PREDICTIVE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUALITY, PEERS AND PARENTS ATTACHMENT ON YOUTH DELINQUENCY: A PERSPECTIVE OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

Grace Tanimoonwo Idowu (Mrs.) and Siti Aishah-Hassan Ph.D.
Department of Counsellor Education and Counselling Psychology,
Faculty of Educational Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: tannymelord@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper proposes a theoretical model that integrates the different groups of factors which influence the behaviour of Nigerian students in Malaysia. The design / methodology that was adopted involves presentation of hypothetical model which shows youth delinquency behaviors among Nigerian students in Malaysia universities as a dependent variable been influenced by a set of three independent variables such as: spirituality, peers and parents attachment. These variables, whether consciously or unconsciously influenced the behaviour of Nigerian students in Malaysia. The limitations of this study stem from the nature of the study itself. Being a preliminary study, it aims to integrate the factors identified in the existing literature that influenced youth delinquency among international students in Malaysia with emphasis on the Nigerian students; thus, future research on the subject will examine the existing relationships among the aforementioned factors. In particular, it will analyze the weight of each factor and the relative importance of each element. Therefore, determining the relative importance of each element and factor would constitute an important source of information for future work on international student's behavioral formation and development studies. Since, there are few studies which try to tackle the influence of spirituality, peers and parent's attachment on behavioral formation of Nigerian students in Malaysian universities from an integrated point of view, this paper contributes to bridging that gap.

Keywords: Spirituality, Peers, Parents, Attachment, Delinquency.

Introduction

Nigeria is a West African country bordered by Republic of Benin, Niger Republic, Chad, Cameroun and the Gulf of Guinea. The country constitutes the largest number of black people and probably the largest number of emigrants to other countries (Soyinka, 1990), hence, among these immigrants, students constitute a significant percentage. As with other countries, it has been reported that Nigerian foreign students contribute positively to the
development of their host countries even at the expense of their home country (Ette, 2005). Studying abroad has both positive and negative impacts on the students, hence, Nigerian students studying abroad is not an exemption (Arthur, 2000; Bakewell, 2008; Loue, 1988). Recently, Nigeria has witnessed high surge in the number of her citizens moving out of the country in pursuit of better education, businesses, and good job (Okome, 2006). Many of these students have, however, found themselves being challenged by life abroad since their perceptions of life abroad are beyond reality, thus, diminishes their self-value and worth for life thereby leading them to acts of delinquencies (Soyinka, 1990).

Nigeria is rated among the top four countries that source international students to Malaysian universities (MOHEM, 2012). However, the authorities of Malaysia are worried over the increasing crime rate among Nigerian students in Malaysia, says Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi….” It was reported that, of the 5,217 cases of foreign students overstaying and immigration-related offences in Malaysia from 2010 to 2013, 1,579 were Nigerians. Based on statistics, 400 Nigerian students are now in Malaysian prisons for various offences. “We have recorded 40 cases of violent crimes involving Nigerian students here, and 1,003 cases involved commercial crimes”…. “We are concerned over the involvement of Nigerians in crime here in Malaysia” (Nation, 2013).

Why do some Nigerian students in Malaysia engage in various vices? This question accounts for the motivation for the present study. Reinicke (1986) in his study on behavioral adjustment of international students confirmed that the behaviour of international students at their host country are been influenced by their level of spirituality, peers and parents attachment. Previous studies on the influence of parents and peer attachment on the behaviors of youths in Malaysia was done in the context of family structure, which includes families
with a single parent, divorced parents and career working parents (Siti et al 2013). However, studies that examined the influence of spirituality, peers and family attachment on the behaviour of Nigerian students in Malaysia had not being reported (McMinn, 2012).

The need for a model that could explain the influence of spirituality, peers and family attachment on youth delinquency in Malaysia context had been suggested (McMinn, 2012), hence, the gaps to be filled in this study. Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine the predictive influence of spirituality, peers and parents attachment on youth Delinquency among Nigerian Students in Malaysia.

**Theoretical Perspective: Spirituality, Peers and Parent Attachment and Youth Delinquency**

Ecological systems theory was proposed in 1970s by famous psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (2009). The theory was used in the field of psychology to explain the influence of different types of environmental systems on human development. The theory identified micro factors such as spirituality / religiosity, peers and parent attachments in explaining why youths behave differently when in the presence of their family and their behaviour when outside their family domain (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). The index in this information shows that ecological systems theory provides a general micro framework for understanding interpersonal relationship in the various settings that contribute to the behavioural development of youths. As related to this article, ecological systems theory holds that spirituality, peers and parent attachment has influence on delinquency behaviours of Nigerians studying in Malaysia. An overwhelming numbers of researches on the influence of spirituality peers and parent attachment on youth delinquency among the international students include the following:
Spirituality / Religiosity and Delinquency among Nigerian Students in Malaysia

Spirituality worldview is believed to have an influence on the religiosity formation of youths, hence, reported by Rahman, (2005) as having a major influence on the formation of behavior and personality of youths. The theological dimension of spirituality encourages youths in the formation of a belief system to appreciate nature and participate in the cycles of the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), including, giving emotional support (Feldman, 2008) by increasing their self-esteem (Al-Qardhawi, 1997), thus, enhancing the overall happiness among the youth. The term spirituality could be viewed in two perspectives. One as “things that give sense to an individual’s life” (Bacik, 1996), that has nothing to do with religion. On the other hand, Spirituality can be used to describe religious practice, rituals and prosaic activities, thus, determining the comprehensive way of life of humans (Yazdani, 2009). Spirituality / religiosity are considered a foundation for spiritual competence and one of the main foundations of youth growth and development (Zullig, Ward and Horn, 2006).

However, past studies have shown that hedonistic behavior correlates negatively with religiosity, indicating that a lifestyle dictated by maximizing sensual pleasure is at odds with important inputs to positive youth development (Milfont, et al, 2008). In the context of the present study, we hypothesized that youth delinquency among Nigerian students in Malaysia is not been positively influenced by spirituality.

Peers Attachment and Delinquency among Nigerian Students in Malaysia

Theoretically, peer attachment is another line of inquiry related to behavioral development of youths and humans (Siti, et al, 2013). Youths’ attachment to peers can influence and shape the personality and individuality of a person, and act as the platform to expand social circles
(Huang, Wang and Shi, 2012). Previous studies show that healthy peer relationships have a positive psychological influence on youth (Durlak, Weissberg and Pachan 2010; Piaget, 1965). Peer relationships contribute to the development of values that generate happiness and self-confidence, which in turn results in positive attitudes and behaviors (Siti, et al, 2013). Armsden and Greenberg (1987) identified three dimensions of peer’s attachment to include: trust, communication and alienation. The index in this information shows that peers attachment has significant influence on the behaviors of youths.

Aside studies that reported the positive influence of peer’s attachment on youth behaviors, numerous studies had shown that peers attachment can also influence youth behaviors negatively (Kandel, 1978). It was reported that youth behaviors mirror each other, hence, peers attachment elicit more negative and deviant behaviors compared to positive ones (Albert and Steinberg, 2011; Brechwald and Prinstein, 2011; Zahrt and Lange, 2011). In their study, Tomé et al (2012) showed that relationships with peers engaging in violence and negative behaviors can negatively influence the behaviors of their friends. In the contest of the present study we thus, hypothesized that youth delinquency attributes of Nigerian students in Malaysia are been influenced by peers attachment.

Parents Attachment and Delinquency among Nigerian Students in Malaysia

Youth’s attachment with parents is vital in nurturing, guiding and supporting healthy behavioral development among youths (Cook, Buehler and Fletcher, 2012; Horvath, Lees and Sidebotham, 2012). This connection between parents and children effectively helps the former mold their children’s behavior and attitude in a certain way. Previous studies on parental attachment and youth development recognized the importance of parenting in youth behavioral formation (Siti, et al, 2013). Theoretical and empirical work has consistently
linked effective parenting practices to youth well-being whereas ineffective parenting practices have been shown to predict unhealthy youth functioning (Ma and Huebner, 2008; Arshat, et al, 2002). Attachment with parents is imperative in monitoring youth behavior; however, activities of relatives as well are also responsible for physiological development of youths’ social behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

Also, it had been reported that strong family bonds that rely on good communication, solidarity, and discipline have more impact in shaping youth behavior than socio demographic factors like the size of the family, age, or circumstances around birth (Coombes, et al, 2009; McArdle, et al 2002). In the context of the present study, we hypothesized that youth delinquency among Nigerian students in Malaysia is been influenced by weak family / parental bond or attachment.

**Proposed Model** (SPPAD Model)

![Proposed Model Diagram]

- Spirituality / Religiosity
- Peers Attachment
- Parents / Relation Attachment
- Delinquency

**Proposed Model**

![Proposed Model Diagram]
**Figure 1: Spirituality, Peers and Parents Attachment Predictive Model for Youth Delinquency**

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Until now, research on predictive influence of spirituality, peers and parents attachments on youth delinquency among the international students centered on their behavioral adjustments. Previous studies on the influence of parents and peer attachment on the behaviors of youths in Malaysia was done in the context of family structure, which includes families with a single parent, divorced parents and career working parents (Siti et al 2013). However, the model proposed in this study explain youth delinquency among Nigerians studying in Malaysia as a dependent variable been influenced by set of independent variables such as spirituality, peers and parents attachment. These factors, whether conscious or unconscious on the part of Nigerian students in Malaysia determine their behavioral formation and development.

The limitations of this study stem from the nature of the study itself. As a theoretical model, it aims to integrate the factors identified in the existing literature. Thus, future research must try to examine the existing relationships among the aforementioned factors. In particular, it must analyze the weight of each of the factors on the delinquencies of Nigerian students in Malaysian universities, and the relative importance of each. Further analysis of the behaviour of international students in Malaysia would allow educational institutions, as well as national, regional and local governments to be interested in attracting international students, to strengthen their recruitment policies, eliminate weaknesses associated with implementation of the policies to ensure that serious minded and highly talented students are attracted to study in Malaysia.
References


