school was not strict. This insinuates that strict schools have the most deviant students.



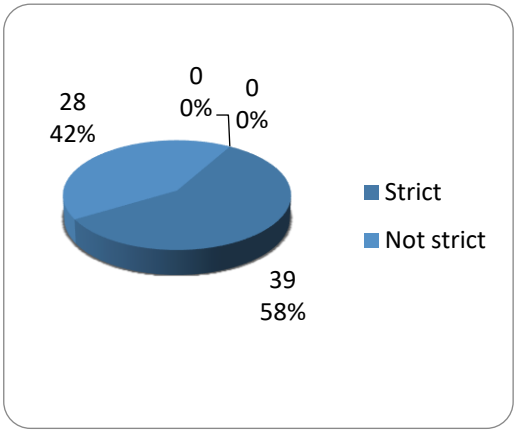


Figure 3: *Teacher's strictness* *School strictness*

4.1.5 Form of punishment

Figure 4 indicates the types of punishments schools use when students misbehave. Suspension, with 24%, was the most used form of punishment, and detention 22%, as reported by the delinquents. 16 % expulsion, 15% general work as punishment, 13% reported cleaning and 9% corporal punishment as penalties they got from their schools for transgressions. This implies that punishments like suspension and detention could be involved with juvenile delinquency as, most of the time, one will not be in sight of any authorities.

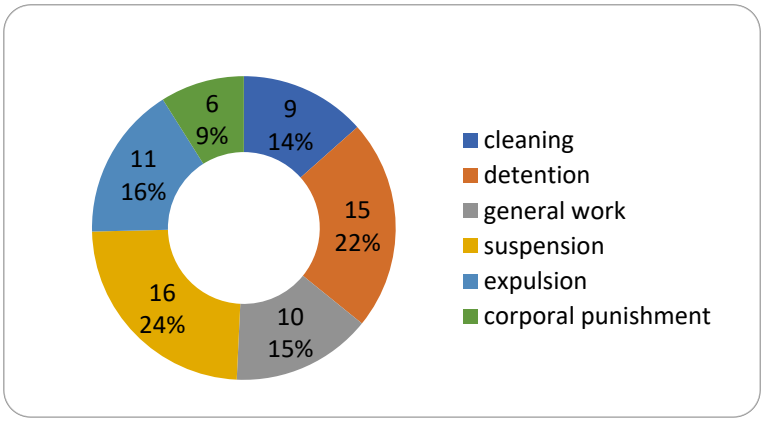


Figure 4: *Type of punishment at school*

4.1.6 Teacher-student relationship

36 (54 %) of the respondents did not like their teachers, while 31 (46 %) did like their teachers. From the explanations, most liked their teachers because they were understanding, the best, taught well and were likable, while others hated that their teachers were too strict, mean, and boring. Those who hated their teachers had the highest frequency, implying no good teacher-student relationship, which fuelled juvenile delinquency.

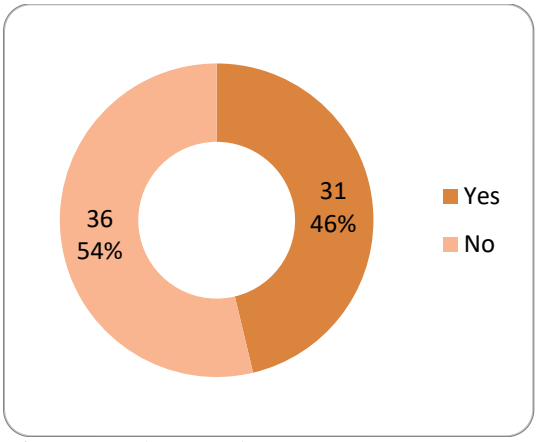


Figure 5: *Liking teacher*

4.1.7 Home condition

Various responses were given regarding the dislike of home living conditions. As shown in figure 6, negligence had the highest frequency of 14, 13 responded poverty, 10 large families, 9 strictness, 7 fights, 6 busy parents, 5 small house and 3 with nothing they disliked about how they lived at their homes. Living conditions or environment can, therefore, be associated with juvenile delinquency.

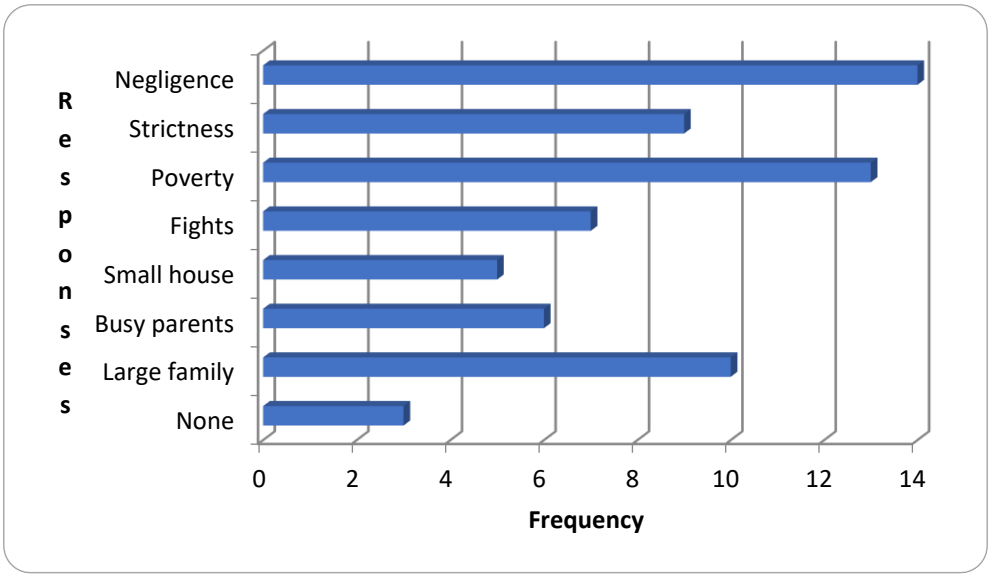


Figure 6: *Dislikes about the way of living at home*

4.1.8 Child parent relationship

37 (55 %) of the respondents, as shown by the above figure, indicated that they did not like their fathers, while 58 (87%) liked their mothers, and 9 (13%) attested to not liking their mothers. Desertion, abuse and alcohol were top reasons delinquents did not like their fathers. Most liked their mothers as they were caring and protective. See figure 7 below.

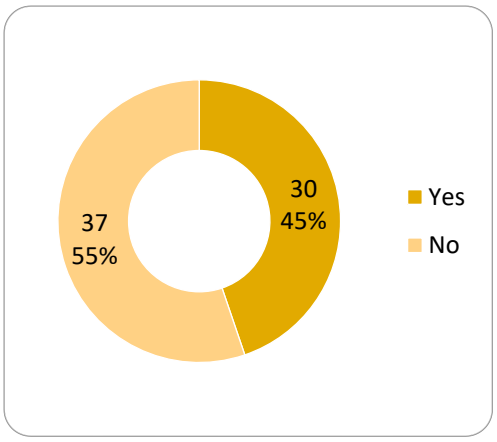
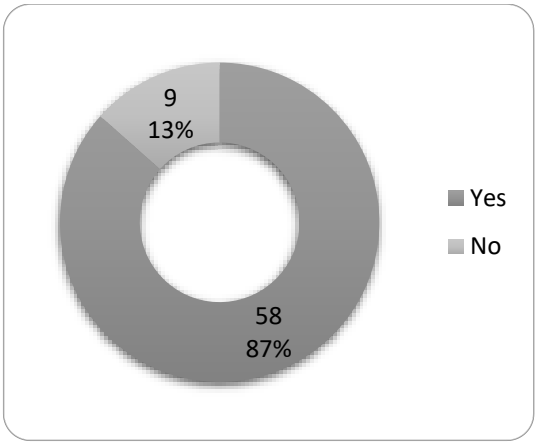


Figure 7: *Like father*



Liking mother

4.1.9 What type of music do you like?

Figure 8 shows the type of music which delinquents listen to. Most of the delinquents (45%) highlighted that they listened to hip hop music, 31% r'n'b and soul music, 21% listened to dancehall and reggae type, and lastly, 3 % of delinquents favoured pop and jazz type of music.

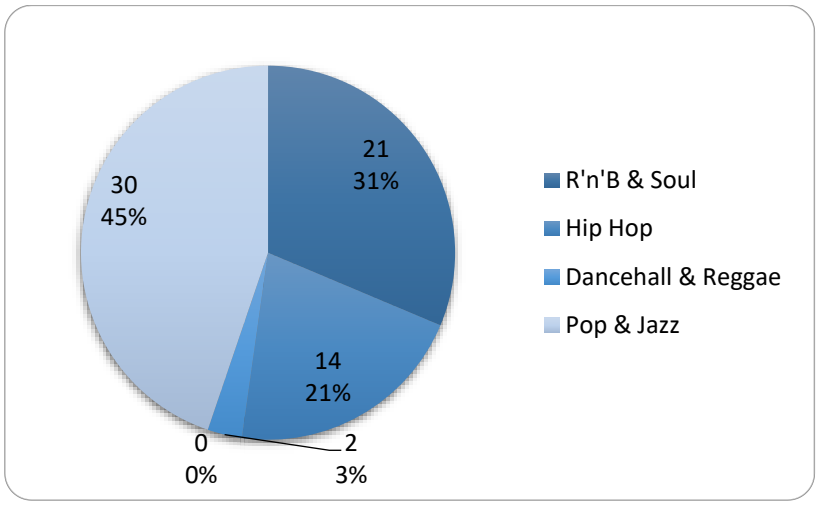


Figure 8: *Type of music*

4.1.10 Are your friends frequently punished for naughty behaviour?

52 % of the juvenile delinquents attested to sometimes, 37 % of the delinquents totally agreed, and 11% denied their friends getting punished. This insinuates that the company of naughty friends is associated with antisocial behaviour. See below figure.

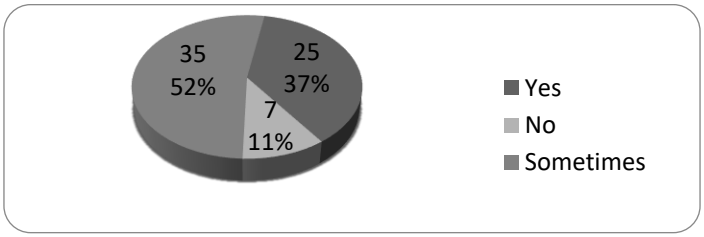


Figure 9: *Friends punished for naughty behaviour*

4.2 Probable indicators of juvenile delinquency

Socio-demographic data for the respondents, including their family size, parent's marital status, who they lived with, family's income, and area of residence, were tested among the probable indicators of juvenile delinquency.

Table 3 below shows that of the identified delinquents in the study, 41 (61%) were male, while twenty-six (39%) were female, entailing more male delinquents compared to females. The majority age range was seventeen to eighteen years, which totaled 25 (38%), followed by 19 (28%) between 19 and 20 years, implying that the delinquents were between form 4-6. As highlighted in Table 1, 50(74%) of the delinquents came from a large family size of more than 3 family members. 33 (50%) of the delinquents stayed with a single parent. The highest family income per month was between $5000 and $9999 shown by 24 (36%), 18 (27%) represented those who netted $10000 to $14999 per month, while 15 (22%) earned more than $15000 per month while 10 (15%) got between $1000 and $4999 per month. In family residential areas, as presented by Table 1, 34 (51%) of the delinquents lived in high-density suburbs, 15 (22%) lived in medium-density suburbs, 12 (18%) of the delinquents lived in low-density areas, while 6 (9%) stayed in other places such as plots etc.

Table 3: *Delinquents Socio-demographic data*

#	Category	Variable	Frequency	%
1	**Gender**	Female	26	39
		Male	41	61
		Total	**67**	**100**
2	**Age**	13-14	6	9
		15-16	17	25
		17-18	25	38
		19-20	19	28
		Total	**67**	**100**
3	**Family size**	2 - 3	17	25
		4 - 6	28	42
		7 - 10	19	28
		More than 10	3	4
		Total	**67**	**100**
4	**Care givers' Marital status**	Married	25	37
		Divorced	15	22
		Separated	9	13
		Never Married	18	27
		Total	**67**	**100**
5	**Delinquent's Caregiver**	Mother only	24	36
		Father only	9	14
		Both parents	21	31
		Relatives	13	19
		Total	**67**	**100**
6	**Family income per month**	1000 - 4999	10	15

		5000 - 9999	24	36
		10000 - 14999	18	27
		15000+	15	22
		Total	**67**	**100**
7	**Family Residential area**	High	34	51
		Medium	15	22
		Low	12	18
		Other	6	9
		Total	**67**	**100**

Results from qualitative inquiry: Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to complement the data on probable juvenile delinquency indicators collected through questionnaires. The teachers' excerpts are represented by [T] whilst parents with a [P]. Thematic approach was used to summarise the findings.

4.2.1 Social influence

Interviewees' feelings, perceptions, and thoughts on how the social environment comprising of social media, the school and interaction with peers has an impact on delinquency were captured. Illustrative respondents' quotes.

[P3] *"Our children spend most of their time at school, which is where some come with new behaviours that they would have learnt from their friends. I think these teachers are not disciplining our children very well because we expect them to be the main source of learning for our children, instead you can meet groups of children during the day when they are supposed to be in school, sometimes intoxicated and you wonder what the school is aware about these behaviours".*

[T4] *"I remember attending a case of sexual misconduct. During sports time, some students remained in the classroom whilst the other was a watchman as the other peers engaged in sex. I think this is because our children lack enough monitoring of the things they do, watch or listen to. The internet has replaced us teachers and the books as the main sources of knowledge, so many now have role models of celebrities they follow on social media as most time is spent on the internet platform. No one monitors these children they watch some explicit content which some of us as adults can't afford to look at".*

Given the above extracts, the school environment plays a role in moulding behaviour, some schools are no longer strict such that children find excess time which they utilise to engage in delinquent acts. It is also clear that a child's association at school, the school environment and the strictness of teachers and the school all play a role in influencing a child's delinquent behaviour

4.2.2 Home

The adage "charity begins at home" predisposed most participants' perceptions and viewpoints. The participants attested to the home environment having a great impact on delinquency as behaviour is shaped by socialisation instilled by one's family, as evidenced below.

[P2] *"In my neighbourhood, there is a couple where the husband is always violent, he even beats his wife in public. Their children are always fighting for food and at each other's necks, even for small issues, "like child-like parent". You can hear the parent shouting at their child that they are a weakling after losing a fight".*

[P4] *"Our economy requires one to be always busy trying to make ends meet for the sake of our families. Most of us parents are too busy for our children, we don't even monitor their whereabouts, schoolwork or who they associate with because most of the times, one gets home late after a long day of toiling at the market or streets".*

[T7] *"We have had many children who come up from broken families where they mostly live with one parent. Most children live with one biological and stepparent, some live with other relatives who do not even care about their welfare, some do not even attend consultations where they monitor children's school performance. A lot of children face negligence at their home and are not supervised".*

It can, therefore, be presumed that the home environment influences behaviour as a child usually models their significant others as siblings' parents. Most children do not have role models they can relate to, as parents and guardians spend most time away from home trying to fend for the family.

4.1.3 The greater social environment

The respondents indicated that one's social environment played a major role in shaping perceptions and views when it came to juvenile delinquency, as noted by the following extracts.

[P1] *"In my neighbourhood, I know of a house where there is a shack where boys around eighteen and twenty hang around smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages. The owner of the house is a single unemployed woman, and she never minds as these boys bring her goodies whenever they hang around that place".*

[T2] *"Most children come from high-density suburbs where they stay as tenants, and most of the time, the houses have many families sharing the place. The houses are too small such that most children spend their time in the streets where they teach each other and witness antisocial behaviours".*

The above extracts divulge that one's neighbourhood or environment has a role in modelling a child's behaviour. Hence, overcrowding and a neighbourhood's basic characteristics conceivably have an impact on delinquency among juveniles.

4.2.4 Legal conditions

The below exerts articulate that policies and legal frameworks have equally positively and negatively affected teachers and parents' in regard to juvenile delinquency. Perchance when it comes to discipline, being lax does not emanate from the individual but the demand to abide by the law.

[T8] *"...given the education circulars and policies, I have no choice but to act accordingly no matter how a child behaves as I fear prosecution. Being in the work for a long time, we used to discipline the way we saw fit, but now I'm very careful of how I react towards delinquent children".*

[T6] *"Culturally, the adage, 'spare the rod, spoil the child', used to be our song as parents. These new laws that are being put into play have left us paralysed as we cannot effectively discipline our children".*

Given the above expressions, it is clear that the state has put laws in homes and schools. Most of these policies and legal frameworks have made the parent and teacher powerless and voiceless regarding disciplinary issues.

5. Discussions of findings

The probable indicators were grouped into individual, social, home, environmental, and home factors. Individual factors included mental illness, homelessness, and type of music. Atkinson-Sheppard (2018) highlights that street children in Bangladesh carry weapons, sell drugs, collect extortion money, and commit political violence; some are involved in land grabbing and even contract killings. Gupta et al. (2022) note that gang members exhibited rates of mental health issue such as conduct disorders, attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorders, antisocial personality disorder, posttraumatic-stress-disorders, and anxiety disorders.

Home factors are encompassed in the Socio-demographic findings. In support, Carlos & Patacchini, Eleonora (2020) investigated how peer and parental unemployment and inability to handle economic necessities interacted to influence adolescent criminal conduct. According to Gupta et al. (2022), individual factors, family environment, family structure, size/type of the family, and parental status

(single/separate/divorcee) are highly affected adolescent's behaviours. The highlighted research findings resonate with the current study, as the researchers found that parental socioeconomic status had a role in influencing juvenile delinquency.

School factors could comprise involvement with delinquent peers at school, academic challenges, unsatisfactory teacher and lax enforcement, punishment, and teacher relationships yield deviant students. Moyo (2018) reports that 17-year-old Jerry hooked on alcohol as he went to school intoxicated. Laxity in implementing school policies, rules, and disciplinary measures cultivates a breed of delinquent students.

The study highlighted that the most committed offences among juveniles, as detected by the Portuguese ASRDS, are related to drugs, vehicles, and school. It unveiled that the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the catalysts for juvenile delinquency are deeply shaped by a myriad of factors, including social, domestic, environmental, and legal conditions. The insights gathered about the social environment pointed towards aspects such as the school atmosphere, peer interaction, and social media as significant contributors to juvenile delinquency. Gupta et al. (2022) elaborates that suboptimal academic performance, a negative disposition towards school, insufficient supervision by educators and school staff, and inadequate organisational structures and school functions act as fertile ground for cultivating delinquent behaviour. Understanding these nuanced findings is pivotal to developing comprehensive strategies for mitigating juvenile delinquency, acknowledging the multifaceted influences that intertwine to mould the behaviours and attitudes of the youth within different environmental contexts.

The research discerned that the home environment is a significant precursor to juvenile delinquency, with its components encompassing broken homes, child-led families, low socioeconomic status, and prevailing violence. UKEssays (2018) identifies certain familial traits indicative of antisocial values—such as a family history of criminal behaviour, severe parental discipline, and intrafamilial conflict—as consistently interrelated elements. Contrastingly, the findings of this study diverge from multiple other research endeavours, challenging the assertion that home conditions, being fundamental mediums of socialisation, could propagate juvenile delinquency if left unregulated. The principle "charity begins at home" implies that familial characteristics, especially those linked to socioeconomic factors, often compel children to bear the economic burdens of their families through various means, potentially leading to delinquent behaviours. Martin (2005), for instance, discusses drug gangs—groups predominantly comprised of young individuals focused on profiting from drug sales, an endeavour fraught with immense risks. This illegal enterprise is invariably associated with the possession of firearms, acts of violence, intimidation, and extortion, illustrating the hazardous environments and conditions some juveniles are embedded within.

This study highlighted environmental conditions, represented by neighbourhood characteristics, availability of substances, and one's location of origin, as pivotal factors in fostering juvenile delinquency. Gupta et al. (2022) support this by outlining the ramifications of community disorganisation, prevalent poverty, substance availability, and localised criminal activity. Additionally, the study discerned the influence of legal conditions on juvenile delinquency, noting the impact of adherence to legal provisions by parents and teachers. For instance, The Education Amendment (2019), specifically in section 68A (5), strictly prohibits any form of corporal punishment by teachers. The implementation of stringent policies and human rights circulars have consequently weakened the authoritative influence of both teachers and parents over adolescents.

To curb juvenile delinquency, parents and teachers, the primary caregivers of adolescents, recommended the integration of guidance and counselling into every school's curriculum. This suggestion aligns with Sixpence's (2019) assertion that adolescents represent a vulnerable demographic, necessitating societal efforts to comprehensively foster communication and dialogue to understand their needs, aspirations, and dreams. By acknowledging and addressing the

multifaceted needs of adolescents, it is envisioned that a collaborative approach involving guidance and counselling will significantly mitigate the prevalence of juvenile delinquency.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, children's environments, primarily of home, school, and neighbourhood, play a pivotal role in shaping their behaviours due to substantial interactions with parents, guardians, teachers, peers, and community members. The economic struggles pervasive in many African societies have rendered parents increasingly absent, as they seek sustainable livelihoods to meet their children's basic needs, often at the expense of addressing the psychological, social, and emotional aspects of child development. Consequently, children, left unmonitored and with diminished parental involvement and emotional support, often resort to maladaptive behaviours to cope with feelings of neglect and frustration. The influence of school and home is paramount in moulding a child's behaviour, yet the enforcement of discipline is complicated by laws and policies aimed at protecting children's rights, thus somewhat incapacitating the authoritative influence of parents and teachers.

Based on these findings, the researchers recommend that parents must actively engage with their children to understand the multifaceted aspects influencing their behaviours and alleviate the undue economic burdens placed upon them. Obligatory counselling services by trained experts should be established in all schools, offering guidance and solace to children, especially those with tumultuous home environments. Child rights conventions and education policies should reconcile the need for discipline with the protection of children's rights, ensuring a balanced power dynamic between children and their caregivers or teachers. Subsequent studies should prioritise the development of prevention and intervention strategies, considering the African context, to mitigate juvenile delinquency and inform contemporary parenting practices, aligning with the principle that prevention supersedes cure.

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