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The influence of Family Lifestyle on Youth Delinquency in Githurai Location, Kiambu County

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Abstract

In many societies, youths form the bulk of victims as well as perpetrators of crime and violence. A number of factors predispose the youth to this situation. Studies have found that some of these factors include family disruption, technological development, government policies, peer group influence and ethnicity. In the developing countries in Africa, including Kenya, delinquency among youth has been found to be caused by among urbanization, lack of employment and educational opportunities, instability of the family structure, migration, lack of parental control and individual maladjustment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family lifestyle on youth delinquency in Githurai Location. The study was guided by the youth coercion theory and the broken home theory and entailed mixed methodology using both qualitative and quantitative designs. The researcher used the triangulation design to obtain information directly from the target population through interviews and questionnaires which were self-administered. In this study, the target population consisted of 140 high school students and eight secondary school deputy principals and the Ruiru sub-county education officer. The sampling techniques used were random sampling for the students and purposive sampling for the school principals and sub-county education officer. The piloting of the research instruments was done in Zimmermann area before collection of data. The questionnaires were randomly administered only once to a sample of respondents who were not used in the main study. The research instruments' validity was established under close guidance of the supervisors. Both quantitative and qualitative data was obtained concurrently and analyzed. The results were discussed based on the objectives after data obtained from the field was cleaned through checking inaccurate and missing data. This was appropriately corrected. Quantitative data was coded and entered for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 for Windows. The Pearson product was computed to establish any relationships, their nature and character. The obtained results have been used to inform the findings, and to discuss on the concepts. Quantitative data obtained from the study was analysed using descriptive statistics which included frequency counts and percentages. In addition, the qualitative data obtained through interviews was also analysed and thematically discussed. It was presented as tables and pie charts. The key findings of the study were that no single factor influenced youth delinquency by itself but rather a number of factors came into place which predisposed youth to delinquency. The conclusion was that delinquency among youth in Githurai Location was influenced by several factors including family lifestyle. The study recommended that measures to keep youth in school and to safeguard them from turning delinquents be put in place.

Key words: Delinquency, youth, crime, juveniles, community programmes

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By

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Background to the Study

Youth are identified as disproportionately represented in the statistics on crime and violence, whether as victims or as perpetrators (UNODC, 2007). In a seminal report by the United Nations Development Council (UNODC, 2007), it was noted that youth are in many incidents involved in outbursts of violence and crime. This is attributed to the fact that in many countries, youthful people represent a large proportion of the population (UNODC, World Bank, 2007). A number of factors predispose youth to crime and delinquency. However, these factors are not uniform across the world. Delinquency rates are lower in developed than in developing countries (Journal of Juvenile Law, 1985). Youthful people who are mostly at risk of becoming delinquent, mainly live in difficult circumstances. In 2003, the United Nations recognized this as one of the problems afflicting social development (Wambugu, 2013; World Youth Report, 2003). Some of the factors that lead to youth delinquency were identified as poverty, alcoholism by parents, breakdown of the family and abusive conditions in the home. Other factors were identified as the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the death of parents during times of armed conflicts. In addition, orphans and unaccompanied children who do not have the means of subsistence, who do not have housing and lack other basic necessities were in the greatest risk of falling into juvenile delinquency (World Youth Report, 2003).

These factors which influence juvenile delinquency abound in developing countries, most of which are in Africa (World Youth Report, 2013). Studies indicate that juvenile delinquency in Africa is widespread. It has been influenced by other factors such as family disruption, technological development, government policies, peer group influence and tribal group and ethnicity. Delinquency is more prevalent in urban areas. Causes of delinquency in Africa have included urbanization, lack of employment and educational opportunities, instability of the family structure, migration, lack of parental control and individual maladjustment (Journal of Juvenile Law, 1985). As far back as 2003, the United Nations (UN) conducted a detailed study on youth delinquency. In the World Youth Report (2003,) the report noted that delinquent and criminal behaviour was common among the youth, as they negotiated the transition from childhood to adulthood in what was identified as an increasingly complex and confusing world. The report recommended that effective approaches and measures for preventing juvenile delinquency be developed, with particular attention given to the development of educational, professional development and community programmes. In addition, it also called for improvements in family relations and parenting skills, and the value of restorative justice for both perpetrators and victims.

In Kenya, previous studies focused on segmented populations of youth such as among secondary school children and juvenile offenders in the rural areas. Kirori, (2010) for example studied juvenile offenders at a Nakuru remand home. Njoroge, (2011) studied school related factors that led to juvenile delinquency amongst secondary school students in Njiru area in Nairobi. In the same year Watiri, (2011) also studied factors contributing to deviant behaviour among school children in Miharati, Nyandarua. Social factors that could affect delinquency among the youth had not been previously considered and are the basis for this study.

Crime in Kenya feeds through a cycle whose main drivers are delinquent youths. Today's youth delinquent becomes tomorrow's adult criminal (OCS, Kasarani 2017). This socially

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disruptive cycle ultimately undermines public safety. Several measures have been adopted to address and fully engage youth so that they do not turn to delinquency. Among these are the development of sports, church programmes and education. Some of the specific measures that have been adopted include the Community Policing programme and Nyumba Kumi initiative. Measures addressing youth radicalization and preventing them from becoming terrorists, have also been adopted in mainly Muslim areas. The main players are government, community and religious institutions.

In Githurai Location, a big number of young people get into delinquent behaviour leading to dropping out from school and turning to crime. Insecurity victims report that they have been attacked and robbed by youthful criminals, an indication that youth delinquency in Githurai was feeding into a cycle of delinquency and crime. Despite the interventions by the community against criminals that includes imprisonment, beating and lynching of criminals, youthful criminals do not seem deterred to keep off crime. This is what influenced the researcher to conduct this study. According to data by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2017), youth form the bulk of criminals. Several studies have previously been done to identify the main causes for youth getting into crime and have been identified as lack of jobs, poverty and inequality. Young criminals get into crime as a way of leveraging to attain class status.

Githurai Location has a reputation as one of the most crime prone areas in Kiambu County as well as the neighbouring Nairobi County and most of this is attributed to youth (OCS, Kasarani 2017). It has remained a matter of conjecture why so many young people turn to crime in this area in disregard of the efforts by the community to get them grow and become responsible members of the society. This study sought to investigate the situation to get an understanding into the causes of youth delinquency in the area. Despite the concerted efforts of law enforcement agencies, parents, teachers and the wider society to curb youth delinquency, the problem of crime among youth in Githurai has remained a big problem. More young people get into crime in spite of knowledge and awareness about its eventual consequences that included arrest and imprisonment and sometimes death (OCS, Kasarani 2017). Youth delinquency was identified as a major influence on crime and security in this area.

When not properly offered guidance during this critical character-formation time, the likelihood of youth turning criminals is high as they only have their peers to learn from. Youth obsession at being identified with their peers and to belong to a group might lead them into becoming delinquents. If nothing is done to correct their character at this stage, future interventions can only be too late after they become criminals (OCS, Kasarani 2017). The study therefore sought to establish the influence of family lifestyle on youth delinquency in Githurai.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenya National Youth Empowerment Strategic Plan 2016-2021, has among its goals the creation of an enabling environment to ensure youth reach their fullest potential. The strategic plan provides an action plan that identified areas for youth empowerment. One of these is on crime, security and substance abuse. The plan acknowledges that this ideal situation cannot be achieved by government alone; rather through active collaboration with other stakeholders. Yet, despite these engagements by religious organizations, schools and their parents, the number of youths who turn to crime has been growing. The community, schools and religious organizations such as churches are all dedicated towards ensuring that children grow up to become responsible members of the society. They do this through sending children to school as well as having them attend churches for religious instruction. According to the Kenya Economic Survey (2019) the number of crimes reported to police in Kiambu county in 2016 were 5,603 and this number rose to 6,932 in 2017. In the same period, the number of people reported to police for committing crime in Kiambu also rose

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from 5,348 to 6,300. Nationwide, the number of juveniles aged under 16 who had been committed to prison in the same period increased from 114 to 131, an indication of growing criminality.

Despite these measures to address youth improvement, a number of the youth get astray, deviate from the social norms expected of them by their parents and the community and become deviants and truants. Some drop out of school to become juvenile delinquents and later join to form gangs. In Githurai Location, such youth have been responsible for local crime that has made the area become one of the most crime-infested localities. In response to this problem, this study sought to determine the influence of family lifestyle on criminal behaviour and delinquency.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family lifestyle on youth delinquency in Githurai Location in Kiambu, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To establish the influence of family lifestyle on youth delinquency in Githurai Location of Kiambu, Kenya.

Research Question

How does family lifestyle influence youth delinquency in Githurai Location?

Rationale of the Research

According to the Kenya Economic Survey published by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (GOK, 2018) youth aged under 26 years accounted for 49.3 per cent of the total convicted population of 82,443. Four years earlier in 2013, out of 96,726 convictions, 54.3% were in this age group (GOK, 2014). In the two years 2014-2015, the numbers remained relatively the same, an indication that juveniles and the youth constituted at any one time close to half of all convicts in the Kenya prisons. In a survey conducted in 2013 by the Children's Service Department (Fair Observer, 2014), most participants among the juveniles held in 10 rehabilitation centres, reported that they committed their first offence between the ages of 12-15 (30%) or between 16-19 years (23%). This shows that delinquency among juveniles and criminal behavior among the youth often manifests at an early age. It would therefore be prudent to examine what factors influence this trend, as this study did.

Scope of the Study

The research was carried out within Githurai Location of Kiambu County. It was carried out among high school students aged 13-15 years in Githurai's secondary schools and the schools' deputy principals as well as Ruiru sub-county education officer. It involved a mixed research methodology using triangulation design by having the participants respond to structured questions through a questionnaire, oral interviews and the researcher's observations as well. This is because it was observed that youth in Githurai live in a crime-infested area, suffer physical negligence and face risk factors through family lifestyles in their area of residence. Thus, the study was guided by two theories including the youth coercion theory as well as the broken homes theory. The study was done within a timeframe of three months from May-July 2019.

Literature Review

In order to be able to study the influence of youth dynamics on youth delinquency in Githurai Location, the study examined what factors influenced the youth to turn to delinquency. The term 'youth' was used in this study to broadly refer to students who were between the ages of 13-15

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years. The study attempted to explain the influence of these dynamics through answering some questions on what made youth turn to delinquency.

Across the world in various socio cultural and political setups, the term ‘youth’ is used in various ways to denote young people at a transient stage of life. Durham (2000) described the concept of youth as a social shifter, applied in various ways and means to describe young people across cultures, political setups and socio-economic status. The United Nations defines youth as those aged 15 to 24 years while the World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes youth into those aged 15 to 24 years. The African Union defines youth as those between 15 and 34 years. In Kenya, youth is a relative term with the Kenya constitution defining youth as aged over 18 years and below 35 years. But according to the Kenya National Youth Policy (NYP), youth are those aged 15 to 30 years (Muthee, 2010).

Youth Dynamics

According to the national census (GOK, 2019), Kenya’s population stood at more than 47 million people. Of these, nearly 42 percent were aged 16 years and below. This makes this segment of the population an important age bracket upon which the future of the country depends. The NYP framework was formed to address this critical part of the population. It followed the realization that the youth have potential that can be productively harnessed to social and economic development of the country and in order to actualize Vision 2030 (Muthee, 2010).

Following the post-election violence that followed the disputed elections in 2007, the youth were identified as among those that contributed to the murders and destruction that was witnessed then. After the enactment of the new constitution in 2010, NYP sought to address the matter of youth by initiating programmes that would harness the potential to worthwhile matters. According to Muthee (2010), the policy intended to among others engage the youth to participate in decision-making processes on matters that directly involved them.

In the traditional African setup, the youth were identified as the carriers of the future. In them, every society saw its future embodied in the young people and thus strived to impart virtues to the youth. According to Kenyatta (1938), older generations strived to impart important moral values on the upcoming generations through customs and traditions handed down successive generations. The coming of the modern-day religion further buttressed this ideal through churches where youth get their instruction on morality from their early childhood. Through religious instruction, youth are taught the importance of virtues that uphold morals, customs and traditions (Kenyatta, 1938). Vices are frowned upon and punished. The vices include deviancy among the youth and includes delinquency.

Socio-culturally, according to Biden and Spectre (2007), laws and regulations that govern the relationship between groups in a community are important in ensuring law and order in a society. Good behaviours and virtues are taken as self-advancing of the society and are encouraged. On the other hand, anti-social behaviour is frowned upon and severely discouraged through the enactment of penalties. Among the Agikuyu for example, the consequences of socio-cultural defiance included banishment from the land. In the modern society, socio-cultural factors are still emphasized in order to have an orderly society (Biden & Spectre, 2007). The youth are expected to be virtuous and keep off matters that are abhorrent to society such as delinquency.

Family Lifestyle

According to the Department of Public Safety in Canada (2018), families play an important role in the development of children and youth. According to the department, studies on juvenile delinquency had shown that the family environment could present several risks. According to Reynolds (2015), factors related to family dynamics and functioning were found to have an effect

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on youth delinquency and crime were identified as inability to set clear limits through ineffective parental behavior and poor supervision; family conflicts and parental or sibling criminality. Abuse of drugs by parents and mistreatment of young people during childhood were also identified as factors. Risk factors related to family characteristics included single parenthood, parents' mental health characteristics and instability of the family, including the number of members of a family.

In a study by Ndirangu, (2005) who researched on the role of family factors in street children in the then Limuru Division in Kenya, found that family relationships were the main causes of youth delinquency. The study examined street children who were in a rehabilitation homes in Limuru and found a correlation that family relationships affect the child's behavioural process and this led to youth running away from their homes into the streets where they eventually turned into juvenile crime. Conditions such as orphan hood, single parenthood, separation and divorce, poverty and unskilled parenting were identified as influences that contributed to the eventual delinquency. Another study conducted by Ndungu, (2005) had similarly explored the relationship between family dynamics and juvenile delinquency in Nakuru Municipality. It studied juvenile delinquents committed to rehabilitation homes in Nakuru and found that the majority of children in the rehabilitation centres came from single-parent homes, large families and low social-economic status families. Many children reported presence of violence among their family members. Their parents reportedly used physical punishment to correct children's mistakes with more boys than girls in the correction facilities. There was a significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and marital stability, marital adjustment and parental mode of discipline. Almost all the children came from very poor families, but there was a weak corelationship between the influences of juvenile delinquency and family social-economic status Ndungu, (2005).

Research Methodology and Design

The study employed the mixed methodology which used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis was used because this study took on an interpretive approach (Almalik, 2016). Data collection from the respondents' youth in the sampled secondary schools and key informants comprising deputy principals and the Ruiru Sub-County education officer was collected separately before being merged during analysis and later interpreted. This meant that the used the triangulation design method as it sought data from different target populations. This meant that the chosen research methodology was capable of collecting the intended data through the identified instruments of questionnaire and interview schedule.

The study used the concurrent triangulation model. The model is a mixed methods design which allows for the validation of data from two or more sources and also allows the combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). The research design was applied to gather data from the students using questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with the deputy principals as well as the Ruiru sub-county education director. The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from each of the respondents during different times was each analyzed before it was merged for analysis.

Research Findings and Discussions

With a 95 percent questionnaire return rate, the study found that family lifestyles do have an influence on youth delinquency in Githurai Location. Indicators that highlighted family lifestyle such as the level of parental involvement in the raising of children as well as the socio-economic status of an individual family, and family history, were seen to influence youth delinquency. To varying degrees, family lifestyle was identified to be a major influence on juvenile delinquency in the study area. According to the respondents, the economic status of a family was identified to be a major influence. Contrary to expectations that poverty levels inclined the dispossessed youth to turn

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to delinquency, it was found that this was not the case. Instead, youth from rich backgrounds were more likely to become delinquents. One of the key respondents coded KR4, identified that youth from relatively well-off families were more likely to be the school delinquents as they had access to money that they used not for food, but for other things such as alcohol and drugs, ultimately delinquent. In general, therefore, the family background was found to have strong influences on youth turning into delinquency and crime in Githurai Location with the majority 70 (52.6%) of the sampled youth participants agreeing that the level of parental involvement in bringing up kids has an influence on youth delinquency.

The influence of socio-economic status of an individual's family was also found to determine whether youth raised in that family would result to delinquency. The majority 83 (62.4%) of the sampled participants agreed indicating that the socio-economic status of the family in Githurai Location determined whether the youth would result to delinquency or not. This finding dovetailed with a previous finding of the study where youth from rich families were found to have a higher inclination towards delinquency than their peers from poor families.

The influence of family history was also identified as a determinant whether youth raised up in specific families would turn delinquents. The majority 81 (60.9%) of the sampled participants agreed, indicating that the family history had a big influence on youth delinquency. This was in tandem with previous findings of the study where a family's social economic status was found to be an influence as far as delinquency was concerned.

Table 1: Influence of Parental involvement on youth delinquency

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	15.0
Agree	32	24.1
Fairly Agree	18	13.5
Disagree	32	24.1
Strongly Disagree	31	23.3
Total	133	100.0

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 2: Influence of socio-economic status on delinquency

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	10.5
Agree	39	29.3
Fairly Agree	30	22.6
Disagree	33	24.8
Strongly Disagree	17	12.8
Total	133	100.0

Source: Field data (2019)

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Table 3: Influence of family history on youth delinquency

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	29	21.8
Agree	29	21.8
Fairly Agree	23	17.3
Disagree	30	22.6
Strongly Disagree	22	16.5
Total	133	100.0

Source: Field data (2019)

Conclusion

Family lifestyles were found to constitute a major influence on delinquency, being the first social environment that a child is exposed to. The family structure and the socio-economic status of the family unit was found to have an influence on the youths' turning to delinquency.

Recommendations

Getting into their youth, it is important to ensure that family structures as a social environment building block, is strengthened to ensure that youth do not turn to delinquency. The environment in homes and schools need to be made conducive for learning and shaping the youth. At the same time, the reputation of Githurai Location as a crime-infested area should be addressed through community participation. The findings indicated that parents should be highly involved in upbringing of their kids and ensure that they do not end up being criminals. Youth should also not let the socio-economic status of their families make them criminals. In addition, they should not allow either family history or family conflicts make them turn into criminals.

The researcher recommended that the following further areas of study should be undertaken:

1. An examination of the role of government in promoting character building programmes for youths in homes and schools.
2. Social intervention measures for peri-urban communities in the raising of future citizens
3. Intervention measures that institutions of learning could put in place to right broken students.

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