DEVIANT BEHAVIOURS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract
Adolescents exhibit deviant behaviours in school at home and in the society at large. Therefore, it has become a serious concern to all stakeholders including teachers, parents and fellow students. This article articulates the behaviours regarded as deviant in schools and causes of deviant behaviours with reference to factors such as: the nature of the home environment, gender, socio-economic status of the parents, peer group influence and residential location. The paper also provides insight on the consequences of deviant behaviour on the child, other adolescents in the schools and the society at large. Finally, the paper identifies various ways by which counsellors could intervene to assist adolescents identify appropriate behaviours and help those with deviant behaviours modify or change their behaviours to better ones.

Keywords: Deviant behaviours, Adolescents, Schools, Implications for counselling

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. This is a period of storm that most adolescents find difficult to cope with the major decisions making that would need the attention of the professional counsellors. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2019), World Health Organization (WHO) perceived adolescents as persons whose ages are 10 to 19, this age range falls within WHO's definition of young people, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24 (Csikszentmihalyi, 2019). In many societies, however, adolescence is narrowly equated with puberty and the cycle of physical changes culminating to reproductive maturity. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2019).

Adolescence is a time of great change and a period of significant growth on many levels: physical, psychological, social and spiritual (Rew, 2005). The biological changes of adolescents include hormonal changes leading to growth of secondary sex characteristics, growth in height and weight and changes in body composition (changes in bone, muscle & fat). Adolescents become more autonomous in their decisions, emotions

and actions, and start to distance from parental control. On the other hand, teen peer groups become increasingly important and it is another way for adolescents to demonstrate their growing independence, and build a sense in them. Building relationships with peers is an important part of social development and peer group usually have a greater influence on adolescents' lives than their parents or other family members (Rew, 2005).

Ikediashi and Akande (2015) reported that there are varieties of behaviours exhibited by adolescent in Nigeria which make right thinking citizens wonder if the national values of Nigeria have been eroded. Nigerians cannot forget in a hurry the activities of the Niger Delta militants in the Niger Delta region that held sway between 2007-2011 in which a lot of pipelines carrying oil were blown up and expatriate oil company workers and Nigerians alike were kidnapped. This period also witnessed unparalleled arson and vandalism of private and public property and a lot of lives were lost. These atrocities were perpetrated by adolescents as well as children (Ikediashi & Akande 2015).

The militancy in the Niger Delta region has started dying down in 2018 but earlier, Boko Haram sect had started unleashing mayhem in the Northern region of the country. The killing going on there makes one wonders if there is a calculated attempt by the sect members to wipe out an entire generation of Nigerians (Ikediashi & Akande 2015). All these despicable behaviours which are contrary to the norms and values of the Nigerian society, as perpetrated by the adolescents as well as adult cohorts are regarded as deviant behaviours. Deviant behaviour, antisocial behaviour, personality disorder or conduct disorder, are terms synonymous with delinquency which was defined by Wachikwu and Ibegbunam (2012) as crimes committed by young people below the age of eighteen years usually characterised by violation of existing social norms and values. Deviant behaviour was defined by Hanrahan (2006) as a disruptive act characterised by covert or overt hostility and intentional aggression towards others. Thus, it is referred to as an overall lack of adherence to the social norms and standards that allow members of a society to coexist peacefully.

It is imperative to note that adolescents with deviant behaviours are people with conduct disorders, who have low tolerance for frustration, usually acted on impulse, lose their tempers quickly, lie easily and skillfully, often bullies, fight, cheat, steal, and are truant in the schools, they also blame others for their misdeeds, feel picked out by their parents and teachers, and never seem to learn from their mistakes. In this paper, deviant behaviour, antisocial behaviour, personality disorder, conduct disorder and delinquency are regarded as synonymous and are used interchangeably in this article.

Deviant Behaviours among Adolescents in Schools

Primary and secondary schools are the institutions in Nigeria that remain preparatory grounds used to empower and certify the requirements for shaping behaviours which lead to overall developments of the adolescents. By implication, the task of a teacher, which includes sustaining education system, do not rest on his or her

professional competency alone, but on the entire features of the school climate (Loukas, 2007). Behaviours within schools are now largely seen as primarily related to the quality and appropriateness of teaching and learning, for the great majority of children.

Among undesirable behaviours exhibited by pupils in schools is aggressive behaviour which includes "revenge at school" and "shouting at classmates" (Adedigba, Ogungbade & Owuyile, 2018). Adedigba, Ogungbade and Owuyile (2018) further reported that among undesirable behaviours common in schools are regarded as deviant behaviours which include among many as bullying mates who offended one, stealing from the class mates and taking school materials without informing the schools.

It is of note that disciplinary problems are viewed as dominating the issues of the day in both large and small schools both in towns and villages in Nigeria. Students disobey school rules and regulations with impunity. They have little or no respect for their teachers and even the school administrators. Students' misbehaviour is a prevailing problem affecting schools not only in Nigeria but also across the many nations around the world (Seffige-krenke & Klessinger, 2000; Smetana, Campione-barr & Metzger, 2006). Students' misconducts in the classroom interfere with teaching and learning and are thought to be precursor to later school dropouts and similar negative social outcomes (Olaitan, Mohammed & Ajibola, 2013).

Students' behavioural problems are also thought to be a leading contributor to teachers' stress and attrition. The indiscipline problem in schools is ranked as a major problem among students of secondary schools in Nigeria. Deviant behaviour is a concern to schools, parents and to fellow students, whose education may be adversely affected. In secondary schools, the situation is worse because the learners who are adolescents, become aware of their rights namely; to privacy, to freedom of religion, belief, opinion, and expression, among others. According to Pager (1994), educators at one school in the Southwest Nigeria reported high levels of absenteeism, truancy, laziness, substance abuse, and subversion of assessments of achievements by learners. The problem now is rather alarming and jeopardizing the administration of schools in Nigeria. It is against this background that deviant behaviours in schools need urgent attention.

Therefore, there are no universal behaviours that are regarded as deviants or antisocials as there are world-wide variations in norms and values upon which deviant behaviours' definitions are based. However, based on the acceptable societal norms and values in Nigeria as applied to adolescents, deviant or antisocial behaviours as listed by Wachikwu and Ibegbunam (2012) include but not limited to lying, deceit, stealing, callousness, love for fighting and violence, cruelty, promiscuity, aggression, bullying, confrontation and lack of respect for elderly ones. Others are vindictiveness, intractability, arson, counterfeiting, hostility, greed, forgery, thuggery, alcoholism, and frequent running away from home. There are various ways in which one might try to estimate how big an issue 'deviant and violent' behaviour is in schools, some of these behaviours could be viewed as criminal, some could be seen as anti-social while other behaviours may be simply part of the growing up process and 'testing the boundaries' with adults.

It should also be emphasised that some of the behaviours that are viewed as problematic or 'deviant' in a school (such as 'disruptive' behaviour) may not be viewed in quite the same way in other settings. Differences in opinions are evident, between parents and teachers, about the extent to which a particular behaviour constitutes a problem severe enough (or deviant enough) to warrant school exclusion (Hayden & Dunne, 2001).

Theoretical framework that this article hangs on is social strain theory. The theory was developed by an American sociologist, Robert K. Merton (Giddens & Sutton, 2017). Merton proposed a typology of deviant behaviour, a classification scheme designed to facilitate understanding. According to Giddens and Sutton (2017), Merton typology of deviance was based on two criteria: (1) a person's motivations or adherence to cultural goals; and (2) a person's belief in how to attain his/her goals (Lumen Boundless Sociology) (Giddens & Sutton, 2017). According to the theory, there are five types of deviance based upon these criteria: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. Merton's typology is fascinating because it suggests that people can turn to deviance in the pursuit of widely accepted social values and goals. For instance, individuals in the U.S. who sell illegal drugs have rejected the culturally acceptable means of making money, but they still share the widely accepted cultural value of making money. Thus, deviance can be the result of accepting one norm, but breaking another in order to pursue the first.

The theory reaffirmed that social structures may pressure citizens to commit crimes. Strain may be structural, which refers to the process at the societal level that filter down and affect how the individual perceives his or her needs. Strain may also be individual, which refers to the frictions and pains experienced by an individual as he or she looks for ways to satisfy his or her needs. These types of strain can insinuate social structures within society that pressure citizens to become criminals.

Conformity involves the acceptance of the cultural goals and means of attaining those goals. *Innovation* involves the acceptance of the goals of a culture but the rejection of the traditional and/or legitimate means of attaining those goals. For example, a member of the Mafia values wealth but employs alternative means of attaining his wealth; in this example, the Mafia member's means would be deviant. *Ritualism* involves the rejection of cultural goals but the routinised acceptance of the means for achieving the goals. *Retreatism* involves the rejection of both the cultural goals and the traditional means of achieving those goals. *Rebellion* is a special case wherein the individual rejects both the cultural goals and traditional means of achieving them but actively attempts to replace both elements of the society with different goals and means (Giddens & Sutton, 2017).

Causes of Deviant Behaviours among Adolescents

There are various factors that may be responsible for the deviant behaviours exhibited by pupils and students in the schools. For instance, Ikediashi and Akande

(2015) identified five factors that are responsible for the development of deviant behaviours in children and adolescents. These factors include:

The Nature of the Home Environment: This refers to the affective aspect of the home environment in which children are raised. Some children are nurtured in aversive, punitive, or violent environments while others are nurtured in blissful environment with love, care, compassion and understanding. Children raised in aversive and punitive environments are usually verbally abused, spanked and sometimes injuries are inflicted on them for any perceived misconduct (real or imagined) by their primary caregivers. Children raised in such home environments are physically and psychologically traumatised. In such homes, all what the children can see are hatred, quarrel, bitterness, hostility, violence, competition and pains. They accept misdemeanor as a way of life and may have no qualms meting out this same treatment to the weaker ones (Ikediashi & Akande, 2015). Also, heavy exposure to uncensored media violence through television, video, internet sites or even cartoons has long been associated with an increase in the likelihood that a child becomes violent and behaves in an aggressive and antisocial manner (Hanrahan, 2006).

Gender: Gender by its implication is a factor that has influence on the development of pre-social or deviant behaviour in adolescents. Sex stereotype manifestation of antisocial behaviour traits is common in the Nigerian society. Boys by their very nature exhibit more physical, verbal aggression and thuggery while antisocial behaviour in girls is more subtle, indirect and relational involving harmful manipulation of others. Besides, there is more involvement of boys than girls in such antisocial behaviours as stealing, kidnapping, rape, fighting and violence. More girls than boys participate in such antisocial behaviours like prostitution, lesbianism, frequent running away from home, hedonism, child theft and child trafficking (Ikediashi & Akande, 2015).

Socio-Economic Status of Parents: Some adolescents are nurtured in a state of abject poverty while some others are brought up in affluent conditions. For those brought up in later condition, life is good and there is no need to do anything that can endanger their lives. For those brought up in the former condition, the reverse is the case as they have to struggle for survival (Ikediashi & Akande, 2015). Nwankwo (2003) also noted that children born into impoverished environments might take to socially unacceptable behaviours as a survival strategy.

Peer Group Influence: An adolescent who belongs to a peer group whose members engage in deviant activities such as under-age smoking, alcoholism, pilfering, cultism, rape, prostitution and violence is most likely to imbibe these attitudes (Ikediashi & Akande, 2015). Developmental theories according to Monahan, Steinberg and Cauffman (2009), suggest that affiliation with deviant peers and susceptibility to peer influence are important contributors to adolescent delinquency. Duarte, Escario and Molina (2011) also found out that there was existence of significant peer group influences on the deviant behaviours of alcohol abuse and truancy.

Residential Location: The impact of location or place of residence as one of the contributory factors in the development of deviant behaviour traits in adolescents cannot

be over-emphasized. Urban dwellers have diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Hence they tend to be more individualistic and often show less concern for the plight of others (Berger, 2003). Cost of living in urban centers is comparatively higher than that of the rural areas and there is more pressure on social amenities in urban centers compared to rural areas. The quest for money and material things is more pronounced in urban centers than in rural areas. All these circumstances conspire to make crimes and delinquent acts equally more pronounced in urban centers (Berger, 2003). Crime-ridden societies typified by some Nigerian urban centers breed adolescents who engage in various forms of delinquency while notorious criminal adults serve as models. Berger (2003) reported that adolescents resident in urban centers exhibit more anger-driven behaviours than those residents in rural areas, adding that residential location significantly influenced such behaviours in adolescents.

Consequences of Deviant Behaviours

Though deviant behaviour refers to conduct disorder perpetrated by young people below 20 years of age, it has far-reaching consequences in Nigerian society at large (Wachikwu & Ibegbunam, 2012). The personality, emotions, beliefs and attitudes of a person as an adult are derived from those he had in childhood. Alternatively, the quality of a person as an adult is determined from his quality as a child. For this reason, signs of deviant behaviour should be looked into with a view to recognising their onset in children and taking remedial action to rectify the maladies before they get out of hand. It is believed that the consequences of deviant behaviour or conduct disorder in adolescents are grievous especially if no remedy is sought and found at the early stage of the manifestation of the traits. There is a high rate of transition from deviant behaviour in adolescents to adult criminal activities (Hanrahan, 2006).

Opinions are rife that successful adults who once exhibited adolescent antisocial behaviour indulge in white collar crimes. Longitudinal studies reported in Hanrahan (2006) revealed that as many as 71% of chronic juvenile offenders had progressed from childhood deviant behaviour through a history of early arrests to a pattern of chronic law breaking in the United State of America. Nigeria is one of the nations where crimes tend to pay. It is worthy of note that Niger Delta militants who once terrorized people in the region, kidnapped, maimed and killed people, blow up oil wells and vandalized pipelines carrying oil around 2007-2011 are being provided cash rewards after an amnesty has been granted to them. Some of these ex-militants are in the pay role of politicians for doing their dirty jobs while some obtain lucrative contracts to provide security services to oil companies operating in the region (Ikediashi & Akande 2015).

Ikediashi and Akande (2015) asserted that it becomes clearer to ascertain whether this gave rise to Boko Haram sect and terrorism in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some Nigerians are accused of an Al-Qaeda membership and are facing trials in various courts around the world. The business of kidnapping has assumed an alarming proportion in recent times in Nigeria; it has permeated every nook and cranny of our society. Even people in the South East of Nigeria have not been spared of the activities of the

kidnappers. Notable Igbo Sons and daughters (from whom they extorted appreciable some of money as ransom) have fallen victims to them (Ikediashi & Akande 2015).

The digits 419 strikes fear in the mind of every enlightened Nigerian. 419 is the number assigned to the decree prohibiting obtaining money or material things by false pretense or what is popularly referred to as advance fee fraud (Ikediashi & Akande 2015). Those who engaged in this fraud dupe people of their hard-earned money and created a terrible image for the country. Just as the activities of this group of people are dying down, cyber crimes are succeeding in taking a hold in our national lives. The inference that can be drawn from the foregoing is that most of the ex-militants from Niger Delta region or elsewhere, most members of the Boko Haram sect, most of the political office holders who came to power by foul means and most of the wealthy citizens who corruptly enriched themselves must have engaged in one form of antisocial behaviour or the other in their adolescent years as the ultimate offshoot of antisocial behaviour of adolescence is criminal activities in adulthood (Ikediashi & Akande 2015).

Conclusion

Deviant behaviours among the adolescents in Nigeria are sources of serious concern to right-thinking citizens. The tendency for deviant or antisocial behaviour develops in children at tender age is very high, if they are not checked at the onset, they usually persist and manifest at adulthood as criminal tendencies. This paper discussed causes of deviant behaviours; it is pertinent that some practical measures must be taken to change the trend. Therefore, necessary measures must be put in place to forestall the development of deviant behaviour traits in adolescents. Failure to do this can give rise to a large population of adolescents with this malady. If this happens, the society will be worse off as this group of adolescents transform to adults some day may unleash crimes and corrupt the society at large. Then the unpleasant conditions can trigger off chain reactions of low investment, infrastructural decay, unemployment, insecurity of life and property, poverty and hunger among others.

Implications for Counselling

The Counsellors should encourage parents and guardians to show love and care to their children and wards. When there is a need to punish a child for wrongdoing, the punishment must be mild and corrective rather than harsh and punitive. Excessive punishment incommensurable with the offence committed should be avoided. Therefore, professional counsellors should play their roles in reducing the deviant behaviours among adolescents in schools. Also, professional counsellors should encourage parents to monitor the type of images their children watch on television and efforts should be made to advise the children against watching violent images as these are capable of precipitating violent behaviours in them at younger ages or later in life. Moreover, counsellors should advise parents during PTA meetings normally held at the end of the term so that tips that will assist the parents monitor the type of friends and peer groups their children keep will be provided for them.

The children should be advised to keep away from friends or peers whose behaviours do not conform with the norms and values of the society. When the behaviours of children conform to the acceptable code of conduct in a society, they will develop into law-abiding adults who will contribute meaningfully for prosperous and blissful society where peace will reign supreme. It is important for counsellors to encourage parents and guardians to provide their children with good examples of acceptable behaviours in the society by exhibiting and maintaining acceptable societal values and norms. Professional counsellors should work with the schools administrations to provide adequate recreational facilities in schools to keep the adolescents productively engaged.

Effective and functional guidance and counselling services should be provided in all primary and secondary schools to prevent deviant behaviours and also modify such behaviours where it exists. Association of Professional Counsellors of Nigeria (APROCON) should mandate the counsellors in both primary and secondary schools so as to see the task of inviting guest speakers who are knowledgeable in the area of deviant behaviours which is of a concern to us and talk to the pupils/students on the consequences of these behaviours.

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