

## **Children's Theatre: a Nostrum to Juvenile Delinquency in The Niger Delta Region, Nigeria.**

**Hannah Modupe Akpodiete**

### **Abstract**

Juvenile delinquency is a habitual problem among the youths that are under the legal prosecution age. The awareness and prominence of juvenile delinquency remains minimal despite the establishment of a juvenile court in 1943. Recently, juvenile delinquency has become proliferous in the Niger Delta Region. Theatre through performance can be employed to change/create a new world for youths and teenagers by developing their emotions through performances. This paper focuses on the exploration of the cultural methods of bringing up children in the Colonial era and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the Niger Delta. To determine the effect of these negative behaviours such as drug-related offenses, violent crimes, sexual abuse, armed robbery, rape and vandalism on the child, the nuclear family, society and the Region; a qualitative research methodology was adopted; with a focus on the Niger Delta Region using random selection to select six (6) out of the nine States that make up the Region. Persons that wereof sixty and eighty (60-80) years of agewere the target age to administer thequestionnaires to. The result shows that parents in the colonial era were stricter and more concerned with the images their children/wards portrayed outside the home. Furthermore, single parenting, divorce, and abortion were alien to African culture and society. Finally, the research illustrates how theatre as a phenomenon can be used to minimise/ eradicate these juvenile problems among youth in the region.

Keywords: Juveniledelinquency,Niger Delta Region, Colonial era, Youths, Children's Theatre.

### **Introduction:**

Maguire and Schuitema (2013) describe children's theatre as an art form that is predominately meant for the children's audience. Children's theatre is an arm of the performing arts that can positively influence young people and benefit them physically, emotionally, and socially. Thus, it enhances healthy development and propels admiration of culture. Theatre is about role-playing and visiting the theatre can be beneficial to young people as it inspires creative imagination, arouses curiosity, and helps them to practice self-reflection (analytical thinking). Most children's performances are hilarious and engaging; it lengthens the children's attention span and helps to keep their minds away from crime as well as entertaining and educating at the same time.

Juvenile delinquency is the involvement of minors in criminal/unlawful activities. Minors under the age of 18 who violated the law are not seen to have committed a crime but are seen to have been involved in a delinquent act. Instead of going through trials, court conduct, and adjudication, they are given deposition instead of sentences. These are offenses that are more than pranks: they can be drug-related offenses, violent crimes (armed robbery, murder, sexual abuse). Minors can be charged and prosecuted as adults depending on the severity of the crime. About 60% - 80% of the first arrests of crimes committed worldwide are committed by adolescents (Drobac and Hulvershorn 2014)

This high percentage of youth involvement in crime is becoming frightening and worrisome. The legal system does not permit minors to be treated as law offenders if it can be proven that the delinquent act is a result of negative home influence. The juvenile system is based on the assumption that minors are susceptible to wrong actions because they don't have an understanding of their actions and their consequences. Thus to educate them and put them on the right path, they are sent to rehabilitation centres instead of an adult prison cell.

### **History of Juvenile Delinquency**

Before the 1800s, minors who were involved in crime were treated the same way as adults as derived from the English Common Law. Under this law, children were forcefully made to work and trained for agriculture, as domestic help and groomed from adolescence into adulthood. This practice was replicated in the American Justice System until the early 19th Century when civil leaders realised that more harm was being done to the children in the way their cases were being handled. They then came up with an alternative measure of alleviating these harsh conditions known as the 'Savers movement'. The major focus of child savers was to improve the behavioural pattern of the juveniles by caring for them, creating activities and programs that enhanced the reduction of crimes. The Establishment of the child savers movement with a focus on reformation and caring for juveniles brought about the establishment of the New York House of Refuge in 1825 as a reformation home. This institution admitted youths who could not be monitored at home by their parents. The youth who pose a risk to society, community, and the street, were confined to a family setting that was conducive for them. The New York House of Refuge started with Ten (10) youths and in less than a decade, had 1600 youths under their care. The successes recorded led to several states starting similar establishments to cater for juvenile related issues. As time progressed, the increase in the number of delinquent youths in these homes resulted in a decrease in the caring and treatment of the youths in the institutions. There were issues of overcrowding and administrative problems that led the child

savers movement to advocate for the establishment of a juvenile court, which was first established in 1899 in Illinois. The establishment of the juvenile court brought about the introduction of the Juvenile court act of 1899 which was seen as a major milestone in the juvenile justice system in the world. This juvenile court had jurisdiction over children under the age of 16 who had violated the law. It introduced a legal backing for the care of neglected children, separated juvenile offenders from the adults, and specified how juveniles should be punished for offenses committed. This concept of the justice system encouraged youths to admit to their offenses. It focused on rehabilitation of juveniles by identifying what led to the crime and finding a solution, thus reorienting the child's mind to accommodate positive behavioural practices. In 1960, the Supreme Court legalized the right to due process in the juvenile justice system. This implied that juveniles were to have the same right to justice as an adult; which is the right to confront their witnesses, to counsel and right to formal notice of charges against them.

### **History of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria**

Juvenile delinquency is a social problem that has spread like wildfire across the globe. According to Laurent Fourchard (2006), before 1920, juvenile delinquency was not seen as a matter of social concern. However, in 1920, the Nigerian Newspaper raised an alarm on the rising offenses committed by youths such as pickpocketing and prostitution. This led to the appointment of a social welfare officer in 1941 and the identification of juvenile delinquency as a social problem that could affect society negatively. Hence the law was then legalized and many youths were criminalised mostly female hookers. Juvenile delinquency was the aftereffect of the Second World War in Africa. But in 1980, the phenomenon called "child destination street children" became prominent in most of the urban cities in Nigeria. To curb this anti-social and criminal behaviour called juvenile delinquency and give offenders legal rights to ameliorate their plight, the child right act was established in Nigeria in 2003. This act secures their basic rights: the right to life, right to dignity, right to preserve and rehabilitate the youths. This was on the premise that juveniles are a special class of the society presumed to be immature, lacking direction, and oblivious to the consequences of their actions. Children were offered special treatment by being allowed to go through reformative actions, instead of being thrown behind prison bars.

### **Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria**

*The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "a juvenile as a person who has attained fourteen years of age but still under seventeen years of age, a young person who is not yet an adult." The 1979 Nigerian constitution defines juvenile delinquency

as “a crime committed by a young person under the age of eighteen resulting from peer pressure, parental pressure or certain emotional stimulation. The youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow and the future of a country is dependent on the kind of leaders the country produces. Hence juvenile delinquency is seen as a dangerous and harmful act that threatens the existence of a country because the kind of crime committed by youths such as rape, stealing, armed robbery, homicide, cultism, drug addiction can destroy the fabric of any nation. Even though the act of juvenile delinquency has a spoke in the wheel of progress of the society at large, there are immediate and remote reasons why youths involve themselves in these wrong acts. These include:

**Rural-urban migration:** Daily, youths (both skilled and unskilled) migrate from rural areas across the country to the cities seeking for greener pastures and better life. In the absence of better condition of life., they are drawn by their peers into committing crimes because as the adage goes, "an idle hand is the devil's workshop". Many migrate to the cities to work as house helps, salespersons, just to survive and in the process; many get involved in delinquent acts.

**Influence of foreign media:** Many of the foreign films from Europe introduce youths to techniques in gangster living, stealing, burglary, armed robbery, and even rape. Even some cartoons teach children some basic principles in vandalism and theft. A child that has cultivated this habit from childhood will be tempted to venture into it as a teenager. Hagan and Foster (2001) stressed that “violence within the family or outside the family is an important source of delinquency”. In other words, if violence encompasses all emotional and environmental aspects of the juvenile’s life, he or she is more likely to engage in juvenile activities.

**Poverty:** The insecurity issues across the country have led to a loss of jobs, mass relocation, and movement from state to state which increases the poverty level of most families. At present, 67.1 percent of the population is living below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017), this is an ideal breeding condition for delinquent children. Most poor couples lack the financial ability to give proper education to their children, give financial assistance to their wards, provide health facilities, decent home apartments, and provide the basic needs of their children. In the bid to survive or fend for themselves, they are lured into delinquent acts. The World Bank’s poverty definition says a “person is considered poor if his/her income level falls below the minimum level necessary to meet his /her basic need” About 800 million people still live in extreme poverty and suffer from hunger. Children suffer more from the effect of extreme poverty than adults. In developing countries, an estimated 19.5% of

children live on less than \$1.90 a day compared to 9.2% of adults. Thus, poverty is one of the major breeding ground for delinquent children.

**Family dysfunction:** Research has shown that children brought up or exposed to violent environments early in life such as where parents are always at loggerheads, or from broken homes and raised by single parents, have the tendency to be involved in delinquent activities.

Children mostly emulate what they see, and if all they see and hear at their tender age are abusive words, quarrels, fighting, hate speeches, and vulgar languages, they are influenced to demonstrate these outside the home thereby getting involved in delinquent activities. Demuth and Brown, (2004)

**Peer group influence:** Children need attention. They want to ask questions and get answers. They want to be seen as pets and allowed to express themselves. If they can't get the needed attention at home, they turn to their peers for this attention. Most times they get the wrong advice and imbibe the wrong opinions about life. The neurobiology research studies discovered that the part of the human brain that is responsible for cognitive control and self-regulation does not completely develop until one is juvenile, which exposes youths to problematic behaviours and making them easily influenced by peer group suggestions and decisions. Peer group influences on juveniles are stronger than peer influences on adults because of the length of time spent together. In this process of socialisation, they pick both negative and positive behaviours depending on the neighbourhood of their peers, their socio-economic background, religious background, and academic background. Jung, R. E., et.al. (2013).

### **Signs of juvenile Delinquency**

There are so many behavioural signs that parents must take cognizance of as their children grow up. Thus, parent's early observance of their children's anti-social behaviours will help to correct such act. In 2011 a research was carried out by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention which shows that 16.6% of Secondary School students carry weapons. While 7.4% admitted that they have been molested, and inflicted with injury by their mates who carry weapons.

**Mood disorder:** A child that is always moody, never friendly, changes mood sporadically without any cogent reason, and enjoys isolation has the tendency to be delinquent. Amos, P. M. (2013)

**Displays lack empathy towards humans and animals:** Children easily share the emotions of others especially their parents and guardians. When a youth is

vicarious and insensitive to the hurt of others especially those around, it should be a thing of concern; when they enjoy what makes others sad, angry, cry, depressed, brings pain and violence. Some children beat up their younger ones when their parents are not around. They hide their siblings' belongings — clothes, toys, bags, books, thereby displaying their displeasure towards their parents/guardians. These are signs that parents should not ignore as they may be pointers to delinquent tendencies by such teenagers.

**Anti-social behavioural pattern:** these are actions and practices that violate the fundamental human right of others. Habitual violation of others' rights and privileges can be a pointer to future misdemeanour problems and discriminatory behaviour towards others. Studies have shown that 20% of children who exhibit anti-social behaviours end up having court and police cases at a later age, Renda. J. et al.(2011).

**Displaying likeness for weapons:** most children are curious and inventive, obsessed with cartoons and anything that captures their attention, but when there is excessive obsession towards guns, knives, or weapons, it calls for extra attention and care. If these signs are discovered early enough, they can be prevented or reduced to the barest minimum by early intervention and therapy.

### **Effects of Juvenile Delinquency on Children**

Juvenile delinquency is a gregarious problem that can have a serious consequence on the child, parents, and society at large if not properly handled. The following are the likely effects of juvenile delinquency on the child:

**Life of Crime:** Parents or guardians showing momentary displeasure towards a crime committed by a juvenile without strong feelings of disapproval of such an act can be misinterpreted by teens to mean parental support which can encourage teens to persist in wrong acts. Perseverance in criminal acts on the part of Teens can lead to confidence in committing more crimes, and the desire to break rules and do something negative becomes predominantly high in such a child. At this stage, it is difficult to curb such a child, crime, and delinquent acts become a daily event. Eventhough parents suffer psychological trauma because on every occasion they face the law enforcement agencies and the shame of failed parenting. The child is hit worse because of frequent arrest and admission into the reformatory home.

**Delinquent youths become insensitive and hardened:** One of the effects of habitual committing of crime is that such youths become less emotional, selfish, and inconsiderate about the consequences of their actions on others. They care about themselves and see others as hostile. To avoid this, parents need to keep

an 'eagle eye' on kids as much as possible and address any sign of delinquency noticed instead of dismissing their acts as mistakes or immature behaviour.

### The Niger Delta Region



<https://nigerianinfopedia.com.ng/>

Niger Delta is a compound word used to delineate the region around the wetland and coastal marine ecosystems in Nigeria. It comprises nine states namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Imo, and Abia with a population of about 31million people that are the major producers of the nation's wealth. It is the part of Nigeria that flows directly into the River Niger and the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. It is a region densely populated that carries about 7.5% of the total Nigeria landmass, comprises 40 ethnic groups with different local languages. Asanebi D.H, (2016)

### The Concept of the Niger Delta in the Colonia Era

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Oyo and Benin Kingdoms were the most prominent kingdoms that expanded in power, economic and were in control of the coastal ports. As traders, the people grew beyond bounds and were in charge of the coastal areas which are now referred to as the Niger Delta. The regions were separate entities from different regions, tribes, and controlled by different kings. "The Western Niger Delta flows into the Bight of Benin in the Atlantic Ocean. This cut across the Benin River, Escravos River, Forcados River, and Ramos River; which are the present-day Ijaw, Itsekiri, Ukwuani, Isoko, and Urhobo. While the Eastern Niger Delta discharges its water into the Bright of Benin with Imo and Cross River majorly in the Eastern part of Nigeria. In the year 2000 Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo Stateswere added by Obasanjo's regime." These communities were majorly tradersin1471; the

Portuguese missionary arrived at the region and established a trade relationship with the locals. This grew the economy of the area but later encouraged slave trade to America. Before the abolition of the slave trade in 1833, the region has deviated from the slave trade to the production of palm oil. There was a great demand for the local palm oil because of the advent of the industrial revolution in Europe. The first major agitation from this region took place between 1894-1895. It was a conflict between king William Koko of Nembe, the Nembe people and the Royal Niger company in their attempt to drive the Nembe traders away from their lucrative palm oil business. In 1899, the southern Nigerian protectorate was established because the Royal Niger Company relinquished their right of ownership to the British Government. The Niger Coast protectorate which comprises Brass, Bonny, Oporobo, Aboh, and the old Calabar were merged and placed under the British Colonial Office. The introduction and use of the combustion engine in 1890 brought about a huge demand for oil and lubricant based products. To meet this demand, the British Government diversified by exploring other colonies. The first colony that was explored was Nigeria because of her rich bitumen, coal, and oil. To make this explorative venture possible in 1914 an acquisition ordinance that bequeathed the oil and mineral resources under the Nigerian soil to the legal property of the crown was established. The first oil well of commercial quantity was discovered in Oloibiri, now Bayelsa State in 1956. This period witnessed the influx of oil companies into the country- Shell and the Anglo Iranian oil company (BP), Dutch, French, and Italian oil companies took advantage of the war and explored the region more.

### **Manifestation of Juvenile Delinquency in the Niger Delta Region**

The issue of juvenile delinquency has grown into a significant phenomenon in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Crimes such as drug peddling and trafficking, militancy, pipeline vandalism, rape, stealing, burglary, homicide, vandalism, robbery, and molestations are being committed daily. These acts have brought worry, fear, and agitation to both parents and society. Although it was first noticed in the early 1990's, this phenomenon grew beyond bounds after the 1998 two million man march in Abuja organized by the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) under the leadership of Daniel Kanu. The influx of Niger Delta Youths to Abuja exposed them to the developmental strides of the Federal Government in Abuja which were lacking in the Niger Delta region which is the source of wealth of the nation. There was a negative reaction to the sight they saw in Abuja which triggered massive Juvenile crimes of all sorts. The region as the oil hub of the nation was supposed to be the richest but instead, it is plagued by poverty, backwardness, unemployment, hunger, deprivation, and was suppressed, so in an attempt for the youths to make their grievances known, they resulted to juvenile crime



.David smock asserted that:“The demands of the population in the Niger Delta to enjoy greater benefit from the oil produced in their region continue to go unanswered. The people in the Delta complained that oil-spill pollution has made their water undrinkable, gas flaring has made the air unfit for breathing, while revenue from the oil has paid for mansions to be built in the capital, Abuja” This agitation led to the appointment of a technical committee by President Yar’adua with the mandate to investigate the claims and make recommendations for actions within the space of nine months. It birthed the Amnesty programme of the Federal Government which has still not addressed the poverty issues. David Smock, (2009)

### **The Cultural Method of Child Upbringing in the Colonial Era In The Niger Delta Region**

In the colonial era, culture was adhered to tenaciously because it defined the people. Culture is a way of life and the string that binds the people together in a specific community. The people’s behaviours, symbols, values, belief systems revolve around their culture and cultural practices. In the traditional Niger Delta society, parenting cannot be disconnected from culture/ cultural practices and belief systems. According to Santrock “Parenting requires interpersonal skills and emotional demands, most parents learn parenting practices from their parents - some they accept and some they discard”. The author argues that when parenting methods are passed on from one generation to the next, both desirable and undesirable practices are perpetuated. These practices may be cultural values that have been passed on from one parent to another.

**Cultural Apprenticeship:** In the pre-colonial era children emulate, imitate, and learn from their parents or guardians. Children were meant to observe their parents and were groomed gradually by being allowed to practice what they see their parents doing. These enabled them to grow up to become master in the skills of child upbringing and adhere strictly to cultural values. Different parents employed different methods of parenting but some generally accepted methods cut across the states and that made the Niger Delta unique.

**Joint Apprenticeship:** Though a child is given birth to by a specific parent, grooming, correction, and instruction, is done by every adult in the community. In this system, parenting is perceived to be the duty of all adults, which leaves no hidden place for a child, and by this act, a child grows up accepting collectivism as a way of life. In the colonial era, adulthood was not a well-defined term when it comes to parenting, any older person within the nuclear or extended family takes the responsibilities of the parents. A child can be called to order when he/ she misbehaves, scolded, reprimanded, reproofed by an elderly person in the society. Though this system might be authoritarian, it

compels the child to accept and practice moral issues and principles lay down by their forefathers. According to Baumrind (1967), there are four major styles of parenting: Authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, authoritative parenting, and uninvolved parenting. In the colonial era, there was no one definite style or method employed by parents in parenting. Most parents employed a combination of all the styles in communicating and teaching their children/wards. They were emphatic because an act of delinquency in any child was regarded as a parental failure on the part of the biological parents and a flaw in the community where the child came from. The impact of parenting was measured by child obedience, proficiency, social competence, social esteem, and relationship with others. Joseph and John, (2008) Furthermore, this system discouraged the early self-independence of youths in the society. It encouraged and created a ready-made home for a young adult until they are ready to marry. Agreeing with this point, Gyekye (1996) advocated that “Growing adults are generally expected to live at home in the family house and leave only after they marry. Even after marriage parents still offer advice and guidance because they believed the adults have richer experiences than their children at any age” The practice of communal training/parenting of a child leaves no vacuum in parenting. Deceased parents' children were automatically transferred to any member of the extended family where their physical, emotional, and psychological and other basic needs are met. The peculiarity in this system is that it repels individualistic tendencies and family values, virtues, and history are passed on from one generation to another creating stronger ties among nuclear and extended family. Most times, parents with many children send them to their extended family members to live with. Parenting was a thing of joy to the parents and guardians because it was assumed that they reproduce their kinds in their children and wards. Therefore, they created enough time and allowance to gradually and symmetrically educate their children and wards.

### **Methods of Parenting In The 21st Century**

In the 21st-century parenting is mostly family function and only close family members have the right to correct a child's misbehaviour . This drift in parenting style has encouraged juvenile delinquency because it communicates new value systems, attitudinal and behavioural patterns. Modernisation is a concept that has made parenting a complex phenomenon in the 21st century. It has to do with a state of being modern, which is changing from what is assumed as 'old-fashioned' to social trends. The advent of ICT has affected both parents and youths negatively even though it has its positive effects. Most youths employ the negative vices gotten from the ICT exploration to propagate crime. While Parents have to adopt foreign ways of parenting which has exposed youths to new ways of doing things, thereby discarding the Niger Delta cultural value system embedded in the African parenting styles.

**Child Right:** Child right is one of the modern-day rights that has made parenting more cumbersome in modern times. In 2003, the child right was domesticated in Nigeria with a focus on child protection, right, and responsibilities in Nigeria. This has brought a lot of caution to parents and reduced the absolute right of parents over their children or wards. Flippant treatment of children is almost synonymous with showing love in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century parenting style. This has reduced parents' strictness in handling their children and wards and is almost becoming the norm. This has made parents give more freedom to their children, appeal to their psychological mind, and seeing most of their offenses as frivolous. Modern parents believe in education at the expense of cultural values and character. They replace the moral upbringing of children with exotic care, fashion, and exposure to modern trends, expecting classroom teachers to make up for their inadequacies in child upbringing.

### **The Art of The Theatre**

Theatre is an arm of the performing arts that covers life performances with a profound and esoteric impact and influence on the audience. The goal of theatre performance is to entertain, educate, inform, indoctrinate, instruct, and orientate the audience through the medium of the performance.

**What Is Children's Theatre** There is no universally accepted definition of what children's theatre is or specific parameter for defining the term children's theatre. Some scholars advocate that the definition should be based on the performer's knowledge of the children's audience and their involvement in the performance. While others advocate that the researcher should determine the definition. The researcher, therefore, defines children's theatre as a theatre for children by children and with children.

### **Brief History of Children's Theatre**

Man is a cultural animal and theatre is inherent in culture, hence it is difficult to state categorically the date children's theatre started. The written children's play is traceable to the late part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when European touring companies did dramatisations of folklores and fairy tales Popular companies were Barrier's Peter Pan [1904], Milner's Toad of Toad (1929). The effect of the Second World War brought about a sudden, powerful acceptance and formation of several children theatre companies all over the UK. In 1967, Polka emerged as a tour company in the UK and the successes recorded prompted the Art council of England to grant the company's application which resulted in the establishment of an exclusive children's theatre in 1979. Polka's theatre employed various art forms to create new work for children with the mission of

inciting imaginative skills and intuitive sense of discovery in children of all ages and backgrounds. Learning and participation were the focal points of Polka's work (polka, 2017).

Based on this innovation in 1994, Polka won the Vivien Duffield Theatre award which brought about the inception of the "curtain-up" scheme and the offering of free tickets to disadvantaged schools. Over 90,000 children visit Polka's theatre every year, where they experience, engage, and participate in fun-filled exciting productions. Another famous professional children's theatre is the Unicorn Theatre established in 1947 as a touring company in the United Kingdom. They have approximately 60,000 children as an audience. It was a family-oriented theatre company with extensive programs for parents, schools, and juveniles of all ages with performances that "expand horizons, change perspectives, reorient and challenge creative and accommodating perspectives. The aesthetic values of the performance were of high quality derived from the company philosophy." Eluyefa, D, (2017).

Education is another focal intention of these theatre companies; it was a means of meeting the demand of the Arts Council of England for securing grants. Education and learning were the major yardsticks that have shaped the philosophies of children's theatre companies and were important elements in most of their storylines. The Prince's Foundation for Children and the Arts in Britain also emphatically declares that "taking children to the theatre can support their learning and creative abilities: A visit to the theatre has the potential to be a life-changing experience, as well as an opportunity for a unique kind of learning. It can touch the imagination, arouse curiosity, or fire an artistic impulse." Theatre can also be an exceptional resource, linking many areas of knowledge; history, geography, language, citizenship, and much more. Learning in theatre has its skills-set; theatrical literacy and understanding of dramatic conventions, a specialized vocabulary, and the ability to sit and watch a performance without distraction The Prince Foundation, (2017).

### **Theatre as a Therapy for Juvenile Problems**

Going by the *Wikipedia Encyclopaedia of education*, the word education is culled from a Latin word *Educare* which means to lead out. Education is a consistent dogged method of introducing change. It involves a process and systematic methodology of transferring acquired knowledge, skills, values, and virtues from one person to another.

Education is the bedrock of development, growth, and empowerment available to all nations to employ. It plays a unique part in understanding and participating in social, religious, political, and general human endeavours.

Education is a system through which characters are remoulded, culture transmitted, values-oriented and inventing innovations to meet the needs of the people.

As stated by Kofi Annan A nation is assessed by her well- defined educational system that has produced quality human resources. Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and *nutrition*.

For everyone and everywhere, literacy is finally the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman, and child can realise his or her full potential. Children's theatre is a formal theatrical production that focuses on children's audience of which actors are majorly children. Klein, J. (2005). Children oriented productions touch the emotions and thinking of the children's audience by making the world real to them. Drama can positively influence audience psychology and in youths/adolescents, it captivates and lures them to make positive inner vows. Menzer, (2015) emphasized that “Engaging in various art activities such as singing, dancing, play, acting and craft at a young age is associated with positive social and emotional behaviours, including empathy, sharing, and mood control.”

Drama as a tool can be employed to change/create a new world for youths and teenagers by developing their emotions through the right performance. As a child actor, you are exposed to role-playing, character assimilation, subjected to a practice and learning process, and build relationships with other actors and actresses. These processes can be cumbersome and time-consuming; thus it can help to distract youths from negative attitudes and behaviours. Although dramatic activities are achieved through constant interaction with others, actors still act independently by interpreting the script to suit the overall picture of the drama. These performances can be used to reconstruct cognitive behavioural therapy by employing the constructivist method. These performances create an active environment where youths can interact, communicate effectively, and utilize their psychomotor abilities. Drama is an activity with limited rules and regulations and unlimited freedom of expression, movement, and creative abilities. It is this freedom that serves as the magnetic tool for youth/teenagers; it enables them to express their hidden potentials. For theatre to solve juvenile problems, the first step is to involve the youth in the process of scriptwriting. This will serve as the first step in the therapy process. This is a collaborative activity in which all the actors and actresses contribute to the writing of the script by generating ideas from their personal experiences, eye witness accounts,

or their environment. This script workshop collates storylines made up of educative, reformative, and entertaining stories. These are done by identifying themes like rebellion, bullying, gambling, drug abuse, and other negative behavioural patterns common among youths. Since most of these themes reflect the actors' pre-life style, they empty themselves by recreating their experiences, ordeals, rigors, and misadventures. The use of this form of art leads to self-expression; eliminates inner emotional conflicts and encourages self-awareness and inner healing. Because this form of art encompasses music, dance, drama, singing, etc. it does not only heal, it also helps to integrate the children into society and family circles. This is because the confidence and excitement derived from the performance helps to reshape, refocus, and redirect the juvenile mind-set to pursue a new life. This type of therapy employs a three-dimensional method in achieving its aim. To Educate, Transform, and Reabsorb back into society.

**Methodology:** This paper employs the qualitative research method to collect data. This approach was adopted to determine the cultural methods of children's upbringing in the colonial era and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Shanks, (2002) "sees qualitative research as inquiring into issues by following rules agreed upon by the researcher, such research is based on the world of experience, understanding how others make sense of their experience. It is a study made in the natural setting, interpreting phenomena and the meanings people give to things" The target population for this paper is the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, which comprises of nine (9) states. It is not realistic to study the whole of the region, thus the researcher made use of the simple random selection to select six (6) states out of the nine states in the Region. The target audience were those between sixty and eighty (60-80) years of age. According to Lenartz "a population is the complete set of individuals, objects, or scores that the investigator is interested in studying"

### **The Questionnaire**

According to Bryman, (1988) "questionnaire is used to acquire information by asking questions and tabulating the responses" A total of sixty (60) copies of questionnaires were administered in the six randomly selected states from the nine (9) that made up the region. The exercise was carried out in the state capitals of the six states with ten (10) copies of questionnaires distributed to ten persons of between (60-800) years of age in each state capital. A total number of 58 copies were retrieved and analysed with narrative analyses.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section one is the basic demographic section, which collected information about respondents' age, gender educational background, religion, and place of work. Section two was based on the knowledge of cultural ways of bringing up children in the colonial era. Section three dealt with methods of children's upbringing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Narrative analysis was employed to analyse the fifty-eight (58) copies collected. "Narrative analysis or narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach whereby the researcher analyses the stories people create, engaging in an inquiry of asking a given question of the narrative 'texts' for a given purpose. This approach can help us to understand how people are representing themselves, or their experiences, to themselves and others. It comes under the umbrella of social construction

It was discovered that parents in the pre-colonial era were stricter and more concerned with the image their children and wards portrayed outside the homes. Furthermore, single parenting, divorce, and abortion were alien to African culture and society. The culture was seen as paramount and was held in high esteem. Children were willing and eager to learn from their parents/guardians and were willing to obey their parents because they saw them as role models. They practiced what they said. Parents were decisive in decision making, especially when it concerned their children and wards. On the other hand, modern parenting is based on societal perception and flexibilities, while traditional parenting was based on family, community, cultural values, and worth. Traditional parenting was a symbol of identity because it inculcated in the children discipline, which distinguished African children wherever they went. When traditional parenting absorbed the foreign culture, cultural conflict among children became apparent. Modern parenting has introduced a high level of freedom, tiredness, selfishness, and an uncaring attitude towards their aging parents. On the other hand, traditional parenting was built on introducing children to community neighbourliness and companionship which is the mainstream of the African Society.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Conclusively, modernization has both negative and positive effects, but most youths are attracted to its negative and ostentatious exhibition which has made them vulnerable. The lackadaisical manner in which most modern parents handle juvenile offenses has not only made children susceptible to crimes, but also shows lapses in parenting styles. Juvenile delinquency has a multiplier effect on the individual, home, society, and the nation at large. The study recommend therefore that theatre and in specific terms children's theatre can serve as an initiative for preventing children from becoming delinquents. This can be achieved starting with the script writing process where youths are encouraged to

imaginatively propose a theme. Creatively script it, rehearse, and perform it to the audience. These are processes that can be cumbersome but interesting, captivating, and arrest youth's attention by occupying them all day leaving no time frivolities'. Every remand home should have a theatre building attached to it, where children can be thoroughly rehabilitated with a theatre director and a children's theatre specialist. It should be made compulsory for all secondary schools to have theatre outfits especially the boarding school. This will serve as an extra-curricular activity. Productions will be based on theyouth's experiences: this will help to unconsciously deal with the issue of cultism and hooliganism in our secondary schools. The higher institutions offering theatre arts as a discipline should also as a matter of compulsion establish children's theatre club as an arm of the department to cater for workers' children in the institution. This will help to complement the parent's effort in child upbringing.

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