



Prevalence of Youths' Deviant Attitude as Attributed to Parents' Careless Attitude: Roles of Civic Education in Plateau State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the prevalence of youths' deviant attitude as attributed to parents' careless attitude: roles of civic education. The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design to enable the researcher collect and analyze data on the consequences of youths' deviant behaviour within the community. The population comprised of youths, parents, teachers, community leaders, and security personnel, from which a representative sample of 200 was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of all groups. A structured questionnaire titled Youths, Deviant Behaviour and Community Consequences Questionnaire (YDBCCQ) was used for data collection. Findings reveal a high incidence of deviance particularly among male youths aged 16–18 including vandalism, substance abuse, truancy, and violence. The study highlights significant negative impacts on community safety, economic stability, educational environments, and public health. While Civic Education is recognized as crucial for moral development and social responsibility, its implementation faces challenges such as inadequate resources and insufficient teacher training. The study concludes that effective parental supervision combined with strengthened Civic Education programmes, supported by community and government involvement, is essential to curb youth deviance and foster societal balance. Recommendations are provided for stakeholders including parents, community and religious leaders, school administrators, and government agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Deviant behavior among youth is a pressing social issue that undermines community safety, economic stability, and educational outcomes. Parents play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of their children. When parental care is absent or careless, young people are more likely to engage in deviant acts. The prevalence of such behaviors has raised concerns about the future of communities and the effectiveness of existing interventions. Civic education, designed to promote responsible citizenship and moral values, offers a potential solution to this growing problem.

Many contemporary societies world over are faced with the problem of adolescent who deviate from the social norms. This could be in terms of general behavior or even in the way they relate to environment and other surrounding issues around them (Dienye & Oyet, 2011). Deviant behavior in the society include, vandalism, disobedience, drug abuse, crime, truancy among students. In schools, efforts has been made by teachers to reduce such behaviour but, it keep persisting. This has therefore raised a lot of concern among the teachers and all other stakeholders since in such a situation, little learning could be going on. According to Fomby, and Cherlin (2017) children of divorced homes constitute 89 percent (%) of children that are into drugs, crime and other forms of deviant behaviours. Ugwu and Stanley (2017) investigated family dynamics as determinants of delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. Their findings were that parent socio-economic status has influence on students' delinquent behaviours. While on the other hand, family size was found not to have any significant influence on delinquency.

The causes of deviant behaviour in tertiary institutions are most attributed to students' poor family backgrounds, effects of mass media and societal pressure/influence. Echebe (2010) asserted that students who come from abusive parents display characteristics of abusive persons. Such children for instance end up beating their fellow playmates without feeling any kind of remorse. On the other hand, students brought up by uncaring parents usually portray delinquent behaviours (Simourd, & Andrews 1994). They resort to criminal activities to achieve what they could not get from their parents. Charon (2007) is of the view that such students take part in criminal



activities such as stealing, rioting/rebellion among others. In the same vein, mass media has a negative effect on school children, more specifically the violent content that are aired in the television or in cinemas. It is believed that children believe what they see in the media more than what happens in the real life (Dibia & Nicholas 2017).

One major factor consistently linked to the increase in youth deviance is parental carelessness or negligence. Parents serve as the primary agents of socialization, responsible for instilling moral values, discipline, and socially acceptable behaviours (Hoffmann, 2017). When parents fail to provide adequate supervision, guidance, and emotional support, young people are more vulnerable to adopting deviant attitudes (Agnew, 2006). Economic hardship, urban migration, rising divorce rates, and the pursuit of livelihood have reduced parental involvement in children's upbringing (Ushie, Emeka, Ononga, & Owolabi, 2012). Many parents no longer closely monitor their children's activities, peer relationships, or exposure to harmful media, thereby increasing susceptibility to deviance (Okpukpara & Chukwuone, 2010).

Research shows that parental negligence manifests in several ways, including inadequate supervision, failure to meet basic needs, lack of emotional bonding, or permissive parenting practices (Barnes & Farrell, 2012). These gaps create fertile ground for deviant behaviours among youths, who may turn to peers, media influencers, streets, or social media platforms for direction (Odongo & Angogo, 2018). In many Nigerian communities, acts such as drug abuse, cultism, vandalism, school absenteeism, and violent behaviour continue to rise among youths aged 13–18 (Nwideeduh & Oghuvbu, 2014).

The consequences of youths' deviant behaviour are far-reaching. Communities experience increased insecurity, vandalism, fear, and social disorganization (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Schools suffer poor academic performance, disruptive classroom environments, teacher stress, and high dropout rates (Ajala, 2017). Economically, communities face business losses, destruction of public property, and additional costs on security and health systems (Osakwe, 2016). The mental and physical health of deviant youths and their peers also becomes compromised due to exposure to violence, drug addiction, or criminal activities (World Health Organization, 2019).

Despite the recognized importance of parental involvement and Civic Education, the prevalence of youth deviance continues to rise across many Nigerian communities. A deeper understanding of the extent of parental responsibility, the patterns of youth deviance, and the implications for community well-being remains necessary. This study therefore seeks to investigate the prevalence of youth deviant attitudes as influenced by parental carelessness and to explore the role of Civic Education in promoting a balanced and responsible society.

Statement of the Problem

Deviant behaviour in most cases is considered as a way of life, depending on the social environment the individuals find themselves. Deviant behaviour in all ramification is not accepted on a global setting but the society at times ignore the signs of this at the early stage of the individual's life and interaction with other peers (Amali, 2019). Educational institutions are fundamentally expected to assist in building up the character of the leaders of tomorrow for a better society are now perceived by some educational stakeholders as breeding ground for social vices. There are various factors responsible for the display of deviant behaviours among undergraduates which cannot be over-emphasised due to the level of accepted values in the environment and this goes a long way to affect the This problem constitutes a source of worry and a serious challenge to families and the society at large. With all these, students hardly have time to study their books, hence the current state of perpetual academic decline in tertiary institutions. It is against this backdrop that it is necessary to ascertain the causes and effects of deviant behaviour among students of higher institution of learning.

Deviant behaviour such as stealing, dishonesty, examination malpractices, rape, disobedience, truancy, drug addiction, violence and assault, riot and demonstration, indecent, dressing offences are still common in educational institutions today. Not to forget those deviant behaviours as providing a cue in the society; where behaviour of student at resumption of school truant synchronized with adults refusing to report for work after certain public holidays. Hence, the modern society is guilty of increased permissiveness, especially in immorality, portrayal of violence in literature and cinemas.

The prevalence of deviant behaviour among youths poses serious implications for the stability and progress of communities. Reports from schools and neighbourhoods indicate that youth involvement in violent acts,



substance abuse, and antisocial behaviour has increased significantly over the past decade. Such behaviours not only threaten community safety but also disrupt educational environments, contribute to poor academic achievement, damage public property, and tarnish the reputation of affected communities. These consequences impose financial, psychological, and social burdens on families, schools, law enforcement agencies, and society at large.

Although Civic Education is designed to impart moral values, responsible citizenship, respect for laws, and positive social behaviour, its impact on reducing youth deviance appears limited in many communities. This may be due to inadequate implementation, insufficient teacher training, poor curriculum delivery, and lack of community support. As a result, many young people, despite being exposed to Civic Education in school, still display behaviours that contradict expected civic values. There is therefore a pressing need to examine the extent to which parental carelessness contributes to the rising cases of youth deviance, to determine the actual prevalence of deviant behaviours among youths in local communities, and to analyze the consequences of such behaviours on community well-being. More importantly, there is a need to critically assess the role of Civic Education in addressing these behavioural problems and promoting a more responsible and balanced society

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the prevalence of youth deviant attitude as attributed to parents' careless attitude: role of civic education. The specific objectives are to;

1. Determine the extent are parent responsible for youths' deviant behaviour
2. Determine the prevalence of deviant behaviour among the youths
3. Analyse the consequence of youths' deviant behaviour in the community

Research Questions

1. To what extent are parent responsible for youths' deviant behaviour
2. What are the prevalence of deviant behaviour among the youths
3. What are the consequence of youths' deviant behaviour in the community

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deviance is generally defined as any behaviour that does not conform to the established rules of a group of individuals or the society (Idris, 2016). Deviant behaviours are actions which conflict with the societal norms. Hirschi (1995). It could also be referred to as the engagement of people in criminal offences, illegal, antisocial and unethical behaviour. Any behaviour that violates the norm or social standard of the society is deviant. Once a particular people no longer consider such an act to be seriously deviant, such laws are often removed from the books, or are simply not enforced. In fact, there are many laws still on the books in the states that were once deemed by society to be necessary to prevent deviant behavior, which seem absurd by modern standards (Wilcox, and Cllen, 2010).

Deviant behaviour could also be any form of behaviour that contravenes the rules and regulations or even laws that govern an establishment. Some researchers have identified the different types of deviant behaviour among in-school adolescents; these include truancy, examination malpractice, substance abuse, bullying, vandalism, and sexual immorality. Goode (2007) further stated that behaviour that is deviant in one society may not be in another. Even within a society, what is deviant today may not be deviant tomorrow. Suleiman (2011) noted that a particular behaviour is antisocial if any of these three criteria are seen; when behaviour does not allow a person to function effectively with others as a member of the society, when such behaviour does not permit the person to meet his or her own needs and when behaviour has a negative effect on the wellbeing of others.

One of the most immediate consequences of youth deviance is the disruption of community peace and safety. Rising incidents of theft, gang activity, drug abuse, and violent attacks create fear among residents, discourage free movement, and reduce social interactions (Akwara et al., 2013). Public spaces such as markets, parks, and



schools become unsafe, leading to a breakdown of social order. Communities with high youth deviance often experience increased crime rates, which weaken trust among citizens and erode the traditional mechanisms that promote peaceful coexistence (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Schools are among the first institutions to feel the effects of youths' deviant behaviour. Behaviours such as truancy, classroom disruption, bullying, cultism, and violence hinder the teaching-learning process and create an unsafe learning environment (Ajala, 2017). Teachers become demoralized due to persistent classroom misconduct, leading to reduced instructional quality. Students who witness or experience deviant behaviours may develop anxiety or poor academic motivation. High dropout rates, absenteeism, and declining academic achievement are common outcomes in communities where youth deviance is prevalent (Nwideduh & Oghuvbu, 2014).

Youths' deviant behaviour imposes significant economic costs on communities. Acts of vandalism, theft, property destruction, and gang violence lead to financial losses for businesses, homeowners, and local governments (Osakwe, 2016). Communities are forced to allocate more funds for security measures, law enforcement, and repairs of public infrastructure, rehabilitation programs, and social services. Furthermore, when young people fail to acquire the skills needed for employment due to deviant lifestyles, the community suffers reduced productivity and a weaker labour force, which ultimately affects long-term economic development.

Social Bond/Social Control Theory

According to Hirschi (1969), virtually all existing criminological theories began with a faulty fundamental premise: that criminal behavior requires, in some form, the creation of criminal motivation. For example, strain theories that emerged out of Merton's (1938) work assumed that it was the pressure placed on social norms, due to a disconnect between youths' goals and aspirations and their ability to reach such goals through legitimate means, that created the motivation to offend an assumption echoed by later versions of strain theory articulated by Cloward and Ohlin (1960). In addition, perspectives drawing on the differential association tradition (see Sutherland, 1939) assumed that the values and techniques associated with criminal behavior had to be learned a process that occurred largely through exposure to deviant peers and to deviant value systems that created the motivation to offend (Akers & Sellers, 2008).

Relatedly, it is also important to note that Hirschi's social bonds represented, at least primarily, mechanisms of informal social control that is, the bonds that control our behavior are typically social conventions rather than formally adopted laws. If you doubt the power of informal rules to guide what we decide to do or not do at any given moment, consider the example of elevator behavior. None of us has been given a pamphlet concerning how we should or should not behave when getting on an elevator, yet there are consistencies of action that all of us seem to follow: A little small talk is permissible, but keep it superficial; give everyone else adequate personal space; looking up at the light moving from floor to floor is the most common place to direct your visual attention. If you doubt the power of any of these informal norms, try violating them sometime and see just how uncomfortable you make those riding with you. Indeed, start a conversation about religion or politics with your elevator mates, or stand facing them while invading their space, or get on your hands and knees and closely examine a spot on the floor. You'll see just how quickly the discomfort level will rise, and you will know that your behavior has violated the rules that informally keep our behavior in check

Method and Procedures

The study adopted survey research design which enable the researchers collect and analyze data on the consequences of youths' deviant behaviour within the community. The population comprised of youths, parents, teachers, community leaders, and security personnel in Plateau State, from which the sample of 200 was selected using stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of all groups. A structured questionnaire titled Youths' deviant behaviour and Community Consequences Questionnaire (YDBCCQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was developed based on the purpose of the study and the research questions formulated, using literature review about the topic which the researcher ensured that the instrument was of good quality and standard to measure what was expected to measure. The instrument developed contained 15 item questions. The questionnaire was developed to collect verse data in answering the research questions. The validity was established by subjecting the instrument to two experts from Educational Psychology and two from Research, Measurement and Evaluation Units all from the University of Jos to judge the adequacy of the



items in terms of content coverage, clarity and adequacy of items. The comments and observation made by the experts were adhered in producing the final copy of the instrument. The reliability of internal consistency of the instrument was estimated using the Cronbach alpha method because the instrument was polytomously scored. The reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained, and this showed that the instrument was reliable. The data collected in the study were computed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency distribution tables, simple, graphs, means and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data collected from 200 respondents on the prevalence and consequences of youths' deviant behaviour in the community and the implementation of civic education as a corrective mechanism. The analysis is guided by the research questions using descriptive statistical tools, specifically the mean and standard deviation, to determine respondents' perceptions.

Research Question One

What is the prevalence of deviant behaviour among youths in the community?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Prevalence of Deviant Behaviour among Youth

S/No	Item	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1	Frequency of observing deviant behavior	3.75	0.980	High Prevalence
2	Types of deviance most common (multi-response)	4.10	0.821	Highly Prevalent
3	Age group with highest deviance	3.95	0.901	16–18 years
4	Gender with higher deviance	4.30	0.702	More Males
5	Common locations of deviance	3.88	0.887	Streets/Schools/Online
6	Time periods of deviance	3.70	0.905	Evenings/Weekends
7	Change in prevalence over 5 years	4.05	0.761	Increasing

Decision Rule: Mean \geq 2.50 indicates high prevalence.

The results show that youths' deviant behaviour is frequently observed in the community, with a mean score of 3.75. Vandalism, substance abuse, truancy, bullying and theft were identified as the most common forms of deviance ($\bar{X} = 4.10$). Respondents indicated that youths aged 16–18 years exhibit the highest levels of deviant behaviour ($\bar{X} = 3.95$), and males are more involved compared to females ($\bar{X} = 4.30$). Furthermore, streets, schools and online **platforms** were identified as the most common locations ($\bar{X} = 3.88$). Deviant behaviour is most prevalent during evenings, weekends and after school hours ($\bar{X} = 3.70$). Importantly, respondents believe that youths' deviant behaviour has increased over the past five years ($\bar{X} = 4.05$).

Question Two

What are the consequences of youths' deviant behaviour in the community?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Consequences of Youths' deviant behaviour

S/No	Item	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1	Impact on community safety	4.40	0.680	Very Significant



2	Effect on local economy	4.15	0.755	Highly Significant
3	Strain on public resources	4.10	0.820	Significant
4	Effect on school environment	4.25	0.720	Very Significant
5	Impact on physical/mental health	4.35	0.702	Very Significant
6	Effect on community reputation	4.20	0.810	Highly Significant

All mean values exceed 4.00, indicating that respondents strongly agree that youths' deviant behaviour has severe consequences on the community. It significantly endangers community safety, contributes to economic losses, strains law enforcement and social services, disrupts schools, creates health risks and damages community image.

Research Question Three

To what extent is civic education implemented to promote a balanced and responsible society?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Implementation of Civic Education

S/No	Item	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1	Importance of civic education	4.55	0.600	Extremely Important
2	Adequacy of curriculum coverage	3.80	0.910	Moderately Adequate
3	Effectiveness of teaching methods	3.55	0.975	Moderately Effective
4	Application of civic knowledge	3.40	1.002	Moderately Implemented
5	Student engagement	3.30	1.050	Moderate
6	Importance of community involvement	4.35	0.750	Very Important
7	Importance of teacher training	4.40	0.710	Very Important
8	Effectiveness of assessment methods	3.25	1.110	Low-Moderate
9	Barriers to proper implementation	3.95	0.880	Significant Barriers
10	Role of government support	4.45	0.630	Extremely Crucial

Respondents consider civic education extremely important ($\bar{X} = 4.55$) for promoting responsible citizenship. However, the curriculum content, teaching methods, assessment approaches and student engagement are only moderately effective. Barriers such as inadequate resources, limited teacher training, insufficient curriculum time and low student interest hinder effective implementation. Government support, community involvement and teacher training are viewed as essential for improvement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal a high prevalence of deviant behaviour, aligning with Hirschi's Social Control Theory, which argues that weak social bonds increase youth delinquency (Hirschi, 1969). The dominance of male youth in deviant acts is consistent with Moffitt (2023) who found males more likely to engage in risktaking and



delinquency. The increase over the last five years agrees with Otu & Elechi (2020) who reported rising youth crime rates in Nigerian communities due to unemployment, peer influence, and family instability.

The consequences identified reflect Agnew's General Strain Theory, which posits that deviance leads to community fear, damaged social order, and resource strain (Agnew, 2021). Similar findings were reported by Adewale (2019) who linked youth deviance to economic losses, insecurity, and low educational performance. The negative impact on mental health aligns with World Health Organization (2021), which notes that youth engagement in deviance increases vulnerability to depression, substance dependence, and violence.

Findings show that civic education is crucial for moral development, consistent with Dewey (1966) who emphasized education as a catalyst for responsible citizenship. The need for teacher training aligns with Omatseye (2012) who argued that civic education requires skilled educators to shape democratic values. Barriers such as inadequate resources and low student interest correspond with Ukpong (2020) who identified similar constraints in Nigerian civic education programs. The significance of government support confirms Ogunyemi (2021) who found policy backing essential for effective citizenship education.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that youths' deviant behaviour is prevalent, primarily among male adolescents, and increasing across communities. This deviance has severe consequences on safety, economy, education, and public resources. However, effective implementation of civic education supported by trained teachers, community involvement, and government policy can help reduce deviance and promote a balanced, responsible society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents should provide consistent supervision and guidance by actively monitoring their children's activities, peer groups and media consumption to reduce the likelihood of deviant behaviour.
2. Community leaders should create structured youth engagement programmes such as sports, skill acquisition and mentorship initiatives to keep young people meaningfully occupied and discourage deviant acts.
3. Religious leaders should intensify moral instruction and establish faith-based youth mentorship programmes that promote positive values and discourage involvement in deviant behaviours.
4. School administrators should strengthen the delivery of Civic Education by ensuring effective teaching methods and functional counselling units to help students develop responsible behaviour and overcome negative influences.
5. Government should provide adequate funding, policies and teacher training to enhance Civic Education and community-based youth development programmes aimed at preventing deviant behaviour among young people.

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