

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING JUVENILE RECIDIVISM IN SELECTED CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN LAGOS STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines socio-economic factors influencing juvenile recidivism in selected correctional centres in Lagos State. Guided by Differential Association Theory and Social Control Theory, the research employs qualitative methods to gather data from juveniles, caregivers, and social workers. Findings reveal that disorganized neighborhoods, peer influence, broken homes, and poverty significantly contribute to recidivism. The study recommends targeted interventions, including family support programs and enhanced monitoring of reintegrated juveniles. These measures aim to reduce juvenile reoffending and promote stable reintegration into society.*

**Keywords:** Juvenile Recidivism, Socio-economic, Correctional Centre, Social Worker.

### INTRODUCTION

The term *recidivism* derives from the Latin word *recidere*, meaning "to fall back," and it refers broadly to the tendency of an individual to relapse into criminal behavior. This concept is central to criminology and has been described variously as "the return to criminal behavior" (National Institute of Corrections, 2023) and "reoffending or reentry into the criminal justice system" (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2023). Despite its technical variations, the essence of recidivism lies in its focus on repeated offenses by individuals who are already known to the justice system.

Juvenile recidivism remains a pressing global issue, with significant economic, social, and individual implications. According to recent data from the National Institute of Corrections, recidivism rates vary widely depending on the population studied and the methodology used to define reoffending. For example, rearrest rates among juveniles in some U.S. states can reach as high as 70% within three years of release, although exact rates fluctuate by region and demographic factors (NIC, 2023). In South Africa, studies continue to highlight concerning statistics, with up to 81% of male and 45% of female juvenile offenders rearrested within three years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2023).

The factors contributing to juvenile recidivism are complex and multifaceted. Socioeconomic hardships, lack of family support, exposure to criminal environments, and inadequate rehabilitation programs are all major contributors. Moreover, the economic burden of juvenile recidivism extends beyond individuals to communities and governments, perpetuating cycles of poverty and crime.

Addressing these challenges requires evidence-based policies and interventions focused on rehabilitation, education, and socioeconomic support to ensure successful reintegration into society. The most recent research highlights the importance of tailored programs that account for individual and community-level factors to mitigate reoffending effectively.

### Statement of the Problem

The socio-economic realities of urbanization and colonial legacies have contributed significantly to juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Urbanization has led to overpopulation, unemployment, and the emergence of an urban underclass that neglects the welfare of its offspring. This social environment fosters conditions where children resort to crime, necessitating the establishment of correctional centres to rehabilitate them (Strathearn et al. 2020). According to Nigeria's Borstal Institutions and Remand Centre Act (No. 32 of 1960), correctional centres aim to "bring to bear upon the inmates every good influence which may establish in them the will to lead a good and useful life on release."

Despite these rehabilitative intentions, many juveniles fail to reintegrate successfully, often returning to correctional facilities after reoffending. This recurring cycle can be attributed to systemic shortcomings in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by these juveniles. For instance, dysfunctional family structures—characterized by separation, divorce, or violence—undermine the emotional and social support required for reintegration. Costello and Laub (2020) emphasized that parental negligence and economic hardships often push juveniles back into delinquency. Furthermore, reintegration into disorganized neighborhoods, marked by a breakdown of social control and prevalent delinquent lifestyles, exacerbates the problem (D'Agostino et al. 2020).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the influence of neighbourhoods on juvenile recidivism in Lagos State correctional centres.
2. To investigate the impact of poverty on juvenile recidivism in Lagos State correctional centres.

### **Literature Review**

Juvenile recidivism is influenced by a combination of socio-economic factors that create an environment conducive to reoffending. Neighborhoods characterized by poverty, social disorganization, and criminogenic influences significantly impact the behaviour of reintegrating juveniles. According to Wehrman (2020), living in disadvantaged areas not only exposes juveniles to criminal networks but also normalizes delinquent behavior, thereby increasing their likelihood of reoffending. The presence of negative peer influences and limited access to positive role models compounds the challenges faced by juveniles in such neighbourhoods.

Poverty is another critical driver of juvenile recidivism. Economic hardship not only restricts access to basic needs but also diminishes the capacity of parents to provide emotional and financial support. Recent studies highlight that juvenile from impoverished families are more prone to engaging in delinquent acts as a means of survival (McCray & Rosenberg, 2021). Furthermore, the economic strain on families often leads to weakened familial bonds, further increasing the propensity for reoffending.

The theoretical framework for understanding juvenile recidivism is rooted in Differential Association Theory and Social Control Theory. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory posits that delinquent behavior is learned through interactions within deviant social groups. Juveniles exposed to criminal influences are more likely to adopt such behaviors, reinforcing the cycle of recidivism. On the other hand, Nye's Social Control Theory emphasizes the importance of familial and societal bonds in curbing delinquency. Weak or absent social controls, such as inadequate parental supervision or lack of community support, create conditions that enable recidivism (Nye, 2023).

Addressing juvenile recidivism requires a multi-faceted approach that targets the socio-economic and familial factors contributing to reoffending. By understanding these underlying dynamics, stakeholders can implement effective interventions to break the cycle of delinquency and promote stable reintegration.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of juveniles, caregivers, and social workers regarding the socio-economic factors influencing recidivism. Phenomenology was selected for its ability to delve deeply into participants' perspectives and uncover nuanced understandings of their realities (Poth, 2022).

Data collection occurred at two correctional centres: the Special Correctional Centre for Boys, Oregun, and the Special Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi-Araba. These sites were selected for

their prominence in rehabilitative efforts in Lagos State and their diversity in juvenile populations. The study focused on understanding how environmental and socio-economic conditions intersect with institutional processes to shape recidivism outcomes.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide rich, detailed insights into the research problem. The sample comprised 14 juvenile recidivists, 3 caregivers, and 6 social workers. This diversity of perspectives allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing juvenile recidivism. Data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). The use of open-ended questions enabled participants to share their experiences and perceptions freely, facilitating the emergence of themes directly relevant to the study objectives (Patton, 2021).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and insights. Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step framework for thematic analysis was used, which includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in the data and reflected participants' lived experiences accurately.

Ethical considerations were a key aspect of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving vulnerable populations, particularly juveniles, to protect their welfare and rights throughout the research process (American Psychological Association, 2020).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents in this study included six social workers, three caregivers, and fourteen juvenile recidivists selected from the Special Correctional Centres for Boys and Girls in Oregun and Idi-Araba, Lagos State. Table 1 indicates that most social workers were male (66.7%), aged 40 years and above (44.4%), and predominantly married (88.9%). Their educational qualifications varied, with 33.3% holding Bachelor's degrees and others possessing HND, OND, or secondary school certificates.

**TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND CAREGIVERS.**

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	FREQUENCY N=9	PERCENTAGE 100%
<b>SEX</b>		
Male	6	66.7
Female	3	33.3
<b>AGE</b>		
30 – 34	3	33.3
35 – 39	2	22.2
40+	4	44.4
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Married	8	88.9
Single	1	11.1
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Christianity	4	44.4
Islam	5	55.6
<b>HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION</b>		
MSc	1	11.1

<b>BSc</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>HND</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22.2</b>
<b>OND</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<b>SSCE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22.2</b>

Table 2 shows that the juvenile recidivists were predominantly male (71.4%), aged 16-18 years (85.7%), and had limited education, with 42.8% reporting no formal education and 28.6% having only primary education. Most came from separated families (64.3%), highlighting family instability as a recurring factor.

**Table 2: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF JUVENILE RECIDIVISTS.**

<b>SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA</b>	<b>FREQUENCY =14</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE =100%</b>
<b>SEX</b>		
Male	10	71.4
Female	4	28.5
<b>AGE</b>		
13-15	2	14.3
16-18	12	85.7
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Christianity	5	35.7
Islam	9	64.3
<b>HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION</b>		
Nursery	2	14.3
Primary	4	28.6
Secondary	2	14.3
No formal education	6	42.8
<b>PARENTS' MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Married	1	7.1
Single	2	14.3
Separated	9	64.3
Divorced	1	7.1
Widowed	1	7.1

### **Neighborhood Influence**

Juveniles residing in disorganized neighborhoods characterized by poverty, dilapidated housing, and proximity to crime-inducing activities faced heightened risks of recidivism. These environments normalized criminal behavior, making reintegration efforts futile. One juvenile explained:

*"In my area, hustling involves stealing. When I returned, nothing changed at home or in the neighborhood, so I went back to hustling."*

Respondents described environments with easy access to alcoholic beverages and hard drugs, creating a setting where deviant behavior thrived. Another juvenile stated:

*"Our area is never dry, even at night. My friends and I had a hideout where we planned operations and hid stolen items. It was like an office for us."*

The findings corroborate Wehrman's (2020) assertion that environmental factors significantly shape juvenile behavior, with disadvantaged neighborhoods exacerbating recidivism risks.

### **Peer Group Influence**

Peer group dynamics emerged as a significant driver of juvenile reoffending. Juveniles often succumbed to the pressure of delinquent peers who reinforced their participation in criminal activities. A respondent recounted:

*"My friends convinced me to join them again, saying we were caught the last time because of carelessness. I needed money to eat, so I agreed."*

Another juvenile highlighted the compounding effect of hunger and peer pressure:

*"I didn't want to reoffend, but there was nothing at home. My friends didn't help me either, so I joined them."*

Social workers corroborated these findings, noting that juveniles returning to environments where their old friends reside often relapse into delinquent behavior. This aligns with Garduno (2022); observation that external social influences undermine rehabilitation efforts.

### **Family Instability and Broken Homes**

Family dynamics, particularly the absence of stable parental support, were pivotal in juvenile recidivism. Juveniles from broken homes experienced neglect, hostility, and emotional deprivation. One juvenile shared:

*"My dad's hostility made me leave home. I joined a gang and was caught during one of our operations."*

Another respondent described the struggles of living with a single mother:

*"My mum's struggles drove me to tears. I joined friends who introduced me to theft to support my schooling and feeding."*

Social workers emphasized that juveniles reintegrated into non-intact families often face the same issues that initially led to their delinquency. Latimer (2021) supports this, noting that family instability increases the likelihood of reoffending.

### **Poverty's Role in Recidivism**

Economic deprivation was a recurring theme in juvenile recidivism. Many juveniles cited hunger and the inability to meet basic needs as reasons for their involvement in criminal activities. One respondent explained:

*"My dad's income was never enough. I stole wires and carburetors because we had no food at home."*

Another juvenile highlighted the impact of parental unemployment:

*"After my grandma passed, my dad couldn't provide. I started stealing to survive."*

These findings align with Strathearn et al. (2020) assertion that poverty is intricately linked to juvenile delinquency and recidivism.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal that juvenile recidivism is a multifaceted issue influenced by environmental, social, familial, and systemic factors. Disorganized neighborhoods and peer group dynamics create environments where criminal behavior is normalized. Family instability and poverty further exacerbate these challenges, leaving juveniles with limited alternatives.

The systemic issues within correctional centres also play a significant role in perpetuating recidivism. Harsh treatment and a lack of supportive relationships with social workers deter meaningful rehabilitation. Effective intervention programs, including surveillance, family support, and community reintegration strategies, are essential to address these challenges.

In conclusion, the study underscores the interconnected nature of socio-economic and systemic factors in juvenile recidivism. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach involving families, communities, and correctional systems to break the cycle of delinquency and foster stable reintegration into society.

**Recommendations**

1. Thorough investigation of juveniles' neighbourhoods should be done before reintegration. Juveniles should not be reintegrated into communities or neighbourhoods which have the tendency to make them re-offend
2. Social work agencies like correctional centres should not only correct juveniles who had been apprehended but also should include their friends in the correction process. This might be in form of counselling.
3. Government should include a special training package, seminar or advocacy for parents of juveniles leaving correctional centres, it should be a requisite for the release of their children.
4. There should be strict monitoring of reintegrated juveniles and their parents.
5. Parents whose child or children reoffend as a result of parental negligence should be prosecuted

**Conclusion**

Juvenile recidivism is deeply intertwined with socio-economic factors, including neighborhood disorganization and poverty. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts between correctional institutions, families, and policymakers to ensure successful reintegration and reduce reoffending rates.

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