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Research Article

Examining the Influences of Psychosocial Factors on Delinquent Behaviours in the Agona West Municipality

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ABSTRACT

Delinquent behaviours of adolescents have become a major issue of concern to many countries in the world. The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours of adolescents. Using a descriptive survey design and a proportionate sampling technique, a total of 327 form two Senior High School students (SHS) were drawn from Nyakrom SHS, Siddique SHS, Fankoba SHS and Swedru School of Business to participate in the study. A 45-item questionnaire with a reliability coefficient 0.72 was adopted for data collection. The study was guided by a research question and hypothesis. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data on the research question whilst multiple regression analysis was used to analyse data on the hypothesis. The study revealed that psychosocial factors such as the school, peers and the family were responsible for influencing delinquent behaviours of adolescents. To help curb delinquent behaviours among adolescents, the study recommended that adolescent students should be vigorously sensitized by school counsellors, headmasters and teachers on some psychosocial factors that can easily lead them to engage in delinquent behaviours.

Keywords: Adolescent, delinquent behaviours, psychosocial factors

Introduction

Ghana and many other countries in Africa, believes strongly that the foundation of every nation depends on the group of adolescents in the country. This is because they stand the chance of occupying some positions in the state besides performing some vital roles within their communities or country when they mature enough (Boakye, 2013). However, for an

adolescent to be accepted into any esteemed leadership position and get involved in decision making, the adolescent must be a good role model who is worthy of emulation. Also, the adolescent must conform to the norms and values that bind the nation and abstain from the ones that destroy it (Bosiakoh & Andoh, 2010). For adolescents to fulfil this potential in the future, it is expected of them to refrain from negative

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externalized behaviours that may jeopardize their future.

Adolescents, according to Santrock (2001), are individuals or persons who are in the transition period between childhood and adulthood. That is the period between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents exhibit different behavioural characteristics that make them different from the period of childhood and adulthood. For example, adolescents try to be independent of adult control, try to resolve their problems without seeking help from parents, choose the friends they want to be with, defend their wrongful thoughts, fail to accept responsibilities from adults, intervene in adult conversation when they have not been invited and above all, fail to see their parents as having absolute control or authority in the family. These behaviours of adolescents, according to Kasser (2011) push adolescents to engage in delinquent behaviours.

Frick (2003) described delinquent behaviours as behaviours resulting from an adolescent's inability to respect the rights of others. In a similar vein, Wachikwu and Ibegbunam (2012) described delinquent behaviours as a violation of social norms and values by young people below the ages of eighteen years. Delinquent behaviour ranges from status offences such as disrespectfulness, insult, truancy, coming home late, and other minor crimes to violent crimes or offences such as robbery, rape, defilement, drug abuse, cybercrime and so on (Farrington, 2005). These delinquent behaviours of adolescents have been reported to be on the rise in most countries around the world (Thompson & Morris, 2016; Mbiriri, 2017), and this has become a problem in contemporary society due to its varying negative effects on health, educational, financial, vocational and judicial system (United Nations Habitat, 2013; Mbiriri, 2017).

In Ghana, problems of adolescents' delinquent behaviours such as premature death, teenage pregnancies, alcoholism among others have become an issue of concern. Abedu-Kennedy (2019), reported of two adolescent boys who after getting drunk with alcohol died in a swimming pool. There was also the case of some students from Ola Girls Senior High School in Ho who were caught on camera

drinking an alcoholic beverage in their dormitory (Brown, 2019). Anyetei (2019) stated that thirty per cent of all births registered in Ghana in 2018, were adolescents, and fourteen per cent of adolescents aged between fifteen and nineteen years had begun childbearing.

These cases of delinquent behaviours indicate that delinquent behaviours of adolescents have gained roots among adolescents in Ghana. The appalling nature of these delinquent behaviours has generated a lot of discussion among people who matter in the lives of adolescents. These discussions about the causes of these unacceptable behaviours have turned to be blame game and speculations. Some speculate that it is adolescents' curiosity, the frequent use of social media, family factors, friends and drug abuse that push adolescents into delinquent behaviours.

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However, for stakeholders such as parents, teachers and policymakers to find appropriate measures of curtailing these unacceptable behaviours of adolescents, it is prudent therefore to find out the influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours. This will help solve the problem of delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

Methods

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), in descriptive survey design, researchers gather data at a particular point in time to describe the nature of existing conditions or identify standards against which existing conditions can be compared. This assertion concurs with the view of Fink (2003) who believed that descriptive survey is used to find out opinions, describe, observe, analyse and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs rather than explaining it. Thus, the descriptive survey was deemed an appropriate design for finding out the influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours of adolescents in the Agona West Municipality.

The target population for the study covered adolescent students in the four public Senior High Schools in the Agona West Municipality.

Through a multi-stage sampling technique, adolescent students in Nyakrom Senior High School (SHS), Siddiq SHS, Fankobaa SHS and Swedru School of Business in the Agona West Municipality were sampled for the study. Specifically, 327 adolescent students in SHS form two were sample from the various schools in the municipality. The study used form two adolescent students because form three students were preoccupied with their final examinations. In the case of the first-year students, two of the four schools that were selected for the study had their first-year students who are on double track occupied with inter houses competition. So, it will be unfair to use form ones in one school and form twos in another school. This informed the choice of form two students since they were free as compared to the form ones and threes. Hence, they were deemed to be in a better position to respond to the statements in the questionnaires appropriately.

The instrument used to collect data on the influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours of adolescents was an adapted questionnaire. The choice of the questionnaire was based on the assertion of Osuola (2001) that questionnaires are "particularly advantageous whenever the sample size is large enough to make it uneconomical for reasons of time or funds to observe every subject" (p. 268). All the items on the questionnaire were mainly close-ended because according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) they do not discriminate unduly based on how articulate the respondents are.

On the whole, a 28-item questionnaire titled Psychosocial Factors and Delinquent Behaviours was adapted and given to adolescent students. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, A, B, and C (See Appendix A). Section A focused on the demographics data of students. Section B, which focused on psychosocial factors (self-esteem, family, peers and school) was made up of 17 items. The scoring was based on the Likert four-point scale of measurement of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The options of the items were weighted in the

Likert format with SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2 and SD = 1. This part of the questionnaire was adapted from Ajidahun (2011) adolescent psychosocial questionnaire (APQ). It has a reliability coefficient of 0.80. Section C, which was centered on delinquent behaviours of adolescents was made up of 11 items. The questionnaire was scored based on the Likert four-point scale of measurement ranging from SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree. The options on the items were weighted in the Likert format with SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2 and SD = 1. The items were

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Adapted from by Lyonsi (2007) adolescents' delinquency scale. The internal reliability of this instrument is 0.75.

In order to ensure a high return rate, the instrument was administered personally by the researcher in the various schools. Conscious efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of data gathered. Ethical considerations were deemed important during the data collection. Descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis was employed to analyse responses related to research questions and hypothesis respectively. The data was found to meet the normality assumption.

Results and Discussion

1. What delinquent behaviours do adolescents in the Agona West Municipality engage in?

This research question aims at exploring the delinquent behaviours adolescents in the Agona West Municipality engage in. Data were taken from the sampled adolescents by way of identifying these behaviours and the extent to which they engaged in such behaviours. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Statement with mean rating of 3.0 and above meant delinquent behaviours which adolescent engage in.

Table 1. Delinquent Behaviours of Adolescents in the Agona West Municipality

Statements	Mean	SD
I severely punish my juniors when they go wrong (Bullying)	3.36	.91
I lie to my parents and friends to get what I want (Lying)	3.23	.93
I watch nude pictures and movies (Pornography)	3.23	.95
I copy others' work during exams to obtain a high score (exams malpractice)	3.17	.87
I engage in sexual activities with my friends of the opposite sex (Pre-marital sex)	3.07	1.04
I try my luck by placing a bet (Gambling)	2.12	1.07
I leave school without taking exeat (Truancy)	2.07	.99
I take what belongs to my siblings without seeking any permit (Stealing)	2.05	.98
I pilfer properties of friends in school (Pilfering)	2.00	.98
I fraud people using the internet to get money for myself (Cybercrime)	1.84	.93
I engage in smoking (Drug abuse)	1.63	.92

Source: Field Survey (2020)

FINDINGS ON INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS

The results in Table 1 revealed delinquent behaviours exhibited by adolescents. Particularly, it was clear that adolescents severely punish their juniors when they go wrong ($M=3.36$, $SD=.91$), lied to their parents and friends to get what they want ($M=3.23$, $SD=.93$), and watch nude pictures and movies ($M=3.23$, $SD=.95$). The respondents indicated that they also copy others' work during an examination to obtain high scores ($M=3.17$, $SD=.87$), and as well engaged in sexual activities with their friends of the opposite sex ($M=3.07$, $SD=1.04$).

The study showed that bullying is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in most. This delinquent behaviour may stem from adolescents' observation of others. For instance, Bandura as cited in Kurt (2019) indicated that adolescents learn to imitate and behave in the same way as others do through observation. This suggests that adolescents' observation of their peers, siblings or seniors meting out punishment or bullying others when they go wrong may have accounted for adolescents' engagement in this delinquent behaviour. Another possible reason for adolescents' engagement in bullying may be due to the reinforcement or reward packages that they receive from their peers. According to Thorndike and Skinner as cited in Edjah (2009), behaviour becomes more probable depending on its feedback or consequences. This implies that the praises and support or encouragement adolescents receive

from their peers when they severely punish or bully others may have influenced them to engage in this delinquent behaviour. Shek and Ma (2001) study is in line with this finding. They reported that adolescent seniors in schools bully their juniors because they were once bullied. Mayer (2015) also indicated that adolescents severely bully their colleagues in school to obtain recognition among peers. This suggests that bullying is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in especially in schools.

The study also found that lying is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engaged in. Skinner (2015) stimulus and response theory supports the adolescent involvement in telling lies. According to Skinner (2015), action will continuously repeat itself depending on the nature or kind of response that proceeds the action. Thus, a behaviour will die off if it is followed by unsatisfactory response but will repeat itself if it is followed by a satisfactory response. The preference for adolescent in telling lies may be due to the satisfactory responses they get. Thus, if adolescent tells lies to his parents and friends and gets what he or she wants, such an adolescent will continuously engage in the act of telling lies. This might have prone adolescent into this delinquent act of telling lies. This confirms the research finding of Eklund and Klinteberg (2005) which revealed that adolescents tell lies to defend themselves or get something from peers and family members. Mason (2005) affirms this assertion. Mason indicated that lies are common antisocial behaviours adolescents commit because it enables them to get what

they want. This suggests that adolescents are likely to tell lies to parents and family members to satisfy their needs in society.

The study also revealed that watching nude pictures and videos is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in. This delinquent behaviour of adolescents could be ascribed to the messages that pornographic pictures and videos convey to adolescents. Adolescents may believe that watching sexually explicit materials help influence and shape their sexual behaviours as well as experiences. For instance, the messages in pornography may convey some ideas to the adolescents that they should look sexy as well as have some sexual techniques. These messages may influence adolescents in watching pornographic videos and pictures. Löfgren-Mårtenson and Månsson (2010) finding is in concurrence with this finding. They reported that the underlying message for adolescents to watch pornography is to enable them to become sexually dominant and objectify their partner's body. Similarly, Papadopoulus (2010) finding is consistent with this finding. According to Papadopoulus (2010), adolescents watch pornographic films to master some sexual

techniques to improve their sex life. This implies that watching pornographic videos and pictures is a common delinquent behaviour among adolescents.

It is also not surprising that the study found adolescents copying others work to obtain higher marks or score. This might have happened due to frequent conflicts that occur between adolescents and their parents over school academic performances. Because adolescents may want to avert the conflicts that exist between them and their parents over academic performances, adolescents may employ various strategies like copying others work during an examination, sending foreign materials to examination halls among others. This might have resulted in this delinquent behaviour of examination malpractices among adolescents. Also, the desire of adolescents to obtain a certain position in school, the fear that adolescents will be expelled from school or be labelled as blockheaded may contribute to adolescents' behaviour of engaging in examination malpractices just to obtain higher scores. This

act supports the findings of Fasasi (2009) which revealed that cheating in an examination is an antisocial behaviour common to adolescents. Similarly, Onuka and Durowoju (2010) assert that examination malpractices are common among school-going adolescents in Africa. This means that examination malpractice is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in.

This study also found premarital sex as delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in. Bandura (1977) theory of social learning can be used to explain adolescent's involvement in this delinquent behaviour. According to Bandura, the extent to which one will reproduce behaviour depends on the level of observation and imitation. Adolescents' involvement in premarital sex could probably be due to adolescents' observation and imitation of others having sexual intercourse in pornographic videos and pictures. Thus, as adolescents continuously watch pornographic videos, they may become addicted and eventually try to imitate what they observe. This might have resulted in their engagement in pre-marital sex.

Dapaah, Appiah, Amankwaa and Ohene (2016) study of antisocial behaviours among adolescents corroborate with this finding. According to them, premarital sex is a delinquent behaviour common among adolescents due to adolescent observation of sexually explicit videos and pictures. Also, study by Abebe, Tsion and Netsanet (2016) affirm to this finding. Abebe, Tsion and Netsanet opined that sex before marriage is a common delinquent behaviour among school going adolescents due to their perpetual observation of nude videos and pictures. This stands to mean that premarital sex is a delinquent behaviour adolescents engage in.

2. H₁: There is statistically significant influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours of adolescents.

The study also sought to find out the overall influence of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours as well as what specific psychosocial factors influence delinquent behaviours of adolescents. The psychosocial factors considered were peer pressure, school conditions, socio-economic status, self-esteem, and parental upbringing. The criterion variable was

delinquent behaviours. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse data that was collected on this research hypothesis. Assumptions underlying the use of multiple regression analysis such as linearity, multicollinearity and

autocorrelation were tested before the main analysis. None of these assumptions was violated. Table 2 shows the overall model of psychosocial factors on delinquent behaviours.

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Table 2. ANOVA Table for the Prediction of Psychosocial Factors on Delinquent Behaviours

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	6655.166	5	1331.033	82.829	.000
Residual	4965.545	309	16.070		
Total	11620.711	314			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Parental Upbringing, socio-economic status, Self-esteem, School condition, Peer pressure

- b. Dependent Variable: Delinquent Behaviours

The analysis in Table 2 revealed that the overall model involving psychosocial factors as predictors (e.g., peer pressure,

school conditions, socio-economic status, self-esteem, and parental upbringing) as predictors and delinquent behaviours as a criterion was significant, $F(5, 309)=82.829$, $p<.001$. Table 3 shows details of the coefficients of the psychosocial factors in predicting engagement of delinquent behaviours.

Table 3. Coefficients of Psychosocial Factors on Delinquent Behaviour

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.828	2.520		3.900	.000
School condition	1.277	.163	.397	7.837	.000
Socio-economic status	-.292	.131	-.106	-2.223	.027
Peer pressure	.422	.107	.230	3.935	.000
Self-esteem	.043	.084	.025	.513	.608
Parental Upbringing	.508	.135	.194	3.756	.000

Dependent Variable: Delinquent Behaviours

As presented in Table 3, all the dimensions of psychosocial factors except self-esteem significantly predicted adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours, ($b=.397$, $t=7.837$, $p<.001$). School conditions, which was the largest significant predictor, positively influenced adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours. In other words, stricter school condition (i.e. strict measures in school) was found to have a probable increase in the rate with which adolescents engaged in delinquent behaviours.

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The second-largest contributor to adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours was peer pressure. The regression result revealed that peer pressure positively influenced adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours, ($b=.230$, $t=3.935$, $p<.001$). That is, higher levels of peer pressure are likely to increase adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours.

Similarly, parental upbringing which was classified as a family factor was the third-highest contributor to the variances in the rate of delinquent behaviours among adolescents. A positive influence of parental upbringing on adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours was found, ($b=.194$, $t=3.756$, $p<.001$).

Thus, adolescents from stricter home are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours.

Finally, socioeconomic status which was also classified as a family factor, had a negative influence on adolescents who engaged in delinquent behaviours, ($b = -.106$, $t = -2.223$, $p = .027$). Adolescents from the low socio-economic background were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours. Contrarily, adolescents coming from a high socio-economic background are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviours.

On the whole, psychosocial factors were found to influence delinquent behaviours of adolescents. However, different results were found for the individual psychosocial predictors of delinquent behaviours. Out of the five predictors; the school, peer pressure, socioeconomic status, self-esteem and parental upbringing, four of the predictors, thus, school, peer pressure, socioeconomic status and parental upbringing were found to predict delinquent behaviours of adolescents whilst self-esteem did not.

About the school, the study found it to be the highest predictor of delinquent behaviours. One possible reason for this may probably be due to lack of sense of belongingness on the part of adolescents in school. Adolescents, who feel rejected or not included in social events or activities in school, are likely to go contrary to school orders. This may eventually lead them into unacceptable behaviours. For example, Farhadian (2016) stated that adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviours such as lying, bullying and running away from school during classes hours are due to adolescents feeling of not being included in the enactment of school rules.

Again, large school size could also be a reason for adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours. For instance, the large population size of adolescents in school may make it difficult for teachers to keep an eye on all the behaviours of adolescents. This may have resulted in adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviours. Also, school disciplinary measures employed by teachers may have influenced adolescents' delinquent behaviours. Chen and Cheung (2000) for example, indicated that school disciplinary measures that

encourage caning, spanking, and use of abusive words cause adolescents to feel ashamed and embarrassed. This causes adolescents to run away from school without permission or bully others (Chen & Cheung, 2000).

This result finds support in existing literature (Damron-Bell, 2011) linking school factors such as large population size and lack of feeling of acceptance to adolescent participation in delinquent behaviours. Scaggs (2011) also confirmed this finding. According to Scaggs (2011), harsh school disciplinary techniques influence adolescents' delinquent behaviours. This suggests that school conditions that are unfavourable to adolescents, influence adolescent involvement in delinquent behaviours.

The study also revealed that peer pressure influences delinquent behaviours of adolescents. This could be explained using Akers and Burgess (2010) differential association-reinforcement theory. According to these scholars, behaviours are determined based on the kind of people one associates with. This means that adolescents' delinquent behaviours could be as a result of the kind of peer adolescents associate with. Adolescents who affiliate themselves to peers who tell lies,

watch pornographic films and bully others are likely to be influenced or pressured by these peers to act in the same manner for fear of being rejected. For example, increased levels of affiliation with peers engaging in deviant behaviour are associated with increased aggression (Capaldi, Dishion, Stoolmiller, & Yoerger, 2001).

This finding concurs with the findings in the literature. Hawkins, Catalano and Miller (2000) indicated that stealing by adolescents' friends, for example, is substantially associated with adolescents' stealing habit. Coker and Borders (2001) also reported that association with drug-using peers is the strongest single predictor of substance use among adolescents. This finding lends credence to Prinstein, Boergers, and Spirito (2001) broad conclusion that affiliation with risk taking peers is related to increase in adolescents' risk behaviour such as bullying, theft and premarital sex. With this, one can confidently say that peer pressure influences adolescents' delinquent behaviours.

The parental upbringing was also found to influence adolescents' delinquent behaviours. Baumrind (1991) indicated that the kind of parenting style employed by parents in bringing their children can influence their behavioural outcome. This stands to mean that inappropriate parenting style used by parents in the upbringing of their adolescent children may influence adolescents into delinquent behaviours. This is because parents who freely allow their children to do whatever they want without supervision, use harsh or severe punishment on them and do not provide adolescents with their needs are likely to push their adolescents into delinquent behaviours. Simon and Whitbeck (1991) finding is consistent with the finding of this study. They indicated that coercive parental upbringing used by parents on their adolescents influence adolescents' rebelliousness. Similarly, Tapia, Alarid and Clare (2010) reported that neglectful parental upbringing influence adolescents to leave home without permission and associate with delinquent peers. This suggests that poor parental upbringing influence adolescents' delinquent behaviours.

Family's socio-economic status is another factor that was found to influence adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviours. This is likely to be the inability of parents to provide their adolescents' needs. Adolescents who come from homes where parents are not able to supply to them their needs are likely to steal from friends in schools, tell lies to get what they want or engage in premarital sex to get what they want. This finding corroborates with the position of Cook, Buehler, and Henson (2009) who were of the view that adolescents from families with low socio-economic status engage in delinquent acts than adolescents of parents from high socio-economic status. It also confirms the finding of Rudasill, Reio, Kosine and Taylor (2010) that the inability of parents to provide cloth, food, shoes and books for their adolescents, prone adolescents to engage in unacceptable behaviours. This shows that low socio-economic status of parents contributes to delinquent behaviours of adolescents.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results obtained from this study, it can be concluded that psychosocial factors specifically, the school, peers, family severely influence delinquent behaviours of adolescents. This might have accounted for adolescents' engagement in delinquent behaviours. It is therefore important that adolescent students are vigorously sensitized by school counsellors, headmasters and teachers on some psychosocial factors that can easily prone them to engage in delinquent behaviours.

It is also recommended that adolescents who engage in delinquent behaviours are referred for counselling services. This will help curb delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

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