

## A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*Adolescent stage is the most turbulent but exiting period of turmoil or crisis characterized by upsurge of hormones which cause physical and psychological changes that help reinforce the display of anti-social behaviors as well as violence and conflict of different nature. The objective of this paper is to identify the social and psychological factors that could be responsible for the adolescent's anti-social behaviors with a view to proffering solutions. This work is basically a review of existing literature and therefore utilized secondary data. The paper adopted a social psychological approach which emphasized on the role of family as the primary agent of socialization. Differences in the socialization of children will arise in the behavior and personalities of parents. The attitudes of the parents may not help the children to integrate into the society. Socialization patterns in some homes actually encourage deviant behavior which constitutes a great threat to peace and meaningful development of the society. The paper posits that every other factor could contribute to adolescent's anti-social behaviors but could be traced to the family directly or indirectly. The family into which a person was born largely determines the individual's personality and anti-social behaviors. The key role of the family or parents is to nurture and provide the child with a safe, loving and supportive environment, and to groom the child into a happy healthy youth and eventually a successful and self-actualized adult. But today the traditional role of the family as the child main socializing agent has degenerated due to modern civilization. Children who experience difficulties may later in life manifest adolescent anti-social behaviors. The paper recommends among others that the various agencies of socialization especially the family needs to wake up to their responsibilities of helping adolescents with sense of direction so that they will have the will power to carry out responsibilities they are expected to play in adulthood and to conform to the norms and values of the society.*

### Introduction

Much has been written about youth and children and the essence of parental care, most parents fall short of the lessons conveyed in their parental assignments. With such low key attention to the wellbeing of children, what is the fate of future generation?

Any society without healthy children of sound moral rectitude will have stunted growth in its march to progress. The child is by nature innocent and must be helped to accommodate himself in necessity. However, the child must pass through the normal stages of growth,

childhood, adolescence and then adulthood. The society should not create the repulsive impression to the child to feel that he cannot be tolerated. This feeling makes the child not only to see the society as an enemy, but also to feel that there is no place for him to discover his identity and capacity to gamble for survival. Since the child starts his life in the family, parents are duty bound to take proper care of the child's home training by inculcating in him or her sense of belonging which puts the child on the right path of life to follow. Failure of this duty will expose the adolescent to anti-social behaviors which has future regrettable consequences on the society (Unachukwu, 1993).

The adolescent is faced with lots of anti-social behaviors particularly the incidence of crime and delinquency which if not checked will render developmental efforts in the country fruitless. The challenges of youth and children in the Nigerian society are enormous and are peculiar to those of developing society. It has been noted in the past that Nigerian youth have suffered tremendous neglect than encouragement and purposeful involvement by the government. This neglect has created so many anti-social behaviors for the youth and children; drug abuse, cultism, and rape, kidnapping and armed robbery, truancy in school, being in bad company of gangs, stealing, smoking cigarette and Indian hemp, disobedience, sleeping in dangerous places outside their parents residence among others which stand glaringly as major challenges in Nigeria today (Obumsele, 1982). However, in spite of the attempts by successive governments to improve their lot, the condition of the Nigerian youth and children still leaves much to be desired. A lot more needs to be done to empower them and re-energize them and get them seriously involved with the task of nation building and socio-economic development.

At birth the individual is not a social being but possesses the capacity to become human, yet if denied certain experiences in the social environment, the potential to become human cannot be fulfilled. It is only through series of social interaction (socialization) with others that the biological organism becomes human or a social being. The family has been identified as the primary agent of socialization. It is within the family cycles that individuals are first introduced to social beliefs, behavioral expectations and special ways of behavior. But overall the family will play a vital role in the formation of human personality. Differences in the socialization of children will also arise because of the variation in the behavior and personalities of the parents: some will be more permissive than others; some will be anxious and others calm; some will lack emotional response; others will be over-protective. The attitudes of the parents may not help the children to integrate into the society: socialization patterns in some homes may actually encourage anti-social behavior which may constitute greater threat to peace and meaningful development of the society.

The key role of the family or parents is to nurture and provide the child with a safe, loving and supportive environment and to groom the child into a happy, healthy youth and eventually a successful and self-actualized adult. In contemporary Nigeria much of the socialization obtained from the family is now undertaken by the neighborhoods, peer groups and modern secondary organizations like schools, churches, mass media and other government agencies. It is now certain that although the family still performs its function as the primary agent of socialization, its status relative to modern agents of socialization, has greatly declined over the years. The decline in the traditional role of the family as the child main socializing agent is brought about by the process of modernization which includes

urbanization and industrialization (Etteng, 1980). Children who experiences difficulties in their families may later in life manifest adolescent anti-social behaviors. For many people the most early relationships and experiences occur within the context of their families. Positive family relationships can help children flourish but negative childhood experiences within the family are associated with an array of anti-social behaviors in later life. For example children who grew up in poverty or whose parents suffered from mental illness or substance abuse are more likely than others to experience adolescent anti-social behaviors. This study however intends to identify the social and psychological factors that could be responsible for the adolescent's anti-social behaviors with a view to proposing solutions. This paper is therefore divided into five (5) sections. The first section is clarification of the key concepts such as adolescence, family, socialization, anti-social behaviors and national development. The second section presents the methodology–social psychological approach. The third section examines the causes of adolescent anti–social behaviors. The fourth section presents the consequences of adolescent anti-social behaviors on national development. The fifth section draws some conclusions and recommendations.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

It is imperative to begin this analysis by venturing into the terrain of definitions: The basic concepts under examination being Adolescence, Family, Socialization, Anti-Social behaviors and National Development. Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. It is a stage of development which occurs between puberty and adulthood. An adolescent has been defined as anybody between the age of 11 and 25 years (Maduka, 1980; Agatha, 2013). This definition is however without prejudice to

existing laws governing children and young persons which may vary in operation but not in principle to basic issues at stake.

It is a known fact that adolescence is a period characterized by perpetual and often hazardous search for recognition and identity. It is a period of complex change, intellectual resurgence and mental alertness characterized by upsurge of hormones which causes most of the physical changes in the adolescents like the development of secondary sex characteristics. It is important to note that these sudden changes in the physical appearances of adolescents have social and psychological implications in the way adolescents address issues generally. This is the period of adjustment for both parents and their children. Early psychologists like Hall (1904) described this age as period of 'storm and stress'. Piaget (1952) described the period of adolescence as the stage of formal operational thoughts. They have the capacity to think of possibility and not just reality. They are able to think hypothetically and this is manifested in their criticisms which in itself show an advance in reasoning. Erickson (1950) described it as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion, failure of individuals at this stage to work on their own identity formation may result in a sense of isolation and confusion (Hall, 1904; Piaget, 1952; Erickson, 1950 cited in Agatha, 2013). It is this confusion which usually occurs when conflicts and inconsistencies in parental guidelines at home coupled with their desperate search for identity that makes room for mischievous and selfish adults and political leaders to take advantage of these confused youngsters to cause mayhem in the society during communal, political, religious and ethnic crisis. Family has been defined as a group of people who are related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption and who live together

for an indefinite period of time. Family is the most basic universal institution which varies considerably from society to society. A family is formed by sex, marriage, parenthood and kinship. What determine the nature and types of family is the cultural and economic systems of the society. However there are two types of family all over the world: the nuclear and the extended family systems. The nuclear family system consist of the husband, wife and their children which is mostly found in Western Europe, America and other developed parts of the world. The extended family system on the other hand is based upon the blood relationships of large number of people including parents, children, grand parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and so on. The extended family is the common family system in most African societies (O'Donnell, 1977; Peil, 1977).

Socialization is the process of social interaction by which human; the biological organism acquires the attitudes, values and actions necessary for living with others in a society. In broad terms, socialization is the process by which beings that are biologically human become socially human. It is the process through which individuals acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them interact with others. Socialization is the process through which the individual learns the beliefs and values of social group and learns to adjust his behavior so that he meets the expectations of others in the group (Horton and Hunt, 1976; Otite and Ogionwo, 1979). It is the process by which individuals learn the ways of a given society or small groups so that they can function within it. In other words socialization is the process by which individuals particularly children are taught and learn the skills, the values, the habits, the beliefs and indeed the culture of their societies to make them fit in well into the societies. Thus, according to Babalola (2010) we have infant socialization, childhood socialization, and adolescent socialization,

socialization for work, socialization for marriage and parenthood, socialization for later years and even socialization for death. In this paper, we will focus mainly on the adolescent socialization.

The term anti-social behaviors is used and understood to embrace in its broad scope deviant behaviors that violate accepted social norms and behavioral expectations. In this sense, indiscipline, lateness to work, disobedience, armed robbery, manslaughter, murder or any of the felonies are all referred to as anti-social behaviors. For the purpose of this paper anti-social behaviors may be loosely or tightly defined as crime and juvenile delinquency. Crime is an act that violates the social norms and its prohibition is buttressed by a punishment administered by the state through a proceeding in its own name (Wolfgang et al, 1970). From a broader sociological view, Tappan (1966) cited in Ozo-Eson (2004) defined crime as an intentional act of commission or omission in violation of the criminal law (statutory or case law) committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by the state as felony or misdemeanor while delinquency is the act of breaking laws or is an offence committed by juveniles (children and young persons). However, most scholars saw delinquency as a habit rather than as an offence. For example, Ruth Cavan (1961) states that a delinquent child is one who by habitually refusing to obey the reasonable and lawful commands of his/her parents or other persons of lawful authority is deemed to be habitually uncontrolled, habitually disobedient or habitually wayward or who habitually is a truant from home or school or who habitually so departs himself or herself as to injure or endanger the moral, health or welfare of himself/herself or others. Legally defined, a delinquent child is the one who has been picked up by the police and has appeared in juvenile court. The court on its own part must

have satisfied itself that the child actually behaved in a way which is harmful both to himself and the society. However, it is important to note that anti-social behavior and criminal or delinquent behaviors are not the same thing. An Act could be anti-social but not criminal. For instance if a female student gets pregnant out of wedlock while still at the university, the student involved in the anti-social act cannot be taken or tried by any court because she has not violated any section of the criminal code. Similarly, an act may be criminal but not anti-social. If a man stole a loaf of bread and fed it to a starving old lonely man, this act though illegal is not anti-social because of the circumstances that made the man to steal the loaf of bread. Many people are more likely to favor an act like this in which an old lonely man was prevented from starving to death (Nkpa, 1994 cited in Ozo-Eson, 2016).

National Development has been defined as the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people such as providing social amenities like quality education, portable water, infrastructural facilities and medical care to mention but a few. This means that national development must involve the aggregation of national resources of the country for the general wellbeing of the citizenry in terms of their social and economic development (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012 cited in Mohammed, 2015). Raji (1999) opined that national development should be conceptualized in terms of progress in three major dimensions; Economic, Political and Social or Moral dimension. Balogun (1972) argues that national development must centre on people and their quality of lives in the society. He argues further that national development entails producing more and better food to eat, healthier and happier individuals, better living accommodation, improved transportation and communication system, sound education and enlightenment

among the populace, and generally more money floating around. Thus, national Development has been defined to mean the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people for the general wellbeing of the citizenry in terms of their social, political and economic advancement (Raji 1999; Balogun 1972 cited in Mohammed, 2015).

### **Theoretical framework**

A socio- Psychological approach places emphasis on the family's role in producing delinquent children. Family and home environment have been described as one of the most potent influences of adolescent anti-social behaviors. It has been asserted that criminal and delinquent behaviors run in families. Gormann- Smith and Tolan (1998) found an association between marital instability and delinquency and this breed discordant marital environment which in turn produce a disproportionately high incidence of delinquent behavior in children raised in such home environments (Gormann-Smith and Tolan 1998 cited in Agatha, 2013). Haskell & Yablonsky (1978) in their study of the influence of the family on juvenile delinquents found that children charged with more serious misconduct more often come from incomplete families than children with less serious delinquency.

The social psychological explanation also attributes criminal behavior to defective primary socialization whereby the innate anti-social motivations of individuals are not brought under control. The absence of warm, loving relationship between a child and the parents is particularly seen as criminogenic (Babalola, 2010). A healthy upbringing of the child is the responsibility of the family. The family is usually the strongest agent of socialization that have control over their children, as parents can impose sanctions and make children conform to the norms and

values of the society. The family therefore is expected to create an enabling environment for growth and development and for the formation of healthy relationships. Children who experience difficulties in the process of growing up may later in life manifest adolescent anti-social behaviors (Musa, 2013). In their study of family upbringing and delinquency Healy and Bronner (1936) argued that delinquency could be as a result of faulty family upbringing. They found that over 90 percent of delinquents compared to 13 percent of their non-delinquent siblings had unhappy home lives and felt discontented with their life circumstances (Hearly and Bronner 1936 cited in Agune, 1999).

The Psychoanalytic approach which was developed by Sigmund Freud (1925), assumed that everyone is born with the potential to be a criminal or delinquent in that the basic human instincts, if uncontrolled will lead to anti-social behaviors. This approach was of the view that criminal behavior springs from unconscious processes like thoughts, fears and wishes a person is unaware of but which still influence behavior. Freud argues that criminals or delinquents are those with relatively weak ego controls who are generally viewed as highly insecure persons with low self esteem or as highly aggressive and hostile persons. They usually experience a great deal of internal conflict and exhibit marked anxiety. Delinquents with markedly defective superego controls have not internalized the social norms of society and experience little sense of guilt over their delinquent acts (Reiss, 1952; Jones, 2003). Thus criminals and delinquents are Id dominated people who suffer from the inability to control impulsive drive.

Some psychoanalysts suggest that some adolescent anti-social behaviors are as a result of early childhood experiences in the family. Family experiences of the child almost exclusively determine the pattern of behavior in later life, whether deviant or non-deviant,

by affecting the personality structure of the child. The psychoanalysts suggested further that a high degree of the personality traits, such as emotional insecurity, immaturity, feelings of inadequacy, inability to display affection and aggression characterize the delinquent but not the non-delinquent. Such traits are the product of early childhood experience in the family. It is argued that because the first experiences of the child with others are within the family group, traits existing there form the basis for the entire structure of personality. Thus, anti-social behavior is often a way of dealing successfully with such personality traits, for example, immature persons may commit crimes or emotionally insecure persons may drink excessively and become alcoholics (Blum, 1966:259).

The psychoanalysts also suggested that all deviant behavior is a product of something in the individual such as personal disorganization or maladjusted personality. Deviants or delinquents are individuals who are psychologically sick persons. All persons at birth have certain inherent basic needs in particular the need for emotional security. Deprivation of these needs in men during the early years of childhood leads to the formation of given personality types of structure. The degree of conflict, disorder, retardation or injury to the personality will vary directly with the degree of deprivation. Perhaps because they suffered deprivation in childhood experiences or had families who could not provide proper love and care, delinquents suffer from inability to cope with conventional society (Abrahamsen, 1944 cited in Agatha, 2013). In its most extreme form, delinquency may be viewed as a form of psychosis that prevents delinquent youths from appreciating the feelings of their victims or controlling their instinctual needs for gratification. For example, Agatha (2013) suggested that stress alone could not produce such an emotional

state. He identified latent delinquent-youths whose trouble family life leads them to seek immediate gratification without consideration of right and wrong or the feelings of others. Zlotnick (2000) asserted that adolescent anti-social behaviors frequently come from families in which parents are unable to give love, set consistent limits and provide the control that allows children to develop the necessary personal tools to cope with the world in which they live (Zlotnick cited in Agatha, 2013).

The adolescent anti-social behaviors have been attributed to intergenerational conflicts between parents and their adolescent children. In a bid to attain a healthy sense of autonomy, adolescents tend to interrupt parental words of wisdom in order to voice their opinions (Steinberg, 1988). This situation more or less breeds intergenerational conflicts between adolescents and their parents and the peer group as important agencies of socialization. The family and peer groups have a very powerful influence over the socialization of their members. The relative importance of the two groups however varies with issues involved. For matters concerning fashion, taste, entertainment and experimentation with sex, alcohol and other drugs including cigarettes, the peer group is more influential in shaping adolescent decisions. For matters concerning future life goals, fundamental behavior codes and values, religion and other socio-economic issues, the family wields the greater influence (Igbinovia, et al, 2004). Generally, adolescents are believed to have stronger preference for risk and novelty, have a tendency to be impulsive and more concerned with short term than long term consequences, have a different appreciation of time and self control and become more susceptible to the peer group pressure (Morse, 1997 cited in Agatha, 2013). Interactionist theorists asserts that the onset of crime can be traced to a deterioration of the social bond during adolescence, marked

by weakened attachment to parents commitment to school and belief in conventional values. Thornberry (1987) argues that delinquent youths seek the company of other children who share their interests and who are likely to reinforce their beliefs about the world and support their delinquent behavior. Deviant peers however do not turn innocent boys into delinquents; they support and amplify the behavior of children who have already accepted a delinquent way of life. He argues further that the causal process of delinquency develops over a person's life time. Again, attachment to family chiefly determines whether a youth will adjust to conventional society and be shielded from delinquency (Thornberry, 1987 cited in Agatha, 2013).

Labeling theory could also be used to explain adolescents' anti-social behaviors in the sense that when children or adolescents continually receive negative feedback from parents and others whose opinion they value, they will continually interpret this rejection as accurate and self defining (Lemert, 1951). Labeling can be used to explain anti-social behavior in the sense that once young people or adolescents have been labeled as criminals, they are more likely to offend. The idea is that once labeled as deviant, young persons may accept that role and be more likely to associate with others who have similar labels. Labeling theorists say that male children from poor families are more likely to be labeled deviant and that this may partially explain why there are more lower class male offenders (Walklate, 2003; Eadie & Morley, 2003 cited in Agatha, 2013).

Social learning theorists like Bandura (1973) hold the view that children will model their behavior according to reactions they receive from others either positive or negative. It could be the behavior they view on television and in movies. If children observe aggression such as slapping or

punching someone during an argument and see that the aggressive behavior is approved or rewarded, they will likely react violently during a similar incident (Bandura cited in Agatha 2013). By implication social learning theorists suggest that children who grow up in homes where violence is a way of life may learn to believe that such behavior is acceptable and rewarding. Thus, children are more likely to heed what parents do than what they say. This means that the more positive the environment a child is placed in, the more likely he/she is able to conform to society and become non-delinquent.

The foregoing theories have clearly demonstrated the link between troubled family life and anti-social behaviors among adolescents. Although family may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children. Parents can influence their children through interaction, rewards and privileges when the child does what is right and punishes the child when he or she do what is wrong. Punishment here does not necessarily entail shouting or flogging but by withdrawing certain privileges from the child like preventing the child from watching a favorite television programme etc when badly behaved. Through the means of punishing inappropriate behavior and rewarding appropriate ones, parents transfer knowledge to children (Agatha, 2013). It has been asserted that failure to discipline acts of disobedience or aggression is correlated with children's anti-social behavior. In other words a child who was not chastised for aggressive behavior earlier or who had abusive or overly intrusive parents is likely to be aggressive with peers (Schwartz et al 1997).

However, different families use different parenting styles in raising their children. Parenting styles are strategies used by parents to interact with their children and influence their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Baumrind (1967)

found four (4) important dimensions of parenting in terms of parental expression of warmth; strategies for discipline; communication and expectation for maturity. On the basis of these dimensions, he identified three parenting styles. The first is Authoritarian parents who are rigid in controlling their children. They place high demands on their children without allowing room for discussion or regards for the children's feelings. The second is permissive parents, these parents are extremely lenient. They allow children to decide for themselves. Unfortunately, these children often have poor control over their emotions and may have difficulty with peer relationship. The democratic parents on the other hand, expect good behavior from their children and guide them gently and lovingly without force (Baumrind cited in Agatha, 2013).

In his analysis of the different parenting styles, Agatha (2013) argues that authoritarian parents raise children who are likely to be conscientious, obedient and quite but not especially happy. As adolescents they sometimes rebel and are likely to leave home before the age of 20. Permissive parents raise children who lack self control especially in give and take of peer relationships. They tend to live at home but still very dependent in early adulthood; while democratic parents raise children who are successful, articulate, happy with themselves and generous with others.

He argues further that when parents are too lenient with their children, giving them free hands in order not to hurt their feelings as in the case of permissive parents, there is a great likelihood that the children would turn out to be unruly and oblivious of other people's needs. Such children could end up as spoilt children. This could pose a problem to the society, since there is no authority figure to caution them when they go astray and no consistent routines, confusion sets in. Because of their erroneous belief that the world is

open for experimentation, their school work is likely to suffer and they are likely to go into drugs and alcohol use. Likewise when parents adopt the authoritarian style where they believe in firmness, rigidity and strict discipline, the children are more likely to rebel during adolescence. As younger children, parents who adopt the authoritarian parenting style may succeed in the short run. Such children may obey parents out of fear, adjust to parental authorities, avoid drugs and other forms of criminal acts, but in the long run, they may suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. By the time they find themselves in the university environment or other environment where they don't have to contend with parental authorities and supervision, they desperately want to redeem their self esteem and therefore join street gangs and other criminal gangs. They try to prove themselves worthy of such gang membership. Anxiety and depression accumulated earlier push them into drugs and other unimaginable social vices.

He also argues that democratic parenting style, unlike authoritarian and permissive styles give parents the opportunity to be assertive. It offers a middle ground by combining the good aspect of authoritarian parenting style and the best from the permissive parenting style in order to raise children who do well in school, who have great self confidence, who are goal oriented and who can never be influenced negatively in and out of the home environment. Parental ineffectiveness and failure generally push most adolescents to seek attention albeit regularly by being destructive or rebellious. Ineffectiveness on the part of parents could manifest in domestic violence as well as in inability of parents to lead by example, for instance when fathers especially give rules that children should not stay out late, but they (fathers who are traditionally supposed to be the head of the home) default by staying out

perpetually late without giving proper explanations on their whereabouts, the children get confused. The truth is that children learn from what they see parents do and not what parents say (as social learning theorist would say). By the time these trends go on for some time in a home, naturally the father's presence is missed and he will definitely not be available to monitor the progress of the family members especially the children.

Anti-social behaviors among adolescents do not start overnight, it develops gradually and it is fueled by parents' inability to follow up on their children's day to day progress. Most of the time parents look for escape route by transferring their own inadequacies on their children shouting at every little fault, calling them names, and labeling them. As labeling theorist would put it, when these adolescents continually get negative feedbacks from others especially parents who are supposed to be important persons in their lives, they are likely to interpret it as accurate and this will go a long way in deteriorating the social bond between parents and children and generally affect their values. Going by the interactionist theory these children will go out of their homes to search for other children with similar label and form association with them. Such children could easily be recruited as thugs during crisis situation to perpetuate various forms of anti-social behaviors.

### **Causes of Anti-Social Behaviors among Adolescents**

Most if not all predispositions to anti-social behaviors among adolescents are based on social and psychological factors. The Social factors include deviant subcultures, family disorganization; social and economic conditions and delinquency areas. Deviant sub-cultures according to Becker (1966) refers to a system of values, beliefs and practices encouraging the commission of crimes and

delinquencies, awarding status on the basis of such acts, and specifying typical relationships to persons who fall outside the groupings governed by group norms that is simply bad gang. The backgrounds of these criminals and delinquents often included signs of extreme rejection and lack of love. Becker emphasized that delinquent acts are done in company with other people and that anti-social behaviors result from involvement of youth and children in the social world of their peers or street gangs. Children learn a lot of delinquent behaviors from friends and peer groups as these are important agents of primary socialization. The gangs promote delinquency by teaching new techniques of crime, by assigning high status and prestige to criminals and also serving as a medium of contact between amateurs and professionals (Becker 1966 cited in Ague, 1999).

Family disorganization as a result of divorce, constant parental discord, bitterness and even hatred between parents make children unhappy with their home environment and sometimes give opportunity for the child to become delinquent. Anti-social behaviors also come from broken homes as a result of death of one or both of the parents, prolonged illness, insanity, desertion, rejection or divorce (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001).

The difficulties of living in poverty, slums or areas of bad housing, chronic illness, malnutrition and unemployment may force some people to crime and delinquency. The conditions of development under which we are now living especially the capitalist or the mixed economy type and the patterns of industrialization and urbanization which we copy from the Western societies all lead to social and economic factors such as broken homes, family disputes, divorce and family instability which lead to the emergence of different forms of anti-social behaviors (Odekunle, 1981 cited in Abdullahi, 2013).

Also in many cities there are delinquency areas – small areas in which most delinquents come. These are often the zones in transition or twilight areas, the areas of poor housing and overcrowding, the areas in which cinema houses and hotels are high in number. If the family resides in such areas where criminal actions and other patterns of delinquents are not blocked or hidden, it offers the child a great opportunity to pick up a delinquent behavior (Shaw & McKay, 1942 cited in Abdullahi, 2013).

The psychological factors that contribute to anti-social behaviors among adolescents include faulty personality, maladjustment and mental deficiency. In his theory of personality, Freud argues that very early childhood experiences which disturb the development of stable personality may result in anti-social behaviors specifically in adult criminal activities. Thus individuals become criminals or delinquents due to inadequate socialization to control their innate anti-social behaviors. Delinquent behavior is the result of three (3) factors; the strength of the unmodified instinctive urges (The Id); the weakness of the ego and the lack of independence and strength of the superego. According to Freudians or psychoanalysts the delinquent is an individual who is governed by the pleasure principle, he wants to get immediate pleasures, if the Id is stronger than the ego and the superego, he is likely to engage in deviant behaviors (Freud cited in Musa, 2013). Another basic psychological cause of anti-social behaviors is maladjustment. The adolescent needs for identity, recognition, security, independence and affection are frequently thwarted to such an extent that anti-social behaviors is employed in an effort to reduce tension. Anti-social behavior is a rebellion and expression of aggression against the psychological conditions which deny the basic rights and satisfaction of the fundamental needs. Adolescents are not

specific type of human beings but they are quite normal individuals with normal desires but with some form of maladjustment which create difficulties for themselves as well as for their families (Steinberg, 2008).

The relationship between intelligence, mental health and delinquent behavior has been stressed by psychologists and psychiatrists. Long ago, Cesare Lombroso, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian Criminologist asserted that criminals have defective body physic and defective intelligence. Investigations on the intelligence of juvenile delinquents have shown that the average intelligence of the delinquent group is lower than the average intelligence of the normal group. It is also found that there is larger proportion of mental defectives in the delinquent group than among normal children (Lombroso cited in Wilkins, 1976; Luntz and Widom, 1994).

### **The Consequences of Anti-Social Behaviors on National Development**

The Social psychological factors that contributed to anti-social behaviors constitute a serious threat to internal security, hinder business activities as well as discourage both local and foreign investors from investing in Nigeria. They divert government attention from execution of people oriented policies and programmes which in turn stifles or retards the progress of Nigeria's national development. Also successive governments in Nigeria have made tremendous efforts to promote foreign direct investment in the country. However, government's efforts in this regard have not yielded high dividends largely due to the prevailing crimes and delinquencies coupled with weak socio-economic infrastructures (Mohammed, 2015).

Anti-social behaviors have serious social, psychological and economic implications for development. In terms of social and psychological consequences, it can safely be argued that social activities are usually

reduced to a minimum in localities, neighborhoods or communities characterized by high rate of crime and delinquencies. Because of the perceived likelihood of criminal victimization in such localities, social life tends to suffer in many ways. In terms of psychological consequences, it is a social fact that crime and delinquency creates avoidable stress and turmoil in the family of the criminal or delinquent. The spouse who knows the police may be calling at her home at any time (even at odd hours) for delinquent child or criminal husband will hardly be at ease mentally and psychologically. Furthermore, criminal victimization does produce psychological trauma as in the case of victim who suffered aggravated assault, rape or armed robbery (Igbo, 2006).

In terms of economic consequences, it is well known that in localities infested with high volume of anti-social activities especially crime and delinquency, the monetary value of losses and damages caused by criminal victimization can be staggering. Direct criminal victimization often times leads to monetary and material losses and damages as in the case of stealing, robberies, arson and vandalism etc. These victimization experiences often result in financial expenses/losses to the individual and his family incurred in the course of medical treatment and the like. Criminal victimization always involves varying degrees of risks of loss of property or life on the part of the victim. When death is involved it may well be a bread winner who has been lost. This also amounts to a loss of economic income to the family concerned. Criminal victimization may also involve loss of employment or earning in cases that involve prolonged hospitalization or periods of convalescence where employers cannot condone absenteeism on medical grounds. Crime against persons may also result in physical deformity or permanent handicap on the part of crime victim who is thereby deprived normal opportunity for wage

employment. Many employers operate employment policies that discriminate against disabled and handicapped persons (Igbo, 2006). Thus adolescent anti-social behaviors impose considerable social-psychological and economic burden on society.

Crime and delinquency like any other anti-social behaviors exact a toll in human and material resources. Nigeria loses more monetarily, economically, politically and socially or morally from crime as business. Crime such as collusive price-fixing, fraud, misrepresentation or adulteration of drugs and food products and other forms of consumer exploitation victimize the public and often impose additional hardships on Nigerians least able to afford them. Theft or embezzlement of valuable state or corporate property provokes material damage by stopping production, wasting raw materials, machines etc. And losses such as these, being cumulative, may not be clearly apparent or measurable in the short run but their repercussions may interfere with development planning goals and strategies (Odekunle, 1979).

Anti-social behaviors also have negative consequences for Nigeria's international image. The propensity of some Nigerians to engage in criminal activities worldwide, which range from advanced fee fraud, drug peddling, human trafficking and prostitution have earned the country a high degree of notoriety for everything negative and the drive to make money through the most fraudulent means. Internally wealth, irrespective of how it is acquired is adored. Consequently, the integrity of most Nigerians is constantly questioned at various business fora and major airports all over the world because of the pervasiveness of the malaise. The motive of most Nigerians anywhere is considered suspect no matter how well intentioned it might be, most Nigerians are generally regarded as crooks, drug couriers and prostitutes until proven

otherwise. They are perceived simply as people who would do anything just to make money. They have attracted to Nigeria such a bad image in international circles that it will take a good measure of courage to invest in Nigeria.

Drug addiction, alcoholism and all sorts of adolescent anti-social behaviors are side effects associated with development. Violent crimes including armed robbery and murder are committed under the influences of hard drugs. Drug abuse by adolescents brings about changes in attitude to work such as absenteeism and late-coming. Drugs also lead to high incidence of infections due to neglect of hygiene procedures. For instance most alcoholics regard gutters and prisons as their places of refuge. Drug Addicts show symptoms of mental confusion and brain damage. When the drugs are not available they suffer from distress such as vomiting, blood pressure, lack of sleep etc. Larger doses of hard drugs can cause death and possession of dangerous drugs like cocaine and heroin is punishable by death (Wilkins, 1976).

Odekunle (1986) rightly pointed out that in cities, crime and delinquency have generally been viewed as phenomenon of youth and children with a yearly turnover and waxing harder as these youngsters emerge into a new phase of life hood, from juvenile delinquency to adult criminality. The girls among delinquents grow up to be prostitutes or call girls or even commit adultery if by chance they get married. At times, they use charms to hook men and render such men 'useless' in life. They succeed in destroying the peace of families by hooking 'sugar daddies' that now can no longer perform their family responsibilities. The male ones among delinquents who now grow up to be 'useless' members of the society do all types of evil including 'enjoying' peoples wives thereby contributing to marital instability. This is because married women are more attractive

to people with questionable characters than decent men. These groups of people lack all senses of morality because they did not internalize the norms and values of their cultures (Odekunle, 1986 cited in Agune, 1999).

Those who are convicted of criminal acts by the courts are sent to prison. Some serve for life or just for some years or even months depending on the type of crime and gravity of offence. Those who purposely kill their fellow human beings and those who are convicted of armed robbery were executed by firing squad. Those who are working after conviction and sentence will be dismissed from their former working places. In the urban areas anybody who committed any crime may face jungle justice from the masses who are tired of problems of crime and delinquency. For instance somebody who stole a packet of Maggie at Onitsha market in 1998 was burnt alive but if the person had been taken to the police and subsequently to court he can only serve not more than five years in prison after his sentence but jungle justice took away his life (Aguene, 1999).

Anti-social behaviors put social stigma on the offenders. These offenders are perceived by other people as a whole as not worthy of friendship, hence people who indulge in criminal or delinquent activities find it difficult to get partners for marriage. The children of these people are not also free in the midst of their peer groups as some parents and relations advise their children to dissociate from children of criminals because in most places people believe that criminal activities are hereditary. Therefore their children are suspected to be potential criminals. Those who are convicted and sentenced in the prison yard and are freed, the society sees them as "social outcasts" who must be avoided. They can hardly marry from good homes and are denied meaningful employment (Odekunle, 1977 cited in Agune, 1999).

## Summary and Conclusion

This study focuses on the ever increasing wave of adolescent anti-social behaviors in Nigeria such as crime and delinquency –armed robbery, murder, rape, assassination, stealing, drug addiction and alcoholism. In addition to these, youths are involved in violence of different nature; communal, political, religious and ethnic crisis. This is being witnessed in our daily lives and is already giving a cause for serious concern. There are several factors that fuel anti-social behaviors including deviant subcultures, family breakdown/social disorganization, social and economic conditions, delinquency areas, faulty personality, maladjustment and mental deficiency, pervasive poverty and unemployment, drug abuse and gang wars particularly among the youth, lack of effective parenting, urbanization and breakdown of traditional community values, simmering ethno-religious disputes, recruitment and use of thugs by politicians. But in social psychological approach the family or parents transcend other factors in explaining adolescent anti-social behaviors including children's delinquent behavior. Parenting styles also matters and many researchers say that it is one of the biggest reasons why adolescents and children commit crime and delinquency respectively. Parents are sometimes very harsh and they punish their children for small issues. Children start disrespecting their parents and they become violent.

The consequences of the adolescent anti-social behaviors entail enormous damage to the country's corporate life and existence, economically, politically, socially and psychologically; the incalculable loss of government revenue; the undermining of the economic and national development, and of political stability and psychological trauma; the debilitating effects on public service efficiency, effectiveness, worker morale and

productivity, the pervasion and frustration of development objectives and peoples legitimate aspirations; the touting of our national image and soiling of our reputation all over the world and even the questioning of the viability of Nigeria as a corporate entity.

The contemporary view of adolescence by social psychologists however is not a period of storm and stress or inherently turbulent. Although the self image and self conception of adolescents changed, the changes do not signify turbulence or crisis of any nature. Instead of experiencing dramatic change, tension and disruption in values, adolescents gradually fashion their identities based on their psycho-sexual circumstances and their evolving competencies and skills. In fact the overall self esteem, personal control, responsibility and independence of most adolescents increase with age across the adolescent period. Adolescents frequently negotiate and adjust to increased demands of a more autonomous lifestyle. Nevertheless, responses to societal sexual norms and expectations remain as one of the major tasks of adolescence.

### **Recommendations**

1. A fundamental transformation is necessary to get the youth and children seriously involved with the task of nation building and socio-economic development. The country cannot attain a stable nationhood without the active involvement of children and the youth in the scheme of national development. The realization of this fact makes it more expedient for the present day leaders and policy makers to formulate their policies and programmes of development towards a sincere integration of the Nigerian youth, who still remain as the true vanguard of our developing society. Children and youth mobilization as a policy of government can only achieve the

required or expected measure of success with the recognition and appreciation of the rights, interests, roles and position of the Nigerian youth. If the adolescent girls and boys are expected to participate in resolving the current crisis plaguing Nigerian society, they should strive to respect lawful orders, of their parents and constituted authorities and attention must be given to those basic incentives which are capable of mobilizing them towards a successful nationhood.

2. Psychologically, adolescent boys and girls needs a lot of adjustment and motivation through education so that he/she can be well prepared for the future roles they are expected to play in adulthood and conform to the norms and values of the society. The adolescents should be educated on the need to be well prepared emotionally and financially before getting into marriage or before starting a family so as to be ready to weather the storm that come with marriage and stay together as a couple to raise their children. Guidance and counseling on sex education will no doubt help ameliorate adolescent psychological problems and channel their potentiality to attain self actualization.
3. The problem of intergenerational conflicts could be averted if the various agencies of socialization especially the family rise up to their responsibilities of helping the adolescents with sense of direction and if parents are more involved with their children, provide nurturance and care, listen to their fears and provide solutions to their problems and needs.
4. Government should put in place machineries to reduce the access of youths to firearms. Adequate punishment should be given to youth and children involved in any act of violence while those involved in any acts of non violence should

be rewarded. Youth who are found to have committed crimes such as murder, robbery and rape should be remanded in prison custody. The children who are found to be delinquents should be sent to reformatories. This is because the main objective of juvenile courts is not to administer punishment but rather to provide guidance, care, protection and rehabilitation for the child.

5. Young people should be educated on the need to be well prepared emotionally and financially before getting into marriage or before starting a family, so as to be ready to weather the storm that come with marriage and stay together as a couple to raise their children. Marriage should be more stable because marital instability is the greatest source of anti-social behaviors. The idea of divorce should be discouraged. The husband and wife must be together to take care of their children because each one of them has a role to play.
6. Laxity on the part of parents, in terms of training their children, is responsible for the unfortunate situation. Parents should be very mindful of the parenting style or combination of parenting styles to adopt. Parents must teach their children about their religion and culture, they should give priority to their children's education especially now that the world has become a global village because the era when some parents send their children to hawk is over. Parents and government should provide support to family members who have been found to suffer from mental health problems.
7. Youth and children need a stable supportive parent which is related to positive adult outcomes. Individuals whose parents were encouraging, loving and provided appropriate boundaries tend to have higher levels of self esteem, hope

and subjective happiness than those sent out at early ages to live with non-caring adults that can lead to instability, delinquency and deviance. Parents should give proper attention and all necessary support to their children through constant monitoring of their activities so as to avoid external influences. Because it is believed that neglect of children by parents makes them to be exposed to all kinds of anti-social behaviors. Parents should bring their children closer to them so that they can know what kind of life their children live and monitor the kind of friends they keep.

8. To rid society of adolescent anti-social behaviors, parents should stop children from watching of violent and uncensored films and movies, and in order to satisfy their material needs. Parents should not expose children to aggressive violent acts, especially in their formative years so that they do not learn those acts to be used in later periods of their development. The mass media could also be of help by emphasizing morality in their write ups and showing violent films and their implications together with the reaction of the public towards crime and delinquency.
9. Youth empowerment and engagement remains the only panacea to tackle adolescent anti-social behaviors especially crime and juvenile delinquency by providing the enabling social environment that would alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities that narrow the gap between the rich and the poor in order to ensure peace and harmony in the land. A greater weight must be placed on provision of basic infrastructures and amenities-shelter, electricity, good roads, well equipped hospitals and functional education must be given proper attention by the government.

10. The fight against anti-social behaviors among adolescents and youth will not succeed as long as they have access to hard drugs. In this regard, government must curtail free access to hard drugs. Government should have a reliable data base of criminal youth and delinquent children. Police, prisons and courts should partner with civil societies to develop a reliable data base. Workshops and seminars should be periodically organized by policy makers to educate youth,

children and general public on the role of the family as the primary agent of socialization. Government should formulate and implement policy on anti-social behaviors that would provide the enabling environment for both local and foreign investors to actively partake in business. Investors are willing to come and invest in Nigeria both financially and in human capital but need assurance that their lives and property would be secured.

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