

Family Type and Adult Criminality among Adolescents of Public and Private Universities in Central Region Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Family type is a strong predictor of adult criminality, people from broken families or households with a single parent are more likely to commit crimes than people from intact families. Conversely, families can also teach children aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior. In adults' lives, family responsibilities may provide an important stabilizing force. Given these possibilities, family life may directly contribute to the development of delinquent and criminal tendencies. The research on the influence of family and adult criminality is important to unearth interventions to adolescents at risk of becoming latent criminals when adults. Results show that, since then practitioners, policymakers, and researchers have attempted to learn more about the role families play in adult criminality is important especially when parents have high expectations and low interactions with their children. Experts have developed a multitude of theoretical models and analyses linking family type and adult criminality. Criminologists suggest that a child who grows up in a dysfunctional family may learn aggressive or antisocial behavior; may not be taught to control unacceptable behavior, delay gratification, or respect the rights of others; or may not be adequately supervised to preclude association with antisocial or delinquent peers. As a consequence, they say, the child becomes inadequately socialized and unable to constrain his or her behavior within acceptable boundaries.

Keywords: Family Type, Adult Criminality.

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nation's (UN) crime policy agenda, criminality and its prevention have long been major subject areas (Blaustein, Pino, Fitz- Gibbon, and White, 2020). Now, formal acknowledgment has been given to the global sustainable priority of crime prevention (Blaustein et al., 2020). There were purposeful efforts to combat and control crime as a global issue before the UN system was established. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2015), there are 6.2 crimes committed per 100,000 people worldwide on average. At 5.17 per 100,000 people, Africa has one of the highest rates of organized crime in the world, close behind Asia (Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organized crime [ENACT, 2021]). Specifically in East Africa, Uganda is said to have one of the high rates of criminals compared to other countries.

Adu-Boahen, E. (2016) observed that behavioral issues in childhood are a strong indicator of later criminality and delinquency. It takes scientific and empirical research to answer the question of how to deal with the persistence of criminal behaviors in adulthood. Some of these behavioral issues seem to be a result of different kinds of parental or family involvement. Although it seems that behavioral issues in childhood indicate criminality, the majority of young offenders eventually discontinue such behavior. There are many different ways to become a criminal, and the journey is complicated.

Another key element in preventing adult crime is parental oversight. Compared to children from households with high levels of parental supervision, those with low parental supervision levels are more likely to engage in criminal activity. In a similar vein, Schroeder et al. (2010) in their study on parenting and adult criminality posits that parenting practices are some of the most notable and important predictors of juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. Their study made use of two different longitudinal samples of youths and their findings showed that parenting styles that do not demand the right attitude from their children are positively associated with adult criminality. What this means is that the more permissive the parent-child relationship is, the highly the likelihood that such a child in such a situation will grow up to engage in criminal activities or behaviors.

An earlier longitudinal study by Mednick et al. (1990) that sought to find out the correlation between family disruption and adult criminality, sampled 410 makes between the ages of 19 and 21 who took part in an 18-year long study. This is perhaps one of the most exhaustive and detailed studies into this phenomenon and the findings showed that the divorce of a stable normal couple has no association with increased risk of criminal behavior. The study went on to conclude that male children that had a constantly disruptive childhood are significantly more at risk of engaging in criminal behavior than their female counterparts. This suggests that more than likely, if a child experiences their parent's divorce, are forced to change environments constantly, then they are also likely to engage in deviant and criminal behavior as young adults.

Defining what a family is one of the most difficult things to do because the definition is constantly evolving. Family is often confused with marriage and is often viewed as a means through which children can be gotten (Preda, et al., 2020).

In this study, family type is referred to as two-parent family (intact family) and one-parent family (unintact family) that offers quality parenting to their children.

In this study, another variable considered in this study is adult criminality. To understand this concept, it is important that it is broken down into two components namely; 'attitude to commit violent' and 'nonviolent crimes while adults'. Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J. (2010) describes attitude as how a person evaluates an act of behavior towards a certain act, event or object. He goes on to explain that attitude is borne out of our personal experience and the environment in which we are situated. What might be frowned upon in one culture, might be perfectly acceptable in another and how attitude towards that particular action is informed by where we are situated geographically, culturally, religiously or otherwise.

METHODOLOGY

The study used Qualitative method. It was mainly used to identify behavior and patterns affecting social conditions, topic or issues. Qualitative methods include interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, observation, longitudinal studies, and document revisions and so on. This study made use interviews to collect data from key informants. Qualitative research experts have argued that there is no straightforward answer to the question of 'how many' and that sample size is contingent on a number of factors relating to methodological and practical issues (Baker & Edwards, 2018). Given the current population of about 12 targeted professionals within the universities, the sample size of 09 participants which is over 50% was recruited to participate in the study interviews.

According to (Young, 2018) interviews are a widely used methodology in conservation research. They are flexible, allowing in-depth analysis from a relatively small sample size and place the focus of research on the views of participants. Interviews help in understanding the real gist of the problem, and the researcher is able to observe and get real life experiences since it is a face-to-face approach. Secondly, professionals at

most times may not have time for the questionnaires, thus this approach is appropriate.

RESULTS

Qualitative data was collected to examine the relationship between family and adult criminality among adolescents of public and private universities in the central region of Uganda.

Interview guide for family type and adult criminality was guided by the following questions: – **‘Which type of family (one parented or two parented family) do most of the arrested criminals come from? What are the causes of adult criminality? In your opinion what family type do adult criminals usually come from?’** In a more detailed form give your opinions on the above.

One of the university counselors responded by saying;

The students come from both families either single or both parents but so common with students who come from a single parented family where there is lack of monitoring and supervision. I don't know how I can term it but children who grew up with single parent their behaviours some times are questionable. The causes of adult criminality I can say students lack proper handling while adolescents and yet this is a very crucial time as they transit from child hood to adult hood and our childhood experiences affect our adult behaviours.

The above views imply that there is a relationship between family type and adult criminality, where in single parented families, there is lack of parental supervision at adolescence stage. When speaking to one security officer from Uganda Police, about the type of families most of the arrested criminals come from, the officer had this to say;

Criminals are made up of different people from different backgrounds, some from religious families, some whose parents are even pastors, some go to good schools, and some to bad schools. However, one thing that appears to be a common denominator for most criminals in our custody is that they mostly lacked parental love and attention. Even people from rich homes often complain that they would have turned out better if they had just been given some little attention.

In view of this participant's words, it is clear that children from intact families will be less likely to engage in criminal acts as adults because they are more likely to be given the required attention. This was supported by yet another police officer who said that;

It is obvious; these busy mothers do not have time for their kids. Everybody wants to work and be the breadwinner and at the end of the day, it is the children that suffer. This is because nobody actually takes care of the children since they are all in pursuit of promotion and money at work. This is even more obvious in single parent homes; the parent must work and at the same time take care of the children. The implication is that the children are left in the care of maids who do not have a vested interest in the proper growth and development of the child. These children grow up with little regard or respect for the rule of law and that is where we step in.

A psychologist interviewed explained that:

Numerous studies show that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in criminal activities as adults than their counterparts from more intact homes. This is not to say that children from intact homes do not end up doing bad things, it is just that kids from broken homes are significantly more so to engage in these criminal activities as adults. Lack of a parent figure can significantly impact on ones' outlook to life and respect for rule.

The findings also revealed that there is indeed a relationship between family type and adult criminality, supporting previous studies that showed that children from broken families are more likely to engage in criminal behavior as adults. Interestingly, the study found out that juvenile delinquency is significantly related to adult criminality. What this means is that juveniles that have been involved in some criminal behavior or the other are more likely to grow up and become criminals.

One of the key findings of this study indicated that abandoned children are often left to fend for themselves on the streets and therefore are exposed to very rough elements which force them to turn to a life of crime and delinquent behavior at an early age.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, concerning family type and adult criminality the researcher concludes that a person's family type has a significant impact on their conduct and chance of committing crimes when they are adolescents. People from broken homes or households with just one parent have a higher propensity to commit crimes than people from intact families. Some crucial elements in reducing adult criminality include parental oversight and the caliber of parent-child connections.

Finally, this study found that family type is a moderating variable on the relationship between juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. This was explained as meaning that juvenile criminality and family type do not necessarily determine the criminal behavior of an individual at adulthood because at adulthood, a person is capable of making informed decisions and cannot blame their behavior on a combination of family type and juvenile criminal behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the result from the study and were explained in accordance with the specific objectives of the study:-

1. There is a need to focus on child welfare by enacting laws specifically targeting the mental and physical well-being of children. These laws should punish parents that abandon their kids or do not take proper care of them. As it is, there are some existing laws that address some of these issues, but they are not properly implemented and enforced. There is therefore a need for proper enforcement of such laws in the country.
2. There is a need to help children with an insecure attachment that intensify distress and they develop a disorder called affectionless psychopath which is the inability to experience guilt or deep feelings for others, which can lead to delinquency
3. Government of Uganda needs to develop a child protective service that is equipped to identify children that are being abused and also able to accommodate and find for abandoned children, loving families and a home. This will ensure that kids are not left to live on the streets or continue to sustain abuse at home at the detriment of the mental and even physical wellbeing. The government needs to be more proactive about the issue of abandonment.
4. To address this issue, proper rehabilitation should be carried out on these children instead of punishments secondly, government and civil society organizations need to provide educational opportunities for these kids so they can be properly reabsorbed into society and become functional and productive members of such societies.

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