

Level of Income, Marital Status and Home Background Variables as Predictors of Criminal Traits among Nigerian Prisoners

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between each of the level of income, marital status and home background variables as they are related to the nature of the crime committed. This was with a view of ameliorating crime rates in Nigeria. The study employed the survey research design. The population for the study comprised of all criminals inmates in Nigeria prisons. A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting 150 inmates prisoners from Agodi Prison, Ibadan in Oyo State Nigeria and Kosere Prison, Ile-Ife in Osun State Nigeria. An instrument titled "Socio Economic and Educational Background of Convicted Prisoners" (SOEBCP) was designed by the investigator to elicit information from the respondents. An analysis was carried out using simple percentages and chi-square statistics. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between level of income and nature of crime committed ($\chi^2 = 56.025$, $p < 0.05$). Also there is a significant relationship between home background variables and nature of crime committed ($\chi^2 = 85.197$, $p < 0.05$). However, there is no significant relationship between marital status variables and nature of crime committed. ($\chi^2 = 35.468$, $p > 0.05$). The study concluded that crime as a deviant behaviour must be prevented if not totally checked in order to avoid resultant effect such as loss of life and property.

Keywords: income, marital status, homebackground variables, criminal traits, prisoners

INTRODUCTION

The word "crime" is derived from a certain academic field of study known as criminology. Criminology is the scientific study of crime, criminals and criminal behaviour. Criminologist conduct research that examines factors related to crime. They also study individual to learn how and why people become criminals. Crime can be defined as a vice afflicting the well being of the society. It is a cankerworm eating the fabric of the entire nation. (Canadian Criminal Justice Association 1989, Collin 1981). In another way, crime is referred to many type of misconduct forbidden by law. It is an illegal attitude. The list of acts considered crimes is constantly metamorphosing for instance, crime practice and how it is been considered as an offence is vastly dynamic and not static. An act is viewed as a crime if enough evidence exists to make law executors believe that a violation of the criminal law has taken place. However, the law does not consider an accused person a criminal unless a judge finds him guilty. A criminal may be imprisoned based on the law of the community in which the crime was committed or trial was held.

Crimes are often divided between acts that most people would consider evil and acts that lawmakers decide should be regulated in the interest of the community. The first group includes such major crimes as arson, assault breach of the peace, burglary, kidnapping, larceny, murder, rape and robbery. Categories of crimes involve severe punishments. The second group includes

violation of income tax law, liquor control regulations, pure food and drug laws, and traffic laws which are generally punished by fines or other relatively light penalties. Hence, crime is basically categorized into various types: i. crime against people or property ii. crime against felony or misdemeanors iii. crime against public order or morality iv. white collar crime and v. organized crime (Feather and Cross, 2000, Hartingel, 1979, Room and Toni, 1992, Tower, 1999, Zastrow 1996, and Waller & Waller 2004).

To curb this milieu, the first agent of socialization has a lot of role to play. In the days of old, criminals were found to come from illiterate and semi-illiterate families. But today, the situation has changed, most of the criminals are from broken homes, educated families, either rich or poor. One then begins to wonder whether socio-economics and educational background variables of a child determines if he will be a criminal or not. Without any doubt, the family is the most significant single agent of socialization in all societies. It has the main responsibility for socializing children in the crucial early year of life. The family is where children establish their first close emotional ties, learn language and begin to internalize cultural norms and values. To young children the family is all encompassing.

Committing crimes are not restricted to adult alone, children and youths also commit an anti-social act, it is called delinquency. When these crimes are committed by an adult, he/she is criminally straightened and

prosecuted, but when a juvenile commits a crime, he is completely excluded from criminal prosecution because he is seen as incapable of committing crime or anticipating the outcomes or consequences of their actions. According to the Nigeria law, person aged eight to eighteen (8 – 18) years are referred to as juvenile and are presumed capable of committing crimes, whose consequences they may not anticipate. A lenient view therefore, taken by the law in dealing with them; some of which are putting the children in corrective institutions like the Approved schools and the Remand Homes. Hence, they are socialized and corrected because they cannot be sent to the prison at their age. Such persons are called juvenile delinquents.

Over the past two decades, a significant emphasis has been laid on the impact of family structure on child's behaviour and his development. Formal researchers have an accumulating body of evidence that children raised in different family contexts display different patterns of outcomes across a wide range of developmental domains. Children raised in one-parent families have been found on average, to do less well across a wide range of measures of well being than peers in two-parent families, while parent separation has been found to be associated with an array of adverse outcomes for children (Awujoola, 2007).

Jaffe (2007) further stated that there are negative consequences of child abuse like behavioural, emotional and physical effects. The behavioural effects comprises of problems in school and work, delinquency, teen pregnancy, suicide attempts, criminal or antisocial behaviour, substance abuse, aggressive behaviour, spousal and child abuse. Emotional effects include low self esteem, depression and anxiety, eating disorders, relationship difficulties, alienation and withdrawal personality disorders. Physical effects are injury, death, lifelong health problems and cognitive difficulties. Knowledgeable observations have concluded that the evidence fails to support a conclusion that parent families cause crime.

Parental rejection may affect the way in which children regard both themselves and others, but failure to provide consistent guidance deprived the children of opportunities to gain approval to behave in accordance with parental rules. If parents treat their offsprings with disdain, the children are likely to regard themselves as unworthy of care and may come to believe that the way they are treated is how they should treat others. (Austin & Irwin, 1990, Barnes & Michael, 1992, Coleman and Thorson, 2002) The Nigerian society today presents a typical picture of a society where disintegration and disorganization has gained a firm root. The rapid rate of urbanization and the craze for rapid technological development has led us to abandon some of the

traditional modes of life. Hence, there is great rush and migration into urban towns, which invariably led to socio-cultural disintegration and breakdown of effective communication, economic pressure, dis-socialization, insecurity, conflicts in value system, confusion of social roles, to mention a few of the dimension, which is a definable and meaningful force, which seems to be *modus operandi*. It is not surprising therefore to see that the nation is engulfed in a social malady. Law violation by both adults and juveniles has become widespread and constituting one of the greatest national concerns.

It is surprising that youths are very much involved, the situation has not been helped by the fact that many criminals have been sentenced to death. There is hardly any day one cannot see on the pages of our daily papers about rise in crime rates. Lawlessness and disorderliness (indiscipline) has become a cankerworm, which has eaten deep into the bloodstream of every Nigerian.

The alarming rise in the incidence of delinquent behaviour and crimes in the country should attract a combined attention of social scientists, psychologists, as well as all meaningful Nigerians so that the basic underlying factors affecting deviance could be found. It is only when such is done can we find a lasting solution to the problem of crime and alarming incidence of delinquency in this country. (Durojaye, 1999, Fayombo, 2001).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Evidences indicate that the rate of criminal acts in Nigeria is on the increase. According to the police report in recent times, minimum of fifty youths in a year face trial at the Iyaganku court in the city of Ibadan alone, which is just one of the major cities in Oyo State not considering adults whose crime rate is very high (Prisons warrant 2010). The problem leads to poverty, low intelligence, conflict in the family, broken homes, lack of affection from parents, humiliation and lack of success in the school, and inferiority feelings arising from real or imagined physical deviations, parent educational background and so on.

There is therefore an urgent need to examine which of socio-economic or home background variables or both are capable of causing or promoting crimes rate in Nigeria and probably suggest possible solutions; hence this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) Is there a significant relationship between the level of income and nature of crime committed?

- (2) Is there any significant relationship between the level of marital status and nature of crime committed?
- (3) Is there any significant relationship between the home background variables and nature of crime committed?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the survey research design. The population consisted of all the inmate prisoners in Nigeria prisons. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting 150 convicted inmates (sentenced to various terms of imprisonment) drawn from Agodi Prisons, Ibadan in Oyo State and Kosere Prison, Ile-Ife in Osun State. A self-constructed questionnaire for prison inmates (convicted) was constructed by the researcher. The instrument consists of two sections. Section ‘A’ contains personal data of the inmates, which includes inmates’ age, sex level of education, occupation before arrest (if any) and so on. Section ‘B’

deals with actual information on the convicts view on crime, which have four points like – scale rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents are to tick the appropriate corresponding response. The instrument was validated before use and the reliability coefficient yielded 0.76. Permission to involve prison inmates for the study was obtained from the Prisons superintendent through personal connection. The researcher was allowed thrice in a week to have access to the convicts. The data collected were collated and analysed using frequency distribution (percentage) and chi-square statistics.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

- (i) Is there a significant relationship between the level of income and nature of crime committed?

Table 1: Distribution of Respondent on Income

Income		Stealing	Robber	Arobbery	Assault	Murder	Forgery	Reperer	Fraud	Man Slup	Total	Chi-square value	P - Value
LESS 10,000	Count	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	4	56.025	0.005
	Expected count	1.0	1.0	.5	.4	.2	.2	.2	.3	.2	4.0		
	% of Total	0%	0%	7%	1.3%	.0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	2.7%		
10,000 20,000	Count	21	21	10	6	3	1	6	4	6	78		
	Expected count	18.7	20.3	8.8	8.3	4.2	3.6	3.6	5.7	4.7	78.0		
	% of Total	14.0%	14.0%	6.7%	4.0%	2.0%	7%	4.0%	2.7%	4.0%	52.0%		
20,000 30,000	Count	5	12	1	4	1	1	1	2	2	29		
	Expected count	7.0	7.5	3.3	3.1	1.5	1.4	1.4	2.1	1.7	29.0		
	% of Total	3.3%	8.0%	7.9%	2.7%	7%	.7%	.7%	1.3%	1.3%	19.3%		
30,000 40,000	Count	2	5	0	4	2	0	0	1	0	14		
	Expected count	3.4	3.6	1.6	1.5	.7	.7	.7	1.0	.8	14.0		
	% of Total	1.3%	3.3%	.0%	2.7%	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.7%	.0%	9.3%		
40,000 50,000 above	Count	8	1	5	0	2	4	0	4	1	25		
	Expected count	6.0	6.5	2.8	2.7	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.8	1.5	25.0		
	% of Total	5.3%	7%	3.3%	.0%	1.3%	2.7%	0%	2.7%	.7%	16.7%		
TOTAL	Count	36	39	17	16	8	7	7	11	9	150		
	Expected count	36.0	37.0	17.0	16.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	11.0	9.0	150.0		
	% of Total	24%	26.0%	11.3%	10.7%	5.3%	4.7%	47%	7.3%	6.0%	100.0%		

The table above shows the distribution of respondents on income of the inmates sampled. The table reveals that the 2.7% inmates were earning less than N10,000. 52.2% were earning between N10,000 and N20,000. 19.3% of the inmates sampled were earning between over N20,000 and N30,000. 9.3% were earning above N30,000 and N40,000 while 16.7% of the inmates sampled were earning income of N50,000 and above.

The chi-square tests shows result less than 0.05% ($\chi^2 = 56.025, p < 0.05$). This explains that there is significant

relationship between income and nature of the offence committed.

From the above table, it could be observed that 28.7% of the inmates sampled were jobless, 33.3% were artisans, civil servants were 7.5%, farmers were 4.0% , drivers were 14.0%, traders were 10.0% and were peculiar with certain types of work.

Research Question 2? Is there any significant relationship between the level of marital status and nature of crime committed?

Table 2: Distribution of Respondent on Marital Status

Marital Status		Stealing	Robber	A.R	Assault	Murder	Reperer	Forgery	Fraud	Manshute	TOTAL	Chi-square valve	P - Value
Single	Count	20	18	9	7	2	2	5	7	8	78	35.468	0.062
	% of Total	13.3%	12.0%	6.0%	4.7%	1.3%	1.3%	3.3%	4.7%	5.3	52.0%		
Married	Count	15	28	6	7	6	5	1	4	1	63		
	% of Total	10%	12%	4.0%	4.7%	4.0%	3.3%	7%	2.7%	7%	42.0%		
Divorced	Count	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3		
	% of Total	0%	0%	1.3%	0%	0%	0%	.7%	0%	0%	2.0%		
Widowed	Count	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6		
	% of Total	7%	2.0%	0%	1.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.0%		
TOTAL	Count	36	39	17	16	8	7	7	11	9	150		
	% of Total	24.0%	26.0%	11.3%	10.7%	5.3%	4.7%	47%	7.3%	6.0%	100.0%		

From the above table, it is clear that 52.0% were single, 42.0% were married 2.0% were divorce, while 4.0% were widowed. The crimes committed were spread over all categories of marital status. From the table above, $\chi^2 = 35.468$ $P > 0.05$ which means that there is no

significant relationship between marital status and the nature of the crime committed.

Research Question 3

(iii) Is there any significant relationship between the home background variables and nature of crime committed?

Table 3: Distribution of Respondent on Background

Background		Stealing	Robbers	A.R	Assault	Murder	Reperer	Forgery	Fraud	Manshute	TOTAL	Chi-square valve	P - Value
Single Parent	Count	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	85.197	0.007
	% of Total	0%	0%	7%	1.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.0%		
Both parent	Count	8	6	4	1	2	4	0	3	1	29		
	% of Total	5.3%	4.0%	2.7%	7%	1.3%	2.7%	0%	2.0%	7%	19.3%		
Widower	Count	16	5	5	5	4	1	3	4	3	46		
	% of Total	10.7%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	2.7%	7%	2.0%	2.7%	2.0%	30.7%		
Polygamous	Count	5	3	0	1	1	1	2	4	3	20		
	% of Total	3.3%	2.0%	0%	.7%	7%	7%	1.3%	2.7%	2.0%	13.3%		
Monogamous	Count	1	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9		
	% of Total	7%	4.7%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6.0%		
Guidance	Count	2	8	5	5	0	1	0	0	1	22		
	% of Total	1.3%	5.3%	3.3%	3.3%	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%	14.7%		
Widow	Count	4	6	1	2	0	0	2	0	1	16		
	% of Total	2.7%	4.0%	7%	1.1%	0%	0%	1.3%	0%	7%	10.7%		
Divorced	Count	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5		
	% of Total	0%	2.7%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	3.3%		
TOTAL	Count	36	39	17	16	8	7	7	11	9	150		
	% of Total	24.0%	26.0%	11.3 %	10.7%	5.3%	4.7%	47%	7.3%	6.0%	100.0%		

The above table shows the distribution of respondents on background of the inmates sampled (Parents) 2.0% were from single parent, 19.3% came from both parents family, 30.7% were from widow, 13.3% came from polygamous home, 6.0% were from monogamy families, 14.7% were children who stayed with guardians, 10.7% were widowed, while 3.3% were products of divorced families. The chi-square test here shows the significant level less than 0.05. It is 0.007 which means that it is less than our significant level of

0.05. Therefore parental background has significant relationship with the nature of crime committed. ($\chi^2 = 85.197$, $p < 0.05$)

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

1. There is a significant relationship between the level of income and nature of crime committed.
2. There is no significant relationship between marital status variables and nature of crime committed.

