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Title: Youth Criminality in Benue State North-Central, Nigeria

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Abstract: The youth are the most energetic members of the society and therefore, their energy can be harnessed for positive use. In spite of this, it has been evident that youth criminality has been on increase and has become a pervasive social ill in the Nigerian society. This situation is unacceptable as it has constituted a significant impediment to national development. This has been a strong impetus to the researcher to initiate this study to examine the causes of youth criminality and the effects it has on the society. Robert Merton's theory of Anomie was adopted for the study. It was found that most youth engage themselves in criminal activities due to lack of parental care or improper socialization of the young ones. Socio-economic influence was also found to be one of the root causes of youth criminality. It was also found that the unwholesome aspect of youth unemployment and underdevelopment in Nigeria has been instrumental to youth criminality. Youth crime is said to have tremendous negative effects on the youth and society at large in the sense that it has negative social-economic and political effects that retard the rate of development of a nation. The study however suggests various ways through which youth crime can be reduced through elimination approach, target hardening approach and modification approach**.**

Keywords: Youth, Crime, North-Central, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

As a country begins to open up, outgrow its traditionalism and respond to outside influences or new ideas by modernizing and industrializing, its citizens seize the many new opportunities created by such development. By so doing, a small but progressively increasing number of them tend to succumb to temptations and seek illegal satisfaction through crimes such as armed robbery, vandalism, theft, terrorism, kidnapping, arson, assassination and so many related crimes. This phenomenon, increases with the process of economic growth and structural changes in any society (Yangeve 2012, 1).

Crime is a social problem that affects the society in various dimensions owing to man's insatiable quest for wealth and other desirables of life. However, it is reported to be one of the major problems of contemporary Nigerian society. Concern about the problem cuts across all categories of people in Nigeria and there is unanimity among both leaders and the public about the need for an urgent solution to the problem (Ubwa 2003, 44). In spite of various efforts to combat youth crimes, the incidence seems to have rather assumed an escalating proportion. No day passes without news of assassinations, murder or other criminal acts. The nation is virtually under-siege by dare-devil men of the underworld.

The spate of criminal activities in the Nigerian Society especially at the beginning of the 21st century implies that the youth see crime as an alternative means of expressing their discontent (Ubwa 2003). Ubwa reported that criminality among youth increasingly appears to be a framework for social recourse aimed at finding solution to the problem of discontentment.

Crime as spelt out in this discourse is very inimical to the growth of various societies but could this argument be substantially true? Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) a French Sociologist however argued that crime is functional and inevitable in every society. He basically contended that all societies' changes begin with some form of deviance. He emphasizes that crime only becomes dysfunctional when its rate becomes unusually high (Haralambos and Holborn 1980).

Since crime causes a lot of harm such as loss of lives and property as well as fear and insecurity, its rising rate has invariably caused a lot of problems in the contemporary Nigerian society. This made Gyong (1988) to posit that "Criminality has become a serious problem in our society today as it is evident in the fact that everybody is living in fear of becoming a victim of crime."

The spate of criminal activities in the country today implies that the youth see crime as an alternative means of expressing their discontent especially with the present political dispensation. In another development, Mngutyo (2007, 11) argued that the general concern about the high rate of youth involvement in crime could be that it has undermined the principles of social order, thus making the society un-conducive for human habitation. He further noted that the difficulty of proffering solution to this social problem could also be attributed to the fact that in most cases, the actual causes of these problems are not known. Worst still, the perpetrators are in most cases ignorant of the latent or unintended effects of their actions. It is therefore not surprising that in spite of the various control measures in reducing crime, crime is still on a high rate which is adversely affecting the nation's development.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

There has been public outcry in Nigeria on the escalating proportion of youth's involvement in criminal activities. This is a result of the fact that too much emphasis is placed on individual pursuit of wealth to the neglect of social development which is concerned with the general improvement in the quality of life of the people (Zumve 2005, 35).

The undertone of Nigeria's socio-economic under-achievement show that armed insurgencies ravaging the oil-rich and volatile Niger Delta region (despite the amnesty granted to them by the Federal Government of Nigeria) also brings about an increase in youth crime. However, the militants are now competing for space in international headlines with a proliferation of Islamic terrorist offshoots. The season of discontent has special ramifications for a nation with unemployed millions. The net effect has been a tragic precipitation of violent crimes, assault, burglary, extortion and kidnapping. Furthermore, decades of

social and political turmoil helped turn this strategically located African nation into an established haven for international drug smugglers. Other highlights of Nigeria's prolific crime syndicates are economic fraud usually in the form of innovative internet schemes, money laundering, advance fee fraud and racketeering.

The human impact of this burgeoning criminal activity has been severe. In the country's economic capital Lagos, for instance, 273 civilians and 85 policemen were killed in separate criminal encounters between August and December, 2011**.** Recent figures are even more disturbing. In 2015 alone, Boko Haram violence claimed over 1000 lives and accounted for 200 abductions, including those of 12 foreign workers.

Osalor (2011, 67) reported that crime is inversely proportional to economic development. He reported that in 2008 alone, Nigeria lost $20.7 billion in oil profits due to militant violence in the oil rich Niger Delta region. He added that a Presidential Technical Committee attributed the fiscal loss to armed militant activity on oil installations that resulted in shutdowns and spillages. Consequently, the Nigerian government considers four of the nine states in the Niger Delta region as conflict zones, and foreigners travelling to these locations are strictly restricted.

Fraud is a huge sub-sector here. In fact, the United State Department specifically warns Nigeria-bound travelers to be wary of innovative scams hatched over the internet that pose the risk of both financial loss and personnel danger.

Since 2008, the connection between youth and terrorism has drawn an increasing scrutiny. It has become evident that Boko Haram and other terrorist groups have operated with impunity in a number of states in northern Nigeria, utilizing sophisticated communications technology and weapons. It is also clear that majority of its members have the youth as their funding leaders. Mohammed Yusuf was less than 30 years and its present leader Abubaka Shakeu is also in his 20's (Osalor 2011, 98).

Youth criminality is a despicable act being perpetrated by the significant proportion of our youths in our various communities that can no longer be ignored. Recently, 'men of the Nigeria Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) in Nasarawa State arrested 87 fake National Youth Service Corps members' (Omoniyi 2013, 41). He reported that the arrest was made at a hotel in a town where the fake corps members who were all youths had gathered to collect discharge certificates. And it was discovered that most of them were drop-outs. One could imagine what that criminal act would have on our society if they were given employment opportunity.

Lamenting, the then Commissioner of Police in Benue State, Emmanuel Obiako said that out of the over 200 suspects arrested in connection with various criminal activities in Benue state between July and November, 2015, 151 were youths. Disclosing this during an interactive session with journalists, he said that majority of the youths were involved in armed robbery, advance fee fraud (which takes place mostly around Wurukum market), unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition, culpable homicide and theft. Obiako said the matter has reached a stage where he had to raise alarm and appeal to the Benue State government to do something about it (Adewale 2015, 12).

On the lower level of society, there are 'area boys' who are mostly within the age bracket of 14-18 years. The area boys organize gangs that are mostly active in Makurdi and they specialize in smuggling and small-scale drug dealing. Makurdi metropolis is also famous for a crime dubbed 419. This is a type of advance fee fraud (named after section 419 of the Nigerian Penal Code) and is a form of confidence trick practiced by individuals and criminal syndicates where the youths are the worst culprit.

Zumve (2005) laments that the neglect of social development can be held as one of the causal factors responsible for the development of institutional structures which foster and encourage mass unemployment, inequality, exploitation, poverty, deprivation and frustration. This kind of environment also tends to encourage youth involvement in crime.

Then, what could be the possible cause or causes of this social problem? How does this social menace affect the youth and society at

large and how can this ugly trend in our society be checked? These are driving forces behind this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are competing theoretical paradigms in the analysis of crime. Youth criminality can however be better explained in terms of Robert Merton's theory of Anomie.

ANOMIE THEORY

Anomie theory is identified with the works of Robert Merton (1938). In his article titled "Social Structure and Anomie" he postulates that society sets forth cultural goals towards which all members of the society are expected to aspire. However, the institutionalized means of achieving these goals are not available to all members of the society. So he argued that crime in the society results from the discrepancy between cultural goals and means available for achieving them.

He also argues that some social structure may exert definite pressure on certain individuals to commit crime. For example, in Nigeria today great emphasis is placed on attaining financial success or material wealth but legitimate or institutionalized means of achieving them are limited, and so individuals seek alternative means of achieving the goals. It is as a result of this that Merton argues that strains in the society sometimes necessitate crime.

According to Haralambos and Holbon (1980) Merton however identified 5 modes an individual indulge in which are aimed at avoiding anomie adaptation as follows:

1. **Conformity:** This is the situation where an individual accept both the culturally approved goals and the means of achieving them (Merton 1938).

2. **Innovation:** This refers to the acceptance of cultural goal but rejection of the institutionalized means of achieving the goals. Instead, the individual devices norm violating means of achieving the goals such as armed robbery advance fee fraud, examination malpractice etc. Most of the crimes committed in

Nigeria for instance are traced to the innovative mode of adaptation (Zumve 2005).

3. **Retreatism:** This is the situation where both the cultural goals and institutionalized means of achieving them are abandoned. Retreatists may be aware of the goals and means of achieving them, but may consider themselves alien to the society and refuse to take responsibility. Such people are withdrawn from the society. Yecho (2007) further gives example of these category of people as drug addicts, school drop-outs, smokers, etc.

4. **Ritualism:** This entails rejecting the goals but accepting the institutionalized means of achieving the goal. Here, the ritualists embrace the rules to the point that they lose sight of the goal completely. Such people insist on the minutest of detailed adherence to bureaucratic norms even at the expense of achieving the cultural goals (Merton 1938).

5. **Rebellion:** This consists of rejecting both the cultural goals and the legitimate or institutionalized means of achieving the goal. Rebels adopt new methods of achieving cultural goals which may range from demonstration to strike. Rebels are often the instigators of new social movements that represent an alternative to existing cultural norms. According to Robert Merton, crime is an option under certain structural means so the lack of legitimate means of achieving a goal produces frustration and distress which in turn produces crime. However, the two basic elements that are culturally defined goals and the institutionalized means of achieving the goals are the main reasons for individuals' conformity or deviation (Schaefer 2005, 182). Most of the crimes committed today could be traced to the innovative mode of adaptation. Merton further opined in emphatic terms that differential

placement of societal members in the social structure that is stratification system creates the situation where people do not have the same opportunity for realizing culturally defined goals. He maintained that such a situation can also generate deviance and crime. (Haralambos and Holbon 1980)

This shows that individuals whose chances of attaining success are blocked by social forces like cultural deprivation, victimization, nepotism, etc. and usually experience frustration in which they alternatively resolve their frustration by engaging in crime. For example, the pathetic reality of graduate youths who resort to criminality is obviously in conformity with the innovative mode of adaptation of Merton's theory of anomie. So the frustrated youths resort to criminality basically as an alternative means as opposed to the legitimate means in a bid to realize their aspirations since the institutionalized means of achieving them are not available to them.

Criminality especially of the youth occurs when individuals experience frustration, anger and stress, and when legitimate means of goal attainment are inadequate and the rules governing behavior are not in existence. This to a large extent fits the case of Makurdi Township where all the aforementioned ingredients to youth criminality are readily found. Merton's Theory has the following criticisms as put forward by Yecho (2007, 26) and Utor (2008, 43):

1. Merton has been criticized on the basis that he neglects the power of relationships in society as a whole within which deviance and conformity occur.

2. Laurie Taylor (1971) criticized Merton for failing to consider who makes the laws and who benefits from the laws. Taylor draws an analogy that for a few individuals to make laws for the whole society and not abiding by these laws themselves is a weakness.

3. He has also been criticized for assuming that there is value consensus in American society and that people only deviate as a result of structural strain.

4. The theory has been criticized for being too deterministic because it fails to explain why some people who experience the effects of anomie do not become criminals or deviants

5. Taylor, Walton and young (1973) criticized it for failing to account for politically motivated criminals (such as freedom fighters) who break the laws because of commitment to their cause rather than the effects of anomie.

YOUTH CRIMINALITY: AN OVERVIEW

Youth criminality is a compound concept which obviously emanates from the terms, youth and crime. Youth, according to Ityaryar (2000, 80), is somebody who has exhibited immaturity in his or her state of mind or reasoning. This definition points at youth as a person who is not fully matured in conduct of ordered activities in the society. "Crime is technically and operationally defined as an act or omission to act which is forbidden by law on pain of punishment" (Igbo 2003, 318).

Youth criminality is therefore the violation of criminal law by the youths. This is to say that virtually all criminal activities perpetrated by youths irrespective of its causes, form, magnitudes, effects and many more are rightly considered as youth crime essentially in the context of this study.

Youth criminality has become a pervasive social ill of the contemporary Nigerian society which is hindering our national development.

Commenting on youth criminality in Nigeria, Zumve observed:

> The most crimes associated with the Nigerian youths in contemporary times includes: armed robbery, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, theft, advance fee fraud, cultism, assassinations, thuggery, vandalism, piracy, cyber-crimes etc. (2005, 16)

MANIFESTATIONS OF YOUTH CRIMINALITY IN NIGERIA

Youth criminality has reached unprecedented proportions in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's emerging democracy. Beginning

from May 29, 1999 when the county re-commenced democratic rule, Nigeria has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of crimes committed by young people. According to Yangeve (2012, 12) these acts of criminality embrace murder, religious uprising, party clashes, cult clashes, shooting, stabbing, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, including armed bank robbery, theft, burglary, rape, rioting especially against government policies, vandalism, ethnic militancy, hostage-taking of prominent citizens and expatriate of oil workers, oil bunkering, arms insurgency and burning of worship centers as well as other sundry criminal tendencies. These criminal acts pose serious threats in all ramifications to human development.

Anum (2007, 34) opined that ethnic and religious militancy has been particularly associated with the violent activities of youth in the past years. Corroborating this view, Mngutyo (2007, 24) notes that youth constitute the bulk of ethnic and religious militias in the society. For instance, the Odudua People's Congress (OPC) is believed to be a youth militant arm of NADACO/Afenifere, a pan Yoruba national political association meant to oppose the military junta and press for the realization of the Yoruba mandate. The Egbesu Boys of Africa, as they are called, represents the militant wing of Ijaw Youth groups which have engaged in series of hostage-taking of oil workers, oil bunkering and cult clashes in the Niger Delta region (Yangeve 2007, 19).

From 1999 to 2011, several people have been killed in the various violent crimes perpetrated majorly by youths in Nigeria. For instance, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, better known by its Hausa name Boko Haram, a violent Jihadist terrorist organization based in the northeast of Nigeria, is a Jihadist group that seeks to establish Sharia law in the country. The group is also known for attacking Christians and bombing churches and other government installations and interests. Abdul Karim Mohammed, a researcher on Boko Haram noted that the founder of the group Mohammed Yusuf successfully attracted followers from unemployed youth "by speaking against police and political corruption." He added that the violent uprisings resulting from this sect's activities are ultimately due to "The fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty

and unemployment by the youth" (Understanding Nigeria's Boko Haram 2011, para. 2).

Similarly, "Understanding Nigeria's Boko Haram" (2011) maintains that in 1995, the group was said to be operating under the name of Shabbaab, Muslim Youth Organization under the able leadership of 25 year old Mohammed Yusuf. According to the report, "By 2000, Yusuf had won the respect and confidence of some youths at Indimi Mosque. Many youths who followed him saw the older clerics as secular and anti-Sharia." The report also found that his followers were largely illiterate youths who engaged in petty trading or had dropped out of school. By early 2004, the Islamic sect had grown in the states of presence with Borno, Yobe and Bauchi. It is obvious that some of the converted youths abandoned their studies to join the group. The ready-made army of followers were, however, said to be Almajiri. The recruitment drive is said to be targeted at Muslims between ages of 17 and 30. In addition to that, the group has also been recruiting its followers through prison breaks when freed prisoners are brainwashed to adherents.

Youth violence on campuses of tertiary institutions and beyond has increasingly become a worrisome scenario for members of the public. Nigeria, with over one hundred and fifty tertiary institutions, has witnessed unprecedented violent behaviors occasioned by students who are mostly of youthful age involvement in campus cultism (Gboyega 2005, 69). Peace on campuses has been shattered due to this development of the violent crime. Blood-letting arising from either murder or manslaughter has become pervasive. Over 33 students' lives were lost between 1986-1996 while more than 7 members of the academic staff were also killed (Gboyega 2005, 73).

Duru (2012, 19) confirmed the death of two students of Fidel Polytechnic, Gboko Benue State North-Central Nigeria in a cult related crisis that engulfed the institution. According to his report, two suspected cultists who were all youths had at 8pm stormed the home of two students of the polytechnic and shot one of them whose name was given as Akawa on the neck, thus killing him instantly. Confirming, the Deputy Police Public Relations Officer for Benue State, ASP Ejike

Alaribe noted that Akawa died before he could receive medical attention. The report added that when the news of his death filtered into the institution, students mobilized themselves and went after the assailants. "They caught up with the two suspects who were identified as being responsible for the shooting, macheted one of them to death. The police however arrived at the scene of the incidence before they meted out jungle justice on the other" (2012, 19).

Politics in Nigeria has been rightly described as a do or die affair. The manner in which the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 political campaigns and elections were conducted justifies the above assertion. Hundreds of precious lives were lost in almost every state of the federation during each of these elections as political parties clashed with one another in what could best be defined as gun-boat political campaigns.

The most deplorable aspect of this ugly situation is the way youths willingly hire themselves out to be used as thugs by these ignominious politicians in exchange for peanuts. There is a saying that youths are the live-wire of a state. Now the question is: what future does a state whose youths are thugs have? No doubt, that state will be nothing but a home of gladiators in Hobbesian state of nature. Anarchy will be the order of the day, while peace and development will be a far cry.

CAUSES OF YOUTH CRIMINALITY

The causes of youth crime are legion, ranging from individual to societal factors. These causes continue to multiply every day, just as the sophistication of the means through which the perpetrators thrive as this condemnable act appears to be ever changing. However, this appears to be a general consensus as youths tend to resort to crime due to a number of reasons as discussed below:

PARENTING STYLE

According to Ityavyar (2000, 49), during the 20th century the family institution underwent many changes and as a result the typical family was lost. He asserted that industrialization played a larger role in these family changes. Jobs moved away from the home, especially for men in the beginning. This allowed for more responsibility in the home for the mother, as she had to take on the mother and father roles. In addition to

this, sometimes the mother also had a job outside of the home as well, thus leaving children with babysitters and daycare. The problem that was presented with this was that, with globalization and advances in telecommunication, new opportunities and ideas were being presented to the child, ideas that the parents may not support and conflict would arise between parents and child. As a result, a child has more opportunity and it is more likely that the child will deviate from the rules set forth by the parents, and this conflict can also lead to the engagement of deviant behaviours outside of the home as well.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCE

According to Zumve (2005), the socio-economic organization of the Nigerian society is the root cause of youth crime. He contended that the Nigerian socio-economic relations are characterized by high level stratification, competition and exploitation. He added that the Nigerian capitalist economy creates a situation which warrants wealth accumulation and control of resources by a few individuals to the detriment of the masses who are the majority continually exploited and relegated or discriminated on the basis of social class relations. Thus concluds that the frustrations and dilemma or predicaments created by the unfavourable capitalist economic conditions like inflation, labour retrenchment (unemployment), has been the driving force for youths involvement in criminality.

Yangeve (2007, 19) opined that the phenomenon of economic hardship in Nigeria has been instrumental in the causality of youth crime. He maintained that labour entrenchment and lack of adequate employment opportunities which has a bearing on the economy are indeed fundamental factors in the explanation of the incessant involvement of Nigerian youths in criminality. Furthermore, because large numbers of crimes are committed by people who do not have much money (according to official records), there is a common belief that poverty can be a significant causative factor underlying youth criminality. This does not mean that those who are not poor do not commit crimes; it rather means that majority of the people who commit crime rather do it in search for survival (Yecho 2007, 35).

PARTISAN POLITICS

The arrival of partisan politics especially in the 21st century in Nigeria is another cause of youth criminality. Yangeve (2007, 20) finds that the political thuggery popularly known as "militia" is mostly common among youths. The 2011 general elections saw a lot of violence and murder because of the prevalent thuggery. According to Zumve (2005), some of these political delinquents popularly known as "militias", are most times sponsored by the rich politicians to aid their violation of the due process of electioneering. At the end, the thugs are left with the fire arms and they continue to use them for other purposes in order to survive.

In a similar vein, Ubwa (2003) blamed the self-centered attitude of our political leaders, which is imperious and has driven so many youths to engage in ignoble criminal activities. He notes that "most of the crimes being committed by Nigerian youths are propelled by the nonchalant attitude of our leaders to provide jobs for youths." He claims this has resulted in cyber-crimes, prostitution, hawking and rituals, to mention but a few.

EFFECTS OF YOUTH CRIMINALITY ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Youth crimes have tremendous negative effects on the youth and the society at large.

According to Soyombo (2003, 22), the general concern about crime can be attributed to the negative effects (physical, psychological, emotional, economic/material and social) it has on the society and the people (victims and non-victims). At the societal level, in addition to the economical/material effects, crime also has political implications and constitutes a direct threat to the legitimacy of government and leaders.

Crime not only constitutes a drain on limited resource by attracting funds that could have been used for more profitable programs. It also inhibits economic investment and gives the country and its citizenry a bad image.

The general public perceives youth crime in high perspective relative to other criminal activities. This is because youth crimes are

more violent thus viewed as constituting more threat to the people. Given the fact that reliable figures and statistics on youth crimes such as armed robbery, thuggery, cultism, and prostitution are difficult to obtain and also viewed with skepticism, one important alternative way or means of assessing the effects of these crimes situations as suggested by Yangeve (2007, 22) may probably be the public's concern about it. According to him, the media remains an important means of transmitting public anxieties. Other means the public expressed concern about the effects of youth crime are tough legislation, harsher punishment and general security apparatuses and reforms. The more one therefore often hears about these from members of the public, the more one understands about the feelings of the public on the effects of youth crimes. Public sentiments unfortunately may reflect a sudden expansion of awareness rather than a great increase in a particular phenomenon. But consistent and persistent complaints by the public and expressed through the mass media certainly indicate some basis for a realistic concern about the problem.

All over the world, youth crimes which are usually more violent in nature constitutes so much fear (real or imagined) in the people. This is because most crimes committed by youths have in the words of Zumve (2005, 23) "double tragedy". For instance, armed robbery which constitutes taking away of one's property also has the possibility of causing bodily injury or even killing a person.

The perception and general fear of youth crimes and its high ranking relation to other crimes is not because of the lost that are measured in monetary values. In essence, youth crime has negative social economic and political effects that retard the rate of development of a nation.

APPROACHES TO YOUTH CRIMES REDUCTION AND CONTROL

It is generally believed that although crime cannot be completely eliminated in the society, it can however be reduced. It is on the basis of this that there is the need to device crime control measures, strategies or approaches.

Yecho (2007, 37) has however identified some major approaches to crime reduction. They include the following among other approaches:

ELIMINATION APPROACH

People, especially the youth, in the low income cadre with undesirable condition may be forced into committing crimes for survival because of their poor economic condition. Their criminal behaviours are reflections of the economic and related circumstances that determine opportunities, influence behaviours and motives as well as shape attitudes towards societal norms.

The elimination approach according to Ubwa (2003) identifies reasons for committing crimes and suggests structural changes and elimination of such factors that are likely to motivate individuals to commit criminal acts. This implied that youth unemployment, poverty among other problems can force many youths to commit crimes. Therefore the elimination of those conditions will reduce youth criminality. This means that the provision of employment will go a long way in controlling and reducing crimes among the youth.

TARGET HARDENING APPROACH

The target hardening approach deals with the opportunity to commit crime and the availability of the object of crime. This approach argues that environment permits the commission of any crime. The opportunity to commit crime is presented to the criminal by the environment. Thus, crime commission depends on the opportunity presented by the environment (Yangeve 2007, 26). This approach emphasizes the elimination of the opportunity to commit a crime, even if the desire is present. The regular environment in which a criminal hopes to operate successfully has to be changed to a more sophisticated one which gives the criminal minded person no opportunity to carry out his criminal act and which may frustrate criminality. This implies that the capitalist mode which places emphasis on individual pursuit of wealth or goals attainment rather than the means for achieving it provides an opportunity for criminal tendencies among the youth in Nigeria.

In other words, the capitalist mode of production as obtainable in Nigeria with its unique features of exploitation, frustration, deprivation and its attendant consequences are a fertile environment that offer opportunity for crime commission especially among the youth. This has to be changed to a more sophisticated one that emphasizes collectivity

which gives more opportunity to youth (Yangeve 2007, 27). In addition, Zumve (2005, 35) suggests that the political structure which provides a fertile environment for crime commission has to be changed too as this will facilitate reduction in youth criminality in Nigeria.

MODIFICATION APPROACH

This approach emphasizes value re-orientation; in other words, it emphasizes socialization that explains the values and norms that guide everyday behavior in the society. This approach believes that socialization is achieved because the individual understands himself as a personality functioning in orderly manner within his culture. Hence, value re-orientation will help in reducing crimes among the youth.

CONCLUSION

It was found that most youth engage themselves in criminal activities due to lack of parental care or improper socialization of the young ones. This is because most parents especially mothers who should look after and monitor the children are busy outside the home for economic survival. Socio-economic influence is also found to be one of the root causes of youth criminality. Nigerian socio-economic relations are characterized by high level stratification, competition and exploitation. So the social class relations created by the Nigerian capitalist economy also creates frustration which breeds criminality. It is also found that the unwholesome aspect of youth unemployment and underdevelopment in Nigeria has been instrumental to youth criminality. Poverty is however identified as one of the major causes of youth criminality. On the whole, youth criminality has negative social-economic and political effects that retard the rate of development of a nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made to address the issue of youth criminality:

i. There should be more emphasis on the means of achieving societal goals rather than the goals itself. By so doing, the people will not be too eager to climb the ladder using whatever means available. This would reduce youth criminality and other crimes in the society.

ii. The government should intensify more efforts in creating employment opportunities for the youth. This can be done by establishing industries and firms in the country for the youth to be gainfully employed.

iii. The issue of social inequality and stratification should be addressed in order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

iv. The youth should also engage themselves in entrepreneurial activities.

v.   Government should provide functional education and a variety of training facilities for skill acquisition of the unemployed youth.

vi. Non-formal education should be encouraged to cater for non-literate rural youths to prevent rural-urban drift of the youth in search of job opportunities.

vii. There should be film censorship throughout the federation to checkmate or curtail media programme from advertising violent films that expose the youth to criminality.

viii. The youth should be politically enlightened on the evils of political thuggery and armed robbery so that they can stay away from crime.

ix. Parents should inculcate good attributes in their children such as humility, tolerance, modesty, honesty and self -discipline. This is because if children are properly trained and socialized, they will avoid any act that can lead to criminality.

x.   The government should be responsive to the citizen's needs.

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