

## Family Factors and Criminality: A Study of Inmates at Correctional Facilities in South-West Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Criminal activities, as they are progressively increasing, have become social problems of which many researchers have attempted to identify the forms; causative factors, effects on perpetrators, victims and the society at large. High incidences of crime place a lot of weight on the society at large. The study of crime in Nigeria has gone through tremendous changes in both quantitative and subjective terms lately. This study aimed at examining the influence of family factors on crime by the offenders incarcerated in South-West Nigeria. A total of 539 convicts participated in the study with data obtained using structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. The quantitative analysis was carried out using the linear regression, while the qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. Socio-demographic backgrounds of the convicted offenders at correctional facilities had majority of the respondents with mean age of 40 years, with 70.7% being less than or equal to 40 years as at the time of arrest, 94.1% having been involved in crime at ages older than seventeen years, 74.8% of the respondents were had never been married, and 36.2% of the respondents had more than 3 siblings. The study concludes that family factors of age at onset of crime and marital status can affect the tendency engage in criminality.

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**Keywords:** Convicts, crime, socio-demographic.

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### Introduction

There is a developing worry in Nigerian culture about crime, because of the terrific expansion in orientation brutality as of late. The degree and the idea of crime in Nigeria have gone through tremendous changes in both quantitative and subjective terms lately. Studies so far conducted have overlooked the influence of family factors on crime. Thus the current study aims at studying the triggering factors that prompt criminal behaviour among inmates who are serving time in Nigeria through a field research that was conducted in Correctional Facilities in the six States of South West Nigeria. The study examined the influence of socio-demographic socio-economic factors, as well as mediating variables on criminality of offenders and most common forms of crime in the study area. A research that attempts to analyse the influence of these factors on crime with particular emphasis on the triggering factors that prompt criminal behaviour is a timely endeavour. Therefore, the study tried to fill the gap of knowledge by studying the factors that lead criminals to criminal action. A tremendous scope of elements impact and influence the lives of children, particularly significant are the nature of youth care and conditions, and parental and family connections. Nearby and family destitution, unfortunate living conditions, and natural circumstances, all also have impact on criminal tendencies (Adegoke, 2014; Aduralere 2019).

The function of family formation in diverting criminal trajectories has long been recognised in the life cycle literature. Unstable family backgrounds would have negative implications for adolescent risk behaviour and transition-to-adulthood experiences (Ukoji and Okolie, 2016; Adeyemi et al., 2021;

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Fomby and Bosick 2013). Men who were involved in crime and delinquency as minors are less likely to continue criminal participation if and when they marry (Sampson and Laub 1995). Criminally active males who remain unmarried, on the other hand, are more likely to continue offending into adulthood. Findings consistently show that cohabitation is connected with desistance, but not as significantly as marriage (Forrest 2014). In addition, males who separate or divorce tend to become more criminals, especially if they are not living with a spouse (Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995; Horney, Osgood, and Ineke, 1995). Research on the relationship between parenthood and criminality has produced less consistent results, although fatherhood doesn't seem to be a driving force behind men's desistance in general (Blokland and Nieuwebeerta 2005).

## Methods

A total of 539 inmates that have been convicted participated in this study. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative form of data collection. The quantitative source of data consisted of the use of a structured questionnaire while the qualitative form consisted of the use of in-depth interviews. The data analysis was done in two stages. The first stage involved the use of Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS V22) for the quantitative data generated. Data were represented using frequency tables. The hypotheses were tested using linear regression and multiple regression analyses to show the significance and strength of the variables. The second stage involved the analysis of the qualitative data. The data generated from the in-depth interviews were transcribed. This involved transcribing the content of the in-depth interviews conducted during the course of this research work into themes.

**Table (1): Participants' demographics (N = 539)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (Mean = 40 years)</b>		
≤ 40 years	381	70.7
> 40 years	158	29.3
<b>Age at onset of crime perpetuation (Mean =17 years)</b>		
≤ 17 years	32	5.9
> 17 years	507	94.1
<b>Years of formal schooling</b>		
No formal education	26	4.8
Up to Secondary education	110	20.4
Post-Secondary education	403	74.8
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	35	6.5
Never been married	403	74.8
Separated or divorced	89	16.5
Widowed	12	2.2
<b>Number of siblings (Mean = 2) years)</b>		
≤ 2	344	63.8
> 2	195	36.2
<b>History of living condition</b>		
With both parents	146	27.1
With father only	48	8.9
With mother only	75	13.9
With some relative	173	32.1
Other	97	18

**Table (2): Model Summary on family factors**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.499 <sup>a</sup>	.249	.246	1.240
a. Predictors: (Constant), family factors				

**Table (3): Coefficients on the family factors**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.655	.151		12.258	.000
Age at point of arrest	.279	.042	.293	6.783	.000
Marital status	.248	.039	.287	6.667	.000

a. a. Dependent Variable: Perpetuation of crime

### Results

Data from the Table 1 shows mean age of the respondents to be forty (40) years, with 70.7% being less than or equal to 40 years as at the time of arrest, and 29.3% being older than forty years. The table equally shows that average age at onset of crime was seventeen (17) year, with 5.9% having been involved in crime while younger than or exactly at seventeen years of age, and 94.1% having been involved in crime at ages older than seventeen years. Data also showed the educational background of the respondents from the six (6) selected facilities. The data presented shows that out of five hundred and thirty nine (539) respondents 4.8% respondents had no formal education, 20.4% respondents that some formal education up to secondary level while a surprising majority of the respondents 74.8% had educational level beyond secondary school education. The table also showed that 6.5% respondents were married, 74.8% of the respondents were had never been married constituting majority of the respondents, 16.5% of the respondents were either separated or divorced, while only 2.2% respondents across the facilities were widowed. Data also showed data of the respondents based on the number of siblings of the respondents. A total of 36.2% of the respondents had more than 3 siblings, while the data presented shows majority 63.8% of respondents had just up to 3 siblings in their family. Finally, data showed history of living conditions of the respondents, with 27.1% having lived with both parents, 8.9% had lived with only their father, 13.9% had lived with only their mother, a total of 32.1% had lived with some relative, and 18% had lived with people other than their relations.

Table 2 shows the relationship between socio-demographic factors and crime perpetuation of convicts in the study area. R in the model shows the strength of relationship. The value of R is 0.499. This suggests that the significant relationship between socio-demographic factors and crime perpetuation of convicts in the study area is high; with the R square value being 0.249 or 24.9% if expressed in percentage.

The coefficient as shown in Table 3 shows the model that expresses the extent to which socio-demographic factors have a relationship on crime perpetuation of convicts. The significance level below 0.05 implies a statistical confidence at 95%. This suggests that socio-demographic factors have a significant relationship on crime perpetuation of convicts in the study area. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was accepted. It can be established that socio-demographic factors of age at onset of crime involvement and marital status, have a significant relationship on crime perpetuation of convicts in the study area.

Excerpts from the in-depth interviews conducted are as follows:

*“I think for me, what affected me the most was I looked at how old I was, I had started engaging in criminal activities since I was twenty-seven” (Inmate at Kirikiri, Lagos Facility)*

*“I never grew up with my father and my uncles from my mother’s side did not interfere with anything my mother did. I can say I did not have much of a disciplining while growing up. I was forty-three years old when I was arrested.” (Inmate at Kirikiri Lagos Facility)*

*“My parents were rather strict, especially my father. I dared not even tell a lie when I was growing up. I envied my friends who would tell stories of their various escapades. I started to think of how I too would get to be independent. I was involved in stealing at age twenty-two.”*  
(Inmate at Ekiti Facility)

*“For me, the reason I got involved in crime was because I was finding it hard to feed my family.”*  
(Inmate at Ile-Ife, Osun Facility)

*“I had been involved in crime even before I got my wife. And just when I felt I should stop or slow it down a bit, I slipped and got arrested and now I am serving this sentence.”* (Inmate at Agodi, Oyo Facility)

## **Discussion**

Studies have identified the relevance of family factors in the lives of children. Such include growing up with a single-never-married parent, divorced parents, or some other form of family instability which can have profound effects on the transition of the child to adulthood, thereby creating avenues for involvement in delinquent acts (Fomby and Bosick, 2013, Lee and McLanahan, 2015, Wu and Martinson, 1993; Van de Rakt, Nieuwbeerta, and Apel, 2009). The findings from this present study in tandem with other previous studies (Kanazawa and Still, 2000; Steffensmeier and Allan, 2000) which identified age as one of the strongest factors associated with criminal behaviour. Studies by Farrington, Loeber and Howell (2012) show that many crimes have their peak involvement before the age of 20, but begin to decline well before age 25. Steffensmeier and Allan (2000) revealed that peak functioning is typically reached between the age of 25 and 30 for physical factors that are assumed to affect one's ability to commit crimes. Siennick and Osgood (2008) identified socio-cultural factors as affecting crime. Not all juvenile offenders go on to conduct crimes as adults, and at least half of all youngsters who are deemed antisocial do not develop into delinquents during their adolescence (Loeber and LeBlanc, 1990). In light of this, it is critical to ascertain the steps a person must take in order to stop engaging in illegal activity. The ability to find successful treatments for those who are already involved in crime makes it crucial to comprehend the processes that lead to desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2001).

A major challenge in researching desistance is defining the term. There are several classifications in the literature, from crimes committed becoming less serious over time (Walker et al., 2013) to steady reductions in offending behaviour. A triggering event can set off a desire, and it need not result in a turning point (Laub and Sampson, 2001). According to earlier research, specific social control structures can act as catalysts for desistance. According to Piquero et al. (2002; Adeyemi et al. (2021); Aduralere, (2019), particular populations' trajectories can be altered by local life conditions like family, marriage, and military service as well as stronger social ties. Parental participation and school dedication were found to be associated with a person's decision to refrain from crime (Farrington, 2006). Furthermore, Labouvie (1996); Nikolaos and Alexandros (2009); Savolainen, (2009) discovered that social institutions including parenthood and marriage were the strongest predictors of reduced substance usage. This was most beneficial for people aged 28 to 31, implying that time is key (Piquero et al., 2002). It is entirely possible that distinct transformation processes are at work during adolescence and adulthood.

Bersani, Laub and Nieuwbeerta (2009); Kreager, et al. (2010); Zoutewelle-Terovan, et al. (2015) found that for men, marriage does promote the desistance from serious offending. They equally identified that having children in particular helps to deter criminality among men. Studies find a negative longitudinal association between marriage and crime. As the marital adjustment increases, so does the level of desistance from crime. Marriage, cohabiting relationships and non-cohabiting dating relationships were discovered to have low associations with criminal behaviours. Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) found that marriage was a potential reason for men to change towards the propensity to commit crime. They were of the view that having a marriage, along with some other factors could provide sufficient bonding and social control to desist from crime.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Criminality among the convicts in the study area may be due to family situations in their social environment. Promoters such as family members, friends, socio-economic situations etc. significantly influenced the participant's tendency to commit crime. Since crime is not confined to any single factor, it is difficult to extract a single factor that can influence the tendency of participants to commit crime. However, although many conditions were inevitably causing the crime, certain conditions are more favourable to crime than others. From this result, it is observed that some family influences increased the propensity of the respondents to commit crime.

This study has been able to provide several findings that are worthy of future research. Further studies could be carried out involving both males and females, and not just one. It could help in comparing criminality among the two genders, to determine the difference in influences, if any, as they affect crime perpetuation. In addition, future research could evaluate the peculiarities of criminality on the basis of gender specific theories such as feminism. The study also suggests that future studies could advance beyond the determinants of these current factors on criminality by attempting to study effects of criminality and conviction on non-deviant dependents and peers.

### **Limitations and strengths of the study**

Firstly, this study was conducted using only one facility from each of the six States of South-West Nigeria, which could raise the question of representativeness. Secondly, this study centered on age at point of arrest and marital status as the variables under family factors determining criminality. Thirdly, some participants, who had committed some rather grievous crimes, were not permitted to take part in the research work. The study is of significant contributions by creating a connectedness between the disciplines of Sociology, Criminology, Psychology and Social Work. The work was an improvement on earlier studies that have attempted to examine other family factors howbeit independently. Emphasis was placed on studies from other countries in terms of determining factors on criminality. This study therefore forms a foundation for such in Nigeria.

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