FAMILY INSTABILITY AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A STUDY OF OWERRI MUNICIPALITY

**ABSTRACT**

*The increasing rate of juvenile delinquency has become a major social problem globally and locally. Researchers and concerned individuals have traced the preponderance of juvenile delinquency to the increasing rate of family instability among other factors. However, concerted inquiries into the influence of family instability on juvenile delinquency have resulted in a raging controversy. While some researchers have found a significant relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency, others have suggested otherwise. Against this backdrop, this study set out to fill this yawning gap in literature and also to examine the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri Municipality. Using the purposive sampling method, 510 senior secondary school students were selected for this study from 10 comprehensive secondary schools in Owerri Municipality. The questionnaire and the interview guide were used for data collection. 3 hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The hypotheses were tested with the chi-square (x2) statistic. The results of the analyses suggested that children from unstable homes were more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency than their counterparts from more stable homes; inadequate parental supervision predicted delinquency while considerable familial conflicts increased the likelihood of delinquency. This study recommended among other things that Governments, counselors and concerned agencies should routinely develop programmes aimed at sensitizing parents and care-givers on parent roles and obligations.*

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# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

* 1. **Background to the Study**

Juvenile delinquency is an intractable problem worldwide and has been increasing phenomenally by as much as 30 percent since the 1990s (World Youth Report, cited in Sheryln, 2008). Anti-social behaviours of young people have been posing a lot of problems to the wellbeing of the people in Nigeria. Citizens, researchers and public officials perceive juvenile delinquency as a major social contemporary concern in Nigeria. Juvenile crimes witnessed in Nigeria include: drug abuse, cultism, bullying, truancy, examination malpractices, prostitution, theft (Ugwuoke, 2010; Sanni, Udoh, Okediji, Modo & Ezeh, 2010).

Shoemaker (2010:3), defined juvenile delinquency as “illegal acts, whether criminal or status offences, which are committed by youth under the age of 18”. From this definition, it is pertinent to highlight the two types of delinquent offences associated with young people, herein referred to as juveniles/children. The first type of offence is a conduct that would be a criminal law violation for an adult, such as rape, burglary, robbery, etc. The other type of delinquent offence called ‘status’ offences are delinquent conducts that do not apply to adults, such as running away from home, truancy, etc (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001; Alfrey,2010).

The origin of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria dates back to the 1920s when youth crimes such as pick pocketing and prostitution became predominant issues in Nigerian newspapers in that period. This ugly trend led to the establishment of judicial

administrative processes by the colonial administrators to deal with juvenile delinquents (Fourchard, 2006).It is appalling that the worrisome issue of juvenile delinquency still plagues the contemporary Nigerian society in a serious dimension (Muhammed, Salami , Adekeye, Ayinla and Adeoye,2009).

However, the problem of juvenile delinquency is not peculiar to Nigeria. In 2007, the law enforcement agencies in the United States of America reported 2.18 million arrests of juveniles (Alfry, 2010). Alfry also reported that the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics found out that 72% of jailed juveniles came from fragmented families. According to World Youth Report cited in Sheryln (2008), the rate of criminal activity among juveniles in groups in the Russian Federation is about three to four times higher than that of adult offenders. Motivated by the increasing rate of juvenile delinquency in Britain, Juby and Farrington (2001), examined juvenile delinquency and family disruption in a longitudinal survey of South London males from age 8 to 46. The researchers found out that 29% of the boys from disrupted families were convicted as juveniles compared with 18% of the boys from stable families. The researchers concluded that family disruption was one of the contributory factors to the upsurge of juvenile delinquency in Britain.

In Kenya, Muola, Ndugu and Ngesa (2009) cited in Kimani (2010) in a study of the relationship between family functions and juvenile delinquency in Nakuru municipality in Kenya found out that the incidences of juvenile delinquency have increased in recent years in Kenya. Juvenile delinquency was found to be significantly related to family instability and mode of discipline. The researchers suggested that there was a relationship between family functions and juvenile delinquency in Kenya. Fourchard (2006) has also

decried the increasing trend of juvenile delinquency in South Africa, attributing the upsurge to familial factors amongst contributory variables.

In view of the foregoing issues and trends globally and locally, many researchers agree that the foundation of juvenile delinquency is rooted in the kind of home the child is brought up (Okorodudu, 2010; Igbo, 2007). Muhammed et al (2009) have observed that family instability is on the increase in Nigeria and that the increasing crime trends among the youths may be attributed to this. Based on the foregoing, this study aims at examining the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality.

# Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is a major social problem which affects the whole society and constitutes a serious impediment to development (Muhammed et al 2009). In Owerri municipality today, crime is common among the young people, many of who are caught in one criminal act or the other such as examination malpractice, armed robbery, assault, rape, house breaking, forgery, truancy e.t.c. There is hardly a day without a case of juvenile crimes being announced (Nwankwo, Nwoke, Chukwuocha, Iwuagwu, Obanny, Okereke and Nwoga, 2010).

Cultism and cult related activities perpetrated by youths have been a source of fear and concern to the inhabitants of Owerri Municipality. These cult- related activities have wrecked untold havoc in Owerri municipality including the loss of lives and limbs and the creation of fear and insecurity. This ugly trend necessitated the call by the rector of

Imo state Polytechnic, Professor Anderson Amadioha, for a promulgation of a law against the scourge of cultism in academic institutions in Imo state (Soriwei, 2008).

Drug abuse among juveniles is also another cankerworm that is eating deep into the fabrics of Owerri municipal .In corroborating this fact, the Imo state commander of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency(NDLEA) lamented that the youths were the most involved in illicit drug usage and dealing (Nkwopara, 2011).The consequences of this malady and other juvenile crimes such as; examination malpractice, alcoholism, forgery, rape, e.t.c in Owerri municipality include; social violence among youths, armed robbery, mental disorders, lack of respect for elders and other numerous social ills. In the light of the nauseating problems of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria and Owerri Municipality, scholars and concerned citizens have attributed the menace to various factors such as; poverty, peer pressure, family instability, drug abuse and so on(Nwankwo et al 2010). While recognizing these other causes, this study seeks to focus on family instability and its contribution to juvenile delinquency because “the family has a crucial role to play in the development of a conforming or delinquent personality (Igbo, 2007:89)”.

Inadequate supervision arising from family instability seems to be associated with juvenile delinquency (Alfrey, 2010). Alfrey further explained that those children in single-parent families tend to receive lower levels of supervision. According to him, this inadequate parental supervision has a tendency to increase the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. Dogget (2004), has it that when there is one parent living in the home as opposed to two, it is more difficult to supervise children all the time .According to Dogget, every day activities like errands and work must be completed by the single

parent, which leaves no parent in the home. Because of this, children in single-parent homes tend to receive lower levels of supervision (Sanni et al, 2010). Lack of parental monitoring contributes not only directly to children’s anti-social behaviours, but also indirectly as it contributes to exposing them to associate with deviant peers, which is predictive of higher levels of deviant acts (Okorodudu, 2010). From observation, it seems that parents and care givers are not doing much in the supervision of their children in Owerri municipal because of their numerous economic and social engagements. This scenario tends to be giving impetus to juvenile delinquency in Owerri Municipality.

Children from broken homes are more likely to run away from their family than children who come from more stable families (Uwaoma & Udeagha, 2007).Uwaoma and Udeagha further explained that a broken home has an imbalance and as a result is detrimental to a child’s socialization and personality adjustment. The resultant effect is that a child may be more vulnerable to negative peer pressure and may ultimately commit delinquent acts not committed by children from stable families where there is a balanced structure of two parents who act as good role models in the child’s acquiring proper roles (Odebunmi, 2007).

Children growing up in unstable families are at a greater risk of experiencing a variety of behavioural and educational problems, including; smoking, drug abuse, vandalism, violence and criminal acts than children from stable families (Sheryln, 2008). According to Sheryln, changes in the family can affect the levels of self-control in children. The transitions in the family structure also lead to changes in the organization, monitoring and disciplining of the children. If the changes are widespread, the resulting

changes in the adolescents’ levels of self-control will likely lead to anti-social behaviours (Mullens, 2004).

Single-parent families are often financially vulnerable as compared to two-parent families. This unfortunate economic circumstance can draw these families to disorganized neighbourhoods where crime and delinquency are rampant (Alfrey, 2010). The implication according to Alfrey is that the children may be exposed to learning delinquent behaviours and they may also be enticed into joining delinquent gangs. It is the opinion of the researcher that financial vulnerability may also be a source of strain to children in single-parent families. Hence, they may not have some of their needs met by their single parent. The effect is that children in such a situation may be pushed to engage in theft, extortion and other delinquent actions to make ends meet.

The menace of juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality is evident in juvenile crime statistics in Owerri municipality collated by the Police headquarters, Owerri from 2009 to 2011.Based on the data, it shows that juveniles between the ages of 14 to 17 years committed the following offences: Murder, 1 case, theft, 61 cases, assault, 55 cases, and breach of public peace, 6 cases.

Nwankwo et al (2010) have also attributed the rise of anti-social behaviours among young people in Owerri municipality to family instability among other factors. They noted that children from unstable families have multiple behavioural problems which impel them to engage in delinquent behaviours. This, according to them is because the warmth, direction, love and protection which the parents would have provided for them are lost and then sought in anti-social behaviours such as drug abuse.

However, there seems to be a controversy on the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency. While Alemika and Chukwuma’s (2001) study, among other studies found no relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency, Kimani’s (2010) study found a positive relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. As a result, this study aims at bridging the gap in studies on juvenile delinquency and also to investigate the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality.

# Research Questions

This study is aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

1. What is the extent of family instability in Owerri municipality?
2. What is the relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality?
3. How does conflict in the family affect juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality?
4. How does inadequate parental supervision affect juvenile delinquency in Owerri Municipal?
5. What are the consequences of family instability on the society?
6. What are the solutions to family instability as it affects juvenile delinquency?

# Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality.

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. To find out the extent of family instability in Owerri municipality.
2. To ascertain the relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality.
3. To critically evaluate the influence of family conflicts on juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality.
4. To appraise the influence of inadequate parental supervision on juvenile delinquency?
5. To find out the consequences of family instability on the society.
6. To proffer solutions to the problems of family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri Municipality.

# Significance of the Study

This study is very significant because if the causes of juvenile delinquency are not known, then, finding a solution to the problem may become an effort in futility. Therefore, this study will be a resource material on how family instability and other family-related variables influence juvenile delinquency. This study will ultimately contribute to closing the gap that exists in studies on juvenile delinquency. In addition, this study will increase the knowledge base in criminology. It will also be useful to other researchers who may need secondary data for other research work in related subject matter.

Practically, the findings of this study will be very useful to guidance counselors and those responsible for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in that it will serve as a working tool in dealing with the problems of juveniles .Parents and care-givers will also find this study very useful as it will raise their consciousness towards monitoring and supervising their children and wards. The findings of this study will also be useful to the

government in the sense that it will assist the government in formulating policies that will consolidate the family.

# Operational Definition of Concepts

**Broken home**: This refers to a family arrangement in which children reside with a parent as a result of divorce, death or separation or any type of family other than one in which both biological parents are present.

**Child:** A child in this study is used interchangeably with the term, juvenile to refer to a young person under the age of 18 years.

**Comprehensive Secondary School:** In this study, this refers to a secondary school that is attended by both males and females.

**Conflict:** This refers to disagreements/ quarrels in the family which could result in fights, violence, e.t.c

**Delinquency**: This refers to less serious crimes or offences committed by juveniles (Igbo, 2007).

**Desertion:** This refers to the act of abandoning one’s spouse and children or either of them without the intent to return and without support.

**Divorce:** This refers to the dissolution of a properly constituted marriage (Njoku & Uwaoma, 2001).

**Family:** In this study, family refers to a social unit made up of father, mother and the child (ren).

**Family instability**: This refers to any family arrangement characterized by frequent conflict, inadequate parental control, weak internal linkages and a couple’s propensity to dissolve an existing marriage, even though, dissolution may not take place. Hence, a

family may be experiencing or showing signs of instability and still remain intact (two- parent).

**Family Cohesion**: This refers to the level of attachment and emotional bonding between family members (Sanni et al, 2010).

**Family stability:** This refers to a two-parent, violence free, and openly communicating family.

**Juvenile:** A juvenile in this study refers to a young person under the age of 18 years. **Juvenile delinquency:** This refers to the antisocial or criminal acts committed by a young person under the age of 18 years. Examples include truancy, theft, cultism, e.t.c.

**Juvenile delinquent:** This refers to a juvenile who has acted antisocially or has broken the law.

**Inadequate parental supervision**: In this study, this refers to negligence on the part of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to closely monitor their child(ren)’s activities.

**Separation:** This refers to a form of marital disruption in which a man and a woman no longer live under the same roof as husband and wife.

**Truancy:** This refers to the act of skipping school/class without excuse.

# CHAPTER TWO

**Literature Review**

The review of literature discussed various aspects of family instability and their influence on juvenile delinquency.

# Review of Empirical Literature

The interest in researching the link between family instability and juvenile delinquency has grown worldwide because of the global increase in both unstable families and juvenile delinquency (Haas, Farrington, Killias, and Sattar, 2004).A survey by Doggett (2004), into the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency using a self-report questionnaire and a sample size of twenty-six (26) respondents from a high school found out that out of the 26 students who confessed engaging in one form of delinquency or the other, 54% came from one parent household while the other 46% came from two parent and other households. Doggett explained that children from single- parents were more likely to become juvenile delinquents because they are scarcely monitored.

The study by Heck and Walsh (2000) aimed at investigating the effects of family structure on minor and serious delinquency using a sample of 489 white males processed by juvenile probation authorities in Idaho found out that 67.8% of the boys in the sample were from broken homes. The researchers further found out that the homes broken by desertion were significantly and positively related to combined delinquency. Heck and Walsh’s findings affirm Doggett’s (2004) findings that a broken home is a major predictor of juvenile delinquency.

Juby and Farrington (2001), examined family disruption and juvenile delinquency in a prospective longitudinal survey of South London males from age 8 to age 46. Three measures of offending were used: juvenile convictions (age 10-16 years); adult convictions (age 17-40 years) but excluding those convicted as juveniles; and juvenile self-reported delinquency (age 14 years). The researchers found out that 29% of boys from disrupted families were convicted as juveniles compared with 18% of boys from stable families which confirmed that family disruption was linked to delinquency. Other findings included that the loss of a mother was more damaging than the loss of a father; families destabilized by parental disharmony were more prone to delinquency than families disrupted by parental death; delinquency rates were highest for disruptions at ages 0-4 and 10-14 years and lowest for disruptions at age 5 – 9 years.

Another survey into the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency by Murry, William and Salekin (2006) using a sample size of 442 juveniles in a borstal institution found out that 53% of the sample came from one parent households. The findings of the research indicate that proportionately, more juvenile offenders come from family arrangements other than the two-parent family home. However, the researchers explained that family arrangements combined with other factors such as environmental factors, situational factors, and functional factors may provide more insight into juvenile delinquency.

Haas, Farrington, Killias and Sattar (2004) conducted a cross-sectional survey to examine the impact of different family configurations on delinquency using a sample of 21, 314 Swiss army male recruits. Data were gotten from self-report questionnaires which were filled by the male recruits. The findings of the study suggest that there is a link

between broken homes and delinquency. This result support Juby and Farrington’s (2001) findings which indicated a significant relationship between disrupted families and Juvenile delinquency.

A study by Mack (2007) aimed at investigating the impact of family structure; family processes and economic factors using a survey of 132 high school students in the United States found out that only 31% of the sample who reported involvement in delinquent acts came from broken homes. Based on the findings, the researcher opined that family processes and economic factors played more important roles in predicting Juvenile delinquency than family structures.

In Cameroon, a study by Ngale (2009) which explored the relationship between family structure and Juvenile delinquency using a sample of 120 juveniles drawn from the Betamba children’s correctional centre with a questionnaire found out that 66.1% or about three-fifths of the children came from two-parent (stable) homes, 16.05% of the children came from homes in which their parents live apart through divorce or temporary separation, while 5.35% of the children do not know their fathers, 12.5% of the children have either lost one or both of their parents. Based on the findings of the study, Ngale suggested that joblessness and economic hardship are major impediments to family cohesion which could be predictors for juvenile delinquency.

A survey by Kimani (2010) aimed at investigating the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency using a sample size of 51 children drawn from the Nakuru children’s Remand Home in Kenya found out that 65.4% of the respondents came from a single parent home. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that

children in a single parent led family had a high tendency to engage in juvenile delinquency than children from stable homes.

Another study by Azoro (2010) on the public perception of the effects of broken homes on the family in Awka South Local Government using a sample of 124 respondents found out that out of the total number of respondents sampled, 62.9% were of the view that broken homes lead to juvenile delinquency thus suggesting a significant relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency.

A study by Sanni, Udoh, Okediji, Modo and Ezeh (2010) focused on investigating the influence of family structure on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria. Using the multistage random sampling technique, 200 students were selected for the study from five public secondary schools in Uyo metropolis. The self- report family delinquency questionnaire was used for data collection. The researchers found out that only 32% of the respondents that showed symptoms of delinquency came from stable families as opposed to 68% from unstable families. Based on the findings, the researchers suggested that family instability has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency.

# Broken Homes and Juvenile Delinquency

Broken homes have been mostly associated with juvenile delinquency. Although some other factors such as lack of parental control and ineffective parental behaviour have been attributed to the rise in juvenile delinquency, most of the literature on juvenile delinquency returns to the ultimate breakdown of the family as the main causative factor (Fry, 2010).

Mullens (2004) has it that juveniles from broken homes are more likely to run away from their family than children living in stable families. The core assumption is that a broken home has an imbalance and as a result is detrimental to a child’s socialization and personality adjustment. As a result, a child may be more susceptible to negative peer pressure and may ultimately commit acts of delinquency not committed by children from stable families where there is a balanced structure of man and woman who act as good role models in the child acquiring more law abiding roles.

Alemika & Chukwuma (2001), in their study of juvenile administration in Nigeria averred that there is no significant relation between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This assertion contradicts Kimani’s (2010) findings from a study of family influence on juvenile delinquency. Kimani found a positive relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This contrast may be as a result of differential focus of research and the methodologies adopted in the research.

Azoro (2010) has asserted that children from broken homes have a higher risk of indulging in delinquent acts than children from stable families. As a result of that, children from broken homes suffer from what he called *attachment disorder.* According to Azoro, this implies a weakened bond with their parents. He argued that this lack of attachment to their parents exposes the children to anti-social behaviours. Hence, children from broken homes suffer from emotional pains and this propel them to engage in vicious crimes such as assault, rape, e.t.c

Heck and Welsh (2010) have argued that the risk of delinquency is highly significant among children from broken homes compared to children from stable families. Heck and Welsh drew the inference that overall, the lack of supervision and

absence of close relationships between the teenager and his parents are factors that influence delinquency. However, these researchers did not say much on the pre- disruption factors preceding broken homes.

The research findings on the relationship between divorce and juvenile delinquency have been mixed. Overall, however, there is a general support for the argument that children of divorce are more likely to be delinquent (Fry, 2010; Alfrey, 2010). For instance, Alfrey (2010) opined that in families that are disrupted by divorce, parents may have higher levels of conflict, be more prone to economic stress and meager parenting practices. Alfrey further asserted that exposure to these effects of divorce may compromise the child’s social, economic and psychological wellbeing.

Videon (2002) has argued that children who live in homes with only one parent or in which marital relationships have been disrupted by divorce or separation are more likely to exhibit a wide range of behavioural problems including delinquency than children who are from stable families. Videon further argued that children who witness marital discord are at greater risk of becoming delinquents.

In concert with the above assertion, Uwaoma and Udeagha (2007) have also argued that children who are from divorced families have been found to have multiple behavioural problems which impel them to engage in delinquent behaviour. They further explained that this occurs because the warmth, direction, love and protection which the parents would have provided for them are lost and sought in anti-social behaviours such as drug abuse and prostitution.

Wardle (2007: 95) opined that “divorce also is indirectly associated causally with juvenile delinquency”. Wardle further explained that children from homes broken by

divorce are more at risk of being maltreated, and that maltreatment correlates strongly with delinquency. Children of divorce suffer heightened levels of emotional trauma when compared to children from stable families. Hence, increased rate of juvenile delinquency is witnessed among children of divorced parents (Heck and Welsh, 2000).

Siegel and Welsh (2008) have argued that divorce may influence children’s misbehavior through its effects on parental misbehavior. They further explained that divorce may encourage deviance since a stable marriage cushions parental misbehavior. For them, parents who are caught up in post divorce turmoil may influence their children to misbehave.

Jekayinfa (n.d) has asserted that children from divorced homes are more likely to be maladjusted in the society. She suggested that when a marriage breaks down, men and women alike often experience a diminished capacity to parent. Hence, parents affected by divorce give less time, provide less discipline and are less sensitive to their children since they themselves are caught up in its aftermath (Alfrey, 2010). “In general, children whose parents divorce have moderately poorer outcomes (i.e. emotional wellbeing, a variety of conduct related difficulties, academic achievement, physical health, teenage child bearing, and labor force participation) than children living in continuously intact two-parent families” (Videon, 2002:489).

* 1. **Single Parenthood and Juvenile Delinquency**

Single parenthood has been associated with juvenile delinquency (Okeke, 2005). Single parenthood could be a consequence of the death of a spouse, from separation or divorce or even by choice (Demuth and Brown, 2004; Okeke, 2005). Research has consistently shown that children in single parent homes are more likely to

be delinquent than children from the stable two parent families (Schroeder, Osgood and Oghia, 2010; Nielsen, 1996).

Demuth & Brown (2004) have avowed that single parent families and, in particular, mother-only families produce more delinquent children than two parent families. The assumption is that the presence of a father figure in the stable two parents’ family helps to stabilize the male children who are more at risk of engaging in delinquency (Okeke, 2005).The absence of fathers from children’s lives is one of the most important causes related to children’s wellbeing such as increasing rates of juvenile crime and substance abuse (Dogget, 2004).

According to Wright and Wright (1994) and Kimani (2010), two-parent families provide increased supervision and monitoring of children and property, while single- parenthood increases the likelihood of delinquency and stigmatization simply by the fact that there is one less person to supervise adolescent’s behaviour. Furthermore, Sweeney (2002) suggests that single parent families, especially, single mothers, expect less of their children, spend less time monitoring them and use less effective techniques to discipline them. In addition, it is harder for a sole parent to find time to monitor, supervise, and discipline children because they find it hard to “prioritize their children’s needs above other live demands” (Mack, Michael, Richard and Maria, 2007:53). Overall, this means that children in single parent families have greater opportunities and motivation to participate in delinquent acts than those living in a two-parent family (Fry, 2010).

Alfrey (2010) has observed that the very absence of a two-parent family makes gang membership more appealing. Hence, children residing in single-parent families are at a greater risk of joining gangs than children from two-parent families. In corroborating

this fact, Reed and Decker (2002) have observed that the gang can serve as a surrogate extended family for adolescents who do not see their own families as meeting their needs for belonging, nurturance and acceptance.

Single parent families often are financially vulnerable as compared to two-parent families (Alfrey, 2010). As a result, these economic circumstances frequently draw these families into more affordable but socially disorganized neighbourhoods where children are prone to learning delinquent behaviours (Anderson, 2002).Overall, the absence of one parent in a family is a major predictor for juvenile delinquency (Wardle, 2007).

# Parental Death and Juvenile Delinquency

Parental death has been associated with juvenile delinquency (Ngale, 2009). Maki (2003) has argued that parental death before the age of 14 is connected to juvenile criminality. Maki further argued that parental death imposes stress and trauma on the children thereby exposing them to delinquent behaviours. Hence, children who are traumatized by the death of a parent tend to externalize their reactions to these stressful experiences by acting out aggressively or committing delinquent acts (Ireland and Wisdom, 1994).

Families destabilized by the death of a parent expose children to series of transitions and role conflicts (Uwaoma and Udeagha, 2007). These transitions may lead to improper personality development. Often, the inner conflicts and psychological trauma such children undergo expose them to antisocial behaviours such as assault and drug abuse (Nielsen, 1996).However, Siegel and Welsh (2008) have argued that children from families disrupted by the death of a parent are better adjusted than children from families polarized by divorce.

# Review of Related Theories

This research study is predicated on some related criminological theories. These theories would enhance a better appreciation of the link between family instability and juvenile delinquency. The theories are: **life course theory**, **social control theory**, **containment theory, general strain theory** and **social disorganization theory**.

# Life Course Theory

The life course theory in criminology was propounded by John Laub and Robert Sampson in the late 1980s (See, 2004). The theory evolved in an attempt to integrate some criminological theories in the explanation of crime and delinquency. The theory posits that a person’s course in life is determined by short (transitory) and long (trajectory) events in his life, and crime can result when a transitory event causes stress in a person’s life causing him to commit crime and delinquency (Cullen and Agnew, 2002). The main thrust of the theory is that both continuity and change exist through the life course and that modification in individual behaviour may occur through new experiences or social circumstances. The theory attempts to explain better the stability and changes in criminal behaviour through time and at different life stages (Cullen and Agnew, 2002). Hence, the theory is of the view that individual factors interact with social factors to determine the onset, length and end of criminal career.

The relevance of this theory could be linked to the core points as they apply to juvenile delinquency. The life course theory view factors such as parental loss, poor parenting and parental conflict as stressors that impinge on the children. The life course perspective emphasizes that it is not a single stressor, but the accumulation of negative events that may result in problems for children (Juby and Farrington, 2001) .In other

words, the more disruptive life events a child experiences, the more stressful and damaging will be the effects (including juvenile delinquency).While enjoying growing popularity in research focusing specifically on the effects of familial factors on children’s well being, life course theory is rarely appreciated in criminology(Amato, 1993 cited in Juby and Farrington, 2001).

# Social Control Theory

Social control theory in criminology was developed by an American criminologist; Travis Hirschi in the late 1960s.The theory posits that criminal behaviour and delinquency result from failure of individuals to bond with conventional social groups such as the family and schools (Miller, 2009). In other words, a person is less likely to choose crime if he/she has strong social bonds. Miller (2009:2) has it that “social control says that to the extent that a youngster fails to become attached to the control agencies of society (for instance, the families and the schools), the youngster’s chances of engaging in delinquency are increased”.

Travis Hirschi identified four key concepts in his social control theory, viz: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001). According to Hirschi, *attachment* to others in the society provides the individuals insulation from committing deviant acts. *Commitment* entails an investment in conventional activities and norms. *Involvement* is behavioural and measures one’s tendency to participate in conventional activities while *belief* in the legitimacy of social norms and values minimize delinquency (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001).

The relevance of social control theory in this study is that juvenile delinquency thrives whenever the family institution as part of the social institutions fails to create an enabling environment for attachment to children. However, social control theory has been criticized for ignoring the effects of parental behaviour in modeling youth conduct (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

# General Strain Theory

The general strain theory is a redefinition of Robert Merton’s Anomie theory developed by Robert Agnew in 1992(Cullen and Agnew, 2002). The theory evolved to explain how the conditions of strain experienced by middle-class youths lead to delinquency. Agnew identified three major types of deviance producing strains:

1. Strain as the failure to achieve positively valued goals. This failure entails a disjunction between aspirations and actual achievements.
2. Strain as the removal of positively valued stimuli from the individual. This state occurs with the actual or anticipated loss of something valued (e.g., the loss of a parent, a close relative).
3. Strain as the presentation of negative stimuli: Delinquency may ensue when a youth attempts to avoid or escape negative stimuli, terminates or alleviates the source of the negative stimuli, or seeks revenge against the source (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

In all cases, actual and anticipated strains may create a predisposition for delinquency or may function as a situational event that instigates a particular act (See, 2004). In other words, deviance is most likely to occur when the response of the individual to any of the above mentioned stressor is anger. Factors such as family bonds,

self control, and self –efficacy will affect each individual’s reaction to stress (Cullen and Agnew, 2003).

The General strain theory is relevant to this study in that it views the loss of a loved one (a parent) as a stressor that can predispose youths into delinquent acts. However, the General strain theory has been criticized for being too mechanistic (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

# Containment Theory

The containment theory was pioneered by Walter Reckless in the early 1960s.The theory posits that every individual is a potential norm breaker but there are containment structures that insulate individuals against violation of norms (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003). Reckless saw forces pulling people away from conventional society or pushing them toward deviance to include:

1. **Social pressures** such as poor living conditions and family conflicts.
2. **Social pulls** that keep the individual away from acceptable behaviours such as criminal

and delinquent subcultures or bad companions.

1. **Biological/Psychological pushes** such as inner tensions, hostility, and aggressiveness.
2. **Rebellion** against authority that originates within the individual and leads to unacceptable norms of living (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

The theory further opines that given these forces, only outer and inner containment structures stand between any individual and a delinquent lifestyle. Reckless observed that

these restraining forces are sufficient to regulate most behaviour .**Outer containment** according to the theory comes from the family and other support groups in the society; it involves among other things, effective supervision and discipline, and group cohesiveness. **Inner containment** on the other hand is inner (psychological) dispositions such as conscience and a sense of responsibility (See, 2004).

The implication of the containment theory to this study is that it explains how failure of the outer containment structures (the family inclusive) can make the children vulnerable to delinquency. As plausible as this theory may seem, it has been criticized for being over simplistic (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

# Social Disorganization Theory

The social disorganization theory was pioneered by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1972 in an effort to explain the rising crime situation in Chicago (Inciardi, 2007). The main thesis of this theory is that crime and delinquency are produced by social disorganization (See, 2004). This theory attributes crime to a breakdown of institutions such as family, church and the like, and relationships with people in those institutions (Cullen and Agnew, 2002).Shaw and McKay further defined the indices of social disorganization as population heterogeneity, rapid population turnover, poor standard of living of residents, dilapidated building structures, weak social ties among residents and absence of dominant cultural patterns shared by most residents (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001). The critical argument of this theory is that absence of strong community and social ties can generate high rate of delinquency among young persons. Hence, the proponents argue that juvenile delinquency is a feature of an environment characterized by social disorganization. However, one of the shortcomings of this theory is that it has

been criticized for being tautological, as it simply postulates that ‘bad conditions’ beget crime and delinquency but crime and delinquency are some of the indicators of ‘bad conditions’ (Opara, 1998).

# Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study was a combination of the **social control theory** and **the social disorganization theory**. These theories seem to provide an adequate explanation of the nexus between family instability and juvenile delinquency.

Firstly, the **social control theory** posits that delinquency is a symptom of the failure of social institutions, such as the family to bond with the individuals in the society. Hence, individuals are more likely to be delinquent if they have weak social bonds (Miller, 2007).

The relevance of this theory could be linked to the main tenets as it applies to juvenile delinquency and family instability. Hence, the inability of the family as a social institution to bond with the children as a result of instability and disruptions could be associated with the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Secondly, **social disorganization theory** attributes crime and delinquency to the breakdown of institutions, such as the family, schools, church and the like and the relationships with people in those institutions. These two variables work as policing guides and if they are absent, then norms and rules may be broken.

The relevance of this theory can be deduced from its core premises .Social disorganization leads to weakened social bonds, which may invariably foster the existence of delinquent opportunity structures including exposure to delinquent peer

groups. Hence, without strong ties to a family, it may be hard for children to stay away from a negative group pulling them in. Overall, the weak social bonds in broken families may give leverage to juvenile delinquency.

# Research Hypotheses

The following hypothetical assumptions guided this study:

1. Children from broken homes are more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency than children from stable families.
2. There is a positive relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency.
3. Children who grow up in homes with considerable conflict are more likely to become delinquents than those who grow up in more peaceful families.

# CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

* 1. **Research Design**

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional study aims at collecting information on certain variables in a study population at one point in time and gives an opportunity to get an overview of the issues involved in the study (Obikeze, 1999; Obasi, 1999; Babbie, 2007). This method is most relevant in eliciting opinions on how parental behaviour affects juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipal.

# Area of Study

This study was carried out in Owerri Municipal. Owerri municipal is the capital city of Imo State as such the land lord to most government ministries, departments and agencies (both state and federal). Owerri municipal has an urban setting. The inhabitants of Owerri municipality are predominantly civil servants of all cadres, with artisans, students and traders. Owerri municipality has become a tourist centre because of the proliferation of hotels and recreation centres in the city in recent times.

According to the 2006 National population census, Owerri municipal has a population of 125, 337 comprising 60,882 males and 64, 455 females. The rationale for carrying out this study in Owerri municipal is because of the increase in juvenile delinquency in the area in recent times (Nwankwo et al, 2010). In addition, the researcher is also familiar with the study area having lived there for a long time.

# Scope of the Study

This study explored the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality. In an effort to establish this relationship, this study examined the influence of family arrangement and cohesion on juvenile delinquency.

# Study Population

The target population for this study comprised juveniles (males and females) who are between the ages of 9 and 17 years. The decision to use this age bracket is justified by the fact that juveniles within the age bracket are best suited to give relevant information on the subject matter of the study.

# Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined statistically using the formula: n = Z2 (pq)

e2

where n = required sample size

z = level of significance (95% or 1.96)

p = proportion of occurrence or rate of juvenile delinquency (30% derived from World Youth Report, 2008, cited in Sheryln, 2008).

q = 70% (complement of p)

e = accuracy rate or error margin (4.0%).

Applying the formula:

n = 1.962 ( . 30) ( . 70)

0. 042

= 3. 84 x 0.21

. 0016

= 504

= 504 + 6 (The number was rounded up to 510 to allow for equal distribution)

= 510

# Sampling procedure

The purposive sampling method was adopted in selecting the subjects for this study. Firstly, 10 comprehensive secondary schools which are attended by both boys and girls were purposively selected from all the secondary schools in Owerri Municipal. This was done to ensure the equal representation of the males and females in the sample. After that, 51 senior secondary students were randomly selected from each of the ten comprehensive secondary schools selected for the study.

The students were randomly selected from the SS1 and SS2 classes. The SS3 students were not sampled in this study because at the time of conducting the study, the SS3 students were unavailable. The reason was that they had concluded the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) prior to the time the study was conducted. In a particular school, 13 males and 13 females were randomly selected from the SS1 class, while in the SS2 class, 13 males and 12 females were randomly selected to

make up a total of 51 students. In another school, the sampling was inversely replicated to ensure equal representation of the males and females in the sample.

The guidance counselors of the 10 comprehensive secondary schools sampled were selected for in-depth interview (IDI). In addition, an opinion leader (a traditional chief) in Owerri municipal and a counseling psychologist were also selected for the in- depth interview.

# Instruments for data collection

The questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher based on the research questions and hypotheses. The questionnaire was validated by an expert in juvenile delinquency after some modifications. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section of the questionnaire sought information on the demographic characteristics of the research subjects while the second section elicited information on the substantive issues of the study. The questions in the questionnaire comprised open-ended and fixed alternative questions. The interview guide was also used to collect more in-depth information from key informants on the subject matter.

# Administration of instruments

The questionnaire was administered to the students in their respective schools by the researcher with the help of 5 research assistants. The research assistants were undergraduate students. The research assistants were thoroughly trained on the study objectives and how to administer the instruments of the study. The questionnaires were other-administered. This means that the researcher and the research assistants filled the

questionnaires for the respondents based on their responses to the questions in the questionnaire. The reason for this was to obviate the anticipated confusion the respondents might encounter if they were allowed to fill the questionnaires themselves.



**Picture 3: Administration of the questionnaires to students in one of the comprehensive secondary schools sampled.**

The researcher conducted the in-depth interview with the assistance of one of the research assistants who was taking notes. The in-depth interview was recorded with a tape recorder after getting the consent of the interviewees.



**Picture 4: Interview session with one of the guidance counselors.**

# Limitations of the Study

The researcher encountered some challenges in the course of collecting data for this study. The principals and students of some of the secondary schools sampled were initially reluctant to co-operate with the researcher. They were apprehensive of the objectives of the study. In that regard, the researcher had to show his school identity card to allay their fears. The researcher also convinced them that the study was primarily for academic purposes. The researcher assured them that their names and that of their schools would not be cited in this study. Another problem the researcher encountered was the intermittent interruption of the interview sessions with the guidance counselors in some

schools by teachers and students. The researcher overcame this problem by continuing the interview after each interruption.

# Methods of Data Analysis

The questionnaire responses were computer- processed and analyzed with the application of the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 16. To this, descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distribution was used to interpret the data, while the Chi-square (X2) statistic was employed in the testing of the hypotheses of the study. The hypotheses for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, qualitative data from the in-depth interview were analyzed using the pattern matching technique where the data was related to propositions during transcription. Phrases with special connotation were extracted as illustrative quotes to complement the quantitative data.

# CHAPTER FOUR

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected for this study. In this study, the respondents were drawn from 10 comprehensive secondary schools in Owerri Municipality. The following analyses are based on the five hundred and ten (510) questionnaires administered to the respondents. The analyses are divided into seven sections: demographic characteristics of respondents, level of communication in the respondents’ families, level of supervision in respondents’ families, family cohesion and symptoms of delinquency in the respondents. The hypotheses for this study were tested in this chapter. The qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) with guidance counselors, a community leader in Owerri municipality and a counseling psychologist were also analyzed in this chapter. This chapter ended with the discussion of findings of the study.

# Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sex** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Male | 255 | 50.0 |
| Female | 255 | 50.0 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Work (2012)

Table 1 indicates that the male respondents were 255 which represented 50.0% of the respondents while the females were 255 representing 50% of the sample. This indicates that both sexes were equally represented in the sample.

# Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 9-13 | 76 | 14.9 |
| 14-17 | 434 | 85.1 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 2 above shows that 434 respondents constituting 85.1% were within the age bracket of 14-17, while 76 (14.9%) respondents were within the age bracket of 9-13. This shows that the majority of the respondents in the sample were those within the age bracket of 14-17.

# Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Class

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Ss1 | 255 | 50.0 |
| Ss2 | 255 | 50.0 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 3 shows that 255 respondents indicating 50.0% of the sample were in SS1 while those in SS2 were 255(50%).

# Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by the Marital Status of their Parents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Parents’ Marital Status** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Married and living together | 283 | 55.5 |
| Separated | 83 | 16.3 |
| Divorced | 28 | 5.5 |
| Mother deceased | 37 | 7.3 |
| Father Deceased | 73 | 14.3 |
| Both parents Deceased | 6 | 1.2 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 4 above indicates that at the time of filling the questionnaires, 283 (55.5%) respondents reported that their parents were married and living together, this was followed by 83 (16.3%) respondents who reported that their parents were separated.73 respondents (14.3%) reported that their fathers were deceased while 37(7.3%) respondents reported that their mothers were deceased.28 (5.5%) respondents reported that their parents were divorced. The least category were 6 (1.2) respondents who reported that their two parents were deceased. For the purposes of this study, a stable family shall mean a family where the two biological parents are living together while a broken home in this study refers to any family where both biological parents are not living and staying together. Hence, responses from the respondents indicate that 283 respondents constituting 55.5% of the sample were from stable families while 227(44.5%) respondents were from broken homes. This statistics gives an insight into the

rate of broken homes in Owerri Municipality. This view is supported by a guidance counselor in her response to the IDI question on the extent of family instability in Owerri Municipality. According to her:

…it is very obvious. There are a lot of changes. The only permanent thing in nature is change. It is also affecting the family. The family is really experiencing a lot of transformation in the negative. There is increase in divorce, separation and what have you. I think that it is emanating from the systemic problem in our society.

Another guidance counselor explained that:

…I counsel some couples that are about to wed. I am a marriage counselor at Assumpta Cathedral. The divorce rate is increasing because nowadays you will see a couple that wedded this month; next year they will tell you that they are not living together. Even, I met one here as I was coming. He is my friend. He got married and the wife died and after some months he brought another girl and introduced the girl to me; went for marriage counseling and I was waiting for them to call us for the blessing at the altar. Behold, he came and told me that he was no longer interested and this girl is pregnant…

A community leader interviewed on the same issue had this to say:

…most women especially the educated ones don’t normally fit into their families. They feel that it is better for them to stay on their own instead of condoning their husbands and most of them don’t take care of their children and this affects most family settings and there is also outbreak of conflicts in many families…

The responses from the In-depth Interview (IDI) also suggested that the increasing rate of family instability in Owerri Municipality is instigating juvenile delinquency in the area. A guidance counselor who was interviewed said that:

If you look at the cultists in our secondary schools, most of them that have been caught come from broken

homes and when they enter into the university, they end up not achieving anything and it is because of the instability in these families…

Another guidance counselor from another school averred that:

…that division is not good. For example, we have some of them here. The children are not happy. There was a student here last year. She was always alone and when you see her you will know that there is something wrong somewhere. At a point she started sneaking out from school. If you see her in the class you will notice that there is something wrong. So, one day I interviewed her and she told me that the father and mother are no longer living together…

# Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Religious Affiliation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Religious Affiliation** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Catholic | 231 | 45.3 |
| Anglican | 157 | 30.8 |
| Islam | 6 | 1.2 |
| ATR | 2 | .4 |
| Pentecostal | 114 | 22.4 |
| **TOTAL** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field work (2012)

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents were Catholics. This is indicated by 231 respondents which are 45.3% of the sample. This was followed by Anglicans who are 30.8% of the sample with 157 respondents. The Pentecostals were 114(22.4%) while the Islam adherents were 6 making up 1.2 % of the sample. The minority category in this distribution was the African Traditional Religion (ATR) adherents with 2 respondents constituting .4% of the respondents.

# LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION IN RESPONDENTS’ FAMILIES

This section deals with the patterns of communication and relationship in the respondents’ families.

# Table 6: Distribution of Respondents on How ‘freely’ they communicate with their Parents/Guardians

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you feel free talking to your parents about anything** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 180 | 35.3 |
| Sometimes | 309 | 60.7 |
| No, never | 21 | 4.1 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 6 above reveals that 60.7 % (309) of the total respondents seldom communicate with their parent(s)/guardian(s); this was followed by 35.3% of the respondents who communicate with their parent(s)/guardian(s) all the time. 21(4.1%) respondents reported that they never communicate with their parent(s)/guardian(s).

# Table 7: Distribution of Respondents on ‘Why’ they don’t communicate with their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasons for not freely talking to your Parent(s)/Guardian** | **Mentioned** | **Not mentioned** | **Total** |
| I am not understood | 10 | 500 | 510 |
| Shyness/fright | 6 | 504 | 510 |
| Parent(s)/Guardian(s) not always around | 3 | 507 | 510 |
| Confidentiality | 2 | 508 | 510 |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 7 above indicates that 10 of the respondents do not freely communicate with their parent(s)/ Guardian because they perceive that they would not be understood. On the other hand, 6 respondents don not freely communicate with their parent(s)/Guardian(s) because they are afraid and shy to do so.3 respondents reported that they do not freely talk to their parent(s)/Guardian because they are not always around while 2 respondents reported that they like keeping things to themselves.

# Table 8: Distribution of Respondents on ‘How often’ they communicate their Personal Problems with their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you talk to your Parent(s)/Guardian(s) about your Personal Problems** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 128 | 25.1 |
| Sometimes | 328 | 64.3 |
| No, never | 54 | 10.6 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 8 above reveals that 64.3 %( 328) of the respondents seldom communicate their personal problems to their parents. This was followed by 25.1 % (128) of the respondents who reported that they often discuss their personal problems with their parent(s)/guardian(s). 10.6% (54) of the respondents never discuss their personal problems with their parent(s).

# Table 9: Distribution of Respondents on ‘Why’ they do not communicate their Personal Problems With their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasons for not communicating your personal problems with your Parent(s)/guardian(s)** | **Mentioned** | **Not Mentioned** | **Total** |
| Fright | 24 | 486 | 510 |
| Shyness | 11 | 499 | 510 |
| Parent(s)/Guardian(s) nonchalance | 3 | 507 | 510 |
| I am not Understood | 8 | 502 | 510 |
| No attention from parent(s)/Guardian(s) | 2 | 508 | 510 |
| Parent(s)/Guardian(s) not always around | 6 | 504 | 510 |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 9 above reveals that 24 respondents from the sample do not communicate their personal problems with their parent(s)/guardian because of fright, 11respondents do not communicate their personal problems with their parent(s)/guardian because they are shy to do so. 8 respondents do not discuss their personal problems with their parent(s)/guardian(s) because they feel that their parent(s)/guardian(s) would not understand them while 6 respondents do not communicate their problems with their parent(s)/guardian(s) as a result of their care- givers’ frequent absence. Responses from 3 respondents indicate that they do not discuss their problems with their parent(s)/guardian because of their nonchalance. 2 respondents do not tell their parent(s)/guardian(s) their problems because they do not give them attention.

# Table 10: Distribution of Respondents on ‘How often’ they spend time with their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **How often do you spend time with your parent(s)/Guardian** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Often | 150 | 29.4 |
| Sometimes | 311 | 61.0 |
| Never | 49 | 9.6 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 10 above shows that 311(61.0%) respondents seldom spend time with their parent(s)/guardian(s) followed by 29.4% (150) who often spend their time with their parent(s)/guardian(s). 49 respondents constituting 9.6% of the respondents reported that they never spend time with their parent(s)/guardian(s). This statistics reveals that most parent(s)/guardian(s) do not spend adequate time with their children and wards.

# LEVEL OF SUPERVISION AND MONITORING IN RESPONDENTS’ FAMILIES

This section deals with the degree of supervision and monitoring in the respondents’ families.

# Table 11: Distribution of respondents on ‘how often’ they are supervised/monitored by their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Are you usually left alone without the supervision of your parent(s)/guardian(s)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 186 | 36.5 |
| Sometimes | 196 | 38.4 |
| No, never | 128 | 25.1 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 11 above reveals that majority of the respondents represented by 38.4% (196) reported that they were seldom supervised while 36.5 %( 186) reported they were usually left alone without supervision. 128(25.1%) respondents reported that they were never left without supervision. From the above statistics, it is evident that parents and guardians are not adequately monitoring their children and wards.

The qualitative data from the IDI lent credence to the view that parents and guardians are not doing enough in the monitoring and supervision of their children and wards. Majority of the people interviewed attributed inadequate supervision of children by their parents and guardians to the excessive pursuit of economic interests. Others opined that most parents are nonchalant about their children’s welfare. These views were confirmed by their responses. A guidance counselor interviewed on this issue said:

…I don’t think so. A lot of us are pursuing money. We are pursuing money forgetting the people for whom we are pursuing the money which is not right.

A counseling psychologist averred that:

There is no way one can say that parents are monitoring their children because the use of these handsets have gone a long way in destabilizing the children. Yes, they may use it for positive reasons but the negative uses outweigh the positive ones. Even, the parents can say that the child can use the handset from so so time to so so time; the parents will not always be there to monitor the use of these handsets. There is no way one can say that parents are monitoring their children hundred percent…

Another guidance counselor in her own view opined that:

…parents are so busy because of the economic situation of this country. Parents are so busy looking for money. At times they are not always there for their children. Only few can monitor their children very well…

A community leader while responding to this issue said:

…laisser- faire. Some parents are not concerned about what their children are doing. Where is the time to monitor them? Early in the morning, the man gets up for work and the woman will do same without caring about what the children are doing; and they will leave the children at the care of the house help or even to care for themselves and they are not so keen to know what the children are doing and this affects the character of the children and when they grow up with that thing, you will have a different thing altogether especially at the adolescent age.

# Table 12: Distribution of Respondents on ‘Why’ they are usually left alone without Supervision by their Parents/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasons why you are usually left without supervision** | **Mentioned** | **Not Mentioned** | **Total** |
| Parent(s)/guardian not always around | 98 | 412 | 510 |
| Parent(s)/guardian always busy | 43 | 467 | 510 |
| I am given instructions | 10 | 500 | 510 |
| Parent(s)/guardian(s) nonchalance | 21 | 489 | 510 |
| My parent(s)/guardian(s) trust me | 2 | 508 | 510 |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 12 above shows that 98 respondents reported that they were usually left without supervision because their parent(s)/guardian(s) were not always around. This was followed by 43 respondents who reported that their parent(s)/guardian were too busy to monitor them. On the other hand, 21 respondents reported that their parent(s)/guardian do not care about their activities. 10 respondents reported that they were not adequately supervised because their parent(s)/guardian(s) always gave them instructions while 2 respondents reported that they were not always supervised because their parent(s)/guardian trust them.

# Table 13: Distribution of respondents on whether their parent(s)/guardian(s) know their company before they go out

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you tell your parents whom you are going to be with before going out** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 199 | 39.0 |
| Sometimes | 182 | 35.7 |
| No | 129 | 25.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 13 above indicates that 199 respondents constituting 39.0% of the sample often tell their parent(s)/guardian whom they are going to be with before going out. This was followed by 35.7% (182) of the respondents who seldom inform their parent(s)/guardian(s) about the identity of whom they are going to be with before they go out. However, 25.3% (129) of the respondents never tell their parents whom they are going to be with before going out.

# Table 14: Distribution of Respondents on ‘whether’ their Parent(s)/guardian(s) know their friends

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do your parent(s)/guardian know who your friends are** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 284 | 55.7 |
| No | 226 | 44.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 14 above shows that 284 (55.7%) respondents reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) know their friends while 226 constituting 44.3% of the respondents in the sample reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) do not know their friends.

# Table 15: Distribution of Respondents on ‘whether’ their parent(s)/guardian(s) monitor ‘what’ they watch on television

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Monitoring of what you watch on television** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 160 | 31.4 |
| Sometimes | 163 | 32.0 |
| No | 187 | 36.7 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 15 above reveals that majority of the respondents representing 36.7% (187) of the total sample reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) do not monitor what they watch on television while 163 respondents representing 32.0% of the sample reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) monitor what they watch on television sometimes. The lowest percentage was 31.4% (160) of the respondents who reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) monitor what the watch on television. This statistics indicate that parent(s)/guardian(s) are not adequately monitoring their children’s activities and this could have implications for juvenile delinquency.

# Table 16: Distribution of Respondents on ‘whether’ their parent(s)/guardian(s) monitor their internet use

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do your parent(s)/guardian(s) monitor your internet use** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 85 | 16.7 |
| Sometimes | 154 | 30.2 |
| No | 271 | 53.1 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 16 above indicates that majority of the respondents representing 53.1% (271) of the sample reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) do not monitor their internet use. This was followed by 154 respondents constituting 30.2% of the sample who reported that their parent(s)/guardian(s) seldom monitor their internet use while 16.7 %( 85) respondents affirmed that their parent(s)/guardian monitor their internet use.

# FAMILY COHESION

This section looks at the level of cohesion and adaptability in the respondents’ families.

# Table 17: Distribution of Respondents on ‘how often’ they witness quarrels between their parent(s)/guardian(s)/relatives

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you witness quarrels between your parent(s)/guardian(s)/relatives** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 108 | 21.2 |
| Sometimes | 149 | 29.2 |
| No | 253 | 49.6 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 17 above shows that majority of the respondents represented by 49.6 % of the sample do not witness conflict between their parent(s)/guardian/relatives. On the other hand, 149(29.2%) respondents witness some measure of conflict between their parent(s)/guardian(s)/ relatives. 108 respondents constituting 21.2% of the sample reported that they often witnessed conflict between their parent(s)/guardian(s)/ relatives.

# Table 18: Distribution of Respondents on ‘how often’ they witness fights between their Siblings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you witness fights between your siblings** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes, all the time | 248 | 48.6 |
| Sometimes | 153 | 30.0 |
| No, never | 109 | 21.4 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 18 above reveals that majority of the respondents constituting 48.6 % (248) witness frequent fights involving their siblings. This was followed by 153 or 30.0% of the respondents who witness some measure of fights between their siblings. 109 (21.4%) respondents reported that they never witnessed fights between their siblings. The statistics above shows that majority of the respondents witnessed considerable conflict between their siblings. This could give insight into the aggressive behaviours of juveniles. Also, it shows the need for parent(s)/guardian(s) to intensify their efforts in taming their children and wards so as to regulate their aggressive behaviours.

# SYMPTOMS OF DELINQUENCY IN THE RESPONDENTS

This section analyzes the common delinquent acts that the respondents have committed in the past one year.

# Table 19: Distribution of Respondents on their involvement in physical fight

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you been involved in a physical fight** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 277 | 54.3 |
| No | 233 | 45.7 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 19 above indicates that majority of the respondents represented by 54.3% (277) reported that they engaged in physical fight as opposed to 233 respondents(45.7%) who did not engage in physical fight in the past one year.

# Table 20: Distribution of Respondents ‘on whether’ they have run away from home in the past year

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you run away from home** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 14 | 2.7 |
| No | 496 | 97.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 20 shows that 2.7% (14) of the respondents ran away from their homes while 97.3% (496) of the respondents did not run away from their homes in the past year.

# Table 21: Distribution of Respondents on ‘why they Ran Away from home’

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasons for running away from home** | **Mentioned** | **Not Mentioned** | **Total** |
| Parent(s)/guardian(s) wrath | 9 | 501 | 510 |
| Caught watching pornography | 2 | 508 | 510 |
| My father beat me up | 1 | 509 | 510 |
| Wrongful accusation at home | 2 | 508 | 510 |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 21 indicates that 9 respondents ran away from their homes because their parent(s)/ guardian(s) were upset with them while 2 respondents ran away from their homes because they were caught watching pornographic materials. On the other hand, another 2 respondents ran away from their homes because they were wrongfully accused at home while 1respondent ran away from home because the respondent was beaten up by the father.

# Table 22: Distribution of respondents on their engagement in Examination Malpractice

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you engaged in examination malpractice** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 180 | 35.3 |
| No | 330 | 64.7 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 22 reveals that majority of the respondents representing 64.7% (330) of the sample did not engage in examination malpractice in the past year while 35.3 %( 180) confessed that they engaged in examination malpractice in the past year.

# Table 23: Distribution of Respondents on their engagement in Stealing

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you taken anything from a store without paying for it** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 89 | 17.5 |
| No | 421 | 82.5 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 23 shows that the majority of the respondents representing 82.5 %( 421) of the sample reported that they did not steal from a store while 17.5% (89) respondents stole from a store in the past year.

# Table 24: Distribution of Respondents on their engagement in Vandalism

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you purposely damaged a property that was not yours** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 111 | 21.8 |
| No | 399 | 78.2 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 24 indicates that 399 respondents (78.2%) did not engage in vandalism as opposed to 21.8% (111) who reported that they engaged in vandalism.

# Table 25: Distribution of Respondents on their Truancy in school

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Engagement in Truancy** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 144 | 28.2 |
| No | 366 | 71.8 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 25 reveals that majority of the respondents (71.8%) did not engage in truancy while 28.2 %( 144) engaged in truancy in the past year.

# Table 26: Distribution of Respondents on their Unruliness in the past year

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you ever been too loud/rowdy and people complained** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 148 | 29.0 |
| No | 362 | 71.0 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 26 shows that 362(71.0%) respondents were not unruly in the past year as opposed to 148(29%) respondents who confessed being unruly in the past year

# Table 27: Distribution of Respondents on their Dishonesty in the past year

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you lied to your parent(s)/guardian(s) about your destination/companion** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 187 | 36.7 |
| No | 323 | 63.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 27 reveals that 63.3 %( 323) of the respondents were not dishonest in the past year while 36.7 %( 187) of the respondents confessed being dishonest in the past year.

# Table 28: Distribution of Respondents on ‘Why’ they were dishonest to their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasons for being dishonest** | **Mentioned** | **Not Mentioned** | **Total** |
| Fear of punishment | 177 | 333 | 510 |
| Fear of restriction of movement | 8 | 502 | 510 |
| Secrecy | 2 | 508 | 510 |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 28 indicates that 177 respondents were dishonest in the past year because they were afraid of being punished if they told the truth. On the other hand, 8 respondents lied

because they feared that their movement would be restricted if they were honest about their destination and company. 2 respondents were dishonest in the past year because they felt that their parent(s)/guardian(s) must not always know their whereabouts.

# Table 29: Distribution of Respondents on their engagement in Verbal Abuse

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you verbally abused someone** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 223 | 43.7 |
| No | 287 | 56.3 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 29 indicates that majority of the respondents representing 56.3% (283) of the sample did not engage in verbal abuse as opposed to 43.7% (223) of the respondents who verbally abused people in the past year.

# Table 30: Distribution of Respondents on their engagement in Bullying

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In the past year, have you ever bullied someone** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Yes | 130 | 25.5 |
| No | 380 | 74.5 |
| **Total** | **510** | **100** |

Source: Field Work (2012).

Table 30 reveals that 380(74.5%) respondents did not bully anyone in the past year while 130(25.5%) respondents confessed that they engaged in bullying in the past year.

# Table 31: Summary Percentage Distribution of the delinquent acts reported by the respondents

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Delinquency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Fighting | 54.3% |
| Verbal Abuse | 43.7% |
| Dishonesty | 36.7% |
| Examination Malpractice | 35.3% |
| Unruliness | 29.0% |
| Truancy | 28.2% |
| Bullying | 25.5% |
| Vandalism | 21.8% |
| Stealing | 17.5% |
| Running Away | 2.7% |

Source: Field Work (2012)

Table 31 indicates that majority of the respondents constituting 54.3% engaged in fighting in the past year, this was followed by 43.7% verbally abused people; 36.7% lied to their parent(s)/guardian(s) about their destination and companion while 35.3% engaged in examination malpractice. 29.0% of the respondents were unruly in the past year, 28.2% confessed being truant, and 25.5% bullied people in the past year while 21.8%

vandalized property that did not belong to them. 17.5% of the respondents reported that they stole from the shop in the past year. The least delinquent act reported was running away from home which was committed by 2.7% of the respondents.

The above statistics suggest that much delinquent behaviours are exhibited by juveniles in Owerri Municipal with fighting being the most prevalent. The prevalence of these delinquent behaviours committed by juveniles appears to be having adverse consequences on the wellbeing of the inhabitants of Owerri Municipal. This view is corroborated by responses from the In-depth interview. For instance, a community leader in Owerri in his response on this issue complained that:

…like the increasing rate of kidnapping and cultism in Owerri now… Owerri is no longer safe. If you are walking along the streets now, you don’t feel safe; and some of these acts are committed by these children…

# TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were formulated for this study. They were tested at 0.05 level of significance (sig.). That is, if the level of significance (sig.) is less than or equal to (≤) 0.05, then there is a significant relationship.

# Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency than children from stable families. To test this hypothesis, family arrangement (gotten from the marital status of respondents’ parents) was cross-tabulated with delinquency.

# Table 32: Family Arrangement \* Delinquency

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Family Arrangement** | **Not Delinquent** | **Delinquent** | **Total** |
| Stable family | 77(15.1%) | 206(40.4%) | 283(55.5%) |
| Broken Home | 40(7.8%) | 187(36.7%) | 227(44.5%) |
| **Total** | **117(22.9%)** | **393(77.1%)** | **510(100%)** |

**X2 = 6.549, df = 1, Sig = .010**

# Decision:

The chi-square value shows that the level of significance (sig.) is .010. It indicates that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency than children from stable families. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is upheld. Hence, there is a significant relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency.

# Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that there is a positive relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency. To test, parental supervision (adopted from responses from the 12th question in the questionnaire, thus: “Are you usually left alone without the supervision of your parent(s)/guardian(s)? Responses, ‘yes, all the time’ and sometimes were collapsed into ‘inadequate’ and ‘no, never’=adequate) was cross- tabulated with delinquency.

# Table 33: Parental Supervision \* Delinquency

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Parental Supervision** | **Not Delinquent** | **Delinquent** | **Total** |
| Inadequate Parental Supervision | 74(14.5%) | 308(60.4%) | 382(74.9%) |
| Adequate Parental Supervision | 43(8.4%) | 85(16.7%) | 128(25.1%) |
| **Total** | **117(22.9%)** | **393(77.1%)** | **510(100%)** |

**X2 = 10.970, df =1, Sig = .001**

# Decision:

The chi-square value shows that the level of significance (sig.) is .001. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the second hypothesis which states that there is a positive relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency is hereby upheld.

# Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis states that children who grow up in homes with considerable conflict are more likely to become delinquents than those who grow up in more peaceful families. To test, family cohesion (questions 18 and 19 adopted from the questionnaire were compressed, thus: do you witness quarrels/fights between your parent(s)/guardian(s)/siblings/relatives? Responses ‘no’= no conflict at home, yes and sometimes=conflict at home) was cross-tabulated with delinquency.

# Table 34: Family Cohesion \* Delinquency

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Family Cohesion** | **Not Delinquent** | **Delinquent** | **Total** |
| No conflict at home | 38(7.4%) | 60(11.8%) | 98(19.2%) |
| Conflict at home | 79(15.5%) | 333(65.3%) | 412(80.8%) |
| **Total** | **117(22.9%)** | **393(77.1%)** | **510(100%)** |

**X2= 17.205, df= 1, Sig. = .000**

# Decision:

The chi-square value shows that the level of significance (sig.) is .000.This indicates that there is a strong positive relationship. Therefore, the third hypothesis which states that children who grow up in homes with considerable conflict are more likely to be delinquent than those who grow up in more peaceful families is hereby upheld.

# Summary of Findings

The preponderance of juvenile delinquency has become a major social problem locally and globally. Many researchers have attributed this problem to the increasing diversification of the family system among other factors. As a result, the chief objective of this study was to examine the nexus between family instability and juvenile delinquency with focus on Owerri Municipality.

This summary of findings is based on the findings gathered from 510 questionnaires administered to senior secondary school students who were purposively selected from 10

comprehensive secondary schools in Owerri Municipality. The findings also include information gathered from the In-Depth Interview discussions.

The result from the first hypothesis of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This finding is in concert with the findings of Kimani (2010). Kimani found out that children from broken homes had a tendency to engage in juvenile delinquency than children from the ideal two-parent family. Furthermore, this finding is also corroborated by Videon’s (2002) assertion that children who live in homes with only one parent or in which marital relationships have been disrupted by divorce or separation were more likely to exhibit a wide range of behavioural problems including delinquency than children who are from a stable two- parent families. This also validates the findings by Fry (2010) that a two-parent family provides insulation against a child’s vulnerability to delinquency.

In contrast to the present findings, Alemika and Chukwuma (2001) in their study found no significant relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This divergent finding by Alemika and Chukwuma contrary to the finding of this study might be due to the methodology and sample adopted by the researchers. In view of the present study and from the results of some studies reviewed herein, it is logical to accept the finding that broken homes predicted juvenile delinquency.

The researcher also observed from the analysis of the second hypothesis that there was a significant relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency. This finding is in line with that of Heck and Welsh (2010) who found out that lack of supervision by parents and care-givers and absence of close relationships

between the teenager and his parents were factors that influenced delinquency. The qualitative data from the present study also affirmed this finding as most of the participants complained about the negative influence of inadequate parental supervision on delinquency. This finding also agrees with the proposition of the Containment Theory reviewed in this study which argues that failure of the family as an ‘outer containment structure’ to regulate the individuals’ behaviour through effective supervision predicts crime and delinquency.

The result from the analysis of the third hypothesis revealed that children from conflict-ridden families were vulnerable to delinquency than children from more peaceful families. This finding supports Alfry’s (2010) assertion that children who witnessed frequent violence and conflicts in the home are more likely to be delinquent. This finding is also in agreement with that of Sanni et al (2010) who suggested that juveniles were likely to be delinquent if their social environments were fraught with conflict and violence. The following findings were also made based on the results obtained from this research study:

1. The rate of family instability is gradually increasing in Owerri Municipality.
2. Parent(s)/guardian(s)-child communication level was abysmally poor in Owerri Municipality.
3. Parent(s)/guardian(s) were not adequately supervising and monitoring their children and wards in Owerri Municipality.
4. There was a prevalence of delinquent acts such as fighting, examination malpractice, running away from home, vandalism, dishonesty, stealing, verbal abuse, bullying and truancy in Owerri Municipality.
5. The preponderance of juvenile delinquency in Owerri Municipality adversely affected the social life of the inhabitants of the area.

# CHAPTER FIVE

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

# Summary

This study explored the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency. The motivation for this study was ignited by the upsurge in juvenile rate in Owerri Municipality.

In an effort to study this problem methodically, the researcher reviewed a good number of relevant literature and theories on the subject matter of this study. The use of questionnaires and interviews were also employed to gather empirical data for this study. The data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) while the chi-square (x2) statistic was used to test the 3 hypotheses formulated for this study.

Based on the empirical findings from this study, it was observed that the rate of family instability in Owerri Municipality has been gradually increasing in recent times. This study also found out that family instability constitutes various problems to the family and the society. Some of these problems include increase in crime and delinquency rate, psychological problems in children among others. Hence, a suitable family environment is a requisite factor necessary to insulate children against delinquency.

# CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency. The findings of this study showed that family instability is a risk factor for juvenile delinquency.

Results from this study showed that children from broken homes are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquents. This is because a broken home is mostly characterized by transitions in parenting and role conflicts. This condition predisposes children in this kind of family settings to delinquency.

Although research has shown that a majority of delinquents come from fragmented families, this study found out that juvenile delinquency is also fostered by inadequate parental monitoring and supervision. Children who are inadequately supervised and poorly socialized, whose parent(s)/guardian(s) do not monitor their movements and activities are more likely to be delinquent. Furthermore, adequate parental supervision and monitoring breeds positive interaction between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the children which is essential for a healthy child upbringing. It therefore becomes imperative that parent(s)/guardian(s) should create adequate time for the supervision of their children. Also, familial conflicts have a positive relationship with juvenile delinquency. This means that children who experience conflicts in the forms of fights, quarrels and violence are prone to a delinquent lifestyle.

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to note that there is need for the family to rise up to the performance of its primary roles of positive child rearing and socialization and to create a healthy social environment in order to insulate the children from delinquency.

# Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

* + 1. Governments should formulate and implement policies that will consolidate the integrity of the family. This is in view of the integral role the family plays in the socialization and moral grooming of the children.
    2. Governments, social workers and counselors should provide assistance to families in need of resolution of conditions of instability and social disruptions in their families.
    3. Alternative institutions such as day care centres and special schools should be considered for children of unstable families where other efforts to help them have failed.
    4. Governments, counselors and concerned agencies should develop programmes aimed at sensitizing parents and care-givers on parent roles and obligations, child- care and development and ways of building a healthy family environment.
    5. Parents and care-givers should endeavour to make out sufficient time to spend with their children in order to monitor and supervise their activities especially what they watch on television and their internet use.
    6. There is need for parents and care-giver to put more effort in facilitating the enhancement of cordial relationships and healthy communication between them and their children.
    7. Parents/guardians and family members should always strive to maintain peace, unity and harmony in their homes at all times.

# Suggestions for Future Research

In view of the findings of this study, it will be imperative to further research in the following areas:

* An investigation into the influence of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency.
* A survey of the impact of maternal employment on juvenile delinquency.
* An exploration of the impact of family size on juvenile delinquency.
* Family size and juvenile delinquency.
* An inquiry into the influence of family socio-economic status on juvenile delinquency.

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# APPENDIX 1: STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

Department of Sociology/Anthropology University of Nigeria

Nsukka Enugu State

Dear Students,

I am a post graduate student of the above named university. I am conducting a research work on “family instability and juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipality”. You have been selected to participate in this study through a scientific process.

I would appreciate your candid response to the questions in the questionnaire as they will assist me to meet the study objectives. Please feel free to answer the questions as your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for your cooperation

Duruji, Onyekachi PG/M.SC/09/50830

Please tick [√] where appropriate.

**THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. Sex: (a) Male [ ] (b) Female [ ]
2. Age

a. 9 – 13 [ ] (b) 14 – 17 [ ] (c) 18 and above [ ]

1. Are you in what class?

a. JSS 1 [ ] (b) JSS 2 [ ] (c) JSS 3 [ ] (d) SS 1 [ ] (e) S.S 2 [ ] (f) SS 3 [ ]

1. Marital status of Parents:
   1. Married and living together [ ] (b) Separated [ ]

(c) Divorced [ ] (d) Mother deceased [ ] (e) Father deceased [ ]

(f) Both parents deceased [ ]

1. Religious Affiliation:
   1. Catholic [ ] (b) Anglican [ ] (c) Islam [ ]

(d) African Traditional Religion [ ]

(e) Other, please specify…………………………………………………………

**SECTION B. ISSUES RELATED TO THE STUDY**

1. Whom do you live with most of the time?
   1. Both mother and father [ ] (b) With mother only [ ]

(c) With father only [ ] (d). Mother and step father [ ]

(e) Father and step mother [ ] (f) With a relative (e.g. grand parents, aunt, brother, sister, uncle etc) [ ] (g) I live with friends [ ]

h. Other, specify ……………………………………………………………………

1. Do you feel free talking to your parent(s) / guardian(s) about anything?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No, never [ ]
2. If ‘No’ to question 7 above, why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

1. Do you talk with your parent(s) / guardian(s) about your personal problems?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No, never [ ]
2. If ‘No’ to question 9 above, why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

1. How often do you spend time with your parent(s) / guardian(s)?
   1. Often [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) Never [ ]
2. Are you usually left alone without the supervision of your parent(s) / guardian(s)?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No, never [ ]

13. If ‘yes’ to question 12 above, why?.................................................................................

1. Do you tell your parent(s) / guardian whom you are going to be with before you go out?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No [ ]
2. Do your parent(s) / guardian(s) know who your friends are?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
3. Do your parent(s) / guardian(s) know what you watch on television?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No [ ]
4. Do your parent(s) / guardian(s) monitor your computer/internet use?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) Sometime [ ] (c) No [ ]
5. Do you witness quarrels between your parent(s) / guardian(s) / relatives?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No [ ]
6. Do you witness fights between your siblings?
   1. Yes, all the time [ ] (b) Sometimes [ ] (c) No [ ]
7. In the past year, have you been involved in a physical fight?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]

21. If ‘yes’ to question 20 above, why did you fight?..............................................................

1. In the past year, have you run away from home ?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]

23. If ‘yes’ to question 21 above, why ………………………………………………………

1. In the past year have you engaged in examination malpractice ?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
2. Have you ever taken something from a store without paying for it?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
3. In the past year,have you purposely damaged a property that did not belong to you?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
4. In the past year, have you ever skipped class/school without excuse?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
5. If ‘ yes’ to question 27 above, why did you skip school without excuse?..................................
6. In the past year, have you ever been too loud /rowdy and people complained?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
7. In the past 12 months, have you ever lied to your parent(s) / guardian(s) about where you had been or whom you were with?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
8. If ‘yes’ to question 30 above, why did you lie to your parents?.................................................
9. In the past year, have you verbally abused someone?
   1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
10. In the past year, have you ever bullied someone?
    1. Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
11. Suggest ways of solving the problem of juvenile delinquency………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

# APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your opinion on the rate of juvenile delinquency in Owerri municipal? (Probe for occurrence in the past 3 years).
2. What could be the reasons that give rise to juvenile delinquency? (probe for economic factors, modernization, family-related factors)
3. Do you think that the family system is witnessing any changes in recent times in Owerri Municipal? (probe for rate of divorce, desertion, single parenthood, conflicts in the family)
4. What could be the reasons for the changes? (Probe for mothers working outside the home, cultural changes, unemployment).
5. What are the consequences of family instability on the children? (probe for juvenile delinquency, gang membership, personality problems)
6. Do you think that parents are doing enough in the supervision of their children? (Probe for monitoring their movement, what they watch on the television)
7. What are the consequences of family instability on the society?
8. What do you think could be the solution to family instability as it affects juvenile delinquency?