

**THEORETICAL DISCOURSE ON PREDISPOSING FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH
CRIME AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIORS IN NIGERIAN CITIES**

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Abstract

The prevalence of youth crime and delinquent behavior in the world today is a cause for serious concern for all and sundry; and has assumed a worrisome dimension in Nigeria. This paper examines the predisposing factors for youth crime and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian cities, using relevant theoretical explanations. It identifies poverty, unemployment, corruption, drugs and substance abuse, broken home, peer group and gang influence, and insufficient education among the youths as predisposing factors influencing crime and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian cities. The paper argues that poverty, unemployment and corruption are on the high side in Nigerian cities and are among the major factors influencing youth crime in the Nigerian cities. Available data show that youth unemployment is very rampant in Nigeria and this has contributed immensely to their involvement in criminal activities. The phenomenon of poverty coupled with corrupt practices has produced a fertile ground for youth crime and delinquent behaviors. The paper recommends that governments should make policies aimed at creating job opportunities to effectively tackle unemployment in order to reduce criminal and delinquent behavior in the Nigerian cities.

Keywords: Youths' crime, delinquent behavior, theoretical discourse, predisposing factors, Nigerian cities.

Introduction

Youth crime and delinquent behavior are global social problems. However, their intensity varies from one society to another. Criminal behaviors, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, cyber-based crime, electoral violence and ethno-religious violence are some of the contemporary social problems bedeviling Nigeria today. They pose a serious threat to the security of the lives and properties of the citizenry. As Tanimu (2012) observes, armed robbery, drug offences, kidnapping, murder and political crime are on the increase in Nigeria.

It is argued that unemployment, poverty, corruption and the like influence youth crime and delinquent behavior in Nigerian cities. Akwara, et al. (2013) posited that lack of employment opportunities has contributed to youth involvement in violence and other criminal behaviors confronting Nigeria in recent times. Miller, et al. (2008:95-96) argued that "poverty is not in itself a cause of crime, but it promotes disorganization and prevents the community from being able to effectively deal with local problems." Poverty could occur due to lack of employment opportunities for people who are willing and able to work. However, Abdulkadir (2008) views poverty from the inadequate access to basic goods and services, such as employment, food, shelter and education, among others. People who are bedeviled by poverty conditions are more likely to be drop out from school or be unemployed. Bartol and Bartol (2005) asserted that poverty is a situation in which the basic resources necessary to maintain an average standard of living within a specific geographical area are not available.

Corruption like poverty and unemployment is pervasive in Nigeria. It appears to be a way of life in Nigerian cities, as people who do not conform to corrupt practices are often seen as deviants (Lawan, 2009). Okereke (2009) asserts that corruption often occurs through offering and receiving bribe, rewards and moral bankruptcy to satisfy selfish or sectional interests as against the general interests of all the citizenry.

Unemployment, poverty and corruption are social problems that pose serious security threats, including violence and other criminal and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian cities. Thus, many of the security challenges facing Nigeria today are the results of corrupt governance and the mismanagement of state resources, which have impoverished majority of citizens lacking employment opportunities to meet their basic necessities of life (Adebayo, 2013; Akwara, 2013; Omboto, et al, 2013; Lawan, 2009 and Ibrahim, 2008, etc.).

Omboto, et al (2013) argued that effective preventive measures and the control of social problems could be easily and effectively achieved when the root causes of such problems are established. It is in this light, therefore, that this study used relevant theoretical explanations to x-ray the predisposing factors for criminal and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian cities, so as to make recommendations accordingly that, if adopted by governments and/or policy makers as well as members of the public, would help tremendously to reduce the spate of crime and general insecurity in Nigerian cities. This paper is structured into four sections. Section one deals with the conceptual clarification of crime and criminal behavior. Section two discusses the predisposing factors influencing criminal behaviors in Nigerian cities, while section three provides theoretical explanations on the subject matter and section four contains the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptualizing Criminal and Delinquent Behaviors

The definitions of criminal and delinquent behaviors vary from one society or culture and religion to another, time to time and person to person. For instance, adultery is illegal in Muslim society and those married found guilty of such a crime by the appropriate Sharia Court are punishable by death, but this is not so in another society or culture. It is a crime to kill a human being, but this is different in periods of war. Also, a person who is mentally ill may commit an unlawful act, but escape punishment because he/she might be judged as not fully in control of his/her behavior. Thus, crime is relative.

Cressey (1951) posits that the definition of the concept “crime” must be restricted to behavior, which is so defined by the criminal law of a state. Therefore, Tappan (1960:10) defines crime as “an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law (statutory and case law), committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by the state as a felony or misdemeanor.” In the same vein, Reid (1996:4) sees crime as “an intentional act or omission of an act that violates criminal statutory or case law and for which the state provides punishment.” Criminal behavior, therefore, is an intentional behavior that violates a criminal code of a state or country (Bartol and Bartol, 2005). Based on the above definitions, criminal behavior does not just occur accidentally or without justification, as it occurs based on the intention of the person that commits the act. Crime encompasses so many types of behavior that include the typologies below.

Table 1: Typologies of Crime

Type of Crime	Examples of Crime
Violent Personal Crimes	Murder, forcible rape, arson, etc.
Occasional Crimes	Shop-lifting, purse-snatching
Occupational Crimes	White-collar crimes like kickback, inflation of contracts, tax evasion, mismanagement, embezzlement, etc.
Public Order Crimes	Prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.
Political Crimes	Rebellion, guerrilla warfare, sabotage, espionage, sedition, treason, etc.
Conventional Crimes	Robbery, burglary, theft
Organized Crimes	Riots, drug pushing, human trafficking, oil bunkering, etc.
Professional Crimes	Forgery, fraud, obtaining by false pretense (419), pick-pocketing

Source: Clinard, Quinney and Wideman (cited in Radda and Shatsari, 2011:9).

The Predisposing Factors for Criminal and Delinquent Behaviors in Nigerian Cities

There are many predisposing factors for criminal and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian Cities. The major ones include the following:

In Sufficient Education

The fallen standard of education in Nigeria coupled with overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, lack of textbooks, and insufficient funding has push many schoolchildren on a path to crime. Children who have poor academic performance, poor attendance, face expulsion or drop out of school, their probability of committing crime is magnified. Leaving school early reduces the chance that juveniles will develop the social skills that are gained in school, such as learning to meet deadlines, following instructions, and being able to deal constructively with their peers. A child without a proper education will eventually learn that he or she is at a disadvantage in the workforce. This feeling of hopelessness create an environment ripe for youth crime and delinquent behaviors.

Poverty

The concept of poverty have assumed not only local but global trend resulting in many countries administering numerous policies in a bid to curb this menace. Haralambos and Holborn (2000) assert that poverty is a situation where a person is unable to acquire the minimum necessities that make for well-being. Poverty is marked by the inability to get good livelihood, have good house to live in, support oneself without depending on others, inability to acquire good healthcare, good educational training etc. Akwara, et al (2013) and Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012) posited that the definition of poverty varies among nations in magnitude and in scope. However, there are universally accepted indicators of what constitutes poverty. These indicators categorize poverty into absolute poverty and relative poverty. According to Akwara, et al (2013) absolute poverty means the inability of a person or group to provide the material needs for physical subsistence and the protection of human dignity. These materials include food, clothing, shelter, water, health-care services and basic education, etc. Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012) defined relative poverty by reference to the living standards of the majority in a given society that separates the poor from the affluent people.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2010), poverty may be measured with some intrinsic parameters. They include inadequate access to basic necessities of life, environmental issues, poor infrastructure, illiteracy and ignorance, poor health, insecurity, social and political exclusion.

Table 2: Relative Poverty Headcount, 1980-2010

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	Estimated Population (Million)	Population in Poverty (Million)
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69.0	163	112.5

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS, 2010), cited in Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012).

According to the Nigeria poverty profile of 2012 report, Nigeria’s relative poverty measurement in 2004 stood at 54.4 percent (Table 2), but it increased to 69 percent (or 112,518,507 Nigerians) in 2010.

Table 3: Incidence of Poverty by Zone (%)

Zone	Absolute Poverty	Relative Poverty	Dollar Per Day
North-Central	59.5	67.5	59.7
North-East	69.0	76.3	69.1
North-West	70.0	77.7	70.4
South-East	58.7	67.0	59.2
South-South	55.9	63.8	56.1
South-West	49.8	59.1	50.1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2010), cited in Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012).

As Table 3 shows, the North-West geo-political zone recorded the highest poverty rate in the country with 77.7 percent in 2010, while the South-West geo-political zone recorded the lowest at 49.8 percent (Table 3).

Poverty, therefore, could predispose some people to engage in violence and other criminal behaviors, since not all the poor people tend to engage in the act. Akwara, et al (2013) posited that poverty to some significant extent influences for example, the Jos riot of 2008 and the post-election violence of 2011 in many cities in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Unemployment

Unemployment has become a major problem tormenting the lives of Nigerian youths and this poses a serious risk to the Nigerian society. Unemployment is linked with boredom, poor self-esteem and poor self-confidence which in turn lead to anti-social behavior. It threatens the overall integration of the youth into society that may lead to criminal offence. Unemployment is closely related to poverty. Dambazau (2007:92) defines unemployment as “enforced idleness of wage earners that are able and willing to work but cannot find jobs.” It is the inability of able-bodied men and women who are willing and capable to work to find work. This type of unemployment is known as structural unemployment. Youth unemployment leads to anti-social behaviors such as: emergence of street children, involvement of youth in crimes and in armed conflict. Rotimi (2011) noted that the increased rate of sectarian violence, crimes and terrorism are connected with unemployment. Where people, especially the youths, cannot get clean jobs, they engage in violent and other criminal behaviors that are detrimental to the society. According to Awake (20112), cited in Akwara, et al (2013), about 90% (percent) of all violence-related deaths have occurred in the less developed nations like Nigeria. Their cities are often high-crime areas as a result of unemployment, which encourages the development of criminal behaviors, such as prostitution and human trafficking with transnational security effects. Unemployment is frustrating and may lead to anger, low self-esteem, negative life satisfaction and violent or criminal behavior.

Table 4 shows the rates of unemployment by states in Nigeria during the year 2002 – 2011. The figures in Table 4 reveals that unemployment has been on the increase in most of the states in Nigeria. The Table indicates that Zamfara state recorded the highest rate of unemployment from the year 2002 to 2006.

Table 4: Unemployment Rates by States in Nigeria 2002-2011

State	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Abia	14.8	11.4	9.7	7.9	13.5	10.9	14.5	14.5	15.5	11.2
Adamawa	12.9	11.9	16.7	21.4	17.9	11.9	29.4	29.4	31.4	18.4
A/Ibom	12.3	14.4	14.4	14.4	15.3	13.5	34.1	34.1	36.1	18.4
Anambra	6.6	9.1	9.5	9.8	10.8	11.1	16.8	16.8	17.8	12.2
Bauchi	10.4	20.5	25.1	29.7	23.9	7.3	37.2	37.2	39.2	41.4
Bayelsa	3.5	7.1	14.0	20.9	16.0	6.9	38.4	38.4	40.4	23.9
Benue	8.2	4.8	11.7	18.6	10.8	67.4	8.5	8.5	9.5	14.2
Borno	6.4	0.8	3.6	6.3	5.8	7.8	27.7	27.7	29.7	29.1
C/River	7.9	12.0	11.5	11.1	16.9	11.8	14.3	14.3	15.3	18.2
Delta	14.9	17.1	10.8	4.5	13.8	18.9	18.4	18.4	20.8	27.2
Ebonyi	2.8	16.7	11.8	7.0	10.9	11.5	12.0	12.0	13.0	23.1
Edo	4.8	3.1	6.5	9.9	8.6	5.1	12.2	12.2	13.2	35.2
Ekiti	17.5	8.2	7.9	7.5	8.7	15.6	20.6	20.6	22.6	12.1
Enugu	15.2	16.5	21.6	27.4	20.0	11.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	25.2
Gombe	13.4	7.6	15.2	22.8	15.6	10.5	32.1	32.1	34.1	38.7
Imo	19.9	22.1	19.3	16.5	21.5	7.6	20.8	20.8	22.8	35.9
Jigawa	6.1	20.5	19.8	19.1	21.6	17.4	26.5	26.5	28.5	35.9
Kaduna	8.4	19.6	15.9	12.1	14.1	5.9	11.6	11.6	12.6	30.3
Kano	12.8	25.9	22.5	19.1	19.4	12.7	27.6	27.6	29.6	21.3
Katsina	10.4	20.3	22.1	23.8	19.3	5.8	37.3	37.3	39.3	28.1
Kebbi	12.3	19.8	19.9	19.9	15.2	11.8	12.0	12.0	13.0	25.3
Kogi	19.9	14.9	11.8	8.7	12.5	16.5	19.0	19.0	21.0	14.4
Kwara	8.8	5.4	4.2	2.9	7.5	16.4	11.0	11.0	12.0	7.1
Lagos	8.0	25.6	16.1	6.5	15.5	10.2	19.5	19.5	20.5	8.3
Nasarawa	1.6	5.1	6.9	8.7	8.1	7.6	10.1	10.1	11.1	36.5
Niger	6.3	6.7	3.5	0.2	3.6	17.0	11.9	11.9	12.9	39.4
Ogun	9.2	1.3	1.9	2.5	2.3	3.9	8.5	8.5	9.5	22.9
Ondo	16.8	7.3	6.8	6.2	6.7	5.8	14.9	14.9	16.9	12.5
Osun	1.0	0.4	1.2	1.9	2.7	6.3	12.6	12.6	13.6	3.0
Oyo	7.0	0.8	3.1	5.3	4.3	6.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	8.9
Plateau	11.8	0.4	1.6	2.8	2.9	8.7	7.1	7.1	8.1	25.3
Rivers	6.6	15.3	11.2	7.0	25.0	4.7	27.9	27.9	29.9	25.5

Sokoto	4.1	4.9	4.5	4.1	6.4	12.1	22.4	22.4	24.4	17.9
Taraba	16.8	23.8	13.6	3.4	14.0	5.9	26.8	26.8	28.8	12.7
Yobe	15.0	12.1	10.7	8.0	13.6	19.9	27.3	27.3	29.3	35.6
Zamfara	46.4	71.5	61.3	51.1	50.8	12.8	13.3	13.3	14.3	42.6
FCT	14.4	5.3	5.9	6.5	16.4	16.4	21.5	21.5	23.5	21.1
Nigeria	12.6	14.8	13.4	11.9	13.7	14.6	19.7	19.7	21.5	23.9

Source: National Bureau of Statistic (NBS, 2010); Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Annual Report and Statement of Account (various issues), cited in Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa, 2012.

Corruption

Spencer et al. describe corruption as “many kinds of “irregular” influence, the objective of which is to allow the participants to make profits they are not entitled to, the method being the breaking of internal or external rules” (Spencer et al, 2006). The term “corruption” involves diverse processes which have different meanings within different societies and the concept of corruption does not mean the same thing across jurisdictions. Heidenheimer (1989), therefore, categorizes corruption according to social acceptance, positing ‘shades’ of corruption from ‘white’ (socially acceptable) to ‘grey’ to ‘black’ corruption (socially unacceptable). According to Rose-Ackerman (1999:9), corruption is “a symptom that something has gone wrong in the management of state (and/or society). Institutions designed to govern the interrelationships between the citizens and the states are used instead for personal enrichment and provision of benefits to the corrupt.” Ngwube and Okoli (2013) defined corruption as the involvement in illegal and/or dubious behavior, which destroys the moral fabric of society.

Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria and has permeated the entire social structure of the Nigerian society. Funds meant for development projects which could have generated employment have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled and stashed away in foreign banks. Achebe (1983) observes that corruption in Nigeria ranges from budgeting abuses, political patronage, public funds being doled out to political allies and personal friends; the collection of mobilization fee or full payment without executing the contract, rewarding politicians who failed elections with ministerial appointments, re-assigning ministers and commissioners or council members who are involved in scandals to another ministry or department. Corruption accounts for the increasing rate of poverty, unemployment, violent and other criminal behaviors in Nigeria. Lawan (2009) argues that in Nigeria the dominant class using state apparatus has appropriated for themselves while the vast majority of the poor and the powerless continue to be ravaged by poverty and hunger, thereby engaging in criminal behavior for survival.

Peer Group and Gang Influence

In Nigerian cities, it is common knowledge that gang activity is high and many teens become involved. Peer pressure is such an integral part of gang activity and criminal activity can be profoundly influenced by peer contagion. Edwin Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory, which predicts that an individual will choose the criminal path when the majority of his/her learned attitudes, which are influenced by their social group, view law-breaking as favorable. This learned behavior, and the powerful influence of the social group on attitudes towards lawlessness, aptly explain how peer influences can affect youth crime in a negative way. Reebellion, et al (2008) posited that friends or peer group have great influence on criminal behavior. Associating with peers or gangs who engage in criminal behavior is a fertile ground of learning or acquiring such an act. Agnew (2001) asserts that a negative relation with peers is a major factor influencing delinquent behavior among juveniles. Nancy and Christopher (2004) argued that the influence of deviant peer behavior has an impact on aggression and violence in adolescence. Thus, associating with delinquent peers or criminal gangs could lead to the assimilation of deviant or criminal behaviors, while associating with peers or gangs who disapprove of such behaviors appear to reduce the likelihood of engaging in violent and other criminal acts. Maseko (2009) posits that some youth get into crime due to peer or gang pressure.

Drugs and Substance Abuse

Drug and substance abuse can impair judgement, resulting in criminal behavior, poor anger management, and violent behavior. Consistent and substantial evidence exists that supports the relationship between substance abuse and criminal behavior (Stephen et al., 2011). Brochor, et al’s (2001) study found that drug and alcohol consumption has influence on criminal behavior. They observed that drug and substance abuse hampers cognitive functions, and thus facilitates criminal behavior and over-exacerbates an individual’s aggressive behavior. For example, drug and alcohol consumption may give a false impression to a potential

criminal that he/she will not be caught while committing a criminal act because if a criminal knows he/she will be caught in such an act they will be deterred.

Others Factors

Other factors influencing criminal behavior include broken homes, selfish interest or greed. Aboh, et al (2014) asserted that the broken home has effects on maladaptive behaviors. Thus, adolescents from broken homes tend to be aggressive and jealous and, therefore, engage in criminal behavior. Ojo (2012), identifies broken home one of the causes of youth crime and delinquency. Harsh or erratic parental discipline and cold or rejecting parental attitudes have been linked to delinquency and are associated with adolescent's lack of internal inhibitions against offending. Physical abuse by parents has been associated with an increased risk of the children themselves becoming violent offenders in later life. Living in a home affected by separation or divorce is more strongly related to delinquent behavior than when the disruption has been caused by the death of one parent. However, it may not be a 'broken home' that creates an increased risk of offending so much as the parental conflict that lead to the separation. Another factor is selfish interest or greed, as the desire to have something without working hard through due processor legitimate means to earn it could influence a person to commit crime.

Theoretical Explanations

In order to explain deviant/criminal behaviors, Sociologists/Criminologists are guided by different theories due to the multifaceted nature of the act in a society. This study, therefore, used some relevant sociological/criminological theories to explain the subject matter thus:

The Conflict Perspective

The conflict perspective of crime is traceable to the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883). This perspective assumed that crime and criminal behavior is a by-product of the social inequality and power imbalance that exist in a capitalist society where the bourgeoisie, who are in the position of power and authority, control the means of production and the proletariat are forced to offer their labor in exchange of wages determined by the capitalist class. According to the conflict perspective, those who owe power (the ruling class) define and structure crime and deviance in ways that serve their selfish interests, thereby underrepresenting the interest of the "have-nots," who constitute the working class (Miller, et al, 2008). Thus, the source of crime could be traced to the capitalist class by making rules that will lead to their infraction. The continued accumulation of wealth by many Nigerians in position of authority through corruption to the detriment of the masses who continue languishing in poverty due to unemployment is connected with many criminal behaviors, such as armed robbery, kidnapping and prostitution, among others, prevailing in the Nigerian cities.

The Differential Association Theory

Edwin Sutherland introduced the differential association theory in 1939 and modified it in 1947. This general theory, which is presented in nine statements, aims at explaining the distribution of crime and criminal behavior among various groups and why some individuals do or do not engage in criminal behavior. According to Sutherland, the basic principles of differential association are that criminal behavior is learned. It is learned as a by-product of interaction with other persons in a process of communication. The principal part of learning criminal behaviors occurs within inmate groups. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes: the techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; and the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definition of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable. A person becomes a criminal because of an excess definition favorable over unfavorable to violating the law. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority and intensity. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning; and while criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values because noncriminal behavior is also an expression of those same needs and values (Siegel, 2004).

Sutherland believes that the direction of human behavior could be determined by the primary groups to which an individual belongs. Thus, intimate social interaction between criminal and non-criminal career peers or friends tends to influence the latter to learn and internalize the techniques of criminal behavior. One of the policy implications of Sutherland's theory is that, since criminal behavior is learned through differential association, parents or guardians should, therefore, closely supervise their children and wards and pay special attention to the people with whom they spend their time (Paternoster and Bachman, 2001).

The theory shows the rudiment of substance abuse and career drug addict. However, the theory has been criticized for an overly simplified view of the way that people choose models.

The Deprivation Theory

This theory is traced to the work of Gurr (1970) and explains why people engage in violence and criminal behavior, such as riots, terrorism, kidnapping, murder and the like. Ajeagbu (2012) posits that the theory examines the psychological causes involving frustration and aggression as the primary sources of the human capacity for violent activities. It is important to note that frustration in some cases may not necessary lead to aggressive behavior, but greed may drive one to violence and other criminal behavior. Frustration is a much stronger motivating force. Prolonged frustration may cause the greater probability for aggressive behavior (Ajeagbu, 2012). According to Gurr, the theory is based on the assumption of the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually think they can get. There is a likelihood of violence, as there is a feeling that people’s expectations cannot be met if the current status quo is maintained. The first situation may be a desperate one, but it is the second that will be frustrating and produce aggression at individual, group and societal levels.

This theory could be used to link a rising number of unemployed youths and violent crime in Nigeria, as graduates pass out from the compulsory National Youth Servers Corps (NYSC) quarterly without commensurate job opportunities thereby creating a fertile ground for frustration induced aggression among prospective job seekers. As frustration prolongs and the feeling of deprivation of what that is expected increases, there is a greater probability that the individual or people can resort to illegitimate activities in order to actualize their expectations in the society (Ajeagbu, 2012). Thus, the prevalence of violent crime, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, prostitution and terrorism in Nigeria today, could be as a result of the deprivation of opportunities for people to realize their expectations. However, critics of the deprivation theory claim that the theory does not explain why some people join movements that apparently do not benefit them directly.

The Anomie Theory

The Anomie theory emanates primarily from the work of Robert K. Merton in 1957. He applied Durkheim’s ideals to explain the way in which the tensions between the legitimate and illegitimate means of acceding to the norms and values of a particular society resulted in deviant behavior in American society (Walklate, 2003). For example, American society like Nigeria’s stresses the goals of acquiring wealth, success and power and the socially permissible means include hard work, education and thrift (Siegel, 2004). When socially approved goals are uniform throughout society and access to legitimate means is bound by class and status, a situation of anomie or normlessness results among those who are locked out of the legitimate opportunity structure (Siegel, 2004; and Reid, 1996). Thus, when people are blocked out from the opportunity to realize or achieve their aspirations in life, they tend to engage in criminal and delinquent behaviors.

Merton suggests that in the contemporary social world, emphasis is on goals, not means, and the main goal is a monetary one. Merton designed a five typology to describe the modes of adaptation that are available to those who react to society’s goals and means (Giddens, 2010; Siegel, 2004; and Reid, 1996).

Typology of Individual Modes of Adaptation

Modes of Adaptation Approved Value Approved Means

i.	Conformity	+	+
ii.	Innovation	+	-
iii.	Ritualism	-	+
iv.	Retreatism	-	-
v.	Rebellion	replacement	replacement

Source: Giddens, A. (2010:944) Sociology

Conformity: This occurs when individuals accept both the conventional social goals and the means of achieving them. This is most common in a balanced or normal society, which is not possible in the contemporary world, as it is difficult for everyone to conform to all the rules just as not everyone breaks all the rules. Thus, deviance or criminal behavior is inevitable in any part of the world.

Innovation: This refers to the situation when the individual accepts the goals of society and rejects the means of achieving them. People who acquire wealth through deviance or criminal means fall into this typology.

Ritualists: People under this typology reject the societal accepted goals and follow the institutionalized means, for instance, someone who dedicates himself/herself to a boring job, even though it has no career prospects and gives a few rewards.

Retreatists: Individuals under this typology reject both the societal accepted goals and the means of achieving them. Thus, they are dropping from the mainstream society. Merton suggests that the individuals who adapt to this typology are “in the society but not of it.” Examples include chronic drunkards, drug addicts, pariahs, psychotics and vagrants, etc. (Giddens, 2010).

Rebelling: People under this typology reject both the generally accepted goals and means but, instead of dropping out, work actively to substitute them with new set of goals and means. Example includes members of radical political groups.

Agnew’s General Strain Theory

Robert Agnew during the early 1990s formulated a theory he termed “general strain theory,” otherwise known as GST that is influential in explaining criminal behavior (Miller, et al, 2008). The GST is based on the assumption that when people are treated badly or blocked from the opportunity to realize their dreams, they may get upset and engage in crime/delinquent behavior. For example, children who are mistreated by their parents may run away from home and engage in delinquent behavior, such as prostitution. Agnew (2001) defines strains as negative treatments by others that could be measured either by asking individuals whether they dislike the ways they are being treated or by asking them whether they are being treated in ways that people believe would be disliked by the members of their group (or they would dislike). According to him, this would provide us with information about the individual subjective level of strain or the measure of objective strain. He, however, maintained that most GST tests employed the objective measure of strain. Strain could said to result in criminal behavior when the legitimate opportunities to lead a meaningful life in Nigerian cities are being blocked as result of severe poverty caused by structural unemployment and a corrupt leadership. Most of the contemporary security challenges in Nigeria, such as kidnapping, armed robbery and prostitution phenomenon, could be as a result of strain.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The expositions in this study shows that criminal/delinquent behaviors do not just happen but are caused or being influenced through conflict of interests and differential association, and that deprivation or strain for people to realize their potential in form of the high incidence of poverty, unemployment and corruption produces frustration expressed through violence and other criminal behaviors. Therefore, the following recommendations are offered to effectively curtail the spate of crime and delinquent behaviors in Nigerian cities:

1. Governments should make policies aimed at creating job opportunities to effectively tackle youth unemployment in order to reduce crime and delinquent behaviors in the cities.
2. Political leaders should be transparent in their governance and accountable to the people. Citizens found guilty of corruption by appropriate anti-corruption agencies should be dealt with according to the laws, so as to deter others. The agencies should be strengthened and empowered to effectively stem the tide of corruption in Nigeria.
3. Political appointments and posts should be made less lucrative by slashing the jumbo salaries attached to them, as the salaries encourage electoral violence and corruption associated with the country’s political process. The monies saved through such slashing should be used to establish companies that would employ many Nigerian youths who are in dire need of employment opportunities. This would reduce politically motivated assassinations and electoral violence and malpractices.
4. There is the need for parents and guardians to imbibe the spirit of discipline in their children and wards and closely supervise whom they spend their time with, so as to learn healthy social skills and avoid the evil impact of peer influence into criminal behavior and delinquency.
5. Religious leaders should preach righteousness to their followers, as righteous people will not engage themselves in criminal activities since it is a sin before the Almighty God.

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