

# Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of Bystanders and Enablers

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**Abstract-** Juveniles commit a broad range of offences from smoking to murder. Several factors have been empirically established as motivations of youth to a lifestyle of delinquency. Scholars have connected some specific misbehaviors with the home, neighborhood, schools among others and by exploration, these agencies and their agents constitute the bystanders and enablers of deviant behaviors. Against this background, this research attempts to determine their culpability regarding juvenile delinquency. Relying on three theories, the research adopted a qualitative approach to explore the role of bystanders and enablers in juvenile delinquency. Results revealed that majority of the bystanders and enablers are equally as guilty as the juvenile delinquents because they also contribute to the rise in juvenile delinquency either overtly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly. Therefore, the study recommends provision of equal opportunities, social infrastructures, adequate parental guidance, strict supervision and monitoring of children, among others.

**Index Terms-** Bystander, Enabler, Juvenile, Juvenile Delinquency

## I. INTRODUCTION

For decades, juvenile delinquency has remained one of the central focuses of researchers (Solomon, 2014). Many academicians and philosophers have come up with several explanations seeking to investigate children's predispositions to juvenile crime and delinquency. Some have associated it with the aspects of genes and chromosomes, gender, race, community deterioration, poverty, unemployment (depicted by poor socio-economic status) while others have associated it with childhood events such as psychological trauma, sexual abuse and other forms of physical abuse among others. The influence of peers has also provided large surface areas for juvenile delinquency to thrive. In fact, several theories have been formulated to explain delinquency (Vincent & Julius, n.d.). For the most part, the predisposition to delinquency has been connected with the environment. One of such explanations for juvenile delinquency concentrated on social structures and the social factors that predispose youth towards crime and deviance.

According to the explanation, a productive and healthy environment is expected to involve the inputs of everyone especially the youth (Siegel, 2007). Children are the youth and the youths become the leaders of tomorrow. Thus, children are useful resources and prosperity of any nation (Shodhganga, 2017). A

healthy society must therefore provide all necessary resources, amenities, institutions, and infrastructures capable of encouraging children to become productive, civilized, law-abiding and constructive citizens. A favorable environment should therefore equip them with good ethical conduct and guidance, all relevant knowledge, skills and counseling to enable them become physically active, socially responsible, emotionally stable, mentally fit, educationally intelligent, financially and economically prudent, so that they become invaluable assets for the society. However, the absence of these may beget a society of crimes and juvenile delinquency.

The presence of challenges to meet up with the structural and functional needs of children may trigger in them a lifestyle of crimes. Once legitimate opportunities are either absent or scarce, illegitimate paths and chances are automatically created and made available (Siegel, 2007). Once this challenge surfaces, other problems would start to emerge. For instance, formal institutions will begin to weaken and social relations will start to collapse. The World Youth Report (2003) revealed that the informal patterns guiding social relationships and modifications are becoming challenged; social relations aiding socialization process are getting deteriorated; and lifestyle trajectories are becoming more diverse and less predictable. According to the report, rapid population growth, poverty, unemployment and underemployment, overcrowding and increasing population growth, absence of shelter and support services, family disintegration, among others, are some of the pressures that must be dealt with for a healthy environment to thrive.

Although contemporary youth, regardless of gender, origin, or country of residence, are being presented with new individual opportunities, they are also subject to individual risks. Most times, advantage is being taken of illegal opportunities since they are mostly available. As such, young people commit various crimes, become addicted to drugs, use violence against their peers among other acts of delinquency (World Youth Report, 2003). In recent times, juvenile delinquency has become an important aspect of criminology (Shodhganga, 2017) since the rate of youth crimes kept rising amidst advancement. Around the 1990s, statistical data had revealed the rise of youth crimes in virtually all parts of the world and many of the crimes have been related to drug abuse and excessive alcohol use (World Youth Report, 2003). Today, sexual and computer crimes have been included among the list of major crimes committed by juveniles.

Traditionally, there are specific acceptable behaviors and moral obligations expected of a child in every society. A child that fails to meet these social obligations is considered a 'delinquent'. The act of such child is seen as 'childish' or 'silly' considering the consequence it caused to the society which, in most cases, is serious threat, panic, and concern (Vincent & Julius, n.d.). The media has continually brought attention to the increasing delinquent acts of children (Maznah, Sa'odah & Juliana, 2007) that is creating social disorder and destruction of moral values and is capable of hampering the social stability and command of the society (Shodhganga, 2017). These acts range from minor socially offensive behaviours such as 'disrespect to parent and elders' to major serious crimes such as 'murder, rape, robbery and infanticide' (Maznah et al, 2007).

Juvenile delinquency has become one of the most serious problems that must be addressed both in developed and developing countries. They pose serious concerns to communities and societies across the world (Solomon, 2014). A number of literatures have been researched and submitted on juvenile delinquency. Many scholars have approached the problem from different angles and had suggested a number of causes underpinning it. Accordingly, different factors predisposing youth to juvenile delinquency have been theoretically identified and empirically established as reasons for its continuous increase. This research therefore intends to add to existing literatures by looking at the role of bystanders and enablers in juvenile delinquency.

#### *Aim and Research Questions*

The general aim is to examine the culpability of bystanders and enablers with regards to juvenile delinquency using theories. Accordingly, the research is guided by the following questions:

- 1) Who are enablers and bystanders in juvenile delinquency?
- 2) How do we measure the responsibility of inaction?
- 3) Can enablers/bystanders of delinquent behavior be criminals?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Who is a juvenile? What is delinquency? Who is a bystander? Who is an enabler? How are they connected with juvenile delinquency? What is juvenile delinquency? How is it a problem? What are the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency as a problem? The literature review will begin with a conceptual clarification of the key concepts within this research: bystander, enabler, juvenile, and delinquency. A clarification is necessary to promote an understanding of the problem that will later be discussed in this research. Unfortunately, the literature review would not contain the connection between the role of bystanders and enabler with juvenile delinquency because there are no literatures on such connection. Instead, the concepts of juvenile delinquency would be reviewed including its causes.

#### *Bystander*

A bystander is a person present or standing near an event or a situation but not taking part in it. A bystander is watching something that is happening but not taking part in it. A bystander is a chance spectator and onlooker; a passer-by; witness; sidewalk superintendent; rubberneck; eye-witness; looker-on; viewer, watcher; observer. A bystander is a non-participant individual and

a close observer; someone who looks at something such as an exhibition of some kind (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020; Dictionary, 2020; Merriam-Webster, 2020; The Free Dictionary, 2020). More technically, a bystander is someone who sees or is otherwise aware of a potentially harmful event that is happening to someone else but is not originally involved in it (Ann & Beth, 2017).

While there are some instances due to the nature of the bystander (e.g. training or employment in a particular profession) and the form of harm (e.g. child abuse), when there may be legal obligations for bystanders to take action, in other situations the perception of a moral obligation is what motivates bystanders to become involved in a situation. Pro-social bystander action in relation to tackling gender discrimination and prevention of violence against women involves responding across a spectrum of possible situations from hearing a stigmatizing, derogatory, or insulting comment or sexist joke, through noticing behavior that represents possible threats or cues that violence is likely, to noticing behavior that indicates that sexual, physical abuse and/or violence has started (Ann & Beth, 2017).

#### *Enabler*

Enablers are capabilities, forces and resources that contribute to the success of an entity, program, or project (Business Dictionary, 2020). An enabler is someone who will assist and/or defend another person, usually a friend or family member, in their psychotic behavior; for the sole purpose of being needed to get out of trouble so they can hold it over their heads and bitch about it forever (Jezebel27, 2011; cited in Urban Dictionary, 2020).

An enabler is a person that supports another person's bad or dangerous habits. An enabler can either be a tacit or an overt enabler. A tacit enabler supports another's bad habits by staying silent while an overt enabler supports another's bad habits by providing assistance such as money, transportation, approval, among others. Enablers tend to fear calling others on their destructive habits because these "others" tend to be friends, family or others close to the enabler. Thus, rather than risking losing the love, respect, friendship or contact with the person, the enabler chooses instead to play it safe and watch the other slowly destroy themselves or others through their own actions. For instance, giving a lift to a drunken friend while knowing he is on his way to commit a crime (Wallbridge, 2005; cited in Urban Dictionary, 2020).

#### *Juvenile*

A juvenile is considered as a child who has not completed a specific age as mentioned in the law of any country and doesn't bear resemblance as an adult person and who can be made legally answerable for his criminal activities. A juvenile is a child who has allegedly violated certain laws that declares his act or omission as an offence. A juvenile and a minor are used in different perspective in legal terms. Generally, the term juvenile is used in reference to a young criminal offender and minor is related to legal capacity of a person (Black Law Dictionary, cited in Vincent & Julius, n.d.). The Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) defines juvenile to be anyone under the age of 18 irrespective of how each individual state explains a juvenile. Statutorily, a juvenile

delinquent refers to a young person who has committed a criminal offence and given a court order (Maznah et al, 2007).

#### *Delinquency*

Delinquency has been defined as when a person commits a felony, unwelcomed action, omission or moral behavior of a juvenile which is socially not permitted in any society. Psychologically, delinquency is an activity that diverges from the normal behavior of a person. According to some social workers, delinquency may entail socially unaccepted deeds in an environment. Cyril Bur observes that delinquency is present in a child when his/her antisocial propensities appear to be so serious to become the subject of official deed. Sheldon defined delinquency as a behavior that disappoints beyond reasonable expectation (Vincent & Julius, n.d.).

From a legal perspective, delinquency refers to any action or behavior that violates the criminal law and committed by a young person below the age of eighteen. Delinquency are all offences or crimes committed by juveniles range from minor to major indexed crimes such as petty theft, traffic violation, drug abuse and/or trafficking, robbery, and crimes that caused grievous hurt to other persons (Maznah et al, 2007). Delinquency is typically defined as any act committed by a minor that violates the statutory code or laws of the government with authority over the area in which the act occurs (Bartolla, 2003).

There are two approaches for the interpretation of the term delinquency: legal and sociological term. The legal term is an umbrella term for a wide variety of social disapproved behaviors that varies with time, place and the attitudes of those assigned to dispense justice and law while the sociological term refers to the anti-social acts of the children and of young person under age. These kind of acts are either termed as prohibited by law or may be lawfully understood as constituting delinquency or as involving some form of official conduct. In short, the sociological definition of delinquency describes a child whose action is not as per statutory dictations and terrifies their parents, teachers, neighbors and guidance (Vincent & Julius, n.d.).

#### *Juvenile Delinquency Defined*

Juvenile delinquency is a concept that has been variously defined both socially and academically. The three main academic disciplines that subspecialize in the study of juvenile delinquency are Law, Sociology and Psychology (Solomon, 2014). Criminologists see juvenile delinquency as encompassing all public wrongdoings committed by young people between the ages of 12 and 20. To sociologists viewed the concepts more broadly and believed that juvenile delinquency covers a multitude of different violations of legal and social norms, from minor offences to serious crimes, committed by juveniles. Status offences are also included under the umbrella of juvenile delinquency because they are closely connected with the age status of an offender. Under the concept of juvenile delinquency, a particular action or behavior is considered a violation of the law only if it is committed by a juvenile (World Youth Report, 2003). Juvenile delinquency involves different forms like theft, pick pocketing, drug addiction, sex offences, predatory acts etc (Shodhganga, 2017).

Juvenile delinquency embraces a wide range of situations when the law is broken by individuals who are underage (i.e. those less than 18 years of age). Such cases may include matters from violating the curfew to committing a murder (Solomon, 2014). Juvenile delinquency is defined as all crimes committed by an individual under the age of 18 fails to abide by the laws. Thus, a juvenile delinquent is a person who constantly commits a crime or crimes but is not prosecuted by law as an adult due to their age (Vincent & Julius, n.d.). In an effort to explain the theoretical underpinnings of delinquency, sociologists have associated specific behavior of youth with the home, family, neighborhood, peers and many other variables that together or separately may influence the formation of young people's social environment (World Youth Report, 2003).

#### *Causes of Juvenile Delinquency*

The acts of juvenile delinquency can take place in different ways and it also varies in degree, frequency and seriousness. Juvenile delinquency like many other social problems has complex roots (Shodhganga, 2017). The factors that operate to turn a child's action in one direction rather than another may be very difficult to understand. Many of these factors are yet known and are beyond the detection of professional criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, physiologists as well as other social experts. Sometimes it may appear that quite a number of different offenses are the results of the same group of causes but further investigation would reveal the presence of other factors that determines the type of delinquency. For instance, poverty, unhappy home and irregular earnings in the evening may lead a child to play truant from school in order to earn more money. It may cause another child to steal or may push another child to join a street gang or starts gambling, smoking, among others (Banham Bridges, 1927).

Accordingly, children should be given a good environment and moral teachings that will make him a responsible and wise citizen of the country since they are the future leaders of tomorrow. A child growing up in an unpleasant surrounding will most likely learn wrong norms and values and at the end of his childhood days, the chances of him heading back to the right path will likely be unpredictable. When a child's first crime is ignored, it gives them further encouragement to commit more and more offences till they are apprehended, tried and convicted by the authorities. Unfortunately, juvenile delinquents have learnt to commit the serious nature of offences like adults including theft, robbery, drug offences, murder and even rape (Shodhganga, 2017).

According to the World Youth Report (2003), juvenile delinquency is motivated by the negative results of social and economic development particularly economic crises, political instability, and the weakening of major institutions (including the state, systems of public education and public assistance, religious institution, the community/neighborhood, and the family). Socio-economic instability is most times connected to the persistent poverty, unemployment and low incomes among the young which can increase the likelihood of their involvement in acts of delinquency and criminal activity. Delinquencies occur in some community settings where the norms for acceptable behavior are absent or have been broken down. They are also frequent in

settings where legal opportunities have been made unavailable (World Youth Report, 2003).

Juvenile delinquency might be explained using the same group of causes but there are other causes of juvenile delinquency (Banham Bridges, 1927). According to Shodhganga (2017), no single factor has been attributed as the major cause of juvenile delinquency; there are countless causes of juvenile delinquency. He divided them into three types namely: biological, socio-environmental and physiological and personal. The biological causes include ocular ailments, nose and throat problem, hearing problem, speech problem, enuresis, irritation, headache, excessive strength and hypoglycemia. The socio-environmental causes are mobility, cultural conflicts, family background (including family structure, broken home, child's birth order in the family, family size and type, and parent-children relationship), socio-economic condition, neighborhood, alcohol and intoxication, peer group, nature of society, the socio-cultural conditions, cinema, role of press, cheap literature, physical standards, mental makeup and heredity. The physiological and personal causes include school factors, drug addiction, and overcrowding. According to him, others causes of delinquency may be noticed under bad company, adolescent insecurity, mental conflicts, excessive social suggestibility, love adventure, school dissatisfaction and poor recreation facilities (Shodhganga, 2017).

Banham Bridges (1927) also summarize the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency and that have been found to operate in some thousands of cases studied and reported on by various authorities. These factors are classed under six general headings as follows:

- 1) Physical factors such as malnutrition, lack of sleep, developmental aberrations, sensory defects, speech defects, endocrine disorders, etc;

### III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically a qualitative research and adopted a theoretical approach. It relies solely on documented theories as well as other secondary data sources. The scope is limited to juvenile delinquency and related concepts. Relevant literatures were collected in an eclectic manner from official documents, to specific reports and published outlets such as books, journal publications, online articles, and newspaper reports. Published outlets were majorly used as they contained the documentations of the assumptions and contributions of the selected theories to juvenile delinquency. Also, there are no academic literature that connects juvenile delinquency with the role of bystanders and enablers. As a result, since the results were majorly qualitative; the results were presented and analyzed using the open method of content analysis.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

#### *Bystanders and Enablers of Juvenile Delinquency*

A bystander is a person who sees or is otherwise aware of a potentially harmful event that is happening to someone else but is not originally involved or does not participate in it (Ann & Beth, 2017) while an enabler is a person that supports another person's bad or dangerous habits either tacitly or overtly (Wallbridge, 2005; cited in Urban Dictionary, 2020). Either way, the bystanders and

- 2) Mental factors such as mental defect, superior intelligence, psychoneuroses, abnormalities of instinct and emotion, uneven mental development, obsessive imagery and imagination, etc;
- 3) Home conditions such as material deficiencies, excess in material things, broken homes, poverty and unemployment, mental and physical abnormalities of parents, or siblings, etc;
- 4) School conditions such as inadequate school building and equipment, inadequate facilities for recreation, rigid and inelastic school system, poor attendance laws and lax enforcement, etc;
- 5) Neighborhood conditions such as lack of recreational facilities, congested neighborhood and slums, disreputable morals of the district, proximity of luxury and wealth, etc;
- 6) Occupational conditions such as irregular occupation, occupational misfit, spare time and idleness, truancy, factory influences, monotony and restraint, etc (Banham Bridges, 1927).

According to Banham Bridges (1927), the few quotations included above are simply illustrative of the points in question and were chosen because of their apparent truth rather than their authoritative source. The first two groups outlined above included all factors dependent upon the bodily and mental condition of the juvenile delinquent. These are the products of both heredity and environment. The other four groups consist of environmental factors such as unfavorable conditions in the home and the family of the child, unfavorable conditions in the school environment, the neighborhood, and occupational environments (Banham Bridges, 1927).

enablers of juvenile delinquency are all persons or group of persons, or an entity or a group of entities, or an organization or a group of organizations who see, understand, assist, or support juvenile delinquency or the actions of juvenile delinquents either openly or secretly, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly and are or may be aware of the one or all of the effects or dangers of juvenile delinquency either on themselves, the delinquents or the society in its entirety. The bystanders and enablers of juvenile delinquency will include parents, guardians, siblings, peer, family relatives, neighbors, social services, police, criminal justice professionals and other security agencies, government policies, programmes and laws, religious institutions and other institutions, government officials, and the government.

#### *Theoretical Explanation of Juvenile Delinquency and the Role of Bystanders and Enablers*

The effects of juvenile delinquency cannot be overemphasized and the role of bystanders and enablers in juvenile delinquency needs to be examined. The several factors that motivate youth into juvenile delinquency have been theoretically investigated and empirically explained but the role of bystanders and enablers remain uninvestigated. For this research, the following theories

will be adopted in explaining the tendencies in juvenile delinquency and connecting them with the role of bystanders and enablers.

1) Anomie-Strain theory:

Strain theory argues that feelings of strains motivate children to acts of crime and delinquency. It is established that the rates of crime and delinquency can only be curtailed when these strains are reduced. Siegel (2007) explains that strain theory comes in two (2) distinct forms: structural strain and individual strain. Structural strain theory proposed that economic and social sources of strain influence the collective behaviors of a person while individual strain theory advocated that the social encounters and life experiences of individuals translated into suffering, pain and misery, shape their behaviors and increase their chances of committing crimes and antisocial behaviors. Thus, a child would likely commit acts of delinquency when he is either structurally strained (such as living in a deteriorated environment) or personally strained (when such living and experience translated into pain and suffering for him and his family). On the structural scale, the bystanders and enablers are the government and other people in control of the economic and social resources and endowment of the society.

Strain theory focuses on conflict between goals and means and argues that alternative methods of achievement of societal goals, frustration, and unequal supply of wealth and power results to crime and delinquency. Strain theorists believe that most people share similar values and goals. Unfortunately, the ability to achieve these personal goals is bound by socio-economic class. While the affluent may live out the dream of success, good education and wealth, the poor are shut out from the door of achieving these goals and as a result, they feel frustrated and angry; these frustrations may then turn out to crimes (Siegel, 2007). Strain theorists believe that most juvenile delinquents come from the poor who are mostly shut out from pursuing the prescribed legitimate goals through the legitimate methods. Accordingly, the bystander and enabler are the legal dictators and the society that define and differentiate between legitimacy and illegitimacy and then fail to include/provide an equal opportunity and ability to the different socio-economic classes to pursue the accepted goals through the accepted methods. Juvenile delinquents are but victims of social inequality created and developed by the society and her legal dictators.

The sharp distinctions between the rich and the poor may also create an atmosphere of envy and mistrust that may translate into violence and aggression. Strain is related to criminal motivation. Criminals and juvenile delinquents may believe that they have the rights to humiliate others in return for the humiliations they have suffered. And as such, they develop a sense of injustice and discontent to cope with the social inequality nurtured by the society which further ignites to frustration, hostility, and eventually lifestyles full of crimes, delinquencies, and illegitimate activities (Braithwaite, 1991; Krueger et al, 2004). A child may psychologically question himself about his social status and what offense he must have committed to be born and raised poor in a society. Misguided by such question and ill-thought, he may justify himself by becoming a juvenile delinquent. Who defines

delinquency and automatically give the poor and vulnerable a free ticket and a hundred percent opportunity to join the league of delinquents?

Merton's modified version of anomie explains the options people (including children) developed as response to strain experiences. The root of strain theory is traced to Emile Durkheim's idea of anomie. Merton revealed that two elements of culture interact to produce potentially anomic conditions: 'culturally defined goals' and 'socially approved means' for achieving them (Siegel, 2007). Merton argued that the goals of acquiring wealth, success and power are uniform throughout societies. But when access to the socially approved means is stratified by social class, strain results which further aggravates to anomie and eventually, crime and delinquency among those exempted from the legitimate socio-economic structure, usually the poor. As a result, they may develop criminal and delinquent solutions to the problems of achieving the goals defined by the society (Siegel, 2007). Robert K. Merton, people adopted five (5) modes or mechanisms to adapt comfortably to strains and stresses as explained below.

- a) Conformity: This occurs when individuals accept both the conventional social goals and the institutionalized means to achieve them. The conformist desires wealth and success and can achieve them through good education and other legitimate and institutionalized means (Siegel, 2007).
- b) Innovation: This occurs when an individual accepts the conventional social goals but rejects or is incapable of attaining the goals through legitimate means (Siegel, 2007).
- c) Ritualism: People in this category are less concerned about the goals of the society but have found solace in embracing the institutionalized means of achieving the goals. Siegel (2007) explained that ritualists derive satisfaction from practicing traditional ceremonies whether or not they have a real purpose. Ritualism is believed to have the lowest level of criminality because they have abandoned the goal of success which is at the root of crimes.
- d) Retreatism: This occurs when an individual rejects both the cultural accepted goals and the means of achieving them. Such people are morally or otherwise incapable of utilizing both legal and illegal means and as such, attempt to escape their lack of success by withdrawing – either mentally or physically (Siegel, 2007). Most of them don't even have a specific goal.
- e) Rebellion: Rebels rejects both the conventional goals and the legal means of attainment but substitute them with an alternative set of goals and means of attaining them (Siegel, 2007). Most times, this category of social adaptation comes with a motive. While some people rebel to influence or change the decisions of a government/country, others revolt to create/establish new homeland, lifestyles, goals, beliefs, cultures and traditions and even opportunities. Siegel (2007) also argues that rebellion may be a reaction to a corrupt and hated government.

Of the five social adaptations, innovation is most closely connected with criminal behaviors and juvenile delinquency. Merton explains that a number of people desire material comfort but lack the financial resources to satisfy their desires. This strain

compels them to adopt innovative solutions to their problems (Siegel, 2007) and automatically included in the list of the financially incapable are the poor children that come from poor homes. This theory has been criticized for explaining criminality and juvenile delinquency among the poor and the low social class.

## 2) Self-Control theory:

Founded by Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (1990), Self-Control theory was formulated as a response to the shortcomings of the Social Control theory developed by Travis Hirschi to explain delinquency. Self-Control theory simply asserts that all illegal activity is a manifestation of a single underlying cause known as “low self-control”. With its root in control theories that assumes delinquent acts to be a result of a child’s weakened or broken bond to society (Hirschi, 1969), self-control theory states that “individuals with high self-control will be substantially less likely at all periods of life to engage in criminal acts while those with low self-control are highly likely to commit crime” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:89). All children, regardless of their origin or social class, are to be blamed for engaging in acts of delinquency for their low self-control.

Self-Control Theory (otherwise known as the General Theory) was developed to compensate for Social Control theory which was criticized for not explaining all criminal and deviant behavior. The authors’ theory is intended to be an “all inclusive” theory since it has the capacity to explain all types of criminal and deviant behavior irrespective of the gravity in nature or demographic factors (Bartusch, Lynam, Moffitt, & Silver 1997; Nakhaie, Silverman & LaGrange, 2000). Parent (2003) also presented what is similar arguing that the theory relates to everyone irrespective of gender, age, social class, or ethnicity. Many scholars have attested to the competence of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s “General Theory of Crime”, or “Self-Control Theory”, in formulating a comprehensive theory of crime. However, just like every other theory and regardless of the number of proponents and the broad utility that the theory emanates, it is still susceptible to criticism and scrutiny. Interestingly, much of this criticism evolves out of the author’s belief that the theory applies to all types of crimes regardless of social class, gender or ethnicity of the perpetrators (Bartusch et al, 1997; Nakhaie et al, 2000).

Gottfredson and Hirschi’s self-control theory asserts that “individual differences in involvement in criminal and analogous behavior are due largely to individual differences in the personality trait they call low self-control” (Ameklev, Grasmick, Tittle, & Bursik, 1993:225). It further posits that individuals with high self-control will be significantly less likely to engage in acts of crime and delinquency and vice versa (Akers, 1997). Due to the fact that both crime and analogous behaviors originate from low self-control, people with low self-control will engage in them at a relatively high rate (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990: 89-91). Low self-control is useful in the explanation of crime and delinquency, for there are tendencies for certain traits associated with low-self-control to come together in the same people and persist over their lifetime. Gottfredson and Hirschi contend that individuals who engage in crime during their years of adolescence are likely to carry over this motivation to engage in crime during their adult years. They proposed that self-control consists of a set of stable

differences across individuals that predispose them to act upon momentary impulse without regard for the consequences (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:87-88).

According to Self-control theory, “self-control is stable, therefore, persons with low self-control will have a greater and stable tendency to commit deviance across all social circumstances at all stages of life after childhood” (Akers, 1997:93). Gottfredson and Hirschi argued that individuals who lack self-control tend to be “impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, shortsighted, and nonverbal” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990: 90). Grasmick et al (1993) observed that the personality trait of these individuals is characterized by a “here and now” orientation and a desire for immediate, easy and simple gratification. These individuals also tend to engage in risky, adventuresome, and exciting activities; they are deemed as being self-centered and insensitive to the needs of others. This is also a possible explanation or, at the least, a connection with their instability in relationships, friendships, and occupations. It was argued that individuals with low self-control often have low frustration, tolerance, and frequently tend to use physical means in responding and resolving conflict as opposed to a verbal alternative. These individuals engage in non-criminal acts comparable to crime, such as illicit sex, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, and are more susceptible to accidents because of their involvement in such acts. Precisely, the above criteria are what Gottfredson and Hirschi believed to comprise a complete and representative measure of self-control: impulsivity, preference for simple tasks, risk-seeking, physical activities, self-centeredness, temper, among others (Grasmick et al, 1993).

It is also important to stress that the authors argued that self-control is not the only necessary condition that leads to crime and delinquency. Gottfredson and Hirschi assert that “lack of self-control does not require crime and can be counteracted by situational conditions... {but} high self-control effectively reduces the possibility of crime – that is, those possessing it will be substantially less likely at all periods of life to engage in criminal acts” (1990:89). To understand why persons with low self-control tend to exhibit acts of crime and delinquency that persist for life, one must look at the socialization process. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that the major cause of low self-control is a poor child-rearing, consequently emphasizing the importance of parental management and child-rearing practices. They explained further that “the essential conditions of child rearing that are required to produce self-control in children are monitoring behavior, recognition of deviant behavior, and appropriate punishment” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:97-98). Thus, an inadequate parental management will yield a low self-control and thus, influences a person’s choice when faced with an opportunity for immediate gain through little investment (Winfrey & Bemat, 1998).

Low self-control is not inborn but a trait developed early in childhood. It becomes ‘internalized’ and inscribed into one’s personality. Once established early in a child’s life, the characteristics of self-control remain stable and unchanging. Thus, a manifestation of low self-control may change over time, but the trait does not diminish as one ages or matures (Parent, 2003).

Although a child is to be blamed for his/her acts of crime and delinquency, their parents are not free from guilt as well. Accordingly, parents also serve as a bystander and enabler of juvenile delinquency because of their poor supervision and parenting styles, ineffective child management, and defective child-bearing practices including the breastfeeding and weaning of children.

### 3) Situational Action theory

Situational Action theory (SAT) was developed by Per-Olof Wikström (2004; 2010; Wikström, Oberwittler, Treiber, & Hardie, 2012; Wikström & Treiber, 2016). SAT is a recently developed general theory of moral values and action that combines individual and environmental perspectives to explain delinquent behavior. Based on the assumption that criminal behavior is a moral action, a criminal act is committed because it is evaluated as an alternative action and therefore chosen as one (Schepers, 2014). SAT is a complex integrative mechanism-based action theory that attempts to explain crime as moral action (guided by value-based rules about what is right and wrong) (Pauwel, Svensson, & Hirtenlehner, 2018).

SAT connects two classical approaches of criminology: the General Theory of Crime (GTOC, Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990), and Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson 1979). SAT makes a distinction between the individual trait and the process of exercising self-control. Self-control as a process was defined as 'the successful inhibition of perceived action alternatives ... that conflict with an individual's morality' (Wikström and Treiber, 2007:258). What one possesses (the trait) is the ability to exercise self-control, which has recently been defined as people's 'ability to withstand external pressure to act against their own personal morals' (Wikström and Treiber, 2016:431). SAT offers a widely acceptable definition of crime by defining it as a special case of moral rule breaking, without being dependent on law regulations or different cultural contexts (Schepers, 2014).

The central idea of SAT is that criminal behavior is the result of the interaction between who individuals are (characteristics and experience) and where they are (Schepers, 2014:4). Designed to overcome the key problems of criminological theorizing (Schepers, 2014), SAT combines the environmental perspective and person-oriented theories and asserts that acts of crime and delinquency are "an outcome of a perception-choice-process guided by the interaction between a person's crime propensity and his/her exposure to criminogenic settings" (Wikström 2009:254). SAT defines acts of crime as "acts that break moral rules of conduct stated in law" (Wikström et al, 2012:11). They are viewed as the result of a perception-choice process based on the action alternatives an individual perceives and the (moral) choices a person selects in a given context (Wikström, 2004, 2010; Wikström et al, 2012).

Four (4) interaction effects for the explanation of crime and delinquency have received the major empirical attention: interaction between exposure and propensity (exposure has a greater effect when propensity is high); interaction between deterrence and propensity (perceived deterrence exerts a greater influence when propensity is high); interaction between personal

morality and self-control (self-control has a greater impact when personal morality is weak) (Schepers, 2014; Pauwel et al, 2017); and interaction between causes of the causes and selection effects (mainly concentrating on mediation effects of informal social controls by propensity) (Schepers, 2014).

Social factors that affect people's involvement in crime and delinquency are best analyzed as "causes of the causes" of criminal behavior. By analyzing them as "causes of the causes", SAT acknowledges the importance of personal factors and processes in life history without mistaking them as causation of delinquency. This strengthens the argument that it is almost impossible to understand the causes of the causes of crime, if the causes of crime and delinquency are not systemically understood. SAT therefore proposes that the causes of the causes are "best analyzed in terms of processes of (social and personal) emergence and processes of (social and self) selection" (Wikström et al, 2012:30). Social conditions and individual developments over the life course should be analyzed as causes of the causes. Thus, causes of the causes are the only social conditions to influence personal propensity and their exposure to different criminogenic setting (Schepers, 2014).

SAT argues that the "likelihood that a person will commit offences depends on his or her propensity towards crime, his or her exposure to criminogenic settings and, in particular, the interaction between propensity and exposure" (Pauwel et al, 2018:34). The probable occurrence of criminal behavior depends on the (criminal) propensity of a person and his or her exposure to criminogenic settings. Criminal behaviors are seen as moral actions and are affected by the ability of an individual to act in accordance to their morality and to exercise self-control. The actions of an individual are also influenced by the setting of his/her environment. Individuals with a high propensity are more likely to commit crimes especially they are exposed to criminal settings while individuals with low propensity are less likely to commit acts of crimes even when exposed to criminogenic settings. SAT follows a situational model in which propensity and exposure interact resulting in the stimulation of criminal behavior. Consequently, delinquency is defined as the result of an interaction process between propensity and exposure in a situational context. The perception-choice-process is dependent on an individual experience and can be regulated by his habits or by deliberation in a rational decision making (Schepers, 2014). Consequently, one can infer that Situation Action theory argues that the propensity of a child to commit actions of crime and delinquency is dependent upon his/her exposure to criminogenic settings; the perceived deterrence against an acts of crime and delinquency exerts a greater influence when a child's delinquency propensity is high; and when a child's personal morality is weak, his low self-control has a greater chance of dictating his/her action. Thus, a child's may likely commit crime and delinquency when his/her personal morality is weak or his/her exposure to negative behaviors and criminal actions is high, when there is a little or no deterrent effort against his acts of crime and delinquency, and when his ability to exercise self-control is weak.

### *Bystander and Enabler and Measuring the Responsibility of Inaction*

A bystander and enabler of juvenile delinquency can either be a co-offender, an accomplice, or a helper. In most of the cases, they either support the actions of juveniles by staying silent (and not condemning them) or providing assistance of whatever kind to them. In an effort to explain the theoretical underpinnings of juvenile delinquency, social scholars have associated some specific actions of crime and delinquency of children with the home, family, school, neighborhood, peers and many other variables that together or separately may influence the formation of young people's social environment (World Youth Report, 2003). This is to assert that most of the acts of crime and delinquency by the youth are connected with the bystanders and enablers. Thus, the bystander and enabler are also a cause to the causes of juvenile delinquency.

How do we measure the responsibility of the inaction of bystanders and enabler? With reference to the four theories adopted in this research, the ultimate role of the inactiveness of bystanders and enablers can be measured by investigating the rise or decline in the rate of juvenile delinquency. The responsibility of inaction of bystanders and enablers will be high when there is a rise in the rate of juvenile delinquency and vice versa. Other measurement indicators include provision of amenities and basic infrastructures, equal access to opportunities, type of parenting styles, parental management, guidance counseling, child time management, child-bearing practices, and children's exposure to environmental settings, among others.

### V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Juvenile delinquency is a serious problem that calls for an urgent attention of all social actors against its increasing wave. The issue cannot be overemphasized considering the problems it poses to the society. If juvenile delinquents are not monitored, they may likely become professional criminals (instead of the leaders of tomorrow as the nature of expectations dictates) as they grow in age and exposure. As the world is advancing in invention and technology, so is the rate of crime and juvenile delinquency. The acts of deviance perpetrated by children have gone beyond minor offences such as smoking, drinking alcohol, drug abuse and truancy, and have included major crimes including murder, armed robbery, rape and other sexual offences.

Several philosophers, scholars and researchers have scientifically researched, empirically identified, and theoretically established different causes or factors predisposing youth to juvenile delinquency. Investigating and understanding the varying roles played by different conventional actors is deemed necessary in order to reduce the impacts or eliminate the roots of delinquency. Therefore, determining the culpability of bystanders and enablers with respect to delinquency is a means to end. The bystanders and enablers of juvenile delinquency include every individual who has a responsibility to play in the upbringing and development of children, including parents, guardians, siblings, family relatives, friends, neighbors, religious clerics, school and other institutional administrators and the government. A child must not be entirely blamed for his acts of crime and delinquency, except that bystanders and enablers take a share of the guilt since all of them

have a role to play to reduce the impacts and rise in juvenile delinquency. The study therefore recommends an effective mutual beneficial parent-child relationship, equal access to opportunities, adequate provision of basic infrastructures and social amenities, adequate parental supervision and guidance counseling, effective child-bearing practices, among others.

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