



## **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AS A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE IN NIGERIA: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF PARENTING STYLES, SINGLE PARENTING AND MARITAL DISCORD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

When addressing juvenile delinquencies in Nigeria, it is important to consider the roles and effects of parenting styles and family structures. Although, there are no universally accepted parenting styles, evidence and studies have pointed to some parenting styles that expose children to delinquent behaviours. We examined different parenting styles comprehensively in this article and how these styles can influence juvenile delinquencies. We also discussed the association between single-parenting and behavioural outcomes; accounting how single-parenting may increase risks of delinquencies. Furthermore, marital discord was discussed and social learning theory by Albert Bandura was adopted to buttress our positions. We concluded that parenting styles have roles in delinquencies and that while children raised by single parents may be vulnerable to delinquencies, the assumption may not always be true. This study posits that government and appropriate agencies should establish a functional child support systems across Nigeria and family institution should be paid more attention to.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, Family, Juvenile, Parent, Children, Delinquency, Discord

### **INTRODUCTION**

Wrongdoings and unexpected behaviours among juveniles are becoming exceedingly worrisome, especially for parents, teachers, government authorities, caretakers, and Nigerian society at large.

Daily reports from news outlets highlight adolescents engaging in delinquent deeds such as stealing, ruthlessness, disrespecting elders, vandalism, examination malpractices, harassment, cultism, running away from home, and not abiding by the rules laid down by their communities (Aremu, 2020). This view is corroborated by This day live (2022) in a publication where it was reported that the tendency of teenagers to engage in criminal activities in Nigeria is increasing at a geometric progression. For example, on 4th of April, 2022, it was reported that the Ondo state Security network agency, also called 'Amotekun', apprehended two juveniles who engaged in armed robbery activities, Timilehin Femi, aged 12 and Ojo Sunday, aged 16, along with 20-year-old Odeyemi Ayodele, their supplier of weapons in Ijore, Ifedore local government area. In the same vein, it was reported that on March 5, 2022, 18-year-old Abdulsamad Suleiman alongside his accomplice, Mu'Azzam Lawani, 17, were apprehended by the Kano state Police command in connecting with the suspected murder of 21-year-old housewife, Rukeyser Jamilu. Nigeria is currently experiencing an upsurge in juvenile delinquency, exacerbated by the nation's increasing complexity. With young ones having more access to the internet, social networking sites, meeting people of different backgrounds, and having more opportunities to join different social clubs, they are exposed to behaviours that may go against accepted norms. According to Eke (2019), delinquent acts among adolescents can be classified into two categories: status offenses (e.g., indolence, haughtiness, running away from home) and criminal offenses (e.g., stealing, cultism, vandalism, murder, pick-pocketing, rape, harassment, drug abuse).

Adolescence is a critical stage where young individuals are subjected to numerous choices in their social environment. Exposure to different social realities, together with the nature of family or parental upbringing, can modify or transform juvenile behaviours (Busari, 2010). Simply put, the type of influence parents have on adolescents may determine the kind of person or attributes possessed by such individuals. In a study carried out in very vulnerable areas of New York, USA, Craig and Cashwell (2019) found that the most effective way to help adolescents with behavioural difficulties is to focus on or assess their parental background. They also identified three important factors that can increase the possibility of delinquent behaviours among young individuals: (a) Insufficient or careless supervision of young ones by parents or step-parents, (b) Excessive discipline, whether physical or verbal, by parents or caretakers, and (c) Lack of unity or cohesiveness among family members or relatives. According to Sheldon and Brown (2019), more than 65 percent of parents still use physical punishment while controlling their young ones; only 26.7 percent use verbal punishment. Although a high level of consistency and steadiness in discipline is needed to prevent or control delinquency among juveniles, such discipline must be viable and impactful. Parenting styles not only modify or influence behaviours of individuals when they are young, but they also influence their behaviours when they grow old and become parents – such reality may continue from one parent to another in the form of generational transmission.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Adolescents who experience a stable life, receive adequate parental supervision, and live in a supportive family environment with effective disciplinary measures for moral development are more likely to behave in acceptable ways compared to those raised in disruptive, unwelcoming, and traumatic homes, lacking proper care essential for social and moral development. In many cases, a child with only one parent is more likely to receive partial treatment and experience only half the guidance and supervision provided by both parents (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn, & Park, 2010; Conrad, Gross, Fogg & Ruchala 1992; Huang, Caughy, Genevro, Miller., 2005). This condition often leads the child in the wrong direction, engaging in actions like dropping out of school, running away from home, stealing, and other immoral habits. According to social learning theory, aggressive and hostile attitudes are learned, especially from parents. When parents display aggressive behaviour towards a situation, young ones tend to emulate this behaviour decisively to achieve their goals (Mugo, Musembi, & Kamau, 2016). While not all children born into conflicting families or raised by violating parents become criminals, exposure to violence and conflict can increase the likelihood of such children exhibiting anti-social behaviours. Family criminality, disharmony, marital infidelity, along with other social factors, may hinder adolescents from reaching their full potential. Positive parenting and a good parenting style are not only crucial during childhood but also during adolescence. When children receive optimal parental guidance, especially during adolescence, they may grow up to become responsible parents. Okpako (2004) suggests that parents should be held responsible for any deviant acts perpetrated by young ones, as their adopted parenting styles may not contribute to the proper development of their children in line with accepted social norms. The issue of juvenile delinquency, particularly in urban areas, has experienced a significant rise in recent years (Moffit, 2009).

A global survey on juvenile delinquency in cities conducted by UN-Habitat in 2009 gathered substantial data regarding the dynamics of Juvenile Delinquency. The survey revealed a 2.6% increase in juvenile delinquency in Europe compared to the previous year's 1.7% increase. In South East Asia, Latin America, and North America, the reported growth rates for juvenile crime were 0.7%, 3.9%, and 1.8%, respectively. In Africa, according to this survey, juvenile criminality has been on the rise, primarily due to parenting issues and parents unemployment. Between 2007 and 2009, juvenile crime escalated from 3.2% to 5.7%. Such increases have also been associated with the rate at which cities expand, levels of urbanization, and the social changes and complexities accompanying these processes, including urban poverty (UN, 2008). The escalation of crime rates related to urbanization is more prevalent in Africa. Researchers and sociologists continue to assess and investigate the links between parenting style, family background, and juvenile delinquent behaviours in Nigeria.

In the past, numerous studies have predominantly centred on economic factors, specifically parental unemployment and poverty, as significant contributors to the heightened risks of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this focus has led to a neglect of the equally crucial role that parenting styles play in determining juvenile delinquency in the country

(Dixon, 2017). This article seeks to rectify this gap by delving into the critical examination of parenting styles and their profound influence on adolescent behaviour, consequently impacting the occurrence of juvenile delinquency. Our approach involves a comprehensive exploration of juvenile delinquency, drawing on the categorization of juvenile delinquents as outlined in the 2001 UNICEF report. We extend our analysis to discuss the relationship between parenting styles and juvenile delinquency in the context of Nigeria. We shed light on the implications of single parenting and marital discord.

### **Conceptualizing Juvenile Delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency is a multifaceted and complex concept, with numerous causative factors contributing to its nature and scope. Defining the concept universally poses challenges, given the variations from one researcher to another and from one society to another. In simpler terms, juvenile delinquency refers to deviant behaviours carried out by teenagers who have not yet reached the legally approved adult age. Put succinctly, any deviant conduct exhibited by individuals under the age of 18 (as per the standards in many countries) falls under the classification of juvenile delinquency. According to Sambo (2008), juvenile delinquency encompasses offensive and prohibitive acts committed by young people, typically under the age of 21. While it might not be entirely logical to confine deviant acts to a specific age bracket, it is reasonable to conclude that delinquent behaviours are predominantly exhibited by young individuals within the age category recognized as legally underage by a given society. The Longman Dictionary defines juvenile delinquency as criminal or antisocial behaviour by children—juveniles who are young, not fully matured to be considered adults, and not yet subject to prosecution in the traditional court of law. Essentially, as Nigeria undergoes a considerable degree of industrial development and experiences social diversities, more opportunities become available for young adolescents, potentially leading them towards engaging in antisocial activities (Odebunmi, 2007). Additionally, it can be argued that the family is gradually losing its position as a major influencer of social conduct among juveniles.

### **Categorizing Juvenile Delinquents in Nigeria**

Essentially, a more effective approach to describing or explaining juvenile delinquency is through categorization. Juvenile delinquency, from the Nigerian perspective, is characterized by various crucial forms and traits. When discussing delinquent acts among young individuals, it is essential to recognize that these acts have their causes, categories, and driving forces. Some deviant acts among adolescents are very serious, such as killing, raping, and vandalizing, while others are more minor in nature, such as disobeying parental orders or refusing to come home on time. According to UNICEF Nigeria (2001), juvenile delinquency can be classified into different unique forms, and the table below is developed to illustrate these categories:

**Fig. 1: UNICEF Nigeria (2001), juvenile delinquency Classification**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Delinquent Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Traits</i>
1	<b>Unsocialized Delinquent (Psychopathic)</b>	Young ones in this category are aggressive, ruthless, violent and relatively remorseless. They are the most dangerous in this category because of their ability to cause greater damages to the society. They display high level of psychological enigmas. Lack of proper psychological development is the major cause of this delinquency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Inability to develop long-lasting emotional relationship with people.</li> <li>ii. Total lack of responsibility, guilt, or inability to feel regretful for doing bad things</li> <li>iii. Perpetual deviant behaviours, Lack of satisfaction and possibility of developing recidivism.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Socialized Delinquents</b>	Unlike un-socialized delinquents, they do not have history or record of psychological disorders. In fact, socialized delinquency among juveniles is the most common form of delinquency. Young ones in this category enjoy joining bad companies; they are out-going, incorporative, they are abusive and have high possibility of disobeying their parents or caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Socialized delinquents essentially experience frustrating and exasperating family background.</li> <li>ii. They enjoy relatively little support from their parents.</li> <li>iii. They feel more delighted joining gangs.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Over-Inhibited neurotics</b>	Delinquents in this category suffer from severe insecurity, anxiety, depression and deplorable state of mental configuration. Young ones suffering from over-inhibited neurotics are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviours in order to feel belonged and quench or reduce their anxiety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. They are worrying type and sensitive in nature.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2023

While there are many categories of juvenile delinquency, the role of parenting style and family structure in juvenile delinquency cannot be unrecognized. Whether a juvenile feels insecure, overprotected, or bullied, parents and caretakers are greatly answerable since they are literally the first and important natural janitors.

**Parenting Style and Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria**

Parenting is an imperative process of guiding young individuals toward adulthood, a necessary phase everyone must undergo to become desirable social beings capable of handling major life challenges. According to Utti (2015), parenting is like a vehicle that transports individuals to an acceptable and suitable destination in life. It involves caretaking, child-rearing, nurturing,

indoctrinating, and educating children to become the best versions of themselves, adhering to social rules necessary for survival. In the era of modernity and urbanization, parenting styles are undergoing an unprecedented paradigm shift as parents seek financial opportunities in a complex world, often leaving their young ones in the care of various recruited caretakers. The challenges faced by parents who relocate from their native communities in search of better prospects contribute to difficulties in fulfilling their parenting roles (Ngoubene-Atioky, Williamson-Taylor, Inman, 2017). Boroffice (2004) contends that depriving and ineffective parenting styles can lead to delinquent acts among juveniles. Harsh, oppressive, and unsupportive parenting may drive adolescents to engage in bizarre and unexpected behaviours, such as refusing to attend classes, running away from home, bullying others, and committing serious crimes like rape, theft, housebreaking, and cultism. It's noteworthy that a significant number of apprehended juveniles for deviant acts attribute their behaviour to harsh treatment by their parents and the lack of proper developmental training due to disorganized family structures and unfavorable parenting styles (Odebumi, 2017). Responsiveness, attention, regard, and affection significantly contribute to the mental and social development of an adolescent. As noted by Otudah (2006), juveniles who display high levels of maturity, friendliness, obedience, and cheerfulness are likely to be raised under relatively better parental styles. Parenting styles can be categorized into four: authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, permissive or lenient parenting style, and negligent or inattentive parenting style.

### **Authoritative Parental Style**

Parents who adopt the authoritative parenting style take a comprehensive and supportive approach to raising their children. They not only encourage their children but also establish clear standards and inspire an appreciation for social values, emphasizing those that reinforce broader societal expectations (Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, van der Laan, Smeenk & Gerris, 2019). Authoritative parents act as guides for their adolescents, helping them control their actions while pursuing personal goals. Unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents engage in positive debates and relevant conversations, fostering healthy competition with their children to encourage them to stand out and be admired. For example, authoritative parents may encourage their teenagers to participate in extracurricular activities of their choice, allowing them to explore their interests and develop a sense of autonomy. They might provide guidance on academic goals, discussing the importance of education and future aspirations while respecting their child's individual preferences. Despite challenging their children, parents in the authoritative category typically assume the majority of parenting responsibilities. This includes creating a nurturing and supportive environment that allows adolescents to express their opinions and concerns freely. This supportive atmosphere contributes to the development of open communication and trust between parents and teenagers (Hoeve, 2019).

Numerous research studies consistently highlight the positive outcomes associated with authoritative parenting. Adolescents raised by authoritative parents often exhibit high levels of confidence, respect, generosity, warmth, and competence (Sadeghi, Ayoubi, & Brand, 2022).

They tend to adeptly address social problems and effectively cope with pressures from peer groups and daily social interactions. This style of parenting nurtures a strong sense of self-esteem and a healthy understanding of social norms. For instance, Sadeghi et al. (2022) observed that while authoritative parents oversee their adolescents' activities, they do not restrict their capacities or decision-making abilities. This approach allows teenagers to develop essential decision-making skills, promoting a sense of responsibility and independence. Authoritative parents strike a balance between setting boundaries and allowing room for personal growth, which contributes to the well-rounded development of their children. Given the logical and modest approach of authoritative parents, they may also take the opportunity to educate their children about the complexities associated with deviant behaviours (Mussen, 2013). Instead of enforcing strict rules without explanation, authoritative parents engage in meaningful discussions about the consequences of various actions, fostering a deeper understanding of right and wrong. In essence, the authoritative parenting style fosters high levels of self-control, self-reliance, and confidence among adolescents. This enables them to navigate problem-solving scenarios effectively and cope with the challenges of the adolescent period. The authoritative parenting style is generally recognized as a superior approach that enhances the developmental processes of young individuals, contributing to their overall well-being and success in various aspects of life.

### **Authoritarian parenting style**

The authoritarian parenting style is characterized by a high degree of discipline, strictness, and severity in parental behaviour. These parents expect their adolescents to adhere rigidly to established standards or values, leaving little room for dissent or negotiation. Authoritarian parents believe in rigorous developmental training and frequently employ various forms of punishment to ensure compliance with their expectations. For example, authoritarian parents may set strict curfews, demand unwavering obedience, and strictly control their teenagers' choices, such as dictating their academic and extracurricular activities. The emphasis is often on adhering to rules without questioning, and failure to comply may result in punishments such as grounding, loss of privileges, or even corporal punishment in extreme cases. Adolescents raised by authoritarian parents experience limited opportunities to explore their environments or make decisions independently. For instance, they may have little say in choosing their friends, deciding on their hobbies, or participating in social activities. This lack of autonomy can impact the development of crucial decision-making and problem-solving skills. Research, such as that conducted by Ang and Goh (2016), suggests that adolescents brought up by authoritarian parents commonly face challenges associated with social pressures, leading to lower self-esteem and the development of unnecessary fears. The strict and controlling environment may hinder their ability to adapt to diverse social situations, and they may struggle to assert themselves in various social settings. Furthermore, authoritarian parents often fail to provide explanations for their actions and decisions, creating an atmosphere where communication is one-sided.

For instance, an authoritarian parent may simply state, "Because I said so," without offering rationale or engaging in open discussions. This lack of communication can lead to a

restricted interaction between parents and adolescents. Adolescents in this category may find solace in communicating with individuals outside their immediate family, such as peers or mentors, as these interactions may provide a sense of understanding and acceptance lacking in their home environment. However, this also makes them more susceptible to external influences, as they seek alternative sources of guidance and support. The emotional toll on adolescents raised by authoritarian parents can manifest as aggression or violence (Ang & Goh, 2016). Due to their upbringing, these young individuals may struggle with expressing themselves assertively, resorting to aggressive behaviour as a means of coping with the restrictive environment they were raised in. It is essential to recognize the potential long-term impact of authoritarian parenting on the psychological well-being of adolescents and consider alternative approaches that balance discipline with open communication and autonomy.

### **Permissive Parents**

Permissive parents are characterized by their compassionate, lenient, and forgiving approach to parenting. Unlike authoritarian parents, they are not stringent or strict with their teens. Instead, they prioritize expressing love and affection over resorting to punishment or retribution as a means of discipline. Permissive parents often adopt a hands-off approach, allowing their children a considerable degree of freedom to make decisions, pursue personal goals independently, and explore various opportunities without constant interference. For instance, they might let their teenagers choose their extracurricular activities, decide on their own schedules, or even determine their bedtime. In the realm of decision-making, permissive parents are not typically active participants in shaping or guiding their children's actions, providing them with a significant level of autonomy (Kopko, 2017). This can lead to situations where the adolescents are left to navigate challenges and choices on their own, which may contribute to the development of problem-solving skills. However, it's crucial to note that the permissive parenting style can also have potential downsides, such as a lack of structure or guidance that may be essential for a child's development. Moreover, permissive parents allow their children to explore and identify which social standards or norms align best with their unique personalities. This flexibility may encourage individuality and self-expression. However, it can also result in teenagers who may struggle with understanding boundaries or adapting to societal expectations. In relationships, juveniles raised by permissive parents may develop a dependency on older individuals, seeking empathy and support from their parents even when it might not be necessary. While this close bond can foster a sense of emotional security, it may inadvertently hinder the development of resilience and independence in the face of challenges (Kopko, 2017).

### **Inattentive, Careless, or Negligent Parenting Style**

This category of parents rarely fulfils their crucial parenting responsibilities and lacks a sense of entitlement, involvement, and attachment. Their children's performances, actions, and choices receive little or no attention from them. Negligent parents may contribute minimally to the upbringing of their children, neglecting their needs and failing to establish norms and rules.



Children raised by such parents often lack awareness of their surroundings, show little regard for social standards, and neglect their responsibilities at the expense of others. Additionally, they are more likely to act according to their own preferences, even if such actions may adversely affect others. Moreover, inattentive parents exert minimal effort in directing, influencing, or controlling the behaviours of their juveniles, predisposing them to various antisocial and immoral actions. Many empirical studies have indicated that most convicted adolescents criticize their parents for neglecting to monitor their behaviours in the early stages due to negligence and abandonment.

### **Single Parenting and Juvenile Delinquency**

In discussing some of the most significant factors contributing to delinquent behaviours among adolescents in Nigeria, it is crucial to consider the impact of single parenting as a contributing causal factor. A significant number of children are being raised by single parents, and this reality has lasting negative outcomes. Two empirical explanations shed light on how single parents may contribute to the development of delinquent juveniles. According to Matsueda and Heimer (1987), most single parents struggle with ineffective monitoring or control of their children due to the challenges of meeting all the necessary demands crucial for raising successful children, especially in terms of moral development. The second explanation, proposed by Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf and Gross (1985), suggests that single parents often grant their children greater independence and autonomy, hindering effective control over their behaviour. Along the same lines, children in single-parent households are more likely to be exposed to negative influences due to less supervision, limited child/parent interactions, increased independence, and vulnerability to peer pressures. It should be noted that the causal relationship between single parenting and delinquent acts among adolescents is more complex than these two widely held opinions.

An empirical study conducted by Webster-Stratton (1989) on single mother and child interaction revealed that many single parents frequently use critical and even abusive statements while correcting their children. These mothers often remind their children about their absent fathers and the failed relationship. Children in this category have been shown to display deviant and non-compliant attitudes. Runaway teenagers are more likely to come from single-parent families, especially those with step-parents. Many apprehended teenagers have admitted that they were treated poorly and did not receive proper attention from their step-parents. In addition to running away, heavy drug and alcohol abuse, stealing, harassing vulnerable people, trouble-making, cultism, and school absenteeism have been linked to problems associated with single parenting. Studies have also shown that single parents are more likely to reside in areas with little or no economic mobility due to financial constraints, exposing their children to a lower quality of life. According to Sadeghi et al (2022), single parenting can contribute to delinquency among young ones in the following ways:

- ii. Unfavourable financial challenges and economic situations essential to single parents can place adolescents at very great risks.

- iii. Children raised or socialized by two parents may do better and outperform those socialized by single parents.
- iv. Bad neighborhoods and negative influences from peers where single parents live may indeed contribute to delinquent acts among adolescents.
- v. Indeterminate treatments by formal organizations like courts, police and school concerning the matters related to children from single-parenting families may also expose them to delinquent acts.

However, other studies have shown that the constituting events leading to single-parenthood determines the likelihood of teenagers to engage in criminal activities (Kroese et al., 2021). It is important to understand that although these experiences all result in single-parent families, they may have different consequences and tendencies for delinquent behaviour. This coincides with the tenets of family crisis model. The family crisis model simply proposes that emotional resentment, psychological distress and social tension, which are leading factors of juvenile delinquency, are often related to parental separation than parental death (Mack et al., 2007). To put it differently, children who experience parental separation may feel resentment towards their parents and this fuels anti-social behaviour of the children which results in feeling of detachment from family and increases the engagement in delinquent behaviours. Contrarily, children raised in a single-parent as a result of the death of one biological parent may experience traumatic events that lead to depression and anxiety, but this does not necessarily lead them to engage in criminal behaviour. Moreover, children born into single parent households are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour because they did not experience any form of family crisis or detachment.

### **Single Parenting and Behavioural Outcome**

Single parenting introduces significant challenges into the lives of children, particularly when one parent is absent. The absence of a parent creates a void in the child's life, depriving them of the support and guidance that would typically come from both parents. While it is evident that many children are currently raised in single-parent families, the traditional understanding posits that the upbringing of a child is a shared responsibility between both parents, and they play a crucial role in the child's overall development (Salami & Alawode, 2000). One of the primary concerns associated with single parenting is the potential lack of adequate attention that children might receive, as the single parent often contends with numerous responsibilities, struggling for survival. This situation creates a challenging and demanding environment for both the parent and the child (Tenibiaje & Joseph, 2011). The impact of such an upbringing can manifest in personality disorders and maladjustment if not well-managed during the child's formative years.

While these assertions highlight the potential negative outcomes of single parenting, it is crucial to acknowledge the presence of counterarguments and diverse perspectives. Some argue that children who experience family shifts, including transitions to single-parent households, may exhibit exacerbated behavioural outcomes compared to those in stable dual-parenting families

(Cherlin, 2005). However, it is essential to consider the nuances of individual cases and recognize that not all children raised in single-parent households experience negative outcomes. Another facet of the discussion focuses on the implications of leaving children under the care or supervision of a stepparent when the single parent is not at home. This scenario exposes children to emotional disturbance, feelings of insecurity, and fear, as stepparents may not demonstrate the same level of love and affection as biological parents (Adelani & Ogunbiowo, 2008). However, it is important to recognize that not all stepparent-child relationships exhibit such challenges, and positive relationships can also form within blended families. Moreover, studies such as the national study involving 6710 teenagers by Amato et al. (1994) emphasize the potential negative outcomes for teenagers living in single-parent households. However, it is essential to consider the socioeconomic context and other variables that may influence these outcomes.

In line with the study of Lauer and Lauer (2002), which suggests a correlation between single parenting and rule-breaking behaviour in children, it is crucial to delve deeper into the underlying factors contributing to such behaviour. Understanding the complexities of these dynamics allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the impact of single parenting on children's behaviour. While there is evidence pointing to potential challenges associated with single parenting, a comprehensive analysis requires an acknowledgment of diverse perspectives, consideration of individual cases, and an exploration of the underlying factors that contribute to the observed outcomes. This approach enriches the overall narrative, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between family structure and children's well-being.

### **Single Parenting and Educational Outcomes**

Studies on educational outcomes of children reveal that children's academic performance gets better when both biological parents are actively present in their lives (Nyarko 2007; Nyarko & Vorgelegt, 2007). As parents get involved in the educational activities of their children, there is a high chance that there would be a positive influence on their academic performance. However, this does not necessarily mean that a child will automatically succeed in his academic performance once there's parental involvement in academic activities, the child's ability and the school environment also play a vital role in this regard (Nyarko, 2007). On the other hand, growing up in a single-parent household critically impacts the academic performance of the children. These impacts usually stem from the lack of financial resources by a single parent to fund their children's education. Additionally, these children lose concentration in their academic pursuits because of a persistent lack of basic needs like food, personal care items, and educational materials (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005). A study conducted Donkor (2010) shows that parents acknowledge that the poor academic performance of their children stemmed from the lack of parental involvement and supervision in children's educational activities, particularly homework. Salami and Alawode (2000) posited that the two parents have a significant role to play in a child's education. The father is to provide funds for essential tools to aid academic achievement while the mother is to augment the father's effort in this respect. When the father is not present, the mother does not have the full capacity to provide all the basic needs together with total

involvement and supervision of the academic activities and performance of the child. This is also applicable when the mother is absent and the father is not well positioned financially.

Empirical evidence suggests that single parents can indeed raise well-behaved children in various scenarios. While challenges may exist, the outcomes for children in single-parent households are diverse, and numerous factors contribute to their behavioural development. Research by Kroese, Bernasco, Liefbroer & Rouwendal (2021) indicates that the quality of the parent-child relationship and the level of parental involvement play crucial roles in shaping children's behaviour. Single parents who actively engage with their children, provide emotional support, and maintain a positive relationship can contribute to well-behaved children. Studies, such as those by Huang et al. (2005), emphasize the influence of socioeconomic factors on parenting and child behaviour. Single parents with higher levels of education and stable financial situations tend to provide better environments for their children, contributing to positive behavioural outcomes. Further, the presence of a supportive community and social networks can mitigate the challenges faced by single parents. According to Hoeve et al. (2019), community support positively influences parenting practices and helps in fostering well-adjusted children. Hence, recognizing the unique needs of each child, single parents who tailor their parenting approaches to the individual characteristics of their children foster positive outcomes. This approach is supported by studies such as those by Mack, Leiber, Featherstone and Monserud (2007).

### **Marital Discord and Juvenile delinquency**

Marital discord or disharmony can be extremely damaging, particularly when it affects the social wellbeing of young individuals. Studies indicate that most juveniles raised in homes where there is no unity and collective agreement between both parents may exhibit a high level of disobedience, aggressiveness, and fierceness. According to Grych and Fincham (1990), marital disputes are likely to have the highest contribution to delinquency among children. It is crucial not to overlook the importance of raising children in peaceful homes with peaceful parents. When parents exhibit peaceful behaviour, their children may imitate them and extract their positive qualities. Unfortunately, when a child witnesses their parent, especially their mother, being battered or assaulted by their father, such a child may develop difficult temperaments and exhibit aggressive behaviour. Social learning theory suggests that aggressive behaviour is mostly learned; as parents display violent behaviour, their children can unconsciously learn to copy it as an acceptable and basic means of achieving their goals. Empirical studies have shown that young adolescents raised and nurtured in an affectionate, supportive, and accepting environment or neighborhood tend to become more conscious and make sense of their surroundings, especially when it comes to goal-setting and pursuing economically and socially fulfilling lives. In sharp contrast, children raised by unloving, aggressive, harsh, and relatively authoritarian or unstable parents often grow up to become self-absorbed or self-regarded adolescents (Chollar, 1987). From the foregoing, the following points can be noted:

- i. Salubrious home environment, where young ones share cohesion, involvement, affection and high level of appreciation with their parents can reduce the incidence of delinquent behaviours.
- ii. It can easily be established that rejection and denunciation from parents can sharply increase the possibility of delinquency among juveniles.
- iii. Child to parent interaction as well as parent to child communication are very paramount especially when it comes to the matter of child social, moral and psychological development. Also, constant interaction can reduce the incidence of delinquency among adolescents in Nigeria.

### **The Social Learning Theory**

In 1977, Albert Bandura introduced the social learning theory to illustrate the phenomenon of observational learning. He posits that most social behaviours are learned through imitation, which may attract either punishment or reward. According to this theory, individuals are observational beings and products of their social environment. In essence, both their personality and behaviour are significantly conditioned by others. Bandura employs the term "model" to explain influences from the social environment, including parents, caregivers, peers, and relatives. Children, in addition to being taught or nurtured, are excellent observers and likely to learn behaviours from their significant others, especially parents, through the process called "imitation." As children grow up, they tend to view certain people as models worthy of imitation, influencing and shaping their personalities. However, it's important to note that children may not only emulate the positive aspects of their models; they can also reproduce negative behaviours, which may have long-lasting effects. Studies have shown that antisocial behaviours among adolescents, such as smoking, stealing, bullying, and pilfering, are often not explicitly taught by their parents but are learned through imitation. It should be emphasized that imbalances in reward and punishment after successfully reproducing observed habits can lead to developmental problems. In situations where bad behaviours are not punished or good behaviours are not rewarded, adolescents may develop nonchalant attitudes, neglect responsibilities, override others, or associate with negative peer groups. Lack of reward may lead to depression, discouragement, dissuasion, and sadness among adolescents. Therefore, models, especially parents, must be cautious of their behaviours and appropriately reward or punish their young ones for imitating specific behaviours.

Applying social learning behaviour to juvenile delinquency implies that most delinquent acts among adolescents are learned behaviours. This includes parents engaging in frequent disputes or showing little regard for their children's needs. Many apprehended adolescents have accused their parents of exposing them to harsh conditions that led them to engage in juvenile acts. For instance, a father who hits his wife in the presence of his children may contribute to the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. Parents or caretakers who smoke or abuse alcohol can similarly instil negative attitudes in young ones. Therefore, being conscious of what adolescents are learning through their models is crucial to preventing the incidence of juvenile delinquency.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study faces several limitations that may impact the generalizability and robustness of its findings. Firstly, the research is predominantly focused on the Nigerian context, and the cultural specificities may limit its applicability to other regions with different societal norms and parenting practices. The theoretical assumptions, particularly the reliance on the Social Learning Theory, may not universally resonate, as individual variations can deviate from assumed patterns. Moreover, the study heavily emphasizes parental influence on juvenile delinquency, potentially overlooking external factors like peer influence, school environment, and broader societal dynamics that could also contribute to delinquent behaviours. The lack of empirical data and specific case studies weakens the evidential support for the claims made in the article. Additionally, the article does not specify the time frame within which the data were collected or the studies referenced. Social dynamics, family structures, and parenting styles can evolve over time, and outdated information may not accurately reflect the current situation. Future research endeavors could address these limitations and further contribute to the understanding of the relationship between family structure, parenting styles, and juvenile delinquency. Cross-cultural analyses involving different countries and cultures would provide valuable insights into variations in these dynamics. A comparative approach would help discern cultural influences on family dynamics and their impact on juvenile behaviour.

Longitudinal studies conducted over an extended period could offer insights into the long-term effects of parenting styles and family structures on juvenile behaviour. Tracking individuals from childhood to adulthood would provide a more nuanced understanding of developmental trajectories. A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, could enhance the depth and reliability of the findings. Interviews, surveys, and observations could complement statistical data, offering a more holistic view of the factors influencing juvenile delinquency. Moreover, future research could focus on identifying effective intervention strategies for mitigating the impact of negative family structures and parenting styles on juvenile delinquency. This could inform policies and programs aimed at promoting positive parenting practices. Lastly, incorporating the perspectives of adolescents, teachers, and community members in research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between family dynamics and juvenile behaviour. Including multiple perspectives would enrich the research and offer a more holistic view of the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency.

### **CONCLUSION**

Parenting style and family structure are potent factors contributing to juvenile delinquency. It is evident from the discussion that deficiencies or shortcomings in parenting style can trigger delinquent acts among young individuals in Nigeria. From theft, cultism, stealing, annoyances, bullying to drug abuse and prostitution, parents indeed bear a significant responsibility. This study reveals that parents adopting an authoritarian parenting style are more likely to be harsh and cruel when controlling or directing their adolescents. This situation can lead to depression, low self-

esteem, sadness, or despair among young ones. Depressed adolescents may seek solace by associating with outsiders, thereby increasing the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, parents who are permissive in nature may find it challenging to adequately and effectively monitor or control their adolescents, exposing them to activities that may elevate the risk of juvenile delinquency. Additionally, this study indicates that family structure, especially single parenting and marital discord, can have a lasting impact on juveniles. Children raised by single parents are more likely to face challenges that may expose them to delinquent acts compared to those brought up by both parents. Marital discord or dissonance can also elevate the chances of delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is no doubt that the family plays a crucial role in socializing children and imparting the norms of any given society. Efforts should be made to educate parents on proper ways to raise their children, emphasizing the potential consequences of juvenile delinquency among adolescents. Action should be taken, especially in designing programs or initiatives to assist single parents in monitoring and supervising their children, as well as promoting the importance of parents spending quality time with their children. Given that the family is a fundamental component primarily responsible for the initial socialization of children, governments at all levels and relevant bodies should take responsibility for ensuring that parents adhere to effective parenting styles to reduce the incidence of juvenile delinquency. Correctional homes should ensure that young individuals thoroughly learn social norms before being released. Finally, traditional ways of fostering collective responsibility and maintaining strong family bonds should also be encouraged.

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