



**Original article**

## **Insight into delinquent and deviant behaviour among students in secondary schools**

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### ABSTRACT

The idea for this paper was propelled and came about as a result of the significance of adolescents who constitute the highest population in secondary schools. The developmental level of the learner as an adolescent and his/her role is instrumental to the general growth and development of the society. Delinquency and deviant behaviour among youth is not uncommon as it has extended into institutions of learning especially at the secondary school level. This paper examines the causes, patterns and effects of such behaviours and discover among other things that the causes are numerous and not in any way limited to secondary schools but distributed among other social units such as family, peers etc. Also such behaviour involves both boys and girls which on the whole affect teaching and learning negatively.

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## **1. Introduction**

Today, there are manifestations of deviant behaviour in institutions, sub-institutions and social groups to the extent social members in all societies are not exempted. It is however worthy of note that no behaviour is deviant

in itself, just as man is not deviant in his own nature. It is therefore the society that defines certain forms of behavior as deviant or normal.

There are fundamental issues worth outlining here first, an individual's behaviour may be influenced by his/her attitude second, his/her behaviour may be a prediction of his/her intentions. One may ask, what then is attitude? and what is intention and how they can be useful in explaining what one's behaviour is likely to be?

According to the general opinion of psychologists, attitude refers to one's opinion or feeling about something especially as re-affirmed by one's behaviours, while intention refers to one's subjective estimates that he or she will engage in a behavior under observation.

## **2. Preamble**

Deviant behaviour refers to behavior, action or reaction that does not conform to the society or what society approve. It also constitute all forms of crime and delinquency. In a nutshell, it is any behaviour that is contrary to the emotional, social norms, values, law and order.

## **3. The concept of delinquency**

Branding a young person as delinquent is not simple or clear-cut and very problematic. According to Blau (2001), delinquency is a complex term involving a series of interactions based on a set of meaning held by participants. This meaning can be modified during interactions so that each stage in the process is negotiable.

The first stage is the decision held by the police to stop and interrogate a person depending on what they believe or perceive as strong, unusual and wrong. Each perception or meaning is related to a particular geographical area, low income or high crime rate. The second stage is when the young person is arrested and handed over to a Juvenile office (probation office) who also has a picture of a typical delinquent behaviour. If the suspect's background corresponds to the picture, he or she is more likely to be charged. As a result, a middle class juvenile is often regarded as ill rather than a criminal.

## **4. Delinquent sub-culture**

Delinquent sub-culture tends to emerge in areas where a pattern is already established for organized crimes by adults. If an institution or learning environment is established in such places, a lot of examples can be set for the young people, and they may be exposed to skills and values that are deviant in nature. They may witness those who commit criminal activities successfully (interms of deviant values) rise high in the professional criminal hierarchy. They may therefore have assess into the illegitimate opportunity structure. Crime in such environment is usually committed purposely for financial reward (Morton, 2000).

In areas where there is little or none of oriented crime, less of such opportunity exists. Access to illegitimate opportunity structure is very limited. This structure tends to prevent an emergence of stable criminal sub-cultures. Actors in such sub-culture move about pretending to be committed criminals literally with tails between their legs (Golbone, 2008).

## **5. Causes and effects of deviant behaviours in secondary schools**

The dictionary definition of the verb 'to deviate' is to run aside from a way or cause, to depart from a procedure or link at thought or reasoning, deviance therefore involves variation, and deviant behaviour is thus variant or unusual. A deviant person is the one who is unusual or typically different from others. To call something deviant implies a departure from means or an acceptable behaviour, (Haralambos, 2008).

The dictionary definition does not seem to be consistent with the popular understanding until the assumption upon which it is based is confronted. Obviously there are two kinds of people; the deviants and the non-deviants who in their nature are different from one another and are easily distinguishable. This is an old idea and one even scientist have accepted and attempted to investigate.

The relationship between deviant behaviour and physical characteristics, body type and chromosomal structure have often been studied. But the titles of the theories had been variably distinguished. However, dependants of the popular understanding might argue that people have freewill; that they can choose whether or not to engage

in deviant behavior; that no one makes someone to steal for example, the difference is in motivation. This argument is of course a variation upon different peoples' assumption. This may seem plausible or surface but then wear out when confronted with facts since it implies the essence of deviation to international conformity. Thus to it, deviants are people in want to violate norms, but no one can escape having the momental desire to commit crime or deviant acts, Haralambos and Holbourn (1998).

People naturally feel the impulse to violate social norms. An honest appraisal of our mental lives would lead most of us to commit unwarranted behaviours for example; sexual experimentation and perhaps even murder are things we commonly imagine. The other popular assumption that some behaviours are intrinsically deviant is also reputable. "It is practically impossible to specify any particular human behaviour," Edwin (2001). Murder is for example widely condemned, but it is not considered an act, it is a set of circumstances. The act of killing another person is sometimes even praised and accepted (for instance in self defence), and sometimes rewarded (in war). Rape is sexual intercourse under specific set of circumstance involving threat or violence and without the consent of the victim.

The cause and effects of deviant behaviour in secondary schools is not limited to what goes on within it alone. Factors beyond the fences of the schools such as family background, socio-economic status of the child, imported culture (example movies and music) role models in the community, peer influence are some of the causes. People may and usually do jump to conclusion that teachers are to blame due to their incompetence. This opinion is wrong since the teacher is only one of the influencing factors inside the school and therefore cannot be blamed wholly. Also, inclining educational problem on unqualified professionals is also incorrect as no general agreement is yet reached as to one single cause of classroom problems.

The following are few indentified causes of deviant behaviour in schools or classroom by the American observer (2007).

- Lack of proper interaction between teachers and students;
- Inefficient school administration;
- Unqualified teachers;
- Large and oversized schools;
- Overcrowded classrooms;
- Poor instructional materials supply;
- Disjointed family (of students);
- Parent inadequacies
- Frequent changes of schools for the students;
- Bullying in the classroom or the school in general.

Deviant behaviours start manifesting in children even before arrival into secondary schools when taken for granted by the homes or the communities. Also behaviour such as noise-making in the classroom when not cheeked or punished in time may take another dimension. It should be noted here that punishment does not necessarily mean corporal punishment, because such punishment when administered constantly make the student to become defiant.

Students in secondary schools display patterns of rule violating behaviour in an attempt to re-affirm their freedom from parents and other adults at the adolescence stage. If such behaviours continue to go unpunished or wrongly punished may become too critical to handle. For example, when students sneak out of school to attend some social events inside the town which result in their returning to school pretty late, and if found out and given a dozen strokes each, they may choose to make a habit of skipping classes altogether (after all, it is only some strokes of the cane). This behaviour may result in serious truancy, negative self-concept and eventually crime.

Deviant behaviour and delinquency in our secondary schools have been a problem metamorphosing into a serious challenge. School administrators teaching staff and students are now realizing that their schools face serious problems. In the classroom for example, teachers spend more time trying to maintain law and order than actual teaching. The American observer (2007) also indentified the following as the most common effects of delinquency and deviant behaviour by students:

- Teachers quit their jobs due to gained experienced in their early service years which may lead to eventual shift to other professions;
- Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in classrooms;

- Teachers are demoralized due to open confrontations and disagreements with students and administrators;
- Teachers are often threatened by students and parents alike in their jobs and family;
- Efficiency and effectiveness of learning become seriously impaired, impacting negatively on the educational standard of the children;
- The school is said to be a controlled environment and delinquency weakens that control and jeopardizes the very essence of the school and ultimately upon the educational system.

## **6. Conclusion**

Deviant behaviour is an action or reaction of individual or group of individuals and in conflict with the norms and values of a society depending not only on the quality of the behaviour but in relation to a standard judgment of another person or people. In secondary schools, deviant behaviour among students is understood in relation to body of existing rules and regulations.

However, should instances of deviant behaviour in schools persist, the school should be held responsible since one of the essence of the school is behaviour modification. The pattern of such behaviour among students in secondary schools is such that, boys and girls mostly between the ages 17-21 are often most involved.

Most cases of such behaviour involving students between the age of 12-16 years may be as a result of social learning, since among them there exist carriers of undesirable behaviours and those who exhibit it (the behaviour). Effects of such behaviour are many and sometimes unpredictable however, on the immediate and most important, it hampers teaching and learning.

## **Recommendations**

- a. Since most of the causes of deviant behaviour are traced to the schools, the family, peer influence etc, parents, teachers and school administrators should work together to keep such behaviours under control rather than pointing blaming fingers at one another or even confrontations.
- b. The effects of delinquency and deviant behaviours are adverse on teaching and learning. Parent teachers and school administrators should as a matter of priority take interest in even the minutest cases and be systematic in arresting such behaviours. Where necessary, the school should consult or employ the services of experts to advice them on the best ways to handle complex cases.
- c. Punishment is not revenge. It should therefore be administrated in such a way that the child realizes his/her faults and to help in behaviour modification. Punishment should not be higher than offence and made immediately or postponed as appropriate.
- d. The schools should provide record book to keep details of cases and to monitor students progressive behaviour changes and learning needs

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