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**Establishing the Influence of Social Dynamics on Juvenile Criminality in Nakuru Sub-County, Kenya**

By

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**Abstract**

The present study was prompted by the observation that there was very high prevalence of juvenile criminality in Kenya. This study focused on establishing the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya. The county was chosen because not many studies about Juvenile Criminality have been done in the county. Also, recent reports by the police indicated an increase in crime among the juveniles in the county. The target population for the study was 144 that included 73 police officers from Bondeni police station, 35 juveniles drawn from children remand home, 35 parents/guardians of the said juveniles, and 1 chief from Bondeni location. The researcher selected a sample size of 102 respondents composed of 62 police officers, 32 juveniles, 7 parents/guardians, and 1 chief. The researcher used a questionnaire and an interview schedule to collect data from respondents and interviewees. The validity of this study was achieved through a thorough consultation with the supervisors and other specialist. Reliability was used to focus on the degree to which empirical indicators are stable and consistent. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to measure the reliability of the research instruments. An alpha coefficient value of 0.6 suggested the instrument is reliable. The study adopted the mixed research methodology and the concurrent triangulation design. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study found out that there was an important positive association between all the measures of social dynamics and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county. The study concluded that there was an influence of social dynamics and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya. The study recommends that the County government should make efforts to reduce drug abuse and improve on family structure in order to reduce juvenile criminality. There is therefore need for juvenile department to improve on their policies and expected performance in regard to juvenile criminality.

**Keywords:** Kenya, Nakuru, Social dynamics, crime, doliincapax, juvenile, juvenile criminality, urban

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### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Juvenile criminality involves participating in a criminal behavior by a juvenile (Siegel and Welsh, 2011). Juvenile criminality is determined by multiple social dynamics which are typically interrelated in complex ways (Lipsey & Derzon, 1999; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Globally, children aged 10-14 years were incapable of having knowledge of committing crime in any court hearing (to be doliincapax)- unable to commit crime (Elizabeth & Laurence, 2008). For instance, in England, it was the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a juvenile had committed an offence (Newburn, 2002). In our country Kenya, the study that was done in Kamiti Youth Corrective Training Centre (KYTC) showed that the peer pressure, mass media, drug abuse, school drop-out, child neglect, poor parenting skills, have been some of the reasons why juvenile criminality is rampant. (Omboto, 2013). In Kenya, there are eleven Juvenile Remand Homes, all of them under the Department of Children's Services. Nakuru County is one of the counties in Kenya that is exposed to the pressures of crime. Several clashes in the county led by the juveniles indicate how they involve themselves into criminal activities (Falcetto, 2012). According to regional crime trend analysis in the police annual crime report (2014), the regions which recorded increases in crime were Nyanza 22%, North Eastern 18%, Central 9% and Rift Valley 3%. According to Omboto (2013) the minors are not able to distinguish which factors will perpetuate their indulgence into criminal activities. They therefore get involved in criminal activities without their knowledge. According to Mooney and Young (2006), studies need to be carried out to identify the context and specific factors that promote juvenile involvement in crime. The parents shift their blame to the juveniles while the juveniles shift their blame to the errant government policies. In effort to correct the existing void, the study therefore sought to establish the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The issue of juveniles engaging in criminality is a global agenda. Juvenile criminality is considered as one of the problems and concerns of different countries. This phenomenon has a growing trend in our country as one of the youngest countries in the world. The various Crime prevention programmes have no enough resources to deal with such a scourge. Juvenile criminality has been proved by previous records showing those who are killed or those caught committing acts like mugging and murder including records of crime during 2007/2008 general election. In Kenya there had been high rate of juveniles engaged in criminality indicated by the high number of them arrested or sentenced due to criminal acts. The tough laws have failed to reduce crime effectively. There was no much that had been written down on social dynamics that cause juvenile criminality. Due to that, it had made it hard for police officers and other stakeholders that deal with juvenile criminality in coming up with appropriate strategies on

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dealing with such cases of criminality among the juveniles, hence, the need for this study. Therefore, the study was important as it establish the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya for the purpose of recommending appropriate actions to address the situation. Nakuru County is one of the urban areas in Kenya which was highly populated and was a metropolitan area with mixed ethnic backgrounds. Social dynamics were matters that affected lifestyle, such as religion; family or wealth, drug abuse, rural-urban migration, reference group, role and status, beliefs. The study therefore aimed to fill the identified gaps by establishing if there was an influence of social dynamics and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-County, Kenya.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed at establishing the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

To establish the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-County, Kenya.

### **1.5 Research Question**

What is the influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya?

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

It was expected that the findings of this study would add knowledge and literature provided for by other authors and academicians. The study findings would also benefit the stakeholders in the field of education, especially in policy and leadership in Nakuru sub-county. Secondly, the study established whether social dynamics have influence on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

First, the research may have helped approve a plan to train parents and teachers on how to detect juvenile criminality. This prevented maladaptive behavior and activities that led them to being criminals. Research may have been useful to the security firms in understanding the nature of crimes committed by juveniles. Information from the study may have helped the government in developing more effective strategies in dealing with criminal activities among the juveniles. The study may have helped the general public in understanding the increase in rate of criminal activities by the juveniles.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social Dynamics**

There are various scholars including Shuja (2008) who said that there is no single purpose why juveniles do involve themselves in criminality, but there are various reasons for so to happen. The causes and condition of juvenile crimes are found at the level of social structure including

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social groups and organization, social institutions, and interpersonal relation (World Youth Report, 2003). Bobonis and Finan (2009) showed the role played by peer groups in shaping individual behavior. Similar to neighborhood pressures, peer pressure from direct acquaintances can have an effect on how a child reacts to bad situations. If all of their friends are committing delinquent acts, the child may feel pressured to do the same to be accepted. The best way to avoid this type of situation is to be actively involved with who your child is hanging out with on a regular basis, for instance, know their close friends. This not only instills confidence in your child to do the right thing, it can help parents keep their children away from bad influences. Sometimes, the juveniles develop delinquent sub- culture due to cultural deprivation and status frustration that they go through Cohen (1955). They often adopt the delinquent tendencies due to peer pressure.

## **2.2 Influence of Social Dynamics on Juvenile Criminality**

There are scholars who suggest that crime is as a result of social product or dynamics such as broken families, peer pressure, urbanization, and rapid social change (Regoli & Hewitt, 1994). Steinberg (1987) stated that “the influence of peers and their acceptance of juvenile criminality are significant, and this relationship is magnified when a juvenile has little interaction with his parents”. McCord and colleagues (2001:80), stated that dynamics such as peer delinquent behavior, peer approval of delinquent behavior, attachment to peers, time spent with peers, and peer pressure for deviance have all been associated with juvenile criminality. Mental hypotheses accept that anti-social behavior is as a result of modeling, learning from the environment, childhood clashes and cognitive components. Ponder discoveries and writing checked on by Besemer (2007) appear that sedate utilize; tutoring and scholarly execution; family variables, particularly components related with child rearing behavior and styles are related to misconduct. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) conducted ameta-analysis of concurrent and longitudinal considers on the connection of family variables (counting parental inclusion with children, parental supervision, parental teach, parental dismissal of their children, child’s dismissal of the parent, parental culpability and animosity, conjugal relations, and parental nonappearance) to adolescent misconduct to conduct issues and concluded that a few components were more effective indicators of adolescent conduct issues and misconduct than others.

According to Lochner and Moretti’s (2004), it is important to understand the link that exist between the education and the causative agents and the direction of crime. In their study Lochner and Moretti identified the influence that education had on engaging in criminal activities by applying law changes in compulsory school leaving age (SLA) for a certain period of time to monitor the relationship between education and crime. Looking at individual-level information on detainment from the 2001 Census and related level board information on offenders’ rate from the Domestic Office offenders List Information (OID) within the period from 1984 to 2002, the study found out that schooling essentially diminishes detainment rates and property wrongdoing.

According to Social learning theory aggressive behavior is acquired by children when they see the parents exhibiting the same behavior and kids look at it as the right and acceptable way of attaining goals (Wright& Wright, 1994). Poor monitoring and close monitoring, erratic

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chastisement and corporeal castigation have been associated with delinquent and violent behavior at later stages of life (Farrington, 2002). Merton's anomie theory provides that, every society has goals and means to achieve those goals. Where goals are not reached its likely to result into stress and anomie, to this extent some may try other methods such as crime in reaching unachievable goals (Hirschi, 1969). Social disorganization is another theory in which the Chicago School of Sociology developed in 1900 (Jensen, 2003). The theory entails on the absence of organization among social institutions such as family, school, and church can also be a risk factor. It is the breakdown of relationships in institutions which traditionally encouraged cooperation among the people and the society at large. Apart from explaining the absence of organization in social institutions the theory also explains the occurrence of crimes due to the fact that the social disintegration means there will be absence of norms and rules may be broken. In relation to the rate of crime Faris (1955) extends the disorganization concept entailing that a crime is reflection of degree of disorganization of control mechanism in a society.

### **3.0 Research Methodology and Design**

In achieving the objective of the study, the researcher adopted the mixed approach of research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Mixed method approach is an aspect of both quantitative and qualitative procedures (Creswell, 2003). This method emanates from the conviction that neither quantitative nor qualitative approach is self- sufficient. Concurrent-triangulation design was applied; it is a mixed method strategy whereby the researcher converged quantitative and qualitative quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2003). The design explored in-depth and holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in data collection by use of questionnaires, and interview schedule. The two approaches were used so that the overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research as stated by Creswell & Clark (2007). Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and reports presented using tables. Inferential statistics was analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient and presented in tables. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form and quotations.

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#### 4.0 Research Findings and Discussions

##### 4.1 Descriptive data analysis

**Table 1: Extent to which social dynamics have influenced juvenile criminality (Police officers)**

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Peer influence motivates young people to criminality.	62	2.56	.575
Many communities and parents lack awareness on the importance of educating young ones on the consequences of drug abuse and criminality	62	2.10	.631
High rates of urban migration are an influential attribute to juvenile criminality	62	2.16	.628
Parents fail to support the juveniles on what programs they are supposed to watch on media	62	2.11	.784
Absence of a smooth transition in the family structure makes juveniles commit crime leading to incarceration	62	2.36	.680
Lack of supervision and school drop-out has also influenced juvenile criminality	62	2.38	.565
<b>Overall Mean score</b>		2.28	

Means: 0 – 1.5 = **SD**, 1.6 – 3.1 = **D**, 3.2 – 4.7 = **A**, Above 4.7 = **SA**

Key: **SD** =Strongly Disagree, **D** =Disagree, **N** = Neutral, **A** = Agree, **SA** =Strongly Agree

Source: Field Data, (2019)

The study results showed that the overall mean score of influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was 2.28. The study findings in relation to peer influence in motivating the juveniles to criminality indicated that there was a mean of 2.56 and SD of 0.575. Drug abuse on the other hand could not make juveniles commit crime when parents lack awareness on the importance of educating their juveniles on the consequences of drug abuse. This was revealed by a mean of 2.10 and SD of 0.631. On high rates of urban migration, a mean of 2.16 and SD of 0.628 were obtained. On the issue of parents failing to support the juveniles on what programs they are supposed to watch on media, a mean of 2.11 and SD of 0.784 were obtained. In regard to the absence of a smooth transition in the family structure that can make juveniles commit crime hence incarceration, a mean of 2.36 and SD of 0.680 were obtained. In regard to lack of close supervision and school drop-out and how it can influence juvenile to engage themselves in crime, a mean of 2.38 and SD of 0.565 were obtained. The above findings concurred with and relate to various observations in the literature like those of Steinberg, (1987) who noted that at a given percentage the influence of peers and their acceptance of criminal behavior are significant and the relationship is magnified when juveniles have no time with their parents.

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#### 4.2 Inferential statistical analysis

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Social Dynamics and Juvenile Criminality (Police officers)**

	Juvenile Criminality	Peer influence	Drug abuse	Family structure	Urban migration	School drop-out	Media
Juvenile Criminality	1						
Peer influence	.423*	1					
Drug abuse	.634*	.731*	1				
Family structure	.632**	.542*	.496*	1			
Urban migration	.418*	.621*	.563*	.632*	1		
School drop-out	.523*	.673*	.624*	.682*	.562*	1	
Media	.456*	.572*	.425*	.592*	.458*	.564*	1

Source: Field Data, (2019)

The study outcome revealed that, the correlation between all the indicators of social dynamics and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was statistically significant. Drug abuse and family structure relationship with juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was the strongest and statistically significant ( $r = .634, p < .05$ ) and ( $r = .632, p < .01$ ) respectively. The study outcomes show a positive correlation between school drop-out and media relationship with juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was the strong and statistically significant ( $r = .523, p < .05$ ) and ( $r = .456, p < .05$ ) respectively. There was also statistically positive association between peer influence and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county ( $r = .423, p < .05$ ) while urban migration and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county were positive and significant correlated ( $r = .418, p < .05$ ).

The study results go hand in hand with study by Goldstein, et al (1993) which found out that majority of juvenile remand homes were open to more diversity through social dynamic practices that had facilitated security of entire juvenile criminals. A (2001) survey by Miami correctional facility found out that more than 40% of juvenile criminals had social related problems therefore they resorted to crime as a compensatory behavior.

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### **4.3 Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data**

The study collected qualitative data from parents/guardians from the selected juvenile remand home and a chief. The study respondents revealed that there was influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality with majority of guardians supporting this view. For instance, a chief reported (Chief A), “Academic exposure influenced decision making.” (Chief A). This meant that when a person is exposed to academics, then the level of how he/she makes decision must be different. An individual of low academics will definitely make decision of engaging in criminality, more so a juvenile.

Parent 3 said that, “don’t care parents/guardians who not exercise control over the juveniles leave them to fall victims of crimes for example, drug abuse.” This had a meaning that parents who don’t practice close supervision to their juveniles and may take drugs at long last will involve themselves in criminality. This also means that parents when they take close monitoring of their children, they will be able to guide them and advise on the best way forward.

Another guardian 6 stated, “Social dynamic of juvenile criminal had not yielded tremendous results on higher learning juvenile remand homes” (Guardian 6). This meant that social dynamics had no any impact in juvenile remand homes.

Nevertheless, the respondents revealed that the relationship had influenced decision makings in most of juvenile. The Chief A also stated that, “Most of the juveniles engage in criminality because they have dropped-out of school and have nothing to do in return apart from getting involved in crime because they are idle”. This meant that many juveniles involve themselves in crime as a result of school drop-out. When juveniles are not schooling, they will not think of anything positive rather than engaging in crime.

Parent 1 said that “Through poor parenting, some parents give too much of pocket money and gifts to their children, and they end up doing crime.” This had an implication that when a parent gives more money to a juvenile, he ends up engaging in criminal acts.

Other guardian 5 stated that “Break-up families where children are raised by single parents has contributed to them doing crime.” This meant that juveniles raised by single parents are most likely to engage in crime because of lack of close supervision.

Chief A said that, social dynamics especially peer pressure, drug abuse and poor family upbringing have led children to involve themselves in evil acts.”

The quality of juvenile criminality had been highly affected in the juvenile remand homes. Most of parents/guardians implied that social dynamics had influenced juvenile criminality relationship between provider’s satisfaction and juvenile criminality.

### **5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study outcome revealed that the correlation between all the indicators of social dynamics and juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was statistically significant. Drug abuse and family structure relationship with juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was the strongest and statistically significant. Work independence was on a restrained level and that the out sourced provider’s loyalty to the correctional facility was also on an uncertain level. Long term continuity relationship was also on a moderate level. The study concluded that there was an influence of social dynamics on juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county, Kenya.

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### **5.1 Recommendations for Practice**

- Drug abuse and family structure relationship with juvenile criminality in Nakuru sub-county was found to have the strongest and statistically significant. The study therefore recommends that the County government should make efforts to reduce drug abuse and improve on family structure.

### **5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies**

The study recommended that the following further areas of study be undertaken;

- The study concentrated on Nakuru sub-county therefore, the generalization of results to other counties needs to be done with caution. The study recommends a similar study to be done in other Counties.
- This study did suggest that further studies can be done on the same sub-County but introducing the elements of moderating variables.

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