

An Investigation into the Causes of Criminal Activities and Drug Abuse among *Shila Boys* (Youths) in Yola North L.G.A., Adamawa State Nigeria

Yusuf Abdullahi¹, Yusuf Hammaadama², Mom Saa-Aondo³

¹Department of Mechanical Engineering, School of Engineering Technology Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola Adamawa state, 640283, Nigeria

²Department of Electrical Engineering, School of Engineering Technology Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola Adamawa state, 640283, Nigeria

³Babcecil Schools, New Karu Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: To investigate the causes of criminal activities and drug abuse among shila boys (youths) in in Yola North Local Government, Adamawa State Nigeria a, descriptive purposive survey was used. The research was guided by two objectives and two research questions. Pre-tested and validated questionnaires were issued to fifty-two shila boys. The questionnaires were collected and the data was analysed using Chi-Square test. The result showed that there was no significant difference in the age groups ($p > 0.05$), also there was significant difference in terms of gender involvement in criminal acts ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the result showed that there was a significant difference in terms of birth order involvement in crimes ($p < 0.05$). Again, it was revealed from the research that there was no significant difference on the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in crimes ($p > 0.05$). Once again, it was revealed from the research that there was a significant difference on the level of education on shila boys' involvement in crimes ($p < 0.05$). Result on causes of drug abuse among shila boys revealed that there was a significant difference in the causes of drug abuse among shila boys ($p < 0.05$). Result on the causes of crimes among shila boys showed that there was a significant difference on the effects of criminal activities of shila boys in Yola North ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, drug abuse among shila boys and their criminal activities of in Yola North pose great threats not only to the socio-economic activities but the lives of inhabitants of Yola North LGA and a threat to the actualization Sustainable Development Goals, especially to goal 1 (No Poverty); goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing); goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth); goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); as such, the criminal activities of shila boys must be nipped from the bud.

Keywords: criminal activities; drug abuse; Shila boys (Yan Shila); Sustainable Development Goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime is often a global phenomenon, and it occurs in many forms. Just about everyone in the world has been exposed to some forms of crime or another in their lifetime, even if they did not commit the crimes themselves (Balogun, 2018). The Nigerian daily newspaper reports, television news headlines, and radio announcements have shown that the activities of robbers are increasing at an alarming rate; both the rich and the poor are always in a perpetual state of fear because nobody really knows where and when they will strike. In describing the incidence of robbery, Lumun *et al*, (2013), argues that it took place on every seventy-five seconds, and half of the robberies known to the police are committed on the street. A clear example is that of *Yan Shila* in Adamawa state. This group according to Gumel (2016) represent a gang of youths who

engage in the snatching of varieties of items on the street such as; cell phones, palmtops, tablets phones, laptops, handbags, wallets, money, and other valuable items but small in size that can be easily moved. Danpullo and Balogun (2019) also defined *Yan Shila*, as a group of youths who organized themselves sometimes with the aid of tricycles (*Keke Napep*), moving around streets of towns and cities confronting, blitzing, injuring and snatching valuable items small in size, with or without the use of knives, cutlasses and others similar proportionate objects which ease the commission of the act.

Thus, the act itself is an infringement of the fundamental human right of people in such places. Shalakwan (2016) discerns that *Yan Shila's* street robbery has led to the falling standard of Adamawa state reputation in the eyes of many, as each day passes, the state witness more and more alarming cases of street robbery. The strain of this crime now imposes on state and federal government of Nigeria, which failed to provide substantial opportunity for youths to reduce their deprivation through legitimate means. Since this kind of crime is linked to some significant imbalances in the existing social system of society. Certainly, until certain measures are drastically taken, the problem will not only continue to permeate the society but its dire consequences may be catastrophic to peace, unity, and development (Danpullo and Balogun, 2019).

The threat of a dreaded gang called the *Yan Shila* has emerged and continued to spread in Adamawa state with Yola North local government inclusive. For a state that is already embroiled in intense security fragility, the need for a response to a security threat is very important (Owonikoko and Momodu, 2020). There is serious need to curb drug abuse and the criminal activities of the group that is spreading like wide fire before it will consume the entire state.

This work was hinged on the theory of conflict perspective of crime, traceable to the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883). This perspective assumed that crime and criminal behavior is a by-product of the social inequality and power imbalance that exist in a capitalist society where the bourgeoisie, who are in the position of power and authority, control the means of production and the proletariat are forced to offer their labor in exchange of wages determined by the capitalist class. According to the conflict perspective, those who own power (the ruling class) define and structure crime and deviance in ways that serve their selfish interests, thereby underrepresenting the interest of the "have-nots," who constitute the working class (Miller *et al.*, 2008). Thus, the source of crime could be traced to the capitalist class by making rules that will lead to their infraction. The continued accumulation of wealth by many Nigerians in position of authority through corruption to the detriment of the masses who continue languishing in poverty due to unemployment is connected with many criminal behaviors, such as armed robbery, kidnapping and prostitution, among others, prevailing in the Nigerian cities (Namadi and Haruna, 2016).

The aim of this study was to investigate the criminal activities and causes of drug abuse among *shila boys* in Yola North Local Government, Adamawa state.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Find the causes of criminal activities of *shila boys*.
- Identify the causes of drug abuse among *shila boys*.

The following research questions guided this study.

- What are the causes of drug abuse among *shila boys*?
- What are the causes of criminal activities among *shila boys*?

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The design for the study was descriptive purposive survey type. This design is suitable for this research because it sort to describe the main variable (causes) of drug abuse and the criminal activities in relation to *shila boys* in Jimeta; Yola North Local Government of Adamawa State. It elicited information from respondents on the causes of criminal activities and drug abuse among *shila boys* in Jimeta; Yola North Local Government of Adamawa State.

The sample size for the study was fifty-two (52) *shila boys* (who were accessed through the thirteen wards heads) who are engaged in drug abuse and criminal activities. This sample size was gotten as explained thus: Yola North has thirteen council wards and two enumeration areas were randomly selected making a total of twenty-six enumeration areas. From the twenty-six enumeration areas, two *shila boys* were purposively selected making fifty-two (52) respondents (*shila boys*).

The information from the respondents was collected using structured questionnaires. A questionnaire titled “An Investigation into the Causes of Drug Abuse and the Criminal Activities of *Shila Boys* in Yola North L.G.A, Adamawa State was used for data collection.

The questionnaire items were developed through the information gotten from reviewed literature. The questionnaire contained questions which were divided into two major sections. Section A contained the personal information of *shila boys* such as age, sex, birth order in the family, parent occupations, among others. Section B addressed the causes of criminal activities and drug abuse. A 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 5 points), Agree (A = 4 points), Fairly agree (FA = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 point) and Strongly disagree (SD = 1 point) was adopted and the mean determined for each questionnaire item.

The validity of the instrument was determined by two experts. One of the experts was from Measurement and Evaluation; the other from Sociology of Education of the Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola Nigeria. They were specifically requested to assess the adequacy of the items in getting the required information, the quality of its language and the logicity of its arrangement.

The reliability of the test instrument was determined using test-retest method. The result was then correlated using Pearson product moment correlation approach.

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the research assistants. The respondents were allowed to fill the questionnaires for two days and then the research assistants under the supervision of the lead researcher collected the questionnaires back from them.

The data collected from the questionnaires was analysed using Chi-Square Test.

3. RESULTS

The personal information of youths (*Shila Boys*) showed that the age group 16 – 18 years was highest among the respondents (34.62%; 18 respondents) while the age group below ten years was least among the age groups (15.38%; 8 respondents)(Table 1)

Table 1 also showed that the male gender was involved in the criminal activities (86%; 45 respondents) more than female gender (13.46%; 7 respondents). The table also showed that increasing birth order in family is directly proportional to the number of youths involved in criminal activities with first birth order having least number of respondents (7.68%; 4 respondents) and the birth order sixth and below having the highest number of respondents (30.77%; 16 respondents).

Information on the parents’ occupation revealed that trading and unknown occupations were highest (28.85%; 15 respondent each) while respondents whose parents were public servants were least among the respondents (19.23%; 10 respondents)(Table 1). Result on the level of education indicated that the number youths involved in criminal activities decreased with increased level of education. Respondents who had none educational level were highest (38.46%; 20 respondents) while others who were majorly higher institutions’ dropout were least among the respondents (7.69%; 4 respondents) (Table 1).

Result on the causes of drug abuse among the youths revealed that greater proportion of the respondents agreed to the questionnaire items (percentage acceptance being between 71% - 98%) with availability of drugs having the highest acceptance (98.08%; 51 respondents) and lack of awareness by religious leaders having the least acceptance by the respondents (71%; 37 respondents) (Table 2).

Table 3 showed respondents opinions on the causes of crimes among youths (*Shila Boys*). The table revealed a high agreement by the respondents to the questionnaire items as the causes of crimes among youths with peer group influence having a 100% (52 respondents) acceptance as the cause of crimes, followed by unemployment with 98% (51 respondents) and means of enhancing personal reputation being least accepted item as the cause of crimes among the sampled youths (42.31%; 22 respondents).

4. DISCUSSION

Result on the personal information of the youths (*Shila boys*) (Table 1) revealed that youths aged between 10 years and above. This agrees, although not totally with the work of Owonikoko and Momodu, (2020) while posited that youth gangs are predominantly aged between 12 – 30 years. There was no significant difference in the age groups involvement in crimes ($p > 0.05$). The table 1 also revealed that males were more involved in the criminal activities (86.54%) than females (13.46%). This agrees with Steffensmeier and Schwartz, (2009) who opined that males exhibit higher frequency and

prevalence of criminal behaviour. Akers, (2009) argue that males are more exposed to criminal role models, especially peers, and that these role models teach beliefs favorable to crime and differentially reinforce crime. There was significant difference in terms of gender involvement in criminal acts ($p < 0.05$)

Result from this research showed that birth order was directly proportional to involvement in criminal activities by the sampled youths. There was a significant difference in terms of birth order involvement in crimes ($p < 0.05$). This agrees with Ajake and Ekpe, (2013) who reported a significant difference on birth order involvement in crimes.

There was no significant difference on the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in crimes ($p > 0.05$). Among Juvenile delinquents, majority of them are belonging to the families of unskilled laborers. Children from lower income group of family also share the burden and to neglect their education (Shailja *et al.*, 2022) (Table 1). There was a significant difference on the level of education on youths involvement in crimes ($p < 0.05$). This agrees with Namadi and Haruna, (2016) who opined that a child without a proper education will eventually learn that he or she is at a disadvantage in the workforce. This feeling of hopelessness creates an environment ripe for youth crime and delinquent behaviors.

Result on the causes of drug abuse among the youths showed that there was a significant difference in the causes ($p < 0.05$). This agrees with Kawugana and Faruna (2018); Iqura, (2017) who posited that unemployment, curiosity among others are the causes of drug abuse among youths. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the causes of crimes among the youths ($p < 0.05$). This is in agreement with Lawan (2009), Rotimi (2011), Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012), Ojo (2012), Namadi and Haruna, (2016) who have their separate works asserted the causes of youth crimes to be the same as the findings in this work.

In conclusion, drug abuse among *Shila boys* and their criminal activities in Yola North L.G.A area, Adamawa State pose a great danger to lives and properties of the inhabitants of the area, as such, must be tackled holistically for the wellbeing of all the inhabitants.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following are recommended:

- Youths unemployment in Yola North should be reduced by training the youths in entrepreneurial skills by both the government and well spirited individuals.
- Stakeholders including the government should work towards reducing poverty and inequality in Yola North LGA.
- Youth awareness programmes on the effects of their criminal activities should be constantly organised.
- NDLEA and other stakeholders should work towards reducing the availability of dangerous drugs.

Table 1: Personal Information of First Respondents (Youths) (N = 52)

S/No	Variables	Frequency	%	
1	Age	Below 10 Years	8	15.38
		10 – 15 Years	10	19.23
		16 – 18 Years	18	34.62
		19 Years and Above	16	30.77
2	Gender	Male	45	86.54
		Female	7	13.46
3	Birth Order in Family	1st	4	7.68
		2nd	5	9.62
		3rd	6	11.54
		4th	9	17.31
		5th	12	23.08
		6th and below	16	30.77
4	Parent occupations	Trading	15	28.85
		Civil Servant	12	23.07
		Public Servant	10	19.23
		Unknown	15	28.85

5	Level of Education	None	20	38.46
		Primary School	12	23.08
		BECE	10	19.23
		SSCE	6	11.54
		Others specify	4	7.69

Source: 2023 field data.

Questionnaire Items for Research Question 1 (What are the causes of drug abuse among youths?).

Table 2: Causes of drug abuse among Youths (N = 52).

S/No	Item	Responses			
		SA/A/FA	%	SD/DA	%
1	Unemployment.	50	96.25	2	3.75
2	Poverty	47	90.38	5	9.62
3	Lack of parental supervision.	48	92.31	4	7.69
4	Peer Group Influence	45	86.54	7	13.46
5	Availability of the Drugs	51	98.08	1	1.92
6	Curiosity	43	82.69	9	17.31
7	Lack of awareness by religious leaders.	37	71.15	15	28.85
8	Lack of awareness by Government.	44	84.62	8	15.38
9	Lack of awareness by and traditional leaders.	42	80.77	10	19.23
10	Lack of awareness by NGO,s.	39	75.00	13	25.00

Source: 2023 field data. SA = Strongly Agreed; A = Agreed; FA = Fairly Agreed; SD = Strongly Disagreed; D = Disagreed.

Questionnaire items for Research Question 2: (What are the causes of criminal activities among youths?).

Table 3: Causes of criminal Activities among Youths (N = 52).

S/No	Item	Responses			
		SA/A/FA	%	D/SD	%
1	Unemployment.	51	98.08	1	1.92
2	Poverty	50	96.15	2	3.85
3	Lack of parental supervision.	48	92.31	4	7.69
4	Peer Group Influence	52	100.00	0	0.00
5	Availability of the Drugs	45	86.54	7	13.46
6	In sufficient education.	49	94.23	3	5.77
7	Corruption among some security agents.	27	51.92	25	48.08
8	Broken homes	40	76.92	12	23.08
9	Greed	30	57.69	22	42.01
10	Laziness	37	71.15	15	28.85
11	Means of enhancing personal reputation.	22	42.31	30	57.69
12	Negligence by parents.	47	90.38	5	9.62
13	Negligence by Religious leaders	33	63.46	19	36.56
14	Negligence by political leaders	50	96.15	2	3.85

Source: 2023 field data. SA = Strongly Agreed; A = Agreed; FA = Fairly Agreed; SD = Strongly Disagreed; D = Disagreed.

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