



Family Attitude and Social Reintegration of Adolescent Offenders in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract: The involvement of adolescents in delinquency is a concern to parents, policy makers and researchers, including social workers. Although there are efforts to reintegrate such adolescents, the role of the family, which is the bedrock of the society remains limited in the process. This study sought to examine the role of family attitude in the social reintegration of adolescent offenders in Kinshasa city. It was grounded on strain theory as proposed by Merton. Mixed methods research focusing on explanatory sequential design was adopted to collect data from a sample of 345 individuals including 330 adolescents and 15 key informants. The study participants were selected from three localities, Limete, Matete and Kisenso, using stratified sampling technique and purposive sampling. Questionnaires, FGDs, and interviews were used in the collection of data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS while thematic content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The study found a positive but moderate correlation ($r=0.441$) between family attitude and social reintegration of adolescent offenders. In addition, the ANOVA test revealed that, family attitude $F = 3.628$, ($p= 0.000$) has statistically significant influence on social reintegration of adolescent offenders. This is consistent with adolescents' perceptions which show that 77.3% of respondents indicated moderate levels of family acceptance attitude. This could explain the recidivism rate of 57.3% among former adolescent offenders in Kinshasa city. Conclusively, poor family attitude characterized by limited attention, feelings among adolescents of not being loved, negatively influence the re-integration process. On the contrary, the acceptance of adolescent offenders by family members paves the way for a successful social reintegration. The study recommends policy reforms regarding the institutionalization of family social work practice in the criminal justice system as well as in family settings in order to improve the care of adolescents faced with anti-behaviour.

Key words: *Conflict, Family environment, social reintegration, family support, family attitude, parenting style.*

1.1 Study background

The phenomenon of adolescents in conflict with the law is a concern to parents, policy makers and researchers, including social workers. Globally, it is estimated that there are about 1.2 billion

adolescents in the world (WHO, 2018). Defined as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, adolescence is characterised by biological and psychological changes for any human being between the age of 10 and 19 years (Bell, 2016; WHO, 2023). The global situation is not different from the African region where a high number of adolescents are involved in criminal activities, yet research on the role of family to address juvenile delinquency issue remains scant. In South Africa for instance, at least 4,000 children were detained by correctional institutions between 2017-2018 because of their alleged involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime against individuals and properties (Saba, 2019). Muchiri and Santos (2018) found out that family related issues account for the behaviour of adolescents involved in behaviour disorder such as substance abuse. The authors argue that any reintegration related interventions should address these risk factors related to family management. Yet, in South Africa, the Government spent millions of dollars to fund rehabilitation centers which house children in conflict with the law (Saba, 2019), separated from their families. This is likely to affect the reintegration of child offenders, which is the purpose of any child justice system (Gwatimba et al., 2018). Discussing recidivism in Ethiopia, Tegeng & Abadi (2018) found inadequate parental warmth and care, lack of acceptance to be among contributing factors to recidivism for young people. In Nigeria, 75 % of young offenders interviewed in Benin State indicated that inadequate parental guidance influence their behaviour, yet, the detention of youth in correctional facilities is used as first resort by the justice system in the country (Atitola et al. (2018).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the rampant insecurity in Kinshasa city is often attributed to youth, including adolescents operating in groups referred as “Kuluna” (Lagrange & Vercoulon, 2021). The new Congolese law provides that children below 14 years should not be held criminally responsible (Child Protection Law, 2009; Bamene & Lukoji, 2018). Children in conflict with the law (14 years and beyond) should be presented to children’s judges, who will take either of the following measures, informed by social workers’ assessment: (1) caution and return the child to parents or care givers; (2) hand-over the child to a family or a private social institution until the child is 18 years old; (3) hand-over the child to a social public institution until the child reaches 18 years of age; (4) hand-over the child to a medical center with an education programme; (5) any child who commits an offence punishable by 5 years imprisonment will be kept in public penal institution for education purposes until they reach 18 years (Child Protection Law, 2009). The analysis of this Act suggests that DRC laws on children are protective as the purpose is that the child re-integrates the family and the community. It also suggests lenient measures against adolescents in conflict with the law, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by DRC, and which provides that imprisonment is a measure of last resort for anyone under 18 years (Bamene & Lukoji, 2018).

However, as it is the case in other countries mentioned in this study, the response of law enforcement institutions to adolescent offenders is guided by a repressive approach (Lagrange and Vircoulon, 2021). This is contrary to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulate that “children in conflict with the law should be treated in a manner that recognises their young age, lack of full maturity, lesser culpability, and human dignity; and reintegrate each child into society” (UNCRC, 1989) should be a priority for any justice system. The UN approach to children in conflict with the law is consistent with the views of Bartollas et al. (2019) who highlight the need to pay attention to the family and social environments in which delinquency either flourishes or is discouraged.

Despite the government of DRC’ stipulation on curbing juvenile delinquency, the approach in dealing with the kuluna issue is inadequate because it does not comprehensively address the problem.

This could be the reason as to why the kuluna issue is still rampant in Kinshasa and other cities such as Lubumbashi, Kikwit, Matadi, and Mbandaka (Lagrange and Vircoulon, 2021). It is also evident that young offenders who spend most of their critical development years in prison miss out on their education, skills training, and opportunity to socialise as children. Unless they receive love and help from families to facilitate their social reintegration, the likelihood of them recidivating is high (UNODC, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The family attitude towards adolescent offenders is important in their reintegration process. Globally it is estimated that 410, 000 adolescents were on remand in 2020 contrary to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which provides that detention of children should be a measure of last resort (Taneva, 2019; Penal Reform International, 2020). Throughout the world, detention of adolescents seems to be a first resort, and interventions to rehabilitate and reintegrate adolescent offenders often take place in prison facilities or government-run educational institutions (Santhosh and Mathew, 2021). The situation is not any different in DRC where the role of family environment, and the attitude is family members towards adolescents has been left out in most studies on adolescent offenders (Moleka, 2021; Makelele, 2018). Yet, Proper family attitudes have the potential to facilitate the social reintegration of adolescents involved in delinquency (UNODC, 2018). This study analyses family attitude and its role in the social reintegration of adolescent offenders to fill this research gap, and inform the policy makers as well as practitioners involved in social work and justice for children issues.

1.3 Study Objective

This study was guided by the following study objective: to investigate the influence of family attitudes on the social reintegration of adolescent offenders in Kinshasa city, DRC.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of family, criminal justice social work in ensuring effective social reintegration of adolescents. This study on family environment and social reintegration of adolescents also contributes to the extension of knowledge on the interplay between family and community social work practice, and the protection, and reintegration of children in conflict with the law in Kinshasa City. This study's findings will be significantly important for parents, social workers, policymakers, police and justice actors working to address the question of adolescent offenders, and their social reintegration process.

1.5 Scope and delimitations of the study

This research on family attitude and social reintegration of adolescent offenders was conducted in Kinshasa city as the DRC Capital increasingly experience criminal cases involving young people, including adolescents. The study was limited to adolescent offenders released to families from penal institutions (detention centers, police stations or prisons) for the following reasons. The first reason is access to respondents as it would have been challenging for adolescents to freely participate in the research activities when they are still detained or imprisoned by law enforcement institutions. The second reason is that the family environment is the main focus of this study; it is therefore crucial to focus the research attention on adolescents who have returned to the community and who are under the care of parents or relatives.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The researcher was faced with the following limitations during the study. Accessing research participants was a challenge considering that the study deals with a sensitive subject, the involvement of adolescents in various offenses. This was mitigated by working closely with the police and few child protection NGOs to ex-offenders in the community. In addition, finding a location where ex-adolescent offenders feel safe to participate in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews was another limitation of this study. This was mitigated by identifying and working with Non-Government and faith-based organisations who provide care to children in conflict with the law, and who availed one of their facilities for the researcher to conduct FGDs without exposing participants to further harm from their former gang members.

1.7 The Conceptual framework

Independent Variable

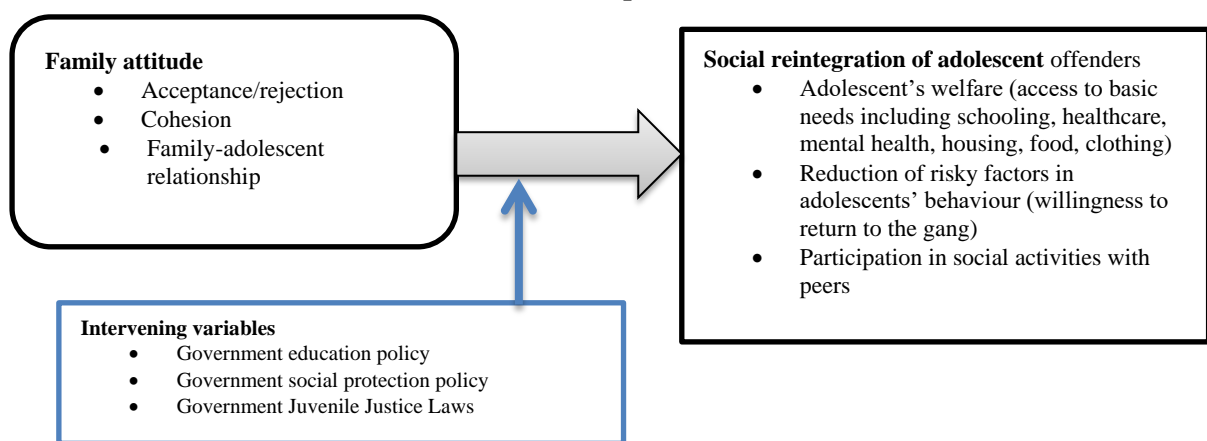


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Own conceptualization, 2021

Family attitude was measured through adolescent's perceptions of the family acceptance or rejection and family-adolescent relationship. The respondents were presented with seven statements they scored using Likert-like scales varying from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1.8 Literature review

1.8.1 Theoretical review

Strain theory was proposed by Robert Merton (1957). In his writings, Merton was building on the works of Durkheim's anomie theory. According to Durkheim (1897), people who feel integrated into the society are more likely to cope and conform with its norms. However, those who do not feel integrated, are more likely to resort to deviant acts or suicide. The lives of such individuals or groups are characterised by anomie, a Greek word which means, "without law". He argues that modern society is characterised by confusion, individualism, egoism, and isolation of the individuals from the wider group and, are among the causes of suicide or criminal behaviour. In this study, Durkheim's

main explanation of deviant behaviour in form of suicide is found in the individual's ability to integrate or to manage regulations.

Building on Durkheim's perspective of deviant behaviour, Merton's strain theory provides an explanation on the mismatch between the society expectations and inequality of means available to individuals to meet these expectations, most of which are around prosperity and economic success. Groups which are marginalised are likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Merton has the tribute of analysing strain, and the subsequent criminal behaviour from a marginalisation and economic exclusion perspective. Crime is understood in this context as the way some individuals choose to adapt to the demanding society goals, using creative but illegal means. This explanation of drivers of criminal behaviour is very relevant to the understanding of the social and economic circumstances leading some adolescents to engaged in gang activities, which expose them to police repression. The strain theory assumes that adolescents for instance who are frustrated and cannot achieve their material goals by legitimate means are more likely than others to engage in crime (Gullion, 2006; Thorpe et al., 2015). The individuals caught up in poverty and unemployment are unable to meet these social expectations by legitimate means because of some barriers such as social class. Based on his analysis, Merton divided people in the society in five categories according to their relationship to culturally accepted goals and the means of achieving them. These categories also determine the way in which individuals adapt to the societal goals and the set means to realise them. The categories include; conformists, ritualists, innovators, retreatists and rebels. Conformists accept the society goals and aspire to achieve them through lawful means such as education and employment (Bartollas and Schmallegger, 2018).

The adolescents who attend schools for instance as per the society expectations are also part of this category. Ritualists accept socially demanding and hard to reach goals, with the hope to achieve goals relying on means accepted by the society. This category could include the majority of society members subjected to economic marginalization, but content with minimum means to survive. Innovators, often seen as potential criminals, are those who believe in the society goals of materials and financial success, but adjust to the situation by resorting to less legitimate and illegal means to achieve their objectives (Bartollas and Schmallegger, 2018).

Challenged by their own situation, individuals who fall in this category are either willing or unable to achieve society means by legitimate means, they then innovate by choosing new methods and ways of succeeding in life. These individuals are likely to resort to crimes such as drug dealing, theft, organized crime (Siegel, 2010). The examples of such individuals who feel disadvantaged to succeed through legal means could include adolescents from marginalized groups in society, school-drop out and children without shelters living in and from the streets. Retreatists are society's dropouts – they not only reject the society goals, but also the means of achieving them. Adolescents growing up in these circumstances where they feel rejected, and have limited opportunities to advance education, enter into employment and earn a living, are likely to engage in other criminal activities beyond drug. Finally, rebels are similar to retreatists, but these are individuals who adapt to the anomie by creating alternative goals and means for success, and seek to advance a counterculture in the society (Thorpe et al., 2015). These are individuals who aim to change the society, by rejecting the existing structures, overthrowing *statu quo*, and installing what responds to their own aspirations. This adaptation can go from simple peaceful protests to more violent means such as formation of radical groups, armed rebellion against established state institutions, as well as terrorism.

Merton's sociological explanation fails to explain why, within marginalized groups where individuals face the same level of economic hardship, some engage in criminal acts, but others don't. The theory also associates crime to economic marginalization, and does not explain crimes committed by individuals from middle and upper class in the society. In agreement with this view is Agnew (1985) who points out that despite economic prosperity over the years, crime remains a reality in the society. While building on Merton's strain concept, Agnew (Perk et al., 2018; Brezina, 2017) develops a general strain theory and elaborates on three types of strain. The first type of strain resulting from the failure to achieve society goals in society. This is consistent with the classic strain theory. The second type of strain is when individuals perceive themselves as subjected to negative treatment such as abuse, unemployment, lack of shelter, bullying by others, discriminations etc. And the third strain is when individuals feel that they have lost something valuable such as family love, romantic relationships, etc. These strains lead to frustrations and anger; and depending on their intensity and duration, they put individuals under pressure to respond, and delinquency or crime in general is often the response to such strains (Brezina, 2017).

The strain theory, however relevant, falls short of explaining how such individuals or adolescents can move from one category to another, and they can readjust to be socially re-integrated back into the family. This study is concerned with investigating family attitude through the strain theory lenses, and its influence on the social reintegration of adolescent offenders.

1.8.2 Empirical review: Family attitude and social reintegration of adolescents

Family attitude is one of the factors predicting child behaviour and weighs heavily on an adolescent's ability to cope with problems they encounter (Mwangangi, 2019). Positive attitude reflected through acceptance and love predict adolescent's re-adjustment in society and is likely to reduce adolescent's tendency to engage in risky behaviour (Savitha & Srimathi, 2016). In agreement with this view are Sharma et al. (2015), who, found out that when children grow up in a conducive family environment, they are less likely to face behavioural problems such as violence in schools, alcohol and substance abuse, involvement in crime, mental distress, and lack of confidence.

Research continue to unfold that when families accept to welcome back adolescents separated from them, the latter expect emotional support and material assistance. For instance, Dutta (2018), found a positive correlation between social support network, and perception of effective social reintegration among girls who were leaving residential care. Further, young girls' expectations to make friends and the feeling of being socially integrated among peers was an equally important element for their preparedness in terms of social reintegration (Dutta (2018).

However, negative parental attitude characterised by lack of affection, parental indifference and rejection is likely to lead adolescents to behaviour challenge including delinquency, street life and exposure to crime (Mwangangi (2019). In addition to family members, peers are an important influential actor on adolescents' behaviour because adolescents value inter-personal relations and rely on friends for recognition, value, sense of self-esteem, information and love (Syakarofath et al., 2021). In this context, when adolescents experience rejection by their peers, they are likely to become anxious, isolated and depressed (Syakarofath et al. 2021). Rejection of adolescents make them feel insecure, irrespective of whether this occurs in a family set up or in a family environment (Mwangangi, 2019).

While the above studies point out to the importance of positive attitude from families and peers for the mental stability and functioning of adolescents, the authors failed to articulate how family acceptance can be cultivated in particular when adolescents have faced adversities such as arrests, detention and eventual imprisonment for having committed an offence. There is no clarity on the role actors can play to restore adolescents' confidence in their parents, peers and other family members, and vice-versa.

In another study, Roostin (2018) underlines the role of relationships within families for the holistic development of a child in all stages of life. This is crucial for the child's socialisation as such relationship affect the child's attitudes and behaviour. Roostin argues that families must care, protect and support their children during the socialization process, so that they control themselves, and develop emotionally, spiritually and materially. Roostin notes that family and other bonds have the potential to support the adolescents to manage the transition from a dysfunctional life as an offender to a productive one in the society. While Roostin views the role of family relationship throughout the child's life cycle, Ergentin et al. (2015) limit the relationship building at the reintegration stage, as a post treatment necessity for adolescents who went through deviant behaviours, including drug addiction. However, Roostin's research leaves some questions unanswered, in particular regarding the steps to be taken by the family to restore the harm that the adolescents may have committed against members of the community. It failed to integrate restorative justice aspect which is crucial in repairing relations between perpetrators and victims of a criminal act (Bolitho & Freeman, 2016). This aspect is beyond the scope of this study.

There are key principles which guide the preparedness for the return of a child to the family after any type of separation. These include do no harm, the best interest of the child, preserving family life, building on community-based support, confidentiality, non-discrimination, child participation and coordination between agencies (Save the Children, 2017).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Child Protection Law (2009) recognizes the role of parents in providing material and emotional needs, as well as love to children under their care. According to the Act, the welfare of the child is the primary responsibility of parents. However, despite the above mentioned legal provisions, the reality is that adolescents in conflict the law in DRC, referred to a *Kuluna*, are not always accepted by family and community members, making their social reintegration challenging. For example, Lagrange & Vircoulon (2021) found out that local population would resort to mob violence against adolescent offenders as a sign of frustration for what they considered to be limited or ineffective Government efforts to curb insecurity in Kinshasa city. The fear for mob violence may force suspected adolescent offenders into hiding, no matter the outcome of their judiciary processes. Makelele (2018) also provides empirical evidence to general public views in Kinshasa city on *Kuluna*. The author found out that the majority of community members perceive *Kuluna* as very young bandits, openly attacking civilians at night and in daylight. In this context, it is critical to analyse the process that family workers would take to promote positive attitude (acceptance) of family and community members towards the adolescent who is viewed as having committed harm to certain individuals in the community. This is a gap in existing research discussing family attitude as a determinant of social reintegration of adolescent.

Some scholars have taken a Christian perspective to highlight the importance of family acceptance in preventing juvenile delinquency. Moleka (2021) notes that some families accept members of the *Kuluna* gangs back to the community as they consider them as their children, despite

what they may have done. Based on this view, the author underlines the importance of family in supporting the adolescents to adjust and become functional again, through faith and family-based therapy. Another attempt to bring in family discourse in the discussion on youth offenders was made by Mpiana cited by Makelele (2018). The author found out that the family is a critical foundation for the prevention and response to the *Kuluna*. He concluded that it is crucial to restore the family as a basic unit of the society, in order to care for and protect children who are socially dysfunctional. While the religious actors are among crucial sub-systems with a potential to prepare the reconciliation between family members, the above mentioned authors failed to point out the complementarity between religious actors and others such as family social workers, teachers, counsellors in the attempt to address the question of family attitude towards adolescent offenders.

Beyond the protection function, the family environment also affects learning outcomes for adolescents as evidenced by research carried by Motamedi (2020). The author observed that maintaining a positive relationship among family members, and in particular between family members and those at the adolescence stage, creates a harmonious learning environment. The same argues that positive relationships between adolescents and other family members are likely to increase adolescents' emotional, social and academic performance. The gap in Modamedi's research is the school attitude towards the adolescent. While the above studies are relevant to the understanding of family attitude as a determinant of social reintegration of adolescent offenders, the authors left some of the questions unanswered. The gaps identified throughout the literature have been addressed in this study.

1.9 Methods

The research utilised mixed methods, in particular the explanatory sequential design, where quantitative data collected were complemented by qualitative data in order to get an-in-depth understanding and appreciation of issue, as well as the need to take into the voices of participants in the study (Creswell, 2014).

Study and target population, and sample

The city of Kinshasa, which is the capital of DRC, has a population estimated around 14.3 million inhabitants, living in the space of 9,965 square kilometres (Balana, Jarobshkin, Konou at al., 2021; Bayebila et al., 2021). The city is also known for its musical and social events, some of which is used for the reintegration of young people formerly involved in drug, street life, and criminal activities (Parion, 2020). Based on national police statistics, Kinshasa accounts for a total of 5000 adolescent offenders recorded by the police in the year 2021 (CNP, 2022, n.p). And the three areas of Kinshasa with the highest (51%) cases of adolescent offenders were purposively selected to identify participants to the research. The sample of 370 for quantitative data collection was obtained based on the population of 5,000 adolescents, using Taro Yamane 's formula of (1967) which is best suited for categorical variables (Israel, 2003; Adam, 2020). Respondents were approached to express their interest in participating in focus group discussions (FGDs). In addition, the researcher planned to interview 20 key informants to gather the views of parents and professionals on the role of family in the social reintegration of adolescent offenders. Non-probability sampling technique, such as snowball was used to identify the research participants. To collect data on family attitude, the researcher used and adapted the Family Support Scale (FSS) tool developed by Uddin and Bhuiyan (2019) and which has an internal consistency reliability of 0.94 (Conbach's Alpha Coefficient). The adapted version had

a Conbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.804, and contains seven items scored on Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1.10 Study findings

Response rate

As a result, the researcher reached 330 adolescents (male, 74.2 % and female, 25.8%) who responded to the questionnaire. Among them, 12 adolescents (six girls and six boys) accepted to participate in the in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In addition, using the purposive sampling, the researcher identified and reached 15 key informants such as adolescents' parents, staff working in international organisations with child protection mandate, children's judges, police officers from the special protection brigade; social workers, counsellors, teachers (from primary and secondary schools), and representatives from agencies dealing with overall social welfare of children during the data collection in September/October 2022. The number of respondents and participants reached (n=345) represents a response of 84%. The quantitative data presented in this chapter was entered and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to summarize general trends in quantitative data obtained. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis, and results were presented in narrative form.

Main findings

The study sought to examine how family attitude towards adolescent offenders influences their social reintegration. In this study, social reintegration is the long-term readjustment of adolescents to their families and community after being involved in anti-social behavior; and family attitude in terms of acceptance or rejection is key to this process as it can facilitate or hinder the effects of programs and services aiming at supporting adolescents to settle in their family environment (DCS, 2021). The respondents' perceptions of family attitude were grouped into three levels: low = for scores ranging from 0 to 20; moderate for 21 to 30; and high for 31 and above. The results are shown on table 1 below:

Table 1: *Levels of perceived family attitude*

Levels of perceived family attitude	Frequency	Percent
Low	43	13.0
Moderate	255	77.3
High	32	9.7
Total	330	100.0

Source: *Field data, 2023*

The data in table 1 shows levels of family attitude (love, acceptance or rejection) as perceived by adolescent offenders when they returned home. Low levels of family attitude mean that adolescent offenders perceive themselves as rejected by family members. This is the case for 13% of the respondents. Moderate levels of family attitude mean that adolescent offenders do not feel strongly accepted or rejected by family members. This mixed feeling is expressed by the majority (77.3%) of adolescent offenders. And high levels mean perception of greater acceptance of adolescent offenders by family members; this category represents 9.7% of the respondents. The results suggest that the majority of adolescent offenders perceive negative attitude from family members. This is likely to have implications on their journey towards social integration in the family and community. The result is in agreement with Karic (2021) who found that juvenile offenders are considered by a large number of society members including parents as individuals who committed anti-social behaviour, and should account for their acts, therefore they are unable to reform. Such attitude is likely to encourage recidivism among adolescent offenders.

The table 2 below presents detailed results of respondents' perceptions of family attitude towards adolescents per the statement they were asked to score.

Table 2: Adolescents perception of family attitude

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1.	My family loves me	53 (16.1%)	90 (27.3%)	168 (50.9%)	19 (5.7%)	330 (100%)
2.	I get respect from my family	69 (20.9%)	148 (44.8%)	96 (29.1%)	17 (5.2%)	330 (100%)
3.	My family shares important decisions with me	137 (42%)	136 (41%)	46 (14%)	11 (3%)	330 (100%)
4.	My family understands my personal desires	87 (26.4%)	89 (27.0%)	134 (40.6%)	20 (6.1%)	330 (100%)
5.	My family listens to my problems	101 (30.6%)	119 (36%)	89 (27%)	21 (6.4%)	330 (100%)
6.	My family treats me as an important person	89 (27.0%)	145 (43.9%)	79 (23.9%)	17 (5.2%)	330 (100%)
7.	My family helps me with daily activities	81 (25.0%)	119 (36.0%)	113 (34.0%)	17 (5.0%)	330 (100%)

Source: Field data, 2023

Table 2 above indicates adolescents' perceptions of family attitude which led to mixed reactions. For example, on the aspect of adolescents being loved by their families, findings revealed that 16.1% (n=53) of adolescents strongly disagreed being loved by their families, 27.3% (n=90) disagreed with this view and majority, 50.9% (n=168) agreed that their family loved them with a smaller percentage 5.7% (n=19) strongly agreeing with the same. This could imply that the majority of adolescents are loved by their families as supported by over half (50.9%) of the respondents. During an interview, one of the key informant persons had the following to say:

“Emotional challenges are push factors for children to go or return to the street where they are exposed to criminal acts: Lack of love in families make children hide in the streets where they tend to find some love from their friends. Unfortunately, the street is a jungle where the fittest emerge and the weakest are crashed”. (P4, 2023).

The above statement provides evidence of love as an important driver of bonds between adolescents and family members. It also suggests that any indication of lack of affection and love could constitute a strain for adolescents, who exit the family by looking for peers to form a community on their own.

Similarly, on whether adolescents get respect from their families, 20.9% (n=69) of the respondents strongly disagreed being respected, 44.8% (n=148) disagreed with this view while 29.1% (n=96) agreeing and 5.2% (n=17) strongly agreeing that their families respected them. This may imply that majority of adolescent offenders do not feel respected by their family members as evidenced by the responses.

Further to this, in one of the interviews, the following was narrated:

“Some children are accused of witchcraft and considered as a curse for their parents or relatives’ misfortune. They are taken to churches where often pastors will confirm that the child is the cause of the family’s misfortune. The child will then be flopped in public by the pastor in order to chase evil spirits. Such children often will leave the house to run away from physical and psychological abuse by parents or family members. When they are socialized with new habits dictated by street life, drugs, sex, theft, gang violence, they develop dependency, and social reintegration will hardly happen” (P5, 2023).

The street is a critical socialization agent for adolescents who leave homes. This suggests that the social reintegration programmes supporting adolescents need to help them unlearn anti-social behaviour associated with street life. This is on the assumption that families and churches are violence free settings for adolescents. On sharing important decisions, 42% (n=137) of adolescents strongly disagreed with view, 41% (136) disagreed with the same view with 14% (n=46) and 3% (11) agreeing and strongly agreeing respectively. This could imply that family members of adolescents who get in conflict with the law rarely share important decisions with their children as supported by 83% of the respondents. On the aspect related to the family’s understanding of adolescents’ personal desires, 26.4% (87) strongly disagreed with this view, 27.0% (89) disagreed with the view, with 40.6% (134) and 6.1% (20) agreeing and strongly agreeing respectively with the same view.

Further, of the 330 respondents interviewed on whether family members listened to their problems, 30.6% (101) strongly disagreed and 36% (119) disagreeing with this view. Similarly, 27% (89) and 21% (6.4) agreed and strongly agreed with the same assertion. Based on these findings it may be worthwhile concluding that the majority of adolescents who get in conflict with the law hardly get listened too. On whether the adolescents who get in conflict with the law are treated as an important person by his or her family, findings showed that 27.0% (89) and 43.9% (145) strongly disagreed and disagreed with the assertion while only 23.9% (79) and 5.2 % (17) agreeing and strongly agreeing with the same assertion. It can thus be deduced from the findings that an adolescent who gets in conflict with the law is rarely treated as an important person by family members as supported by over half of the respondents (70%). In a follow-up FGD, P6 had the following to say:

“When I returned home after being arrested and detained by the police, my parents shouted at me; they used a rope to tie my body and left me in a room where I spent the night before being freed the following day. I then felt out of place, and often I would prefer to return to my friends where I feel accepted” (P6, 2023).

The above sentence is an evidence of how the treatment of adolescents at home is paramount to their reintegration process in a family set up. It also exemplifies how such rejection attitude has the potential to lead adolescents to recidivate.

A similar experience was shared by P7 who stated the following:

“When I returned home after being imprisoned, my family members shouted in the house: the thief is back; be careful with your valuable items; hide them before he steals them. When I hear that I am not welcomed home; I feel rejected; in fact, I feel humiliated; why should I stay home?” (P7, 2023)

The negative family attitude towards returning adolescents is likely to be associated with failed social reintegration as noted by P6 and P7 during the FGD.

On whether the family helps the adolescent who get in conflict with the law with daily activities, respondents 25.0% (81) strongly disagreed and 36.0 % (119) disagreed with 34.0% (113) and 5.0% (17) agreeing and strongly agreeing with the same view. This may indicate that once an adolescent gets in conflict with the law rarely receive help from family members for daily activities as evidenced by 61.0% who strongly disagreed and disagreed with this assertion. The findings from participants in the FGDs revealed the quest for attention, love, positive treatment, acceptance of adolescent offenders by parents. For example, P8, noted *“ I wish to be welcomed with affection and love when I am at home; but I do not always get such love”* (P8). This also means that adolescent offenders are experiencing strained relationship with family members. Conclusively, adolescents who gets in conflict with the law and experience positive attitude from the family (loved, listened to, respected, treated as important person, and helped with the daily activities) are likely to feel socially reintegrated. This view is in tandem with Mwangangi (2019) who found a positive correlation between positive family attitude and healthy adolescent development. He argues that an attitude of love and positive emotions prevent delinquency as it leads adolescents to conform to societal norms. He also found that rejection of children and negative attitude towards them are likely to create a favorable environment to delinquency. This is evident from the findings of this study which revealed that adolescents who were reintegrated back to the family feel rejected. The majority of them do not feel understood, respected, or considered as important persons. They reported not being supported in their daily activities, and above all they don't feel loved. This could explain recidivism as opposed to those who were welcomed back and accepted by the family members.

Correlation analysis

The study was focused on analyzing the relationships between family attitude and social reintegration of adolescents offenders. Table 3 provides the results of correlation analysis of these variables.

Table 3: *Correlation matrix between family attitude and adolescent offenders' social reintegration*

		Family Attitude Scores7	Adolescents social reintegration
Family Attitude Scores7	Pearson Correlation	1	.441
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	330	330
Adolescents social reintegration	Pearson Correlation	.441	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	330	330

Source: *Field data, 2023*

Table 3 shows a Pearson correlation Coefficient (r) of 0.441 between family attitude and social reintegration, against the threshold ranging from – 1 to + 1 and which is significant at the P- value 0.00. This means, the more the adolescent experience positive attitude from family members, the more they feel socially reintegrated. The finding agrees with Mwangangi (2019) who found a positive correlation between positive family attitude and healthy adolescent development. He argues that an attitude of love and positive emotions prevent delinquency as it leads adolescents to conform to societal norms. He also found that rejection of children and negative attitude towards them are likely to create a favorable environment to delinquency. This is evident from the findings which revealed that adolescents who were reintegrated back to the family and face feelings of rejection ended up in recidivism as opposed to those who were welcomed back and accepted by the family members. This finding has an implication on policies related to social reintegration within the broader criminal justice system related to child offenders. The finding also raises the question of the role that professionals (social workers and psychologists) play in matters related to justice for children, in particular regarding to preparedness of adolescents and family identify to foster mutual acceptance before and during the reintegration phase.

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

In order to answer some of the research questions, the study sought to use the ANOVA test. The ANOVA is a type of t-test which helps to investigate the influence of independent variables on dependent variables (Cresswell and Guetterman, 2019; Gesami, 2023). In this study, one- way ANOVA test was performed to investigate the influence of independent variables (family support, family attitude, authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style and neglectful parenting style) and the dependent variable, adolescent offenders' social integration. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA test results

Variables		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Total	8462.444	330			
Family Attitude_Cat7	Between Groups	11.054	15	.737	3.628	.000
	Within Groups	63.578	315	.203		
	Total	74.632	330			

Source: Field data, 2023

The ANOVA table above suggests that, family attitude $F = 3.628$, ($p = 0.000$) has statistically significant influence on social reintegration. This means that family attitude is a predictor social reintegration of adolescent offenders. While emergency assistance such as food, shelter, clothing, and food are necessary to respond to the child's needs during reintegration (Global Coalition, 2020), it is the researcher's views that a caring attitude from parents or guardians including the protection from neglect, physical, sexual and psychological violence, and abuse is an essential ingredient for the readjustment of former adolescent offenders in the society. Hence, the need for social work practice to assess the child's readiness to return home, as well as prepare family members to accept and create emotional bonds with returning adolescents for stability during the reintegration phase (Delay and Wedge, 2016; Fripong-Manso, Agbali and Deliege, 2022). The finding suggests that any improvement in the family attitude results in improved feelings of social reintegration amongst adolescent offenders.

1.11 Conclusion

The research pointed out poor family attitude characterized by limited attention, love and harsh treatment of adolescent offenders negatively influence the re-integration process of adolescent offenders. This has the potential to limit the extent of social reintegration for adolescent offenders, as family attitude is positively associated with social reintegration. Therefore, there is need to invest in restoring family confidence, trust, and acceptance to positively influence adolescents' social reintegration. Social work with families as well as social work within the criminal justice system can positively support parents and adolescents to address life challenges, and support young people in their social reintegration journey, including dealing with strained relations between adolescents and family members.

1.12 Recommendations

The study recommends that, families of reintegrated adolescents be associated with government efforts to rehabilitate and socially reintegrate young people in conflict with the law. This entails that families are provided with professional support to develop a warmth and positive attitude towards adolescent offenders. The study also recommends the regularization of social work as a profession, within the criminal justice system, as well as in all sectors dealing with the care and protection of

children. In terms of further research, it is crucial to look into the role of family in the restorative justice interventions related to adolescent offenders.

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