

TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS AND CRIME INCIDENTS IN KOGI STATE NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL INSIGHT.

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ABSTRACT

The rise in incidences of youth/students' involvement in violent crimes in Nigeria makes the discourse under reference not just topical, but also timely. Kogi state which is the focal point of this study has experienced a surge in security threats raging from kidnaping, armed robbery, political thuggery, and cultism among others, in the last ten years. This study seeks to investigate the extent of student's involvement in security breaches in Kogi State, investigate factors responsible for such involvements and to determine its effects on the students and the state in general. The study adopts a survey design involving the use of questionnaire and interviews and found that, students/youths are the key players in crimes in kogi state. It was equally established that poverty, drug/substance abuse, peer pressure, bitter/Do-or-Die politics among others, are factors responsible for student's involvement in crimes in Kogi State. The study therefore recommends that tertiary institutions should take issues of crime seriously as such, the security architecture of higher institutions should incorporate technologies and other such measures that could make the option of crime less appealing/enticing. The study further recommends that the curriculum of tertiary institutions be tweaked to incorporate the teaching and learning of Hands-on-skills that could keep students busy, productive and self-reliant, thereby making them less prone to crime and criminality.

Keywords: Crime, Students, Youths, Tertiary Institution

INTRODUCTION

The society may be seen as an aggregate of the human, physical and geographical resources of a set of people bound by common interests. It is also normal for human societies everywhere to seek the means of "increasing their potentials for living a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature" (Nwana-Nzewunwa et al, 61.)

Today, several factors are seen hindering the pace of socio-economic development in Nigeria and the world at large and one of such is the issue of criminal activities which have risen to a high level in Nigeria and in Kogi State and with the increasing

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involvement of students generally. Students by their vocation in the society are least expected to be part of crimes as they constitute a group of the society chosen to acquire knowledge and skills from different institutions of learning. Eventually and regrettably, their involvement in criminal activities such as hooliganism, examination mis-conduct, cultism, kidnapping cyber-crime, thuggery, theft etc. do not only jeopardize their future as a people seen to be “future leaders” but also poses threats on the socio-economic and technological development of a nation (Frank Hagan 1986).

Current wisdom suggests that high or increasing crime levels make communities decline, (Taylor, 1995). Since, the issue of crime cannot be ignored, this study seeks to examine the nature of crimes that “entice” students in Kogi State, the “raison d’etre of their involvement along with the consequences of these acts. The study seeks to provide an empirical basis for the discourse on the involvement of students in crimes in Kogi State. The research seeks an understanding of the level of students’ involvement in crimes, the factors behind their involvement along with the consequences of their involvement in crime. It is also to draw the attention of the society to the nature and consequences of crime on students, youths and the society at large.

Specific objectives of the Study

This paper aims to identify and examine the following objectives:

1. Generate empirical data on the extent of students’ involvement in crimes in Kogi State.
2. To determine factors responsible for student’s involvement in crimes in Kogi State
3. To investigate the consequences of students’ involvement in crimes in Kogi State.

Conceptual underpinning

The persistent increase in crime incidences have continued to have a debilitating on society at all levels, local or internationally. Of huge importance also is the fact that crime does not distinguish between the developed and under-developed countries, as crime and criminality may occur in almost all climes. The emerging trend of crimes in Kogi state has reflected a high rate of student’s involvement which may have been facilitated by some factors that are discussed in this study.

Onoge (1988) in Adebayo (2013) perceives crime as dysfunctional as it threatens the stability of the socio-economic and technological growth of the society; a problem that requires concerted efforts and solutions. Crime undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security.

The Concept of Crime

The incidence and severity of crime and the involvement of students in criminal acts such as cultism, kidnapping, cybercrime Armed Robbery, theft, Rape etc cannot be over-emphasized as events of the past few years have shown that the spate of crime has assumed a debilitating proportion and as such requires the intervention of policy makers in this regard. Osawe (2015), posits that crime portrays the inability of government to provide security of lives, properties and the conduct of economic activities considering the alarming increase in criminal activities in Nigeria involving youths may even be students of higher institutions of learning and are involved in hooliganism, examination mis-conduct, theft, and other crime related acts. Crime is any act of omission which the law forbids and for which it prescribes punishment to be administered by the state through a proceeding in its own name (Durkheim 1933).

Ackernan and Murray (2004) posits that a criminal is a person who has committed crime. Tanimu (2006) describes crime as any act that is immoral. There is no disagreement from both macro and minor level of studies that the rate of crimes in Nigeria has reached an unacceptable level (Fajemirokun, 2006). The new international websites comprehensive Dictionary –Trident press Int'l 2003, explains a crime as any grave offence against morality. It is a social order, weakness/iniquity.

According to Garofalo (5), crime is a harmful act that is regarded as criminal by public opinion because it is an injury to so much of the moral sense as is represented by one or the other of the elementary altruistic sentiments of probity and pity. According to Martin (2003), crime is an act that is harmful, that commonly and is majorly committed by younger Adults (youths). Olanrewaju (1994), noted that crime is unlawful. Drug abuse also is on the increase among students.

The Nature of Crime

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes youth as anybody between the ages of 15 and 24 years and most of these youths are students in various institutions of learning. In consonance with that, Ibonubere (1989) describes the students (youth) as a conventionally conceptualized social category made up of people whose chronological age falls within 15-24 years bracket and who also posse certain distinct psychological and socio-cultural characteristics and constitutes over 20% of the entire population. Crime as perceived in the primitive days was a simple and less organized issue, but which has come up today as very complex and organized. Therefore, the existence of crime and its problems have spanned the history of mankind (Uche, 2008). Kogi state is one of the states with a high crime rate in Nigeria. Several crime incidents have been recorded in the rural and urban areas of the study, especially along the High-ways involving crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery etc. Many arrests made by security agencies suggest that many of such crimes have the participation of students. Prior and Paris (2005), posits that many youths are in crime and this is threatening our future. Harijen, (1978:172) observed that the community labels as crime those lines of conduct it sees as immoral and its action results to pronouncement of moral condemnation. Ogbu (2001:120-123) in his study of criminal cases in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, stated that most of the violent crimes, with the involvement of students are the handiwork of cult boys and girls.

Ogbu (2001) further highlighted criminal incidents to be activities which include burglary, intimidation, theft, assault, cybercrime, rape, extortion, drugs, acid attack, assassination, religious riots, armed robbery, violent demonstrations, kidnap, etc. Hence, based on our findings, several factors leading to crime in Kogi state with students' involvement shall be highlighted and discussed as follows;

a. Peer Pressure

As they generally say "Bad Company corrupts good manners", majority of students and youths are observed to be victims of this due to peer group influence.

According to Jupp (1970) and Cannavals, et al (1970), students often resent the authority of adults and rely on their peers and this often, is seen as a factor that leads some students into crime.

b. Family Factor

The condition of a family plays a significant role in determining criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1939). In the same vein, Oyebanji (1982) and Akpan (2002), opine that the background of a family and how children are brought up from infancy determines criminal behavior.

c. Drugs

Drugs such as Tramadol, codeine, marijuana, etc can lead students and youths into crimes. A person addicted to drugs can end up stealing, raping, killing etc.

Garvin et al, (2006) opine that most prevalent health risky behaviours are associated with adolescent and youths illicit drug use. Aluede (2000) and Melis et al, (2005) also said majority of youths depend on one form of drug or the other. Oshikoya and Alli (2006) in their studies on perception of drug abuse amongst Nigeria undergraduates also identified dependence and addiction to drugs as one of the major consequences.

d. Negative Influence of Electronic Media

Students who have learnt bad habits from an early age through all manner of movies on television may also lead to criminal activities. Some join secret cult groups as a cover to perpetuate bad character.

e. Bitter Politics

The quest for political power and die – hard politics has severally resulted to students' involvement in political crimes such as ballot box-snatching, thuggery and violence during electioneering campaigns with the vain promises that when their masters win, they will reward them accordingly. But unfortunately, when politicians get to power, they often forget them and these students eventually use those arms they were given earlier to fend for themselves through violent means.

Consequences of Crime and Criminality among Youths

The emergence of different criminal acts perpetrated by students and youths generally in Kogi State has regrettably generated several negative effects on the psyche of students which in some cases may take a life time to correct. Different types of crimes are being

committed by different types of people at different times and in different places, under different circumstances (Danbazau, 2007). According to Louis et al, (1981) crime is one of the continuous problems that bedevil the existence of mankind. Crime has been a disturbing threat to personalities, property and lawful authority. Considering the consequences of crimes on students and youths, Durkheim (1933) opines that various controlling and preventive measures had been taken, and are still being taken to reduce the menace in our society in order to save our students and youths, and to secure the future of our nation at large. On this role, the study will enumerate below with brief discussions, the consequences of crimes on the perpetrators themselves i.e Kogi State students.

- **Death:** Many students involved in cultism and other criminal activities end up paying the price with their dear lives when caught by security agents. Sometimes death is caused by one secret cult member killing a member of another secret cult on the grounds of supremacy and revenge.
- **Ill – Health:** This is caused by different harmful drugs that are carelessly and habitually taken. This action tends to destroy the body's immune system and sometimes shuts down some organs of the body.
- **Bad Reputation:** Crime leads to bad reputation as people tend to have negative impressions about them in the society.

Expulsion from School

Since tertiary institutions in Nigeria especially in Kogi State have zero tolerance for crime, any student found involved in any criminal act is often expelled from school.

2.3.5 Poor Academic Performance

Students' involvement in crime incidents may lead to poor academic performance as they begin to skip classes and lectures due to lack of interest in academics, hence, resulting to ultimate failure.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out in Kogi state – Nigeria, and is premised on a survey research design, involving the use of interviews and questionnaires to gather data on students' involvement in crimes and the implication to society. The research centered on Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Kogi State University, Ayingba and Federal College of Education, Okene as selected tertiary institutions in the state, taken as representatives of other institutions where crimes can take place. The result of the findings are used to some extent to extrapolate for other institutions. Data was also gotten from some security agencies in Kogi State.

Primary and secondary data were carefully weighed, in proffering solutions and the way forward in addressing this societal malaise among students and youths in Kogi State and Nigeria.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The main research instruments for the study were the use of interview for security agencies and questionnaire for students in order to get statistical details that were properly analyzed.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part is about the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, sex and educational qualification. The second part deals with information on the substantive part of the study.

The questionnaire were administered and supervised by researchers and included open and close-ended questions. It is also important to state clearly here that some information were gathered from men of the Nigeria Police, Lokoja, Kogi State Headquarters. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered and fifty questionnaires were distributed to each of the three tertiary institutions selected as representatives in Kogi State.

PART 1 (Demographic Characteristics)

This part involves the demographic characteristics of 150 students who served as respondents in the study.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age range	Kogi poly	KSU	FCE	Freq	Percentage %
15-20	10	15	30	55	45%
21-24	24	30	15	69	65
Total	34	45	45	124	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 1 above shows approximately the age distribution of the respondents with majority between 21-24 years representing 65% while 15-20 years represents 45%.

Table 2: Sex Respondents Sex

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Freq	Percentage %
Male	20	12	33	65	55%
Female	13	33	7	53	44%
Total				118	99.9%

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 2 above shows that 118 respondents responded with 55% of male and 44% of females

Table 3: Level of study		Level of study	KSP	KSU	FCE	Freq
		Percentage %				
Final year	27	17	3	47	41	
Penultimate	-	14	23	37	33	
Any other	-	14	14	28	24	
Total				112	99%	

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 3 above indicates that out of a total 112 respondents 47 or 41% are final year students, 33% are penultimate and 24% fall into the category of any other. The data collected shows that the majority of the respondents are final year students and this could be as a result of the fact that they have spent more time in the school studying than the rest and as a result of that, they have experienced more challenges than the rest.

Part 2: Substantive Issues of the Research

This part involves the substantive issues involving 150 students who served as respondents in the study.

Table 4: Incidences of crime on campus

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	14	30	7	51	41%
No	26	15	33	74	59%
Total				125	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2018

From the above, table 4 seeks to know whether respondents had ever witnessed any sort of crime on campus, with 41% accepting that they had witnessed such.

The response simply connotes that quite a number of students have witnessed crimes and these crimes include violent demonstrations among students, cell phone snatching, rape incidents etc.

Table 5: Reporting of Campus Crimes to school Authority

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	8	19	4	31	25%
No	32	24	36	92	75%
Total				123	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 5 further shows 75% of students who are victims/ witnesses of one crime or the other responded that they never reported to the concerned authority. This shows that majority of students on campus who are victims of crime do not report to the authority perhaps a reason that their case may not get adequate response.

Table 6: Victim of crime on campus

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	5	6	5	16	15
No	35	28	35	98	85
Total				114	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 6 sought to know if the respondents had once been victims of crime themselves on campus. The respondents in their responses show that out of a total of 114 respondents 15% said that they have been direct victims of crime incidents on campus while 85% of the 114 student- respondents claimed they have never been victims of crime on campus. From these findings, we can say that students who are involved in criminal acts majorly commit crimes outside the campus.

Table 7: Most common crimes on Campus

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Stealing	16	19	25	60	46
Robbery	2	4	-	6	7
Burglary	3	2	-	5	3
Rape	12	9	10	31	23
Cultism	8	10	10	28	21
Others	-	-	-	-	-
Total				130	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 7 shows that of the 130 students respondents who responded to our findings on which of the crimes as mentioned in the questionnaire is most common, 46% said stealing is a major crime and is very common in their campuses, while 23% went for Rape and 21% for Cultism, 3% said it is Burglary and 7% said Robbery is much common as a criminal act on campus. From the findings and results collated, we can say stealing is the commonest crime on campus and this involves cell-phone snatching, wallet snatching, theft of books, watches, umbrella, clothes, foot-wears etc.

Table 8: Trend of crime incidences on the campus

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Increase	17	33	18	68	54%
Decrease	8	2	13	23	18
Don't know	20	7	9	36	28
Total				127	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2018

The above shows that majority of the respondents are of the notion that crime has increased tremendously in Kogi state. 54% of the respondents say that crime on campus has increased while 18% said crime has decreased and 28% said "I don't know whether crime has increased in Kogi state or not".

Table 9: Arrest of students involved in crimes in Kogi State.

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	10	10	5	25	20
No	27	32	26	85	67
I don't know	6	2	9	17	13
Total				125	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 9 above shows that of a total of 125 respondents, 20% said that majority of students involved in crime incidents within the state are always arrested while 67% said they are not always arrested. This shows that the security agents may not be doing enough to arrest crime perpetrators. 13% however said that they don't know whether the state arrests student involved in crimes or not.

Table 10: Reasons for Youth/Student crimes

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Poverty	4	11	8	23	18
Poor family background	10	1	1	12	9
Influence of friends	21	23	22	66	52
Drugs	8	9	10	27	21
Total					128

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 10 shows that of the 128 student respondents who responded to the question, 52% of the student respondents said that the influence of friends is a major factor responsible for crimes involving students on campus while 21% of the respondents claimed that drug is most responsible for crimes. 9% stated that poor family background is most responsible for crimes perpetrated by students and 18% identified poverty as the major cause of crimes perpetrated by students.

From the results shown clearly in the table above, the negative influence of friends is most responsible for crimes perpetrated by students on campus and in Kogi state.

Table 11: Consequences of crime and criminality on the students

	KSP	KSU	FCE	Frequency	Percentage %
Poverty/loss of lives	8	10	6	24	18
Poor academic performance	10	17	15	42	32
Bad reputation	6	10	8	24	19
Expulsion from school	19	11	11	41	31
Total				131	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 11 sought to know the consequences of crimes on the students on campus. In response to the questionnaire, out of the total number of 131 student respondents, 18% claim that loss of lives is the consequence of crime on students, 32% say poor academic performance is the consequence of crime on students while 19% claim that bad reputation is the consequence of crime on campus. Still, 31% opine that expulsion of students from school is the consequence of crime on students on campus. This suggests that poor academic performance and expulsion from school together form the leading consequence of crime on students as students involved in crimes end up being withdrawn from school either as penalty or due to woeful academic performance, and these by implication have increased crime rate in Kogi State.

Table 12: What tertiary institutions can do to reduce crime rate in society

	Frequency	Percentage %
Adequate training of security officers	84.5	65
They didn't know	13	10
Students and youths should be careful with the kind of friends they keep.	19.5	15
Sensitize youths and students through orientation programmes	13	10
Total	130	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Question 12 Sought to know what tertiary institutions should do to reduce crime rate in our society. Out of a total of 130 respondents, 65% suggested that the security officers of the state and security officers of the state's tertiary institutions should be adequately trained and equipped to handle criminal matters. 10% said they did not know while 15% suggested that since it is observed that one of the major causes of crime in tertiary institutions is peer group influence and poor family background, that students and youths should be careful with the kind of friends they keep and that parents should ensure they give their children good moral upbringing. 10% stated in their opinion that tertiary institutions should sensitize youths and students through orientation programmes on crime and its consequences. They further suggested that Managements of tertiary institutions management should ensure they address and resolve conflicts among students without delay.

Question 10 sought to know the respondent's opinions on why crimes have persisted on campus. The respondents in our findings suggested that the persistence of crimes on campus is due to poor orientation of students on the consequences and causes of crimes. Some said in their opinion that increase in crime rate in Kogi state is caused by the poor economy with that factor leading some youths/students into cultism, robbery, theft etc.

When the security departments of the tertiary institutions and security agencies of the state were interviewed. The respondents in their opinions about crime and its consequences, said the commonest crimes that have been reported in the past till date are robbery, cultism and rape. Despite disciplinary measures taken by security units on those involved in crimes, crime on campuses has not decreased, rather, the number has increased based on criminal cases that are reported by victims.

The security respondents in their opinion on the consequences of crime said the major consequence of crime on students involved is death. They stated clearly that most criminals end up with untimely death after being shot while trying to escape from crime scenes. They also said criminal incidents have caused unrest in the society and that some end up in prison after they are arrested and found guilty by the courts.

The security departments' respondents in their suggestions on how tertiary institutions can curb crime among students and youths, opined that once the victims report any crime, arrest should be made of those involved without sentiments. Again, they noted that the security units should be equipped with adequate gadgets for fighting crime on campus. Some respondents suggested that security units should be involved in programmes/talks that sensitize students on crime, its causes and consequences.

CONCLUSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The research concentrated on the research questions in order to know the nature of crime, causes, consequences and the extent to which crime has increased in the tertiary institutions in Kogi state with focus on students and youths.

Nonetheless, the research revealed that criminal incidents in our tertiary institutions have increased immensely. The study revealed that the common crimes on campus are theft/ snatching of cell-phones, rape, cultism, violent demonstrations, robbery etc. Furthermore, our study discovered that poor family background, peer group influence and the poor economy have resulted to crime incidents and these consequently have resulted to loss of lives and properties and in some cases, paralyzed academic programmes.

The research further claims that lack of adequate disciplinary measures by security agents and authorities of the tertiary institutions against offenders has led to an increase in crime rate. The study also exposed the fact that majority of those affected by crimes do not report to appropriate agencies.

Our findings also revealed that most programmes organized by the authorities of the tertiary institutions to educate students and youths on crime do not involve security agencies who also play a major role in curbing crimes in Kogi state.

Lastly, the research findings discovered that security personnel are not equipped with adequate skills that focus on crime. The security agents are not equipped with suitable gadgets to handle serious criminal cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tertiary institutions at all levels should come up with strict disciplinary measures for all criminal cases on those who are found guilty. Once appropriate punishment is given to student offenders others would not want to be punished and by this, crime will reduce drastically.

The national responsibility of successive governments in Nigeria and in the states should be to create an enabling environment that will promote investments and job opportunities for the students and youths at large. These should include the provision of power, maintenance of law and order, and adequate security and employment that will give them hope for a better future after graduating from school.

Education curriculum for tertiary institutions must be immediately revised to incorporate skills acquisition exercises to empower students and youths. Entrepreneurship development must not be over-looked. Low-skilled youths should be integrated in vocational centres where they can have adequate skills.

According to Chinedu (2018) Security Summit has advanced strategies for the reduction and ultimate prevention of criminal acts in Nigeria tertiary institutions. There should be a well-designed, dedicated curriculum for character molding of students and youths in tertiary institutions to balance or enhance the curriculum that is currently largely focused on academics.

Parents and guardians and the society at large should take the socialization of their children and the youths more seriously as it will enable them know early enough unacceptable traits that are detrimental to their development.

Governments should use intelligence personnel to fish out cultists and criminals from tertiary institutions as well as create a database for students expelled from any tertiary institution to be shared by other institutions.

Security awareness programmes (SAP) should be provided as this will also go a long way in curbing crimes in our tertiary institutions.

Through partnerships with governments, sports organizations and civil society groups, we should have National and regional youth-oriented awareness programmes to further promote civic values and disseminate the benefits of sports in keeping youths from crimes, since majority of youths seem to enjoy sports activities across the states in the federation.

Religious leaders across the 21 local government areas and their likes in tertiary institutions should inculcate good morals in the students. This they should do through teaching and organizing programmes that will improve students' behavior on campus. Finally, functional Guidance and Counseling centres should be established in our higher institutions of learning. These experts could also help in meeting the psychological needs of students as well as their emotional and spiritual needs.

On the whole, it is hoped that the recommendations above if implemented will go a long way curtailing criminal activities on our campuses as well as reduce crime rate generally in the society.

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