



Influence of Family Structure on Development of Male Juvenile Delinquency: A Case of Kamiti Youth Correction and Training Center Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The rising cases of delinquent behavior among male teenagers is a feedback of sorts that the family structure, which is the nurturing context of children has failed to effectively insulate the teenagers against negative influences. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of the family structure on male juvenile delinquency at the Kamiti Youth Correction and Training Center (KYCTC), in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was guided by Family Systems Theory (FST), which views the family as the primary context where the members of the structure relate with each other precipitating the development of individual character traits and patterns of behavior. Therefore, FST practitioners attribute outcomes of an individual to manifestations of sequences of family interaction. The study used purposive sampling method and simple random technique to select a sample of 68 males aged between 15 and 18 years from a target population of 120 delinquents at the KYCTC. Purposive sampling was used to juveniles between 15 and 18 years while random sampling technique was used to select the main sample of 68 out of the population of 120. The study used the ex post facto research design. In this study data was collected through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and self-administered questionnaire. Quantitative data collected through questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 25.0 and qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was analyzed through thematic analysis. The study established that majority, 23(33.6%) of the juveniles came from families where parents were absent, 21(30.9%) came from single parents and 16(23.5%) were from grandparent led families. Two-parent families were the least represented among the juvenile delinquents with 8(11.8%) respondents. The findings of the study indicate that a two-parent family structure presents the least risk of breeding juvenile delinquency while, the greatest risk was presented by the absent family structure. These findings point to the critical role the family structure plays in the development and(or) prevention of juvenile delinquency. Based on the findings of this study, the paper recommends that family-centric intervention measures be put in place, considering factors such as: sensitization on the critical role the family structure plays in combating juvenile delinquency, strengthening of the parenting role; encouragement of co-parenting in case of separation; coordination of key stakeholders including the children's department, correction institutions and religious organizations.

Keywords: Delinquency, Family Structure, Juvenile, Parenting style

INTRODUCTION

The family structure has gone through major transitions in the last three decades. Many parts of the world are experiencing increased rates of divorce, early pregnancies,

single-parenthood by choice or death of a spouse, cohabitation and remarriage, which have led to the emergence of new family structures. Various studies have established the existence of a relationship between the family structure and children's behavioural outcomes. Wallman (2010) supports the position that stability of the family structure or lack of it has a direct link to the development of delinquent behavior among children. This phenomenon has not been adequately studied in Africa and Kenya in particular where family dynamics are different compared to the western world where studies in this area have been done (Loeber & Stouthammer-Loeber, 2012).

Carlson and Corcoran (2001) posit that unpredicted family transitions/disruptions, conflicts and distress can directly influence child outcomes, both in the short and long run. Coupled with ineffective parenting and parental relationship issues, family structures and relationships can have lasting negative effects on child development that could lead to delinquent behavior later in life. Based on this fact, this study establishes the nexus between family structure and development of juvenile delinquency.

In this article, the family structure is conceptualized as the composition and membership of the family that includes, single-parent family, two-parent families, grandparent/relative-led families and, absent-parent families. The traditional family structure was composed of a father, mother and children. This family structure guaranteed the children a balanced form of care, with fathers offering proper sanctions, discipline and a ready role model for sons, while the mothers provided the softer skills of respect, meekness, service and role modeling daughters. Continuous interactional pattern within this traditional family structure that encompassed discipline, monitoring, self-control and supervision were appropriate buffers that protected children from delinquency (Meldrum, Connolly, Flexon, & Guerette, 2016).

Ngale (2009) posits that the family structure forms the foundation blocks of human society. Therefore, the children's outcomes depend on the interactions in this basic unit. He further observed that children faced with rejection from parents, children who witness or experience abuse, or who are not properly guided are at a greater risk of falling into delinquent behavior. This argument points to the fact that family structure cannot be properly understood without consideration of the interactional pattern within the family structure.

This paper focuses on the influence of the family structure on the development of juvenile delinquency, though it also briefly links the family structure to parental practices that are executed in the context of the family structure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study conducted by Kierkus and Hewitt (2009) shows that a two-biological-parent family structure has higher levels of parental monitoring, supervision, involvement, and attachment when compared to other family types. On the other hand, various studies have found out that delinquent behavior is more linked to poor family relationships compared to the family structure. They cited parenting style, self-control and supervision as appropriate buffers that protect children from delinquency (Meldrum, Connolly, Flexon, & Guerette, 2016). Despite the availability of this knowledge, there is little focus on research on parenting strategies within different family structures. Though the two-biological parents family structure provides an ideal structure for nurturing children, the outcomes will depend on the interactional patterns within this structure. Aspects such as coordinated guidance and discipline,

manifestation of parental adherence to societal norms and respect for authority also play a key role in protecting children against delinquency.

The systems family theory, posits that human beings exist within systems such as family, community, culture and society where the participants are intricately linked to one another (Minuchin, 1974). Minuchin, who is credited with the creation of the structural family therapy, points out that the family structure that is ideally supposed to be hierarchical, is stable when the parent-child relations are cordial with clearly marked control measures of behavior, with parents ensuring that the family power lies with the parent(s) who have the responsibility of nurturing.

This therefore implies that action of one member of the family structure influences and is in turn influenced by the actions of others. This means that an individual member's actions cannot be understood without considering the entire system in which he/she belongs to (Minuchin, 1974). This argument proposes that actions and behavior cannot be fully understood unless you consider the parenting structure (family structure) that maintains, reinforces, or weakens the effectiveness of the parenting style adopted. Despite this understanding, there are limited studies seeking to establish how parenting practices deployed in a family system influences juvenile delinquency.

Different countries define a juvenile differently. In U.S.A. each state determines the age of juveniles in their respective jurisdictions since each state has its own age criteria. However, based on the 1976 Standards and Goals, majority of 52 states concur that any person with a maximum age of 21 committing delinquency can be considered a juvenile (Puzzanchera et al. 2018).

Kenya's Children's Act (2001) defines juvenile as a child under the age of 18 years, and who is in conflict with the law and is confined in a correctional institution. The age bracket is critical because any person below the age of 18 years is not considered an adult and therefore under the care of his parents or guardians. This is the reason why one cannot be issued with the national identity card because they are legally considered to be children. The provision in the Act that defines a juvenile appears to assign responsibility for violation of the law to the teenager, who ideally is a child under the care of responsible parents or adults who need to model these children. The responsibility of violation could ideally be shared with the responsible adult who could be the parent or guardian.

Carr (2016) attributes the escalation of male juvenile delinquency to failure of the family unit to properly guide children. Carr stresses that juvenile delinquency is appropriate feedback of sorts that indicates that the monitoring, guiding and supervision role of the family is diminishing. Though it can be argued that the failing monitoring component is tied to important aspects such as economic activities, families run the risk of the male child sinking further into antisocial behavioral practices if appropriate intervention measures focusing on parenting styles in the context of family structure is not reviewed.

Johnson (2013) argues that children are born helpless and totally dependent on their parents for nurture and care until such a time that they are self-sustaining. Based on these arguments, the co-relationship between parenting practices and the family structure jointly plays a cardinal role of inculcating values and a belief system in children that will influence their moral behavior. The process of shaping the behavior of a child begins and continues through interactions between the child and the parent within the confines of a family structure that may vary from a two-parent structure to a

single-parent structure. This process ideally inculcates beliefs and values that ultimately influence the child's future behavior.

Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

Previous studies in this area have established the existence of relationships between family structure and juvenile delinquency. The studies confirmed that minors from stable family structures (two biological parents) were less likely to be involved in antisocial behavior, and are more emotionally stable compared to their counterparts from unstable family structures such as single-parenting or co-habiting arrangements (McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider, 2013). This can be attributed to the presence, guidance and discipline offered by a structure that has both parents involved in parenting practices. A survey done by Murry, William and Salekin (2006) on the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency targeting 442 delinquents in a borstal institution found out that 53% of the respondents hailed from single-parent family structure. Further findings from the research indicated that more juvenile offenders came from other family arrangements other than the two-parent family home. Demuth and Brown (2004) confirmed that adolescents who live in a family structure which includes both biological parents had lesser chance of having behavioral issues than those who live with other type of families. Other than the family structure, there was association between delinquent behavior of adolescents and non-traditional family structure linked to other contexts of age, socioeconomic status, gender, race, family size and place of residence.

Another predicament that has a direct bearing on the development of juvenile delinquency is continued changes of the family structure a child lives in. When a family structure is altered or suddenly becomes dysfunctional because one of the parents is absent or in cases where abuse is prevalent, serious disorders in the development of an individual can emerge thus constituting a risk for addiction to substance/drug abuse and crime (Wallman, 2010). The home environment is the most important sociological unit where lessons about interaction are learnt. It is the ideal place to teach children lessons about love and the first contact experienced with the world. The child's worldview begins to be shaped within the family unit (Shek, 2016). Prestin-Latham, (2013) points out that cases of delinquency are higher in children of divorced parents despite the age when divorce happened. Another interesting trend cited in the study is the rising cases of cohabitation among children raised by single parents who introduce their partners to their children and demanding that their children accept them as their parents despite the fact that the children still cherish a relationship with their biological parents. This predicament is confusing to the children who may opt to rebel against the remaining biological parent and the introduced 'parent'.

Provision of the basic needs of a child without due regard for the home environment is contributing to the increasing number of juvenile delinquencies. Parenting practices are closely related to the environment or context of parenting which is best conceptualized within the framework of the family structure. Consideration of these parenting practices within the framework of family structure is what this study explored.

A case study on juvenile offenders at Adyala Jail, located in Rawalpindi, found out that the main cause of juvenile delinquency was family neglect and poverty (Khursheed & Urooj, 2012). Another study conducted in juvenile jail and borstal institutions located at Bahawalpur and Faisalabad in Punjab province singled out nagging tendencies of parents especially the father, parental conflicts, media and unstable family environment (Mahmood & Cheema, 2004).

Miller and Fagan, (2014) posit that children living in dysfunctional families where there is low or poor supervision, parental abuse, and disrupted home environment are at a higher risk for becoming delinquent because of lack of control and right modeling from parents. Related studies have revealed that when families are separated and do not connect, children/adolescents often drift towards other supporting systems especially peer groups for support because they cannot get the necessary support from their parents. This prepares the ground for the adolescents to gravitate towards groups or gangs that are inclined towards socially unacceptable behavior (Godinet & Vakalahi, (2009). Supervision, parental abuse and disrupted home environment are key factors that can influence the behavior of a child. The three elements can be viewed as both parenting and structural matters that have a direct impact on a child's delinquency.

On the other hand, various studies have found out that delinquent behavior is more linked to poor family relationships compared to the family structure. They cited parenting style, self-control and supervision as appropriate buffers that protect children from delinquency (Meldrum, Connolly, Flexon, & Guerette, 2016). This argument lends credence to the view that co-parenting of separated couples can result into favorable outcomes among adolescents, probably because the interaction of both parents conveys a message of normalcy and provides an opportunity for both parents to establish a bond and instill values to the child.

One of the factors that influence delinquency among youth is the family structure that a child is exposed to and the kind of family relationships that have been developed within the structure. Disruptions and transitions in the structure from a two-biological structure to co-habiting parents' structure and then to a single parent structure, confounds the children who may interpret the disruptions as rejection and abandonment, forcing them to establish attachment bonds with peers. (Leiber, Mack, & Featherstone, 2009). Establishing a bond with peers deprives the child necessary guidance and care from more mature people like parents directly exposing them to higher risk of falling into delinquent behavior (Jekayinfa, 2007).

Kierkus, Johnson and Hewitt (2010), argue that the family structure in the United States has enormously changed over the years, becoming diverse by the day. They further argue that children and youth are more likely to be bred in different types of homes, that are at times transient, with the structure changing from single to married, and later cohabitation and single again. These transitions in the family structure in the event of a divorce or a separation and later coupling again continuously changes the home environment and is ultimately detrimental to the overall development and wellbeing of the adolescent basically because it is difficult to develop a secure attachment with the parents. This leaves the minors with the option of turning to peers for direction and guidance (Wallman, 2010). If the minors turn to peers who are inclined towards antisocial behavior for direction and guidance the minor may easily be exposed to antisocial behavior.

Alpatanni (2015) argued that the family's functional state influences whether a child will eventually lean towards delinquent tendencies. Factors that bear more influence include: styles of parenting, behavior of other siblings, poverty, inadequate educational level and, untimely separation of the child from their parents at a young age. It is now widely agreed that a child is socialized through numerous observations and interactions both positive and negative in the family structure. Parents are therefore, obligated to create a conducive home environment that will positively influence the behavior of children through adoption of appropriate parenting practices and providing a stable family structure for children to thrive.

Ngale (2009) posits that the family structure forms the foundation blocks of human society. Therefore, the children's outcomes depend on the interactions in this basic unit. He further argued that children faced with rejection from parents, children who witness or experience abuse, or who are not properly guided are at a greater risk of falling into delinquent behavior. Conversely, Sharma (2012) points out that most delinquents had a history conflicted relationship within their family systems. He further argues that in the formative years of a child, the home environment, the interactional patterns and the attachment bond play a critical role. He cited parental conflict, abuse and poor living conditions as key determinants of delinquent behavior in future. Many parents are apparently ignorant of the implications of their behavior before children. Failure to spend quality time with children, physically and emotionally abusing children progressively push children to delinquent behavior.

Hoeve (2009) posits that nontraditional families exposes children to a greater risk to a variety of delinquent outcomes compared to traditional married households. When children are exposed to different family structures, the level of supervision and monitoring from parents is inconsistent thus making them vulnerable to engaging in juvenile delinquency.

Another study conducted by Laursen (2005) to determine if different family structures present different levels of conflicts between parents and adolescents, established that adolescents from single and blended family structures reported more disagreements compared to adolescents from a stable family structure. The study made an interesting conclusion that the exposure of adolescents to delinquency was due to limited discipline, supervision and monitoring of the adolescent, factors that mesh well with parenting practices and family structure the child belongs to. On the other hand, the traditional two-biological parents' family structure provides a conducive environment for support, involvement, and monitoring for an adolescent.

The findings of the above study are confirmed by earlier research by Demuth and Brown (2004) that studied the effects of specific family structures on juvenile delinquency and found out that single-parenthood is a major contributor to juvenile delinquency but also established that, single-father headed households had significantly higher rates of delinquency compared to single-mother headed families. The study also found out that children from blended and cohabiting families were likely to exhibit a range of behavioral problems compared to those from two-parent families. Other studies have established that single parent families, especially, mother-only families raise children who are likely to turn delinquent compared to two parent families because of the assumption that a father's presence helps to stabilize the male children who are at greater risk of engaging in delinquent behavior. Two-parent family structure provides greater opportunity for enhanced supervision and monitoring of children while single parent structure increases the likelihood of delinquency because of lack of adequate supervision and monitoring (Kimani, 2010). This leads to the hypothesis that family structure may influence the development of juvenile delinquency. This was therefore an area of interest for this study.

Based on the studies so far reviewed in this area, it is apparent that the family system is a major contributor to patterns of antisocial behavior in youth. Variables such as ineffective parental discipline, lack of parental involvement, constant changes in the home environment, abuse and, feelings of rejection from family gradually move the youth to delinquent behavior. However, the studies so far done have not been able to clearly articulate how the interdependent nature of parenting style and family structure

collectively play a causal role in the development of juvenile delinquency. Focusing on the delinquent alone without investigating the context of parenting may undermine creation of adequate interventions.

METHODOLOGY

Systems theory postulates that behavior of a system can only be understood when you consider the individual characteristics of elements within the system and the relationship between these elements. Families are also classified as 'systems' of people, who relate with others who also belong to systems. This implies that any individual experience needs to be seen as an interpersonal activity and not an intrapersonal event (Vetere & Dallos, 2003). Any type of the family can therefore be described as a system characterized by specific patterns of functioning including parenting style, family structure, and relationship patterns whose stability is conditioned by the interaction of the different parts within the system (Carter, 1988). Family systems theory, views the family is an organized system, that is composed of interdependent subsystems, such as, a spousal subsystem and a parent-child subsystem. The two subsystems are related and affect each other. In essence, what happens between married couples affects their children. (Cummings et al., 2015). Family systems theory, postulates that families function as both integrated and differentiated whole, where relationships are banded into subsystems, such as spousal subsystems, parent-child subsystem, and sibling subsystems (Xia et al., 2018).

Kwok et.al (2015) illustrate how different subsystems in the family system influence each other citing marital subsystem's disagreements having spillover effects on the parent-child subsystem causing conflict and unpredictability that damages parent-child relationship. Therefore, when dealing with Juvenile delinquency, it is important to consider critical aspects of the family system that shaped the delinquent including parenting styles and the structure of the family system that nurtured the delinquent. Family systems often have open boundary, allowing interaction of internal and external environments, which in turn affects each family member and all subsystems. Studies support the hypothesis that subsystems within the family are interdependent to the extent that negative effects from one subsystem can result to spillover effects on other subsystems. The net-effect is that, the negativity in the family system can result in youth delinquency (Xia et al., 2018).

From the family systems theory (FST) perspective, the family is considered the primary context where the members of the system relate with each other precipitating the development of individual character traits and patterns of behavior. Therefore, FST practitioners attribute outcomes of an individual to manifestations of sequences of family interaction. A strongly held perspective of family systems theoretical approaches is that a relationship exists between the identified patient's symptom(s) and the total family interaction. The family systems approach asserts that keen interest must be paid in the repeating interactions that connect delinquent behavior of one person with the interaction patterns of other people within the family system.

Proponents of the FST view the family as the first and most important socialization points in society. The family unit is the first environment a child interacts with thus influencing the way the child pictures the world and the society. The child begins to adapt to various activities in their direct environment (family system) through the progressive shaping of their first reflexes and reactions directly influenced by the parenting practices and other happenings within the family structure. (Blaim, 1986).

FST intentionally moved away from a lineal causal to a circular conception of causality that connects the problem behavior of one person with the surrounding behavior of the other family members. Minuchin (1974), who is a key proponent of family systems therapy, argues that the main goal of family systems therapy is to break up patterns of interaction that reinforce and perpetuate problem behavior, allowing for a different and non-problematic behavior to develop. In his emphasis Minuchin argues that the shift from a lineal causal to a circular conception of causality in essence connects the problem behavior of one person with the surrounding behavior of the other family members. This change of focus shifts the thinking from what motivates behavior to the impact of one member's behavior on the subsequent behavior of others. FST stresses the importance of monitoring observable arrangement of recurring interaction that ultimately produces a self-perpetuating pattern that maintains a particular behavior. Family systems of any nature, whether they are a single parent family, heterosexual families with children, homosexual families with adopted children or blended families, the bottom line is that each member belongs to a family system that in its interaction sends out and receives communication.

Bowen (1978) another proponent of FST asserts that treating individuals' members of a family system often did not lead to long-lasting change. He argues that unless family dynamics are changed, rarely will the individual change. Interestingly, he postulates that, negative traits if left unchanged in a family often surfaced as traits of the next generation. In FST, specific conducts and experiences are viewed in the context of other parts of a system. This means that a cause of any problem can be found in many places in a system meaning that successful change is therefore achieved through the spiraling effects of feedback throughout the system.

On the basis of FST, juvenile delinquency should be viewed from a larger contextual perspective that puts the family system at the center of any remedial measures. It is the family system that produced and maintained the delinquent and it is to the same system the delinquent goes back to after serving jail term. Any rehabilitation must then employ a systemic approach for long lasting change. The FST that focuses on the structure of the family and the interactions between different components of the structure including relational issues between parents and children in the structure will inform the present study.

The present study adopted the *ex post facto* design using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. This design is appropriate because it helps to investigate possible causes of an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time what could have contributed to the condition. This design is non-experimental but adopts several aspects of an experiment since it deals with separation of groups and the analysis of data. It is appropriate in making comparisons between individuals who belong to different groups but have identical backgrounds. In this study the identical background of respondents is that they are all delinquent. However, in this design, the researcher does not have control over the independent variable. In the study the independent variables drawn from the family system were the parenting styles adopted by the parents of the juveniles and the family structure that they belong to. These variables were beyond the control of the researcher.

The study focused on male juveniles confined at involved in antisocial behavior under the custody of the Kenya prison warders. The independent variable was outside the researchers' control thus appropriate to study its influence on the dependent variable. The target population were juveniles aged between 15 and 18 at the KYCTC. The facility has a capacity of about 300 juveniles but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the

juveniles held in the facility during this study were 120. Purposive sampling method was used to select those within the age bracket of 15 to 18 years and thereafter a sample of 68 juveniles was selected using random sampling technique from a population of 120 juveniles. The sample size for the study was based on a criterion outlined by Mugenda and Mugenda, (2012), who argue that when the study population does not exceed 10, 000, a sample size of between 10 and 30% is a good representation of the target population. The study targeted a sample of 68 juveniles who made up 56% of the population. The targeted population and age bracket was relevant to the study since they are all convicted of juvenile delinquency related offences and therefore have the relevant information that the study required in order to meet its objective.

The study used questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions in the collection of data. Data collected through questionnaires (quantitative) was sorted, classified, coded, computed, and analyzed with the help of SPSS version 25.0. Tables and charts illustrating the frequencies and percentages were presented. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed using thematic descriptions. Analysis was done based on a pre-defined framework derived from the research questions. Data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, sorted and categorized. Re-emerging themes, remarks, their specificity, and family structure trends, all received special attention. This process facilitated drawing of conclusions.

Findings of the Study

The structures that were of interest to the study were two-parent, single-parent, grandparent/relative led and absent parent. The findings are summarized in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Relationship between Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

	Family Structure	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.	Two Parents	8	11.8%	11.8%	11.8%
2.	Single Parent	21	30.9%	30.9%	42.6%
3.	Grand/Relative	16	23.5%	23.5%	66.2%
4.	Absent Parent	23	33.8%	33.8%	100.0%
	Total	68	100.0%	100.0%	

From the findings, it is clear that 23(33.8%) of the juveniles came from families where parents were virtually absent pushing the juveniles to make their own decisions and probably filling the absence of their parents with peers who ultimately became their moral compass. Another big group came from single parents at 21(30.9%) followed by grandparent led families at 16(23.5%). Two parent families were the least represented with 8(11.8%) respondents. This simply illustrates that the family structure contributes to the development of delinquency probably due to levels of supervision and guidance in different structures.

These findings clearly demonstrate that children brought up in a single parent family structure are more predisposed to develop juvenile delinquency. This could be attributed to the parents' absence due to economic activities and the tendency to ventilate their problems on the children which ultimately pushes them away from home. These findings agree with a study by McLanahan, Tach and Schneider (2013), who established that minors from stable family structures (two biological parents) were less likely to be involved in anti-social behavior compared to their counter parts from unstable family structure such as single-parent or cohabitation arrangements. The study

was further interested in the parent the juveniles were actually living with during the time of their arrest. The figure below summarizes the findings.

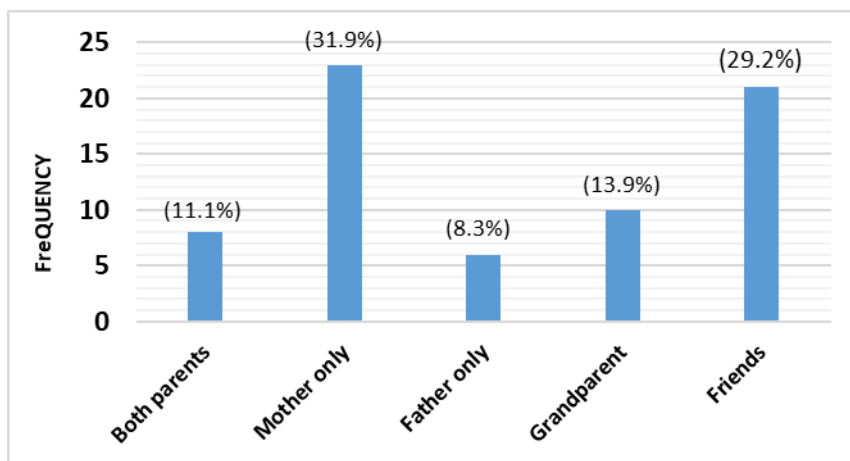


Figure 1. Who were you living with at the time of your arrest?

The Figure illustrates that 23(31.9%) of the juveniles were arrested while they stayed with their mothers while 6(8.3%) where living with their fathers. Another interesting finding is that 21(29.2%) of the juveniles at KYCTC were arrested while living with their friends and 10(13.9%) lived with their grandparents. Among all the respondents, 8(11.1%) were arrested when they were living with both parents. These results indicate that mothers bear the brunt of caring for their children in the event the family structure transits from two parent family to single parent structure. Apparently, lack of adequate supervision and guidance in a single parent (father/mother only) exposes the juveniles to development of delinquent behavior.

The objective of the study was meant to establish the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency. The findings on this objective established that 33.6% (23) of the juveniles came from families where parents were virtually absent pushing the juveniles to make their own decisions and probably filling the absence of their parents with peers who ultimately became their moral compass. Another big group came from single parents at 30.9% (21) followed by grandparent led families at 23.5% (16). Two-parent families were the least represented with 8(11.8%) respondents. This illustrates that the family structure contributes to the development of delinquency probably due to levels of supervision and guidance in different structures. The findings projected that juveniles living in absent parent family structure meaning that parents exist but are mostly away from their families either working or doing other things that deny them the opportunity to interact with their children thus exposing their children to delinquency through development of toxic relationships with peers. Another group was associated with single-parent structure that impacted on the juveniles in two ways. The first being that the parents turned out to be authoritarian making life at home unbearable and second being that they were busy fending for the family leaving them with very little time with their children indirectly exposing them to the wrong influence. The tendency to place a lot of demands on the child makes them view the home as the most unlikely place to find peace and freedom thus pushing them to seek other places where they can experience the peace and freedom other than the home. The most likely alternative is the streets where they will progressively be introduced to drugs and delinquency.

The findings on this objective also confirmed that minors from stable family structures (two biological parents) were less likely to be involved in antisocial behavior, and are more emotionally stable compared to their counterparts from unstable family structures such as single-parenting or grandparent led families. These findings are similar to a study conducted by McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider (2013) who concluded that children raised in a stable two-biological parent's family structure are less likely to be involved in juvenile delinquency.

The findings are corroborated by a survey done by Murry, William and Salekin (2006) on the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency that targeted 442 delinquents in a borstal institution found out that 53% of the respondents hailed from single-parent family structure. Further findings from the research indicated that more juvenile offenders came from other family arrangements other than the two-parent family home.

The findings also confirm Miller and Fagan's (2014) study that found out that children living in dysfunctional families where there is low or poor supervision, parental abuse, and disrupted home environment are at a higher risk for becoming delinquent because of lack of control and right modeling from parents. Related studies have revealed that when families are separated and do not connect, children/adolescents often drift towards other supporting systems especially peer groups for support because they cannot get the necessary support from their parents. This prepares the ground for the adolescents to gravitate towards groups or gangs that are inclined towards socially unacceptable behavior (Godinet & Vakalahi, (2009).

Another interesting phenomenon that was discovered in the findings, is the situation where children are neither bred by their father nor mother for different reasons thereby ceding the responsibility of nurturing to grandparents or relatives. In such a scenario the children are not a priority to the relatives or grandparents who have their own areas of interest in life. This structure is therefore inadequate because it does not offer proper safeguards around the child. The grandparents will either be indulgent which is related to permissive parenting style or be authoritarian which will push the child to alternative areas of influence that may lead to delinquency. This underscores the importance of two-parent family structure as the most ideal structure for nurture.

The findings of the current study are confirmed by an earlier research by Demuth and Brown (2004) that studied the effects of specific family structures on juvenile delinquency and found out that single-parenthood is a major contributor to juvenile delinquency but also established that, single-father headed households had significantly higher rates of delinquency compared to single-mother headed families. The study also found out that children from blended and cohabiting families were likely to exhibit a range of behavioral problems compared to those from two-parent families. Other studies have established that single parent families, especially, mother-only families raise children who are likely to turn delinquent compared to two parent families because of the assumption that a father's presence helps to stabilize the male children who are at greater risk of engaging in delinquent behavior.

The findings of this study demonstrates that a two-parent family structure is more preferable since it provides greater opportunity for enhanced supervision and monitoring of children while single parent structure increases the likelihood of delinquency because of lack of adequate supervision and monitoring. However, it is important to point out that it is possible for a single parent structure to produce socially upright children if the parenting practices remain responsive to the demands of the child. This position is in agreement with a study by Meldrum, Connolly and Guerette

(2016), who found that delinquent behavior may also be linked to poor family relationships that undermine buffers such as self-control and supervision of children. Most parents are ignorant of this fact, which can otherwise turn the tide of juvenile delinquency.

CONCLUSION

The current study focused on the influence of the family structure on the development of juvenile delinquency. Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that the family structure has a big influence in the development of delinquency among teenagers. Changes in the family structure including broken homes, divorce, single parenting, broken relationships, non-cohesive families, weakened social bonds are key variables that influence the development of juvenile delinquency.

From a systemic perspective, all humans belong and are produced by the family system. It therefore matters what kind of family structure is used in the nurture of children. The study has demonstrated that a two-parent family structure had the least number of delinquents in KYCTC. However, there are several factors that determine the type of the structure that are beyond the control of the parents such as death or even irreconcilable differences between spouses, singleness by choice and other transitions that alter the family structure such as economic activities requiring frequent travel pushing parents to transfer the care of children from biological parent(s) to relatives or grandparents. In such cases parental qualities, familial and societal interventions can mitigate the threat of delinquency among teenagers. In cases where parents have to separate because of irreconcilable differences, then the rights of the child to access both parents must be considered. An arrangement for co-parenting may be considered to ensure that a balanced parental guidance is maintained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends the public be sensitized on the existence of a strong relationship between children's outcomes and family structure. The sensitization can be done during public forums including church functions and any other gathering where parents are involved such as open days in schools and family gatherings. This will raise awareness on the importance of a stable family structure.

Intervention measures seeking to minimize juvenile delinquency should be family-centric, meaning that rehabilitation programs should include the families that produced the delinquent. This important because the family is often an enabler through the family patterns such as abuse, parental absence and family transitions.

At the community level, religious organizations and community based organizations could be of great assistance if they could be organize for training programs championing the interests of the child and highlighting the negative impact of juvenile delinquency.

Sensitization of the spirit of Africa's collectivity way of life, that vests the responsibility of raising children on the larger family system that assists parents to supervise and monitor children when they are not in the home family environment. Signs of delinquency can be traced in open areas, play grounds, in public transport vehicles, in churches, schools and social gathering where responsible adults look the other way because the teenagers are not their biological children. This attitude is a subtle enabling societal posture that expose teenagers to delinquency. This tide can be

stopped if adults would borrow from the rich African heritage that places the responsibility of nurture on the shoulders of the entire society.

The government should come up with policies that would protect the rights of the child in the event the parents decide to separate or divorce. Access rights that will ensure the semblance of a stable structure for a child may be advisable.

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