

A STUDY OF SELF REGULATION, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER AS CORRELATE TO TENDENCY TO COMMIT CRIME AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: The study investigated self regulation, domestic violence and gender as correlate to tendency to commit crime among adolescents in a public secondary school; Modern Ideal College Enugu, Enugu State. A total of 150 students were draw from JSS1 to SS3. 58.67% (88) of these students were females while 41.33% (62) were males. The selection of students was randomized and was not influenced by any criteria other than the inclusion criterion; participants must be within the age bracket of 10 to 19 years of age. The instruments used in the study were: The Crime Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) was developed by Animashaun (2011), The Child Exposure to Domestic Violence (CEDV) scale developed by Edleson, Shin, and Armendariz (2008), Self-Regulation Scale developed by Novak and Clayton (2001). The correlation design was adopted for this study while were used in Pearson's correlation analyzing the data the Pearson's correlation The result of the findings reveals that there is significant positive correlation between exposure to domestic violence and tendency to commit crime and also there is a significant correlation between gender and exposure to domestic violence. While both male and female and tendency to commit crime and gender exposure to domestic violence showed no significant correlation between. The implication of this finding is that the increase in adolescents and youth involvement in different kinds of crime could be as a result of increased exposure of child to domestic violence, directly or indirectly. Considering that the damage that accompanies youth involvement in crime can at times be unsalvageable, it is, therefore, imperative that parents and guardian desist from exposing children to any form of domestic violence. It is recommended that Government especially National Orientation Agency and other relevance agencies should mount campaign against domestic violence and exposure to domestic violence. On their part, psychologists are to develop programme aimed at healing the inner child wounds and other programmes to enhance harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Self Regulation, Domestic Violence, Gender Crime and Adolescents.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Background to the Study

Being a developmental stage of complex translational changes, adolescence has been a subject of extensive study. The change in behaviour associated with the continued refinement of the sense of self attracted and have made prominent the field of psychology in the study of this developmental stage. World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. It is a period of multiple transitions involving education, training, employment, and unemployment, as well as transitions from one living circumstance to another (Coleman and Roker, 1998). Erikson (1968) reported that the main and most important developmental tasks for an adolescent are to solve the identity versus role confusion crisis. These prompt adolescents to seek social environments where they can belong to and create meaningful relationships with other people (Chen et al, 2007). In so doing, adolescents may identify with peer groups where they will be mounted with pressure to conform to their behavioural norms. If adolescents are unable to resist peer pressure and negative influences, they may be prone to delinquent behaviour (Rageliene, 2016). This developmental stage thus, represent the period of greatest risk for youth becoming involved in criminal activity (Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2003).

Research over the past few decades on normal child development and on development of delinquent behavior has shown that individual, social, and community conditions as well as their interactions influence behavior. There is general agreement that behavior, including antisocial and delinquent behavior, is the result of a complex interplay of individual biological, genetic factors and environmental factors (Bock and Goode, 1996). However, the trend in the study of this problem has moved gradually from the focus on just physical and psychological composition of the individual to the place of social influence on an individual. Scholars who claimed that family structure is a major factor in the causation of juvenile delinquency worked on the assumption that, if the family background (especially the general atmosphere of the home and the attitude of the other members of the family) is congenial for proper development of a child, it is likely that the child will grow up to be law abiding. On the other hand scholars who claimed that extra family conditions are crucial in the explanation of delinquent behaviour worked on the assumption that participation in the creation and maintenance of delinquent subculture is an important factor in causation of juvenile delinquency (Oloruntimehin, 1973).

Crime is like other concepts in social sciences, which have no generally accepted definition. According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009), "a crime is held to be an offence, which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority. Dambazau (1994) defined crime as an act or omission against public interest and which is prescribed by law enacted by the legislature in the overall interests of the society, and to which prescribed punishment is attached in the event of violation and it involves four major principles which are public wrong, moral wrong, law and punishment for the criminal. Crime is also seen as a violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, and upon which the rest members of the society mete sanction upon those guilty of the violation. It is for the same reason that the legal system views crime as a public and moral wrong. The prevalence of crime in the world today is a cause for serious concern for all and sundry. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security. Crime impacts on society in a variety of ways according to the nature and extent of crime committed. It constitutes a problem when its incidence is as rampant in the society as to constitute a threat to the security of persons and property, as well as social order and solidarity (Onoge, 1998).

Crime is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development. It causes great personal suffering, vast material damage, and place enormous burden on the urban social network. Globally, every five years, 60% of city inhabitants have been victims of one type of crime or another while over half of these crimes have involved personal crime (arson, fraudulence, cheating, 419 syndrome, forgery, etc). Reports from the media show that most of these crimes are committed by youths within their care adolescence and early adulthood. One important protective factor that may help to prevent youth from engaging in risky behaviour or help adolescents avoid outcomes associated with risky behaviour is self-regulation (Moilanen et al, 2005).

Self-regulation has become recognized for its foundational role in promoting wellbeing across lifespan, including physical, emotional, social, economic, health and educational achievement. It can be defined as the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed actions, including a variety of actions necessary for success in school, relationships, and the workplace (Murray and Rosanbalm, 2017). Self-regulation has also been defined as the ability to flexibly activate, monitor, inhibit, persevere and/or adapt one's behaviour, attention, emotions and cognitive strategies in response to direction from internal cues, environmental stimuli and feedback from others, in an attempt to attain personally-relevant goals (Frijns et al., 2005). It has become recognized for its foundational role in promoting wellbeing across the lifespan, including physical, emotional, social and economic health and educational achievement (Murray and Rosanbalm, 2017). For instance, emotional self-regulation has been identified to create a positive impact of offenders arrested for domestic violence (Bomar, 2017).

Domestic violence is a significant social problem which has become the focus of increased community concern. Whether children experience violence themselves or witness this behaviour, this violence can have long-lasting impacts on children's wellbeing and development. Domestic violence is not physical violence alone. It is defined by ACESDV as any behaviour the purpose of which is to gain power and control over a spouse, partner, girl/boyfriend or intimate family member. The family, being the first agent of socialization, can impact on a child both negatively and positively. One negative impact is the child being socialised to aggressive behaviours and tendencies. Exposure to violence has been consistently linked to antisocial behaviour among youth. For example, violence victimization was found to be the single best predictor of juvenile violent behaviours in adolescents (Blum, Ireland, and Blum, 2003). Children exposed to violence frequently experience difficulty in their interactions with peers and adults (Margolin and Gordis, 2000), indicating underlying deficits in social skills. This lack of social competence may serve as a risk for later developing conduct problems – invariably leading to criminal tendency. This is especially higher in the male gender.

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e, the state of being male or female, or an intersex variation), sex based on social structure (i.e, gender roles), or gender identity (Hage, 2004). In adults, gender is seen as the single best predictor of criminal behaviour: men commit more crime and women less. However with the rapid increase in gender equality, there have been also been increase in the number of female offenders. This is evident in the growing interest in gender differences in the type and frequency of crime in the past two decades. This change is one of the consequences of numerous other social policy changes affecting women and men in the society (Hurwitz and Smithey, 1998).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nearly every society since the dawn of history has looked on youth crime as a serious problem, and our society is no different. Although the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. Anti-social behaviours such as vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, to mention but a few, are often associated with the juvenile delinquents. Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the wave of juvenile delinquency, the prospect of having Nigeria emerge a better, safer, more prosperous and crime free society will remain elusive (Udoh et,al 2010).

The current study seeks to add to the existing knowledge on the predicating factors of the tendency to commit crime among adolescent. The variables assessed in the study are, self-regulation, domestic violence, and gender. The outcome of this study will show if the above variables are viable to be used as predictors of adolescents' tendency to commit crime.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to determine the correlation between the variables; self-regulation, domestic violence and gender, and tendency to commit crime among adolescent.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1) To determine the correlation between self-regulation and tendency to commit crime among adolescents
- 2) To determine the correlation between domestic violence and tendency to commit crime among adolescents
- 3) To determine the correlation between gender and tendency to commit crime among adolescents.

4. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY VARIABLES

1. Adolescent – These are individuals within the age range of 10-19 years (World Health Organization, 2017)
2. Tendency to commit Crime-is defined as any overt or covert law-breaking conduct in a given country or state, punishable upon conviction (Coulacoglou and Saklofske, 2017) and is measured using a thirty three items known as Crime Behaviour Rating Scale (CBRS) which was developed and validated by Animasahun (2011).
3. Self-Regulation – This is the assessment an individuals' ability to regulate negative emotions and disruptive behaviors and is measured by using the Self-regulation questionnaire developed by Novak and Clayton (2001).
4. Domestic Violence – is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling and threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between anyone over 16 years, who are/have been intimately involved or are family members (Royal College of Psychiatrist, 2017). This is measured using Child Exposure to Domestic Violence (CEDV) Scale developed by (Edleson, Shin, and Armendariz, 2008).
5. Gender - This is the state of being male or female.

Participants

The participants of this study are adolescents in a public secondary school; Modern Ideal College Enugu, Enugu State. A total of 150 students were draw from JSS1 to SS3. 58.67% (88) of these students were females while 41.33% (62) were males. The selection of students was randomized and was not influenced by any criteria other than the inclusion criterion; participants must be within the age bracket of 10 to 19 years of age. This is because according to WHO (2011), ages 10 – 19 are regarded as the adolescent age. Therefore any prospective participant younger or older than the above age was excluded from the study.

Instruments

To answer the research questions of this study, three instruments were used; Criminal Behaviour Rating Scale (developed by Animashaun,2011), Child Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale (Edleson, Shin, and Johnson Armendariz, 2008) and Self-regulation Scale developed by Novak and Clayton (2001).

Criminal Behaviour Rating Scale (CBRS)

The Crime Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) was developed by Animashaun (2011) and it was the first scale in the Crime Behavior Factor Battery. The CBRS is used in measuring the tendency to commit crime among a class of individuals. It is a 33 item scale constructed on 5- points Likert format where lesser points implies a lower tendency while points implies higher tendency to commit crime per item. It has a norm of 63 whereby any score above the norm is an indication of high crime tendency. It has a Cronbach Alpha of 0.95 and a Guttman split half reliability of 0.82.

Child Exposure to Domestic Violence (CEDV) Scale

The Child Exposure to Domestic Violence (CEDV) scale developed by Edleson, Shin and Armendariz (2008) was used to collect data on exposure to domestic violence. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (i) Demographic details (such as age, gender, race and relation of the abuser) and (ii) The types of exposure to domestic violence the teenager might have experienced. The questionnaire was originally developed for children who had been exposed to domestic violence. The CEDV scale sought to determine the frequency of domestic violence scenarios a child is exposed to at home and the way in which they were exposed to it.

The responses to the given scenarios were measured on a four-point Likert scale of 'never', 'seldom', 'almost always' and 'always'. The convergent questions used to discover types of exposure through Things I've Seen and Heard (TISH) permit participants to respond to each item using a four-point Likert-type scale where more than one response can be chosen. An example of the TISH contains follow-up statements such as "When your mother and her partner disagreed with one another, how did you experience it?" the response of which ranged from "I saw the end-result" (e.g. she was hurt, something was broken, police

came.), "I witnessed the incident", "I heard what was going on but did not see it" (e.g. stayed in my room, hid nearby) and "I heard about it afterwards" (Edleson, Shin and Armendariz, 2008).

The internal consistency reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Test-retest reliability was established by Pearson's correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and paired t-test. The convergent validity assessment was done by administering measure concurrently with Things I've Seen and Heard (TISH) measure of violence exposure.

Self-Regulation Scale

This scale was developed by Novak and Clayton (2001). It is a 13 item questionnaire used to assess children's ability to regulate negative emotions and disruptive behaviors, and to set and attain goals. Respondents rate how true each item is for them, ranging from 1 (never true) to 4 (always true). After reverse coding items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13, higher scores represent the child's ability to regulate his/her emotions (item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), behavior (items 9, 10, 11, 12) and cognition (items 6, 7, 8).

5. PROCEDURE

A total of 150 copies of the questionnaires were randomly distributed to the same number of participants; 88 of which were females and 62 males. Prior to administering the questionnaires, the consent of the school authority was sought and appropriate permission granted after explaining the aim and intentions of the product of this study to them. After handing the participants the questionnaire, the researcher explained each session of the questionnaire to the participant and cleared confusions they had in the course of filling the questionnaire. When the participants were done filling the questionnaires, the researcher assisted by research assistance collected them, going through them one by one and highlighting any inappropriate or unclear selections and this was all attended to adequately by participants before final submission. After collection of the questionnaire, the researcher collated the data collected and then proceeded to analysing them.

Design and Statistics

This is a survey design and correlation design and Pearson's correlation adopted for data analysis.

6. RESULTS

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

Variables	Mean	S.D	Correlation			
			EDV	SR	GENDER	TCC
EDV	13.69	7.376	1	-0.003	0.180*	0.269**
SR	29.66	5.221	-0.003	1	-0.007	-0.031
GENDER	1.62	0.501	0.180*	-0.007	1	0.102
TCC	74.90	13.591	0.269**	-0.031	0.102	1

*Correlation is significant at $p = 0.05$

**Correlation is significant at $p = 0.01$

The inspection of the table shows that there is a significant positive correlation ($p = 0.001$) between exposure to domestic violence and tendency to commit crime among adolescents.

It also shows that there is no significant correlation ($p = 0.704$ and 0.216 respectively) between Self-regulation and tendency to commit crime, and between gender and tendency to commit crime.

However, the table shows a significant ($p = 0.027$) positive correlation between gender and exposure to domestic violence.

Summary of the findings

1. There is significant positive correlation between exposure to domestic violence and tendency to commit crime.
2. There is no significant correlation between self-regulation and tendency to commit crime.
3. There is no significant correlation between both male and female and tendency to commit crime.
4. The study, however, find that there is a significant correlation between gender and exposure to domestic violence.

7. DISCUSSION

This study accessed the correlation between three independent variables; exposure to domestic violence, self-regulation and gender, against the tendency to commit crime among adolescents in Modern Ideal College, Enugu, Enugu state. In order to achieve the specific objectives of this study, three hypotheses were postulated which were tested using appropriate instruments. The first hypothesis which stated that, 'Exposure to domestic violence will correlate significantly and positively with tendency to commit crime' was accepted. This finding is in consonance with the findings of many researchers. Many researchers have reported a link between violent childhood experiences (including witnessing domestic violence and/or being physically abused) and violent adult offenses, and this phenomenon is frequently called the intergenerational transmission of violence or aggression (e.g., Dutton et al. 2006; Jankowski et al. 1999; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986). One often-hypothesized mechanism of such transmission is observational learning (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994), most commonly described as learning from modelling with a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory suggests that a child learns not only how to commit violence but also learns positive attitudes about violence when he (or she) sees it rewarded (Dutton and Holtzworth-Munroe 1997). This suggests that children who have witnessed violence, or have been abused, learn destructive conflict resolution and communication patterns. Sternberg et al. (1997) suggest that Bandura's social learning theory would predict that both observers and victims can be affected, with children from more violent environments being more likely to acquire aggressive modes of behaviour. There is a large body of evidence suggesting that social learning theory can account for violent behaviour in general (e.g., Bandura et al. 1961; Ellis and Sekyra 1972; Plomin et al. 1981).

The second hypothesis which stated that, 'Gender will significantly and positively correlate with tendency to commit crime' was rejected. This implies being a male or female has not correlation with the tendency to commit crime. This finding is contrary to the finding of Denno (1994), whose examination of gender differences and crime reached the conclusion that, with respect to prevalence, males commit more crime and violence than females during both their juvenile and adult years, and they are more frequent and chronic offenders once they do participate in crime, and with respect to prediction, results confirmed some past research suggesting that biological factors are generally more predictive of crime among females, whereas environmental factors are generally more predictive of crime among males. These findings are based on the results of the Biosocial Study. More so, Hindelang and Gottfredson (1979), noted in his analysis of the National Crime Survey that women were less often arrested because they in fact committed less crime than did males and also because the types of crime which they committed frequently were substantially less serious.

The third hypothesis which stated that, 'Lack of self-regulation will significantly and positively correlate with tendency to commit crime' was rejected. This indicates that an individual's self-regulation or lack of it does not have a linear relationship with the individual's tendency to commit crime. This particular finding of this study contradicts popular opinion by many researchers who have postulated theories to support the correlation between components of self-regulation and tendency to commit crime. One of such researchers is Travis Hirschi, who alongside Gottfredson conducted a study in which age distributions of crimes and analogous acts was examined and they came to the conclusion that those acts examined are, after all, manifestations of low self-control (a component of self-regulation) on the part of the offender (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). They were forced to this position by their conclusion that the powerful effects of age on criminal and analogous acts are the same in all social and demographic groups, and that difference in crime rates persist over the life course and are therefore essentially impervious to changes in the social and economic situations of individuals. This present study, also found a significant positive correlate between gender and domestic violence. This is in line with a study by Caldwell, Swan and Woodbrown (2012) on "Intimate partner Violence" – a form of domestic violence. In their study, they demonstrated that both women and men experience negative effects of domestic violence, but many of these effects do appear to be more likely for women. Numerous studies indicate that women are more likely to be injured as a result of domestic violence, and findings consistently point to higher rates of posttraumatic stress for women as a result of domestic violence.

Implication of Study

The implication of this study is discussed in line with the findings of the study.

This study found a significant positive correlation between exposure to domestic violence and tendency to commit crime in adolescents. This implies that the increase in adolescents and youth involvement in different kinds of crime could be as a result of increased exposure of child to domestic violence, directly or indirectly. Considering that the damage that

accompanies youth involvement in crime can at times be unsalvageable, it is, therefore, imperative that parents and guardian desist from exposing children to any form of domestic violence.

This study also found no significant correlation between gender and tendency to commit. This, therefore, implies that both male and female have equal tendency to develop criminal behaviours. This should be an indication to the importance more should not be done just for the young males to keep them out of crime – equal resources should be used for both genders.

Limitation of the Study

The findings of this study are faced with some limitations. The first is that the number of participants that took part in this study is very few that the outcome of this study might be wrong if generalised. Secondly, due to some sensitive questions that formed part of the instrument for this study, some participants might not have been completely honest when responding to the questionnaire.

Suggestion for Future Studies

This present study suggested some new directions for further studies. This study was conducted on adolescents who are schooling in an urban area, similar study should be conducted on a different sample population; such as adolescents schooling in rural areas and/or out of school adolescents. Similar studies can also be conducted on juvenile offenders and adult offenders to investigate the correlation of the variables assessed in this study on them.

8. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the correlation between three independent variables, domestic violence, self-regulation and gender, and tendency to commit crime among adolescence in Modern Ideal College, Enugu, Enugu state. Three hypotheses were postulated and tested in line with the research questions this study aimed to address. From the findings of this study, the first hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is significant and positive correlation between exposure to domestic violence and tendency to commit crime among adolescence. The second and third hypotheses were rejected, thus, there is no correlation between self-regulation and gender respectively and tendency to commit crime among adolescence.

This study, however, went on to make the finding that there is a significant and positive correlation between gender and exposure to domestic violence in adolescence.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately affected their report of the findings of this research

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