

In trinidad and tobago the spiraling crime situation



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Introduction

In Trinidad and Tobago the spiraling crime situation has been committed predominately by young males. This study focuses on the relationship between the violence in schools and the crime situation in the wider society in Trinidad.

By curbing school violence it will greatly reduce the criminal activities occurring in society. Studies have shown that young minds are easier to mould rather than adult minds. This strategy is a proactive measure in the reduction in the level of crime in society.

Violence in schools has been a reflection of on the level of crime in the society in Trinidad. Early research has shown that Trinidad was a crime free country, a paradise, where crime was not a concern.

Today, crime is the number one problem which faces the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. The escalating crime rate in the country affects the economy (investments, business, tourism), society well being and safety. Violence in school was not seen as a contributing factor for crime among male students.

The point in focus is the supervision of young male secondary students from the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years which is lacking at their homes and at schools over the years.

Review of literature

School violence in Trinidad have become a serious problem with most recent out breaks of violence among rival schools in El Dorado especially where

weapons such as guns or knives are involved. It incorporates violence among school students as well as physical attacks by students on the school staff members. The latest incident of school violence in Trinidad was in November where two secondary school students were stabbed to death by fellow students on separate occasions. Four students from the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years from secondary schools are in police custody at present for these murders.

Due to the escalating crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago the Government seeks to identify and implement both proactive and reactive strategies in combating crime. By analyzing the lives of male criminals and their physiological development at the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years we can minimize the likelihood of them becoming criminals. By analyzing the students' family situations, their discontentment with education, parental involvement, the physiological influence by violence in the media and effect of poverty we can determine the likelihood of students becoming violent.

Many of them are from single parent families most often without fathers and with working mothers. A recent study suggest that " Teens from single-parent or stepparent homes are more likely to commit a school crime (possess, use or distribute alcohol or drugs; possess a weapon; assault a teacher, administrator or another student) than teens from intact homes." (Orr 41)

The current Euro-centric education system does not provide young people with the imperative paraphernalia, discipline and self awareness to survive in the world today. After many years, some children in the public schools are

allowed to pass through the school system without gaining a proper education. However, these students find themselves as a social drain on the economy being unemployed, unaccepted and unsuited to society. These persons have a lack of self confidence and find themselves in a total failure syndrome with no way out and nowhere to turn. They in turn hate the education system that did this to them. In their limited reasoning capability they feel that revenge is the only way of curbing their downfall and resorts to violent behavior.

Patricia Neufeld conducted an experiment proving that parent involvement causes the reduction of aggression in students to become violent. The experiment concluded that parental involvement was positively correlated with positive student attitudes towards schools and negatively correlated with problem behaviors such as school violence and aggression (Neufeld).

Parents who are aware of how their children feel about school can assist them in solving the problems that they may be facing before these children become violent (Neufeld). A child whose parents are readily available for him/her is less likely to hold resentment towards their parents, and take their aggression out on classmates at school. Parents need to be more involved in their children's' lives and become familiar with their feelings to decrease the animosity that their children feel towards them, so that anger is not brought to school the environment.

Violence in schools has risen from one-on-one hand fights for personal disagreements to all-out, deadly weapon assaults on innocent lives for no good reasons. This is due to the effects of the society, media content, video

games and other factors, especially movies and television. The violence shown on recent movies portrays gruesome acts by criminal minds. This is in such detail that we feel and see all angles of the crime. The news media broadcast murders, serious crimes and other heinous activities on a daily basis. These broadcast has become commonplace in the everyday society as it is so frequent. Forty years ago a fist-fight between two individuals was an uncommon and extreme violent act in schools. However, at the present time extreme violence is shown so prominently and graphically every day, however, the escalation in school violence by the impressionable youth who look and copy from it should follow that direction.

The effects of poverty on the student would enable them to commit acts of violence on order to appease the lack of financial stability at home. Students that generally grow up in repressed areas such as Betham Gardens in Trinidad may be likely to commit acts of violence. Studies have shown that the lower socioeconomic class is more likely to engage in criminal activity than those who are financially well-off. The economic inequality which exists in Trinidad is a major contributor to numerous criminal issues.

Methodology

This study would be based on the effects of violence among young male secondary school students from the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years in Trinidad and the tendency to commit crimes. It would involve a cross sectional survey. Eligible schools within the eight counties of Trinidad would form the sample frame. There are one hundred and four secondary schools with approximately twelve hundred children each, approximately

half are males between the ages of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years. One in every three schools from each county would be chosen randomly.

The police reports within the time frame of four years would be examined on the students that are being profiled.

Preliminary Studies

The Curepe Junior Secondary School was selected as the pilot test and of the survey. It was found that twenty six persons had violent conduct record at the school. Seven of them were arrested by the police custody two for serious crimes and the other five for petty crimes.

	Count y	Number of Schools	Number of Schools selected
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St. David	3	1	
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St. David	34	11	
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St. George	6	2	
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St. George	20	6	
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St. Andrew	6	2	
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St. Andrew	7	2	
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w

Caroni

Nariva

Mayar

o 12 4

Victori 16 5

a

St.

Patric

k

Total 104 33

The figures given above are used to illustrate the sampling method that would be applied.

The thirty three schools (33) were chosen using the stratified random sampling method. The instrument that would be used for the survey is a questionnaire, police criminal records and schools records from the Ministry of Education. The questionnaire would contain questions on age, ethnicity, family status, area of residence, smoking habits, alcohol consumption, drug use, gang affiliation, educational status and potential aggression.

All male secondary school students between the ages of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years old with records of violent conduct from January 2005 to January 2009 would be surveyed by way of questionnaire. These students' names would be cross reference with that of the Police Criminal Records to indicate the number of persons involve in serious crimes. These students will

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be selected from the school records at the Ministry of Education with permission from the Minister of Education responsible for all schools in Trinidad, also from the Minister of National Security responsible for violence and crime.

The ethical issues raised were that the privacy of student's record was reviewed in order to carry out the exercise. The parents of students, students and principals of schools were assured that the information would be kept confidential by way of a sworn document. However, person who refused to take part in the survey and persons who do not return the questionnaire will simply not be considered.

The information collected through the survey would be inputted into a computer system where the statistical analysis will be performed using a computer program (SPSS). This program would give the results which would show the relationship between violence among young male secondary students from the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years and the escalated crime situation present in Trinidad.

The results obtained from this analysis would be use to see if the hypothesis stands of should be rejected.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the results obtained from the study, conclusions can be made with respect to the relationship between violence among young male secondary students from the age of twelve to seventeen (12-17) years and the escalated crime situation present in Trinidad. This study can be extended to the wider Caribbean.

Survey Questionnaire

-Please tick the box corresponding to your response:

-Please write on line space provided.

Name of School.....

Name.....

Age:..... Date of Birth.....

Ethnicity: African Indian Chinese Mix Other

How much quality time do your parents/ guardians spend with you?

A lot Fair amount Minimal None

Living With: Both Parents Single Parent (Father) Single Parent (Mother)

Grandparents Step parents

Living Standard: Rich Middleclass Poor

Do you: Smoke Cigarettes Use Drugs

Drink Alcohol

Are you affiliated with a gang: Yes No

Have you ever been arrested by the police Yes No

Is there domestic violence at your home: Yes No

What is your standard of school work: Excellent Very Good Good Fair

Poor

How quickly do you become aggressive: Easily Moderate Rarely

On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you rank the stress level experienced daily at home?

On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you rank the stress level experienced daily at school?

Have any of your parents or other family members been involved in serious crimes?

Yes No

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