



**THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG) AND
THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN REHABILITATION OF MALE JUVENILE
DELINQUENTS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA**

Rotimi Alaba OTI, Ph.D

The Redeemed Christian Bible College, Redemption Camp, Mowe.

Abstract

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) as a Pentecostal Church is socially engaged in the rehabilitation of Male juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria, through the creation of an arm: Habitation of Hope Rehabilitation Centre. Scholars have discussed rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents without linking them to the RCCG rehabilitation efforts. So, there is still the need to interrogate the Redeemed Christian Church of God and their involvement in the rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria. The paper intends to highlight RCCG's Habitation of Hope Rehabilitation Centre and their methods of operation. The paper employs a documentation method for data gathering. Primary data is sourced from the interviews, while secondary data is sourced from published works on RCCG, Habitation of Hope Rehabilitation Centre and juvenile delinquents. Data will be content analysed within the ambit of the rehabilitation theory. The prevalence of juvenile delinquents in Nigeria is both a problem to families and the general society. Therefore, this paper is based on the understanding of rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents as a strategy within the church social responsibility (CSR), to socially re-integrate and spiritually re-claim them. Therefore, the paper makes recommendations for RCCG on how to effectively rehabilitate male juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria.

Keywords: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Rehabilitation, Male juvenile delinquents and Southwest Nigeria.

Introduction

The Redeemed Christian Church of God's (RCCG) in recent times has been involved in the rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents, because, Nigerian society is experiencing a lot of violence and high crime rate which may be attributed to male juvenile delinquents. Nigeria has attracted international attention for the criminal activities that emanate from these juvenile delinquents. In the country, the most conspicuous male juvenile delinquents are the "Area boys" and some "Street Children"¹. The population includes females, but more among the males².

The number of juvenile delinquents in the country is on the increase, although there is no reliable census on them. The United Nations reported that only 1925 juvenile delinquents were medically rehabilitated in Nigeria in the year 2004, and this is the most recent figures available.³ There is every likelihood that there are thousands of them in the country.⁴ The prevalence of juvenile delinquents is not only a problem to those families that have them as children, it also has moral implications for the society at large. Juvenile delinquents cause their families to undergo a lot of stress and social stigmatization, and therefore affect the normal function of the society.⁵

The devastating effects of the menace of juvenile delinquents on the society are already surfacing. They have poor social skills and interpersonal relationships. They are responsible for highest toll of social breaches, like absenteeism at schools, armed robbery, substance related legal problem, such as; rape, broken homes, murder, suicide, violent crime and cultism among others. All these are traceable to the influence of narcotic drugs on the juvenile delinquents and thereafter lead to breakdown of relationship and places further stress on their already burdened families. Also, inestimable economic and manpower losses have been associated with mortality in the victims.⁶

Southwest Nigeria (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States), have faced challenges arising from the activities of the juvenile delinquents. They have aggravated the problems of indiscipline, lawlessness and violence in the society. This has also brought about psychological problems of anxiety, depression, frustration, tension, threats, and fear upon parents, families and the public. In a way, this has contributed to the decline of the standard of education and public morality. It has also increased the rate of crime in all the states.⁷

Consequently, government has been involved by taken several

¹ Area boys and Street Children are the youth and homeless teenagers who are hooked in drug addiction and also involved in other criminal activities and prostitution in order to finance their addiction business.

²(Adesina,1989: 44)

³<https://www.studymode.com/essays/There-Are-An-Increasing-Number-Of-1348260.html>

⁴(Adesina), 1975: 34)

⁵(Jinadu,2006: 25)

⁶(Zamani, 1993:, 115.)

⁷(Momoh, 2010:, 9)

initiatives in form of regulations, laws, decrees, enforcement, public education and rehabilitation to combat juvenile delinquent problem. In spite of all these, there are indications that juvenile delinquents and their serious damage to the moral and social fabric of the country are on the increase. The implication of this is that government several strategies are not adequate. The challenge has always been how juvenile delinquents can be effectively rehabilitated. Therefore, this paper examines, The Redeemed Christian Church of God and their involvement in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Southwestern Nigeria..

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: AN OVERVIEW

Juvenile delinquency, also recognized as juvenile offending, or youth crime, is participation in criminal behavior by minors (juveniles).⁸ A juvenile delinquent is a someone who is normally under the age of 18 and perpetrates an act that otherwise would have been prosecuted as a crime if they were an adult. Delinquency is a lawful term for immoral behaviour performed by a juvenile, that is, individual under the age of 18⁹.

The Nigerian constitution of 1979 defines juvenile delinquency as “a crime perpetrated by a young individual under the age of 18 years as an outcome of trying to comply with the urges of his peers or to circumvent parental coercion or certain emotional provocation”.¹⁰ The antisocial behaviours repeatedly attributed to the juvenile delinquents' in contemporary times, include vandalism, narcotic abuse, prostitution, defrauding, cultism, weapon holding, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, habitual truancy, school drop-outs, armed robbery, to mention but a few. Additional scandals correlated with juvenile include: kleptomanism, burglary, noncompliance, homicide, vandalization and deception of any type etc.¹¹ The consequence of juveniledelinquencyon Nigerian culture are innumerable and devastating. It has eroded lives and properties and similarly retarded the advancement of this country.¹²

Juvenile delinquency is a multi-causal social phenomenon, in which socio-cultural and economic, family and individual factors are interrelated. In young people with an enormous number of related risk components, the criteria appear to be inadequate, both in loose and secure environments, since the percentage of recidivism is outstanding.¹³

⁸https://www.liquisearch.com/juvenile_delinquency

⁹(Lauer and Lauer, 2002: 144-152)

¹⁰<https://www.ipl.org/essay/Causes...CausesOfDelinquencyInNigeria->

¹¹https://pub.abuad.edu.ng/Open_Access_Research_Projects_of_Universities

¹²<https://abubakarlawankura.wordpress.com/>

¹³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7754538/>

The home environment is contributory; for example in an household where the parents are constantly at loggerhead, or contentious, or where there is a feeling of inferiority. Delinquency may have emerged from these derivations in the course of the individual finding remedies to the dilemmas. Juvenile delinquency is consequently more prevalent among children who experiences parental failure, prejudiced tendencies among parents or denial of one kind or the other. It is therefore a feature of response to social issue¹⁴.

According to Famuyiwa, the case of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, but obviously, it appears that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the current era¹⁵. Their probability is so high that it has become a basis of concern to the church, parents, guidance, sponsors and well wishes, because of the nature of offense executed by these juvenile who are considered as our prospective leaders.¹⁶ Some of them invariably partake in troublesome behaviours that negatively implicate their family, educational, civil and private functioning. These youngsters are of considerable interest to parents, the church and the neighborhood at large.

Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the tide of juvenile delinquency, the possibility of a decent, comfortable and more healthy society emerging in Nigeria will remain evasive. Consequently, this study examines the Redeemed Christian Church of God and their involvement in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Southwestern Nigeria.

Biblical view of Juvenile Delinquency¹⁷

Juvenile delinquency was not taken with levity, but by every earnestness it deserves by the numerous writers of Bible because rebellion among teenagers is thwarting the authority pattern of the household and the composition of society. An organized family avoid catastrophe outside the home which in turn guarantee a stable society (Eph. 6:2-3). God require parents to monitor their juveniles and they are to esteem their parents (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:4) yet realises that this is not often the case (Isa. 3:5; Ezek. 22:7). The sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:22-25; 8:3), the boys who laughed at Elisha (2 Kings 2:23-24), and the prodigal son (Lk. 15:12-13) are all illustrations of juvenile delinquency. The Mosaic law classified striking (Exod. 21:15), cursing (Exod. 21:17) and dishonoring (Deut. 27:16) one's parent as acts of familial rebellion and commanded that a son who refused modification should be stoned in the public (Deut. 21:18-21).

In spite of the obligation placed on parents for child nurturing (Deut. 6:7; Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4), the Bible recognizes that, ultimately, children

¹⁴<http://readingcraze.com › index.php>, Causes and Solutions of Juvenile Delinquency

¹⁵ (Famuyiwa, 2017: 87)

¹⁶https://pub.abuad.edu.ng/Open_Access_Research_Projects_of_Universities

¹⁷ (Butler, 2003: 972)

are accountable for their own actions (Ezek. 18:10-13). Jesus used the illustration of the prodigal son to educate that everyone stands delinquent before God and must move toward Him for forgiveness.

Historical Background of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was founded by Reverend Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi in 1952. Revd. J.O. Akindayomi was born in 1909 and died in 1980. His parents were Pa Eleyinmi Akindole and Madam Olakuobi of Ondo town, in the present Ondo State of Nigeria. His parents were worshippers of Ogun divinity of the Yoruba traditional religion.

He joined the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at the age of eighteen, but later left the church for Cherubim and Seraphim church under the leadership of Prophet Orimolade Tunolase³. Reverend. J.O. Akindayomi who was then a leading prophet in the Cherubim and Seraphim later came in contact with the salvation of the Lord, and could no longer stand what he identified as some unbiblical practices within the church. He began a twelve-member prayer fellowship called Ogo Oluwa Praying Band in 1952. It was this small group that translated into The Redeemed Christian Church of God. The Ogo Oluwa Fellowship was used in purging and purifying members' lives as they continued to meet for prayers, worship and Bible study at No. 9, Willoughby Street, Ebute-Metta, Lagos. Many of the Members surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ, sought for and began to enjoy the sanctification experience. Several members, including the founder/leader, carried out restitution in line with the teachings of the word of God.¹⁸

As the fellowship began to grow, there was a search for the proper name of the emerging church, and when one or two attempts to name it did not work, the leader, Revd, J.O. Akindayomi, sought the face of the Lord in fasting and prayers, as to the name the Lord really wanted the church to bear. God answered him in a vision in which he saw words that appeared to be written on a blackboard. The words were written in English, so he had no way of interpreting the letter, but amazingly, the unlettered man was able to write them down through divine inspiration. He later showed it to one of his educated lieutenants who read the written words as: The Redeemed Christian Church of God. Given the name, God also promised that He would bless the church and meet all her needs on the account that, the leaders and members will serve Him faithfully and obediently. The Lord declared to the founder that He would make the church go around the world. This promise came at a time when the total

¹⁸(Oti, 2005: 56)

number of the congregation was less than one hundred. It was upon these and more covenant promises that the Redeemed Christian church of God began.

The founder and General Superintendent of the church, Revd. J.O. Akindayomi died on November 2nd 1980 and it was recorded of him that he continued in the zeal, holiness and life of prayers with which the church began until he died.¹⁹The issue of who would succeed the founder and first General Superintendent of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Revd. J.O. Akindayomi, was on the minds of many in the church, as the leaders grew older. But by the time he passed onto glory on November 2nd, 1980 at the age of 75, he left a clear statement about whom the Lord had chosen to succeed him. Pastor E.A. Adeboye who was a lecturer at the University of Ilorin in 1979 was chosen.

Although there were initial problems, the church is now classified as one of the fastest growing Christian churches in Nigeria. From thirty-nine parishes which he inherited in 1981, the church now has branches in more than seventy countries of the world. And in Nigeria alone, the church has eight thousand, six hundred and ninety-eight parishes with membership of about two million.²⁰ Through him, the Lord has brought several innovations and programmes by which the church has continued to grow and expand in which they have the initiative to solving social male juvenile delinquents problems in southwest, Nigeria which is referred to as the RCCG Habitation of Hope Rehabilitation

The RCCG's involvement in Rehabilitation of Male Juvenile Delinquents in Southwest, Nigeria: Habitation of Hope Ministry

The Redeemed Christian Church of God's involvement in rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents in southwest Nigeria is being handled by a unit called Habitation of Hope ministry. Habitation of Hope ministry was registered with the corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria as well as the Lagos and Ogun State Government under the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The ministry was founded in 2006 to take care of only male juvenile delinquents/Street children between the ages of 7 to 18 years old. It is a faith based non-profit making organization located in Loburo via Mowe in Ogun State in the Southwest Nigeria.

The rehabilitation centre has over 120 boys, 40% of who are in private secondary school. There is also a primary school (within the rehabilitation centre for the younger ones) that has accommodated more than 50% of the boys. Others who are not academically inclined are into various vocational activities like Tailoring, Shoe making, and so forth alongside with adult education respectively. The centre is overseen by a nine-man Board, with

¹⁹ (Adetoye, 2007: 32)

²⁰Titus, 2006: 9)

members drawn from various professions, all with background of integrity and competence

Their Aims and Visions²¹

Aims

To salvage from destruction, transform the lives and rehabilitate homeless street boys and to reintegrate them into the society

Vision

i) To reconcile juvenile delinquents/Street Children back to God in order to make heaven

ii) To give them a home

iii) To give them education or vocation that will make them become useful to the society

iv) To give them a hope and shape their future in accordance with the will of God and v) To settle and reunite/reconcile them with their family (if they have any)

Their Activities

Every Thursday the Pulpit Ministry of the rehabilitation centre goes to Kuramo Beach in Lagos State while some other people go to Ogun state and other states within southwest Nigeria to reach out to the juvenile delinquents called street boys. Every Sunday, three church services are held in Lagos states and its environs:

i) 7am-9am at City of the Great King Parish Iddo Terminus,

ii) 10am-2pm at Costain under bridge round about

iii) 2pm-4pm at Kuramo beach in Lagos

In addition to the above, they provide for the juvenile delinquents:

a) Regular Sunday services

b) Thanksgiving services on Sundays

c) Deliverance and Anointing services every 3rd Sundays

d) Counseling after Thanksgiving on 1st Sundays

e) Food distribution on every Sunday (material distributions as the provision is made available)

f) Medical care and referral to hospitals in the last two years

²¹RCCG, 2020:2)

Mode of Operation of The Redeemed Christian Church of God's Programmes for

Rehabilitation²²

The church familiarizes itself with the environment by finding men and women of all ages who care passionately about juvenile delinquents. The first task of the rehabilitation centre is to locate the juveniles in the street who have really lost contact with their families. This stage is sometimes carried out in cooperation with other NGOs specialized in the area of child labour, health, drug addiction and sexual exploitation.

The Admission Process

The admission process in rehabilitation of Male juvenile delinquents in RCCG's rehabilitation centres, according to the interview conducted takes the following forms: the Male juvenile delinquents are admitted into the various centres twice per year. This is in March and September, because of the limited accommodation. They are admitted into all the centres through three means. Firstly, Evangelism, which is the preaching of the gospel to the Male juvenile delinquents. This is conducted at their various locations in Lagos, Abeokuta and other towns within and around southwestern Nigeria because of their proximities to the operational base of the Ministry by some of assigned Pastors. Any of the Male juvenile delinquents that yielded positively to the evangelism are admitted into any of the centres. Secondly through referral, some Male juvenile delinquents are referred from other rehabilitation centres and hospitals within or around Lagos and Ogun States. Lastly, some Male juvenile delinquents came voluntarily after realizing their state and the need to change their ways of life.

They are admitted and accommodated for treatment through diagnostic and comprehensive assessment procedures which is the basis for a personalized and effective approach to their rehabilitation.

Method of Operation

Moral education²³

The first to be identified method of operation of the RCCG programme for rehabilitation is Moral education. Through moral education, all male juvenile delinquents are intimated with societal norms and values for their re-integration into the society. This is a five month treatment programme aimed at enabling the beneficiaries to recover from juvenile delinquents predispositions and related problems which periodically include narcotic addiction. Classes take place every Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

²² (Balogun, 2020, 10-11)

²³Participant's Observation on (20/12/2020)

Counselling²⁴

Counseling is another method of operation in RCCG rehabilitation programme. In the centres, counseling sessions are offered on individual, group and family bases to furnish the male juvenile delinquents for re-integration into the community.

This counseling takes place at least once in a week but may take place several periods in a week depending on the demands of the beneficiaries. Some of them have day-to-day individual sessions when outstanding needs arise. During individual counseling, the victims meet in one-on-one sessions with the counsellor. These sessions are confidential and commonly last about an hour.

Skills Acquisition Training²⁵

Apart from supporting them with transitioning into a normal life, they are empowered to be self-reliant by sending them to numerous vocational training centers in various parts of Southwestern Nigeria.. At these training centers, they learn skills that will benefit them after convalescence. Each student is fitted to the program according to their abilities and potentials. This is accomplished to make them become autonomous and totally accountable. And most importantly, be furnished to also go out and influence positively on the community and also on other male juvenile delinquents.

Games and Exercises

Games and exercises like football, Volley-ball, Table-Tennis, are utilized in RCCG Rehabilitation Centres to instruct juvenile delinquents ethical instruction and social re-integration. They have a football team called Hope football team. Here, they are stimulated and the qualities of their interchange with one another are boosted. They are well prepared and the instructions are certainly bestowed. These games are comprehended activities and regulated by rules. It encompasses a competitive condition between winners and losers. In these games, the learning generally comes from the interchange of the players. The game hinges on the group and the facilitator employs what is acceptable for the period.

Follow-up

The follow-up and aftercare stage of therapy takes place in all centres after the Male juvenile delinquents have finished the rehabilitation procedure and have been discharged from the rehabilitation centre. It is usually performed on an outpatient basis and consist of face-to-face visits and communications

²⁴Interview, Care staff (1912/2020)

²⁵Interview, Care staff (20/12/2020)

over the telephone. There are regular contacts with the victim and household over the telephone and the face-to-face visits are organized.

The aim of the follow-up phase is to provide continuing support to discharged patients, monitor their post-rehabilitation progress and detect as early as possible any threats or signs of relapse

Agents of the RCCG's Rehabilitation Programmes²⁶

The agents involved in rehabilitation in the Redeemed Christian Church of God are Programme Coordinator, Care givers, Counsellors and Bible study teachers. They are pastors, invited lecturers and spiritual leaders in RCCG who make themselves available to provide education and counseling for Male juvenile delinquents for their recovery process. They help them in accepting themselves, get rid of negative feelings and guilt and live more productively in the society.

Achievements of the Redeemed Christian Church of God's involvement in Rehabilitation Programmes for Male juvenile delinquents

Character reformation

Majority of the care givers of the rehabilitation centres concurred that moral instructional method induced character reformation, attitudinal change and complete transformation among some of the Male juvenile delinquents as exemplified in 2 Corinthians 5:17²⁷. Many of the Male juvenile delinquents have changed attitudes. For example, from 2001 to 2021, 500 juvenile delinquents in Habitation of Hope

Social re-integration

Many of the programme coordinators confirmed that counselling method has restored the Male juvenile delinquents from the state of material and spiritual hopelessness to a state of wholistic hopefulness for their reintegration into the society. Formerly, they were in a state of inadequacy, confusion and hopelessness, but counselling has enabled them to live a life of wholeness in Christ. It provided understanding, encouragement and physical support for them, through members and organizational structure of the church.

Skill Development

Majority of the programme coordinators responded that through the skill acquisition training method put in place to complement other methods earlier stated, the Male juvenile delinquents were trained as artisans, pastors

²⁶Interview, (20/12/2020), Programme coordinator

²⁷NIV. 2 Corinthians 5:17

and social workers to incorporate them into the social and economic scheme of the society. Habitation of Hope rehabilitation centre has produced many tailors and several secondary school graduate. This is in accordance with Apostle Paul injunction which says: "if any would not work, neither should he eat." (II Thessalonians 3:1b).

Recommendations and General Conclusion

The RCCG has significantly contributed to the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in southwestern Nigeria,

Recommendation s

Based on the above, we recommend that,

Firstly, in enhancing the Character reformation outcome of the rehabilitation programmes of the church, an annual special award event should be instituted where those Male juvenile delinquents who have been consistently of good behavior be rewarded with cash or other thing that would boost their morale and self-esteem. It is believed that these ex- Male juvenile delinquents would happily embrace the award system which will in turn motivate them to achieve and continue in good character.

Secondly, the study also suggests that the church should intensify their social re-integration policy by investing more in the education of general public, especially church members, and fellow clergy on problems related to the recruitment of rehabilitated or treated Male juvenile delinquents. Public enlightenment and education on Male juvenile delinquents behaviour should include reducing the harm of the society on the rehabilitated Male juvenile delinquents which is perpetrated through suspicious discrimination and denials of rights.

Thirdly, the skill training programme of the RCCG rehabilitation centres should be enlarged to accommodate some other new skills in order to foster more work opportunity. In the alternative, the church should pay proper attention to her centres, which are performing below expectation in order to improve their capabilities in handling the rehabilitation programme effectively.

Lastly, further research should also be geared towards understanding the problems and prospects of juvenile delinquents in the larger society after rehabilitation, especially the stigma and discrimination, which they are facing.

Conclusion

This study therefore confirmed that religious organization is a factor in the rehabilitation of miscreants in Nigeria. Hence, the need to recognize the role religion can play in enhancing good order in Nigeria. With this, the work has

remained a major contribution to the methods of solving the problem of miscreants in Lagos and Ogun States. This study has been able to prove that the RCCG's programme for rehabilitation will enhance the positive impact of miscreants in the society thereby reducing the cases of drug addiction, prostitution and delinquency in Lagos and Ogun States of Nigeria.

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