

Juvenile Delinquency and Its Effects on Students Mental Health and Academic Performance in Nigeria

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Article Information

ABSTRACT

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Juvenile delinquency is a significant problem in all societies around the world, including Nigeria, where it has implications for student mental health and academic performance. This study investigates the relationship between juvenile delinquency and its impact on the mental health and academic performance of students in Nigeria. The study was designed to identify the prevalent forms of juvenile delinquency, the underlying factors contributing to these behaviours, and the effects on student's mental health and educational outcomes. A cross-sectional research design was adopted and a sample of 250 students from ten public secondary schools in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State was chosen for the study. The findings reveal a significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and student mental health, with higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression among affected students. Additionally, the findings revealed a significant impact of juvenile delinquency on academic performance, as it negatively influenced students' ability to learn, concentrate, and achieve educational goals. The prevalence of juvenile delinquency was also found to vary across different socio-economic backgrounds. The study concluded with recommendations for the implementation of comprehensive intervention strategies, including counselling services, community-based programs, and policy changes, to address the needs of students affected by juvenile delinquency in Nigeria.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Student Mental Health, Academic Performance, Intervention Strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a significant social and educational issue that has long plagued societies across the globe. In Nigeria, this issue has become increasingly pervasive, with the prevalence of delinquent acts among students posing a growing challenge to the country's education system and the overall well-being of the youth population (John-Nelson et al., 2021). The rising juvenile delinquency in Nigeria can be attributed to a complex interplay of socioeconomic, familial, and environmental factors. The country has been facing persistent economic challenges that include high levels of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality. These have been the causes of delinquent behaviour among youths, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds (John-Nelson et al., 2021). Besides, the disintegration of traditional family institutions, the power of peer groups, and the absence of proper intervention and support systems have also aggravated the problem (Folorunsho et al., 2024).

The effects of juvenile delinquency on students in Nigeria are far-reaching and profound. Engaging in delinquent behaviours like truancy, vandalism, substance abuse, and violent acts can lead to negative consequences like mental stress, and poor performance, and ultimately limit an individual's potential for

success (Folorunsho et al., 2024). The psychological toll of juvenile delinquency on students is also well-documented, with studies linking these behaviours to increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and overall deterioration in mental well-being (Adegoke, 2015; Alinnor & Okeafor, 2023).

The impact of juvenile delinquency on the academic performance of Nigerian students is equally concerning. Delinquent behaviours often lead to poor attendance, disruptive classroom conduct, and a general disengagement from the educational process (John-Nelson et al., 2021). As a result, these students frequently underperform academically, jeopardizing their future educational and professional prospects. Despite the growing recognition of the problem, the existing research on juvenile delinquency and its effects on Nigerian students is limited, particularly in terms of documenting the prevalent forms of delinquent behaviour, the underlying contributing factors, and the specific impact on mental health and academic performance (Adigun et al., 2019; John-Nelson et al., 2021). This knowledge gap hinders the development of comprehensive and effective intervention strategies to address the needs of students affected by this issue.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the complex relationship between juvenile delinquency and its impact on the mental health and academic performance of students in Nigeria. By examining the prevalent forms of delinquent behaviour, the underlying factors contributing to these acts, and the consequences on students' psychological well-being and educational outcomes, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems (Adegoke, 2015; Oluwamumibori et al., 2022). In Nigeria, juvenile delinquency is a pressing concern, as it is a challenge that extends way beyond legal aberrations to other societal problems. Although juvenile delinquency is pervasive, the interplay of its impact on students' mental well-being and academic performance still needs to be unfolded within the Nigerian setting. This knowledge gap hampers the development of effective interventions and support systems for at-risk youth, exacerbating the negative consequences of delinquent behaviour. The limited understanding of this issue mainly stems from insufficient research; therefore, it is difficult to comprehend the whole range of the problem and conceive well-thought-out solutions to address it. Additionally, the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency in Nigeria remain poorly understood, hindering efforts to implement evidence-based interventions. Moreover, the paucity of resources and support services for students who are facing these problems makes the situation worse. This insufficiency causes many students to fall victim to the negative consequences of delinquent behaviour such as high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and low academic performance. Without support structures in place, these students may not be able to overcome the challenges they experience, and this might affect their long-term mental health and academic achievement. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between juvenile delinquency and its impact on the mental health and academic performance of students in Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the prevailing forms of juvenile delinquency among students in Nigeria and the underlying factors contributing to these behaviours.
2. To determine how juvenile delinquency affects the mental health of students in Nigeria, including their levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and overall psychological well-being.
3. To evaluate the impact of juvenile delinquency on the academic performance of students in Nigeria, in terms of how it influences their ability to learn, concentrate, and achieve educational goals.
4. To examine the resources, support system and intervention strategies currently used to address the needs of students affected by juvenile delinquency in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Juvenile delinquency is the engagement of minors, especially those below 18 years, in criminal activities or behaviours

against established societal norms and laws (Shoemaker, 2020). It is a broad category of offences, and they include crimes against individuals (e.g., assault, robbery), crimes against property (e.g., theft, vandalism), and substance-related offences (e.g., drug possession, underage drinking) (Siegel & Welsh, 2005). The causes of juvenile delinquency are multifactorial, with an intricate interplay between intrapersonal, familial and environmental factors (Jennings et al., 2010). At the individual level, factors such as impulsivity, low self-control, and cognitive deficit can be seen as predictors of delinquent behaviours (Rocque et al., 2017). Moreover, mental health conditions, including conduct disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and substance use disorders, also increase the likelihood of committing juvenile offences (Underwood & Washington, 2016).

It is worth mentioning that family factors are also one of the key aspects of delinquent behaviours. Dysfunctional family conditions, which encompass absent parental supervision, incompetent disciplinary methods and exposure to domestic violence and drug abuse, can bring the manifestation of delinquency (Mwangagi, 2019). In addition, delinquent behaviours often result from peer influences or having delinquent peers who reinforce and perpetuate such behaviours (Haynie & Osgood, 2005). In addition to environmental factors, such as neighbourhoods, schooling, and socioeconomic status, can also be from juvenile delinquency (Vaughn et al., 2020). Youths' exposure to community violence, low-quality education as well as limited access to positive social support systems will increase the likelihood of their involvement in delinquent behaviours (Piquero et al., 2016). To resolve the problem of juvenile delinquency, a thorough plan of action must be developed, generally designed to combat the risk factors, and include rehabilitative and youth development services. Studies have found that interventions that are based on evidence, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, family-based intervention, and community-based programs, are effective in reducing delinquency and promoting better outcomes (Lipsey, 2009). In Nigeria, juvenile delinquency is a relevant problem and, unfortunately, it is on the increase. In fact, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Nigeria boasts one of the highest rates of juvenile delinquent cases in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a large portion of crimes being committed by persons aged 18 or less. Youth delinquency in Nigeria largely manifests as drug abuse, theft, and violent crimes.

Mental health is a complex construct that involves emotional, psychological and social dimensions (World Health Organization, 2022). It refers to the capability of being able to deal with the usual daily stressors, work effectively, and contribute back to one's community (Manderscheid et al., 2010 cited in Orth & van Wyk, 2022). The term mental health problems or disorders refers to clinically significant disturbances in an individual's cognition, mood, or behaviour that lead to some level of dysfunction in everyday functioning

(American Psychiatric Association, 2022). These disorders can have a devastating effect on the quality of life of an individual, his or her relationships, and capacity to carry out various tasks (Whiteford et al., 2013).

The aetiology of mental problems is complex, including the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors (Funk et al., 2012). Genetic predispositions, neurochemical imbalances and brain structural atypia can lead to the appearance of mental disorders (Smoller, 2016). Moreover, psychological factors like past experiences, trauma, and coping mechanisms also play a significant role in influencing an individual's journey toward mental health (Nanni et al., 2012). Environmental and socio-economic factors also considerably contribute to mental health results. Being exposed to events such as adversity, poverty, discrimination, and lack of social support may increase the probability of developing mental health problems (Allen et al., 2014). On the other hand, a strong social network, availability of mental health services and a supportive community could be the building blocks to resilience and good mental health (Thoits, 2011).

The promotion of mental health calls for a holistic emphasis on the different causative factors involved in this regard. Interventions based on research, such as psychotherapy, systematized prescriptions, and lifestyle changes, deal with mental disorders well (Cuijpers et al., 2019). Similarly, prevention and early intervention strategies that include fostering mental health awareness, curbing the stigma, and creating the appropriate environment support the decreased possibility of the problem.

Academic performance implies a student's attainment of goals in education, which can be seen by some parameters like grades, test results and perseverance levels (Steinmayr et al., 2014). It is multidimensional however, it incorporates both knowledge and the learning and perfection of expertise development from a training environment. It becomes the representation of a student's endeavour, motivation, and expertise (Farrington et al., 2012).

Academic performance is influenced by a mixture of person-related factors and environmental factors. On the first level, which involves a person individually, cognitive abilities such as intelligence, memory as well as problem-solving skills become a paramount factor (Deary et al., 2007). Besides, the non-cognitive factors which comprise aspects like motivation, self-control, and study habits greatly contribute to the success in academics (Richardson et al., 2012). Furthermore, factors of environment, which include family background, school climate, and teacher attributes affect the outcome of academics (Hattie & Anderman, 2019). Parents are mostly involved in the student's academic activities and they provide him with encouragement and support, positively affecting his academic performance (Wilder, 2014). For example, in the same way, a well-organized school and a schooling system that supports and encourages the development of academic systems, through dedicated tutors and diverse resources, could

enhance the progress of the pupils (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). Additionally, the status of the society and the fact that where you live also matter to an academic performance (Reardon, 2018). Those students, who originate from families of low-income or deprived communities, might suffer from more difficulties like insufficient access to rights, poor health, and environmental stressors, which can eventually obstruct their academic development (Rothstein, 2004).

To achieve academic success, a holistic approach that not only focuses on individual factors but also environmental issues is highly required. Experts report (Fryer, 2017) that proven practices, which include the emphasis on academic enrichment, tutoring, improvement in school quality, and other social methods, are instrumental in improving academic achievements. Moreover, putting in place egalitarian policies and creating an environment that will promote the acquisition of knowledge by every individual is a fundamental requirement for education success (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Mental Health Implications of Juvenile Delinquency

Several researches have highlighted a strong correlation between juvenile delinquency and mental health problems, with delinquent behaviour frequently preceding or being the result of psychological distress. The study by Wasserman et al. (2005) established that mental health disorders were common among juvenile detainees in the United States. The findings showed that about 70% of the adolescents in the juvenile system met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, the most being substance abuse disorders, disruptive behaviour disorders and anxiety disorders (Wasserman et al., 2005). Also, Teplin et al. (2002) showed that 60% of the juvenile detainees in Cook County, Illinois, had at least one psychiatric disorder, thus revealing the enormous mental health problems facing juvenile offenders.

The connection between mental health and juvenile delinquency is often reciprocal and intricate. On one hand, those with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or conduct disorders, will have a higher chance of delinquency (Thompson et al., 2020). On the one hand, however, the event of being engaged in delinquent activities and the resultant aftermath, such as arrest, imprisonment, or discrediting, can further intensify or become a cause of a mental health problem (Gatti et al., 2009). On the other hand, various aspects may weaken or mediate the connection between juvenile delinquency and mental health outcomes. For example, the study conducted by Chung et al (2002) demonstrated that the link between delinquency and depression was stronger for females than males, indicating that the effects of delinquent behaviour on mental health might differ by gender. Moreover, family factors like parental mental health, parental style, and home environment have been proven to have an impact on the mental health development of delinquent youths (Hoeve et al., 2008).

Academic Performance and Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency has also been linked to poor academic performance and educational outcomes. Longitudinal researches by Maguin and Loeber (1996) show that early adolescent delinquent behaviours are the most important predictors of school dropout and poor academic performance. Hirschfield (2009) indicated that school-age delinquents were more likely than their peers to have significantly lower grades, lower test scores, and higher suspension and dropping-out rates. Several mechanisms have been proposed, which explain the negative effects of delinquency on school performance. To begin with, participation in deviant conduct may interfere with school work and distract adolescents (Hirschfield, 2009). Also, the penalties for disruptive behaviour which may include suspension or expulsion from school can create inconveniences and stop the development of academic skills (Arcia, 2006). Furthermore, the stigma and the negative labelling related to delinquency can be a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the offender can disengage with school and thus have more academic problems (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003).

Mediating effects on delinquency and academic achievement may also be occasioned by factors such as mental health problems. Hence, Meece et al. (2006) discovered that the negative impact of delinquency on educational success was partly transmitted through students' private views about the gains from criminal activities. In addition, socioeconomic status, family environment, and peers have been named as important moderators of the delinquent behaviour-academic performance relationship (Hirschfield, 2009; Maguin & Loeber 1996).

Interventions and Prevention Strategies

Considering the negative consequences of juvenile delinquency on mental health and academic performance, different intervention and prevention strategies have been proposed and evaluated. The first approach entails tackling the underlying risk factors that form the base of delinquent conduct, including family problems, poverty, and social disadvantage. Programs such as Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) have been proven helpful in the reduction of delinquent behaviours and improvement of family functioning (Sawyer & Borduin, 2011; Sexton & Turner, 2011).

Additionally, school-based strategies have shown potential in helping delinquent youth in their educational and mental health needs. For instance, the Cognitive Behavioural Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program was found to be effective in relieving symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression among students who were victims of violence and trauma (Stein et al., 2003). In addition, central academic support programs like tutoring, mentoring and career counselling have been proven to enhance the educational performance of offenders (Arcia, 2006). Restorative justice models (that focus on accountability, reconciliation, and integration) have been suggested as alternatives to traditional punitive measures to some extent

for juvenile offenders. This approach is aimed at repairing the damage done by offending behaviour and meeting the social and emotional needs that the offender may have had (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007). It has been shown that restorative justice programs can lead to decreased recidivism and better psychological well-being for juvenile offenders (Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018).

Empirical Review

Juvenile delinquency as a social dilemma has major implications for individuals, families, and communities across the globe. Juvenile delinquency among students in Nigeria and other countries is one of the major challenges faced by academic institutions, mental health workers, policymakers and society. Comprehension of the interconnection between juvenile delinquency and student mental health and academic performance is a starting point for development of the successful treatment programs and counselling services.

Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic status, family environment, peer influence, and educational resources. A study by Alinnor and Okefor (2023) found that 21.9% of in-school adolescents in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, experienced depression. Female gender, low socioeconomic status, and non-monogamous family structures were significantly associated with depression. Early detection and management of depression can mitigate risks like substance abuse, relationship issues, suicide, and academic difficulties. They found that smoking, cultism, and reckless endangerment were the major IJDs in high, medium, and low-density areas, respectively. Anxiety levels decreased with lower residential density, suggesting that high-impact areas should be the focus of interventions.

Oyeleke and Tanga (2015) explored the relationship between youth gangs, peer imitation, friendship networks, and adolescent delinquency in secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. They found that rates of juvenile delinquency rose with gang membership and peer imitation, and age was positively correlated with delinquency, possibly due to increased rebelliousness and adventure. The research offered various approaches to engaging teens holistically, including community service programs and non-parental role models, to combat negative influences from peer groups. Nwatah and colleagues (2022) found that sociodemographic factors, such as maternal age, student age, and school, influence cognitive function measures in early adolescent students. Private school students were found to have ideal IQ scores. Siby and Nithya (2022) found connections between delinquency proneness, metacognition, social competence, and emotional competence in vulnerable adolescents. Grinenko et al. (2023) identified factors affecting personality development among young criminals, including substandard living conditions, overcrowding, low family income, and negative adult behaviour models. They proposed timely diagnosis and holistic preventive measures to tackle juvenile delinquency.

Research in Nigeria is needed to understand the connection between juvenile delinquency, mental health, and academic performance. While some studies have provided valuable information, gaps remain in understanding the extent of these consequences. Long-term investigations are needed to trace the effects on mental health and academic performance. Additionally, studies on gender variations and protective factors are needed. This research gap can help develop effective policies and initiatives for Nigerian youth's well-being and success.

METHOD

The study employed a cross-sectional research design to investigate the prevalent forms of juvenile delinquency, the underlying factors contributing to these behaviours, and the impact of delinquency on student mental health and academic performance in Nigeria. The study sample consisted of 250 secondary school students, aged between 13 and 18 years, selected from ten public secondary schools in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The participants were drawn from different socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure the representativeness of the sample. The schools were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure a diverse representation of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Within each selected school, students were randomly chosen to participate in the study.

Researchers developed a questionnaire to measure juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, covering various delinquent acts such as vandalism, theft, drug issues, and violence. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. The mental health status of participants was assessed using the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), which assesses variables like depression, anxiety, stress, and psychological discomfort. The GHQ-12 had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86 in this study. Academic performance was evaluated using grades, test scores, and school records, with permission from school administration officers. The socioeconomic status questionnaire collected information about individuals' backgrounds, including family income, parental education, and household resources. This data was used to segregate participants into lower, middle, and high socioeconomic groups for analysis. The questionnaires were designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria.

The researcher obtained ethical approval and permission from the institutional review board and schools, collecting data during regular school hours. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and determine the extent of juvenile delinquency. Pearson's correlation analysis method was used to explore the correlation between juvenile delinquency, student mental health, and academic achievement. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine differences in juvenile delinquency occurrence within

various socioeconomic groups. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.

Presents The Demographic Profile of The Participants, Analyzing Their Socioeconomic Status, Gender, and age.

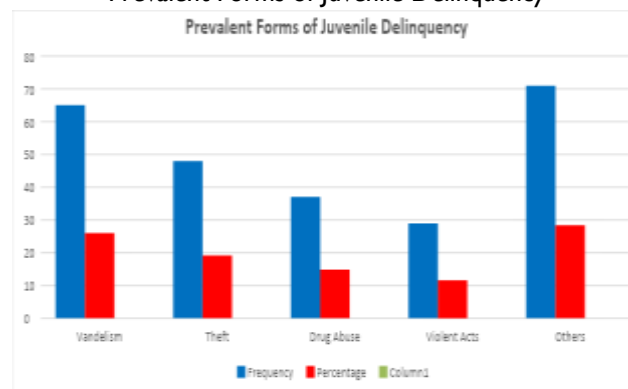
Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Participants	Percentage
Socioeconomic Status	Low	90	36%
	Middle	105	42%
	High	55	22%
Age	13-14	62	24.8%
	15-16	108	43.2%
	17-18	80	32%
	40 and above		
Gender	Male	128	51.2%
	Female	122	48.8%

The table provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' demographic profiles, including socioeconomic statuses, gender, and age. The majority are from the middle socioeconomic class (42%), with the lowest (36%), and highest (22%). The sample is balanced, with males representing 51.2% and females 48.8%. The majority of participants are aged 13-18, similar to Nigerian secondary school students' target audience. The analysis integrates these demographics to better understand the study's dependent variables.

Research Question 1: What are the prevailing forms of juvenile delinquency among students in Nigeria, and what are the underlying factors contributing to these behaviours?

Table 2.

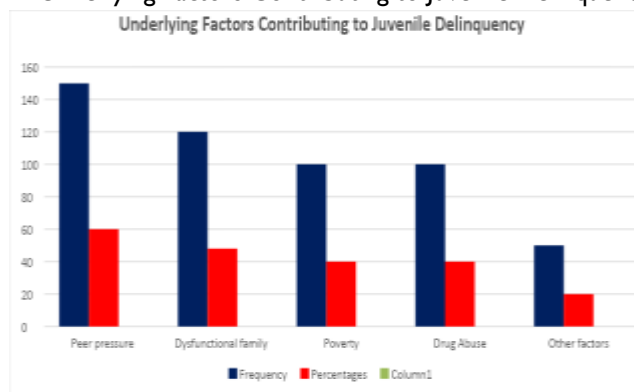
Prevalent Forms of Juvenile Delinquency



The study reveals that vandalism (26%), theft (19.2%), and drug abuse (14.8%) are the primary forms of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, with 28.4% also engaging in other delinquent behaviours like truancy and gang involvement.

Table 3.

Underlying Factors Contributing to Juvenile Delinquency



The findings suggest that juvenile delinquency is a prevalent issue among students in Nigeria, with various forms of antisocial and illegal behaviours being reported. Based on the analysis of the socioeconomic status questionnaire and open-ended responses from participants, the major factors contributing to juvenile delinquency are peer pressure and negative peer influence (60%), dysfunctional family environments (e.g., lack of parental supervision, domestic violence) (48%), poverty and economic deprivation (40%). Research Question 2: How does juvenile delinquency affect the mental health of students in Nigeria, including their levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and overall psychological well-being?

Table 4.

Relationship between Juvenile Delinquency and Mental Health

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson's r	p-value
Juvenile Delinquency	32.14	9.87	0.48	< 0.001
Mental Health (GHQ-12 Score)	19.62	6.23		

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.48, p < 0.001$) between juvenile delinquency and poor mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12 scores. This indicates that higher levels of juvenile delinquency were associated with poorer mental health outcomes among the sampled students. Research Question 3: What is the impact of juvenile delinquency on the academic performance of students in Nigeria, and how does it influence their ability to learn, concentrate, and achieve educational outcomes?

Table 5.

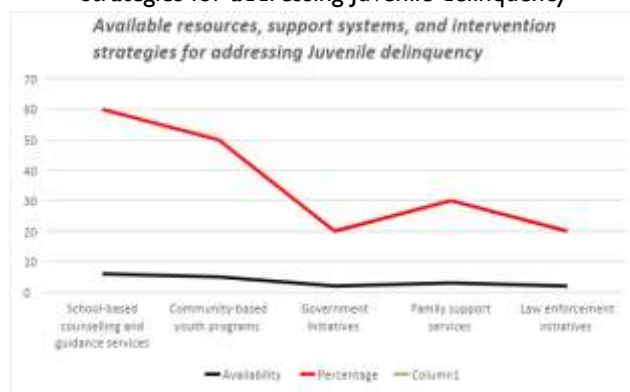
Impact of Juvenile Delinquency on Academic Performance

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson's r	p-value
Juvenile Delinquency	32.14	9.87	-0.37	< 0.001
Academic Performance	68.24	12.15		

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.37, p < 0.001$) between juvenile delinquency and academic performance. This indicates that higher levels of juvenile delinquency were associated with lower academic performance among the sampled students. Research Question 4: What resources, support systems, and intervention strategies are currently available to address the needs of students affected by juvenile delinquency in Nigeria?

Table 6.

Available resources, support systems, and intervention strategies for addressing juvenile delinquency



The study reveals that community-based youth programs, facilitated by NGOs and organizations, provide about 50% of the resources for addressing juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. However, only 60% of schools have educational and psychological counselling units, which are crucial for providing psychological support and counselling to students. Family Support Services account for 30%, while Government Initiatives and Law Enforcement Initiatives account for 20% of the resources. These resources are often low on funding, staff, and materials, which can reduce their impact on juvenile delinquency. The results emphasize the need for a multifaceted approach, including participation from schools, NGOs, policing bodies, social welfare institutions, and communities. By reinforcing resources, creating new programs, and supporting inter-agency cooperation, Nigeria can better handle juvenile delinquency and its impact on students' mental health and academic performance. Emphasizing social and economic factors such as poverty, lack of education, and dysfunctional families is also crucial. Without these factors, the effectiveness of intervention or assistance systems may be severely restricted.

Testing of Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and student mental health in Nigeria.

The study found a significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and student mental health in Nigeria. The p-value was less than the significance level, indicating a negative impact on students' mental health. High rates of delinquency were linked to increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and psychological distress. Mental health problems are believed to be a primary cause of juvenile delinquency, as internal psychological distress leads to problematic behaviours in

adolescents. The alternative hypothesis, rejecting the null hypothesis, supports this finding.

Ho2: There is no significant impact of juvenile delinquency on academic performance among students in Nigeria.

The study reveals a significant impact of juvenile delinquency on academic performance among Nigerian students. The p-value is less than the significance level, indicating that juvenile delinquency significantly affects students' academic performance. The delinquent behaviour directly correlates with low grades and other academic achievement indicators. This aligns with previous research suggesting that juvenile delinquency can hinder students' ability to learn, concentrate, and engage in educational activities due to factors such as disobedience, absenteeism, and mental strain.

Ho3: The prevalence of juvenile delinquency among students in Nigeria does not vary significantly across different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The study reveals a significant difference in the prevalence of juvenile delinquency among Nigerian students across various socioeconomic backgrounds, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, as the p-value is less than the significance level.

Table 7.
One-way ANOVA Results

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p-value
Between Groups	1842.67	2	921.34	9.78	< 0.001
Within Groups	23214.29	247	94.03		
Total	25056.96	249			

Table 8.
Post-hoc Analysis (Tukey's HSD Test)

Socioeconomic Group	Mean Difference	p-value
Low vs. Middle	6.24	0.002
Low vs. High	10.17	< 0.001
Middle vs. High	3.93	0.048

The study reveals that juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is significantly different among low, middle, and high socioeconomic groups, with students from lower backgrounds having higher rates of delinquency compared to their peers from middle and high socioeconomic backgrounds. This suggests that the socioeconomic background of a family significantly influences the rate of delinquency among Nigerian youth. This finding supports previous research indicating a strong correlation between poor economic conditions and juvenile delinquency.

Discussion

This study's findings showed that juvenile delinquency has a profound effect on student's mental health and performance in school in Nigeria. The most common crimes, including vandalism, theft, drug abuse, and violent acts, were often

observed to be related to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, among juvenile offenders, poor academic performance has been linked to higher delinquency rates likely because the behaviour can distract students from learning, concentration and ultimately, academic achievement. The research results also demonstrate a considerable negative impact of juvenile offending on the mental health of students, with the majority of affected persons suffering from different levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. This becomes a consistent position which is similar to the literature that highlights the deep psychological consequences of criminal behaviour (Adegoke, 2015; John-Nelson et al., 2021).

The study further proves the harmful effect of delinquency on academic performance, reflected by lower grades, higher absenteeism and lessened classroom engagement. This finding vindicates the prior studies which have linked delinquent behaviour to poor school performance (Adigun et al., 2019; John-Nelson et al., 2021). The considerable difference in the occurrence of juvenile delinquency among different socio-economic classes reveals that those who come from low-income families are more prone to be involved in such behaviour. This concurs with the literature which identifies socio-economic factors, home dynamics and surrounding environment as the major issues of juvenile crimes (John-Nelson et al., 2021; Folorunsho et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study explores the causes of adolescent delinquency in secondary schools in Lagos, highlighting the devastating consequences such as poor mental health and low academic performance. It highlights the need for holistic education reforms, including multi-faceted programs that address juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. The study emphasizes the need to tackle poverty, parental absence, and exposure to violence through focused social programs and community-wide interventions. School-based counselling services and positive youth development programs can help students cope with problems and adopt more positive behaviours. Interaction between educational institutions, police departments, and social service institutions is crucial for developing a holistic strategy that emphasizes prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation for at-risk youths. A comprehensive and coordinated response from stakeholders is essential for creating a safer and more caring learning environment for students in Lagos and beyond.

The report recommends implementing school-based mental health programs, community-based rehabilitation programs, and collaboration among public schools, social agents, law enforcement agencies, and communities to address juvenile delinquency. It also suggests allocating resources towards inclusive, supportive educational systems, particularly for underserved learners. Further studies should focus on the long-term consequences of delinquency on mental health, academic progress, and overall well-being. The report also

suggests establishing specialized centres or programs to provide comprehensive support, rehabilitation, and reintegration services for students affected by juvenile delinquency.

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between juvenile delinquency, student mental health, and academic performance in Nigeria. However, it has limitations, such as its geographical location in Lagos State and reliance on self-reported data from students. The findings emphasize the need for a collective effort from regulators, teachers, law enforcement, and social welfare agencies to address this issue and promote positive youth development. Future research should include a longitudinal or experimental design, data collection from diverse sources, and extending the study to other regions. Additionally, further research could explore intervention strategies and mediating factors.

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