

Addressing Youth Delinquencies through Theatre: A Critical Study of Tor Iorapuu's *Had I Known...*

Abstract

This article examines Tor Iorapuu's *Had I Known...* through content analysis as a compelling example of Theatre for the Youth (TFY) and its ability to address real-life challenges faced by adolescents. The choice of the play is because it brings the struggles of Nigerian adolescents to life, tackling issues like juvenile delinquency, peer pressure, and the lack of open discussions about sex education. The play uses relatable stories and creative techniques, like flashbacks and puppetry, to tackle sensitive topics such as sex education, peer influence, and juvenile delinquency. By drawing from the lived experiences of young people, the play creates a safe space for open discussions about the struggles and pressures they face. It also highlights the importance of bridging the gap between youth and society, particularly when it comes to taboo topics like sexuality and family life. The findings of this article underscore how theatre can be a transformative tool for education and social change, inspiring not just young audiences but also parents, teachers, and policymakers to rethink how they engage with and support the younger generation.

Keywords: Sex, education, theatre, youth, drama, adolescents

Introduction

My art is varied and open, eclectic and generous. This is why I speak of aesthetics of necessity capable of including volumes for those who only have a sense of touch, scents for those who only have a sense of smell, colors for those who only have their sights, sounds for those who only have their hearing... My highest priority needs are those of young people, and more particularly, those who are deprived. There are the needs of their education, culture, knowledge, of new openings, as well as personal adventures susceptible to awakening other creative impulses in them in the face of my own, so that all of the young people and children here may be able to dream and carry out their dreams, to take off from their initial level to attain any level of their thirst, knowing that in tum, they can create their paradise or hell, that the choice is in their hands and they are therefore responsible for themselves... Necessity means progress; the necessity of taking responsibility for one's actions represents, in fact, a genuine power (Werewere Liking in an interview with Esiaba Irobi, 2006: 36).

The above quotation gives much spring to this chapter as it strengthens the potency of the 'theatre of necessity'. Theatre of necessity is theatre about survival. It is a form of performance that responds to a collective crisis. It draws its impulses and semiological construct from the

past- from the elements and fragments of indigenous African ritual and festival theatre - to address, confront, and transform the life-threatening situation of the present. It seeks to re-order dislocated worldviews and balm the fissures in culturally, psychologically, and spiritually splintered minds, young and old, on the continent. It aims to heal the increasing wounds of modernity on the African psyche (Esiaba Irobi, 2006: 34)

Induced by the theatre of necessity, between the 20th century and now, there has been a speedy hybridization of theatre practices and approaches that draw directly on the personal stories of participants, performers, and audiences (Martin, 2013; Snow, 2016; Foster, 1996; Leffler, 2012; Salas, 1993; Heddon, 2008). From autobiographical drama to investigatory and tribunal plays, from the theatre of witness to self-revelatory forms, theatre-makers are drawing on lived experience and creating powerful work that is transformative for participant-performers, for auto-ethnographic performers, and for audiences and spect-actors (Pendzik et al, 2016; Boal, 1979, 1995; Cohen-Cruz, 2006; Emunah, 2015). Tor Iorapuu's *Had I Known...*, is a play based on the lived and personal experiences of adolescents and young adults. The experiences eloquently outlined in this play are those of young persons with whom the playwright/theatre for conscientization and community growth director and maker interacted in a good number of towns and villages in Plateau State (Dapo Adelugba, 2004: ix)

In many societies, children and youth experience ostracism in public spaces and places. Tracey Skelton and Katherine Gough edited a special issue of *Urban Studies* focused on children and youth. As they point out in their introduction; "Currently, in the majority of cities worldwide, young people are ignored and/or actively excluded from decisions that affect them" (2013: 457). Other theorists argue that children and youth are not just ignored; they are understood as actively disrupting the social order and peace of public spaces. "In short, young people are—sometimes simultaneously—portrayed as being both at risk in public space and being a risk to the successful running of public space and the safety of its other users" (Brown 2013: 541). Understanding a group of youth congregating on the corner, for example, as active threats to community well-being, depends on implicit understandings of public spaces that exclude children and youth. Brown reiterates that "the very presence of young people in public space is now routinely used to justify punitive policies, which aim for their expulsion from those spaces" (Brown, 2013: 551). This confirms the fact that in many societies in Africa, young people are routinely and traditionally barred from both the public sphere and public space; they are not heard or heard. The adult world is sacrosanct, and the youth are sometimes abysmally relegated. The TFY practice as scripted by Tor Iorapuu in *Had I Known...* is an attempt to bridge the divide between youth and the public environments.

Had I Known... is a play that establishes a vista for the 21st Nigerian child to discuss his immediate social problems that affect his future existence. This position is a variant of some works of many Nigerian dramatists whose targets are the adult audience. To this end, this article

using *Had I Known...* as a participatory and theatre of personal experience stories, interrogates the core boundaries that exist between the youth and the aged when it comes to matters concerning sex discourses. This theatre experience, to some degree is apt given here the potentially significant vulnerabilities of participants (youth) or it follows that, if the theatre process is to use the personal stories of the participants, it is crucial to include in such processes several principles, guidelines and structures to protect people from re-oppression and from exacerbating their struggle.

Therefore, in trying to bring up the closing gaps to avoid re-oppression from this drama of personal stories of the participants, this article also does a critique of *Had I Known...* from the angle of an admixture of a fictional-reality play text. More significantly, the play in question is a product of a morally bankrupt society; a society where sex has become the fashion of the day. Whereas, society is not willing to come to terms with this alarming sex trend that has manifested into; prostitution, human trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, etc, by not allowing open sex discourses.

On the other hand, youth delinquency refers to illegal or antisocial behavior by individuals typically under the age of 18. The characteristics of youth delinquency can vary widely, but several common factors and patterns have been identified. Youth delinquency can include a range of offenses such as theft, vandalism, drug abuse, truancy, assault, and serious violent crimes. Status offenses, which are only considered offenses due to the age of the individual (e.g., running away from home, underage drinking), are also common. Delinquent behavior often peaks in the mid-adolescent years (ages 15-17). Significantly, early adolescence may be characterized by experimentation, while late adolescence may involve more serious offenses. Males are statistically more likely to engage in delinquent behavior than females. However, the gap is narrowing in some areas, particularly with regard to status offenses. Youth delinquency is often influenced by social environment and context, including family dynamics, peer associations, socio-economic status, and community factors.

Moreover, youth from disadvantaged or dysfunctional backgrounds may be more prone to delinquent behavior. Thus, family relationships play a significant role in delinquency. Youth from families with poor communication, low supervision, or parental substance abuse are at higher risk. Conversely, supportive family environments can mitigate risk. The worst is that peers have a strong impact on adolescent behavior; youth are likely to engage in delinquency if they have friends who do the same. Peer pressure can encourage involvement in gangs or other delinquent activities. Many youths involved in delinquency may struggle with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or behavioral disorders. These issues can contribute to impulsivity and poor decision-making.

There is a correlation between youth delinquency and substance abuse, as drug or alcohol use can impair judgment and increase the likelihood of engaging in illegal activities. School-related issues, such as academic failure, truancy, and lack of engagement, are often associated with

delinquent behavior. Youth who struggle in school may feel alienated and turn to delinquency for **forceful recognition and acceptance**. Societal attitudes towards crime and norms can shape behaviors. In communities where delinquency is normalized or accepted, young people might be more likely to engage in such behaviors. Many psychologists struggle with the continuous nature, nurture debate when it comes to delinquency in children. Some think it is biological, suggesting that the children were born with it and that they inherited some type of illness from their parents. Others think that these delinquents are a product of their environment and that they act out and kill people due to social pressure, abuse and neglect they have faced in their lives (Obindah, Fortune, 2022:40). However, that may not be the case. Most adolescents often struggle with impulse control and are less able to weigh consequences compared to adults, leading to riskier behavior. This is why there are varying definitions of what constitutes juvenile delinquency. For example, the

Differential association theory asserts that juveniles engage in delinquency when definitions favouring law violations surpass those against it. These definitions can be specific, such as rationalizing theft from an insured store as a victimless crime, or more general, like claiming a right to act freely on public land. Such definitions justify delinquent activities, while opposing definitions, such as "stealing is immoral," counteract them. The impact of these definitions depends on how frequently they are encountered, how early in life they are introduced, and the value placed on the relationship with the person presenting them. Juveniles are most influenced by definitions from friends and family, but learning can also occur through schools and media (Kester Efe Fregene & Caleb Chukwuebuka Iwuala, 2024:1607)

Hence, many youths who engage in delinquent behavior may repeat offenses, particularly if underlying issues are not addressed. Early intervention and support can reduce recidivism rates. Addressing youth delinquency therefore involves a comprehensive approach that includes family involvement, community support, schools, worship centres, mental health services, and preventive educational programs. Effective intervention strategies aim to address the root causes and provide positive alternatives for at-risk youth becomes the concern of this paper.

Youth Theatre in Applied Theatre

Theatre for Children and Youth has generally been perceived as geared to the traditional school-age group, that is, theatre for children aged 5–11 **years** (elementary school), for adolescents between 11 and 14 **years** (middle school/early secondary), and youth 14–18 **years** (high school/late secondary). Of these age groups, the 14- to 18-year-old audiences have been the least defined and are often relegated to attending suitable productions for adults. The elementary-school-age group is the most heavily targeted. And adolescents frequently fall in between. However, over the past few decades, several theatre practitioners looked beyond these school-defined age groups. Some turned to making theatre for the very young (6 months-6 years), while others started to focus specifically on theatre for young adults (15–25 **years**).

Manon van de Water posits that

the theatre for young audiences "one of the great inventions of the Twentieth Century." Moving into the Twenty-First Century, the field continues to grow in importance—as an educational force, certainly, but also as an art form, and maybe even as a political weapon for change in our complex society (2012: 19).

This corroborates the understanding that personal experiences are significant in the creation of young people's theatre, drama, and performance, and also increasingly in adult mainstream theatre. Games are also important elements in how young people first tackle collaborative drama and in creative devising techniques using the principles of applied theatre which **Within its broad continuum, techniques or approaches consciously employed for diverse purposes: to create productive and creative interpersonal and social relationships in a social context; to help groups to have a difficult conversation or to enable a group discussion; to orchestrate the smooth running of a particular workshop, a consultation or sharing of ideas; to improve productivity in a business; or as an efficient method for conducting qualitative research (Sheila Preston, 2016:2).**

Therefore, this makes no difference if one decides to label youth theatre within the context of applied theatre which also covers Theatre-in-Education (TIE). TIE stems from several distinct but related developments in theatre and education [...]: the movements to re-establish the theatre's root in the community and in so doing broaden its social basis [...]; the theatre's search for a useful and effective role within society and an exploration especially of its potential both as an educational medium and as a force for social change [...]; and, in education, the recognition during the 1960s and 1970s of the importance of the arts (and drama particularly) in the school curriculum, together with the increasing stress given to the functional role that the arts have to play in helping children to understand, and operate in, the world in which they live" (Jackson 1993: 4).

They are an integral part of the process, and they also become embedded in the performances. They are vehicles for expressing difficult issues.

The term 'youth theatre' describes a wide variety of organizations that engage young people in theatre-related activities in their own time. The research findings suggest that youth theatre has several important functions for young people, positively contributing to their personal and social development. The findings are placed in the context of youth transition research that has identified the skills, capacities and resources that help young people make successful transitions to adulthood in the current social and economic climate (Jenny Hughes & Karen Wilson, 2004: 58)

From the above, one can simply say that Youth Theatre is a broad term used to label a wide variety of groups that involve young people in theatre-related actions. It takes place freestanding of formal education and is created on the deliberate participation of young people. Young people take part in an array of events within youth theatre, including formulating and acting theatre productions with their peers; creative-, skills- or issue-based workshops preparing them for the personal and social challenges implicit in the process of making theatre; experimentation with different theatre forms and styles; special projects with professional artists and theatre practitioners; special projects with the youth service; and tours to other youth theatres or festivals. Youth theatre has long been perceived to have important personal and social impacts on young people. This is also within the canons of contemporary applied theatre,

projects, shaped often by a range of social and public agendas such as civic renewal, social justice, health promotion, welfare and social inclusion, are commonly targeted in communities in deprived areas or with participants who are marginalized socially, culturally and/or economically. The *raison d'être* of much of the work happening in applied and socially engaged theatre centres on the use of the arts in fostering a range of development outcomes such as community building, health promotion, self-reliance and well-being (Sheila Preston, 2016: 5.).

Thus, youth theatre/drama is all about the application of drama and theatre for the social service of the youth in order to break the walls of inhibition, by building self-confidence and self-reliance to them which places it within the tenet of applied theatre. This is a Social knowledge that advances beyond individualistic theories of knowledge, taking a relational approach to knowledge-making that is particularly appropriate to applied theatre research (Madeleine J Irwin, 2018:84). The use of applied theatre methodology makes teaching and learning liberal and democratic because all participants are facilitated to contribute to the story or the plot structure of the plays/games at hand. This by implication places everyone at the centre of social engagement and development with the doctrine of Augusto Boal's Legislative theatre in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

Had I known...., a Reflection of the adolescent delinquencies

Every living soul has a history; sometimes, this past is always worth remembering while some do not deserve to be remembered. There are obvious mistakes one commits while growing up, however, the good thing about it is that one realizes and changes for good. Sometimes it is too late to change because some of the mistakes are life-consuming, and the result is death or what can ruin the entire life of an individual. Thus, *Had I Known...* is a true reflection of the youthful exuberances that usually overlap with other excesses like; drug abuse, alcoholism, teenage sex, abortion, and other vices. Within the context of Augusto Boal's 'Legislative Theatre' *Had I Known...*, creates a good atmosphere between the young and the aged for a discussion on issues concerning sexuality and family life. The playwright seems to be conscious of the fact that the youth, while perpetrating these acts of sexual risk do not know the aftermath of the misbehaviors, hence, the play becomes a model for the teaming youth. The approach deployed

by the playwright is to create a story around the practical experiences of the performers which bring nonfictional life-bearing effects to the audience. This is to say that

Life while it is happening to us can seem random and undirected. It's often only when we tell the story of what happened that some order can emerge from the abundant jumble of details and impressions. When we weave our experiences into stories, we find meaning in what we have undergone. Telling our stories to others helps us to integrate the story's meaning for us. It is a way, too, for us to contribute to the universal quest for meaning. The intrinsic element of form in a story can transmute chaos and restore a sense of belonging to a world that is fundamentally purposeful after all (Jo Salas cited in Ananda Breed, 2012: 8)

This approach is related to playback theatre integrating elements of storytelling, ritual, and psychodrama into a participatory form of theater. The form is based on sharing personal stories, and having the stories 'played back' by a group of trained Playback performers.

As a play for the children, *Had I Known...* opens with a serious attention-getter, two Puppets, Rabito and Babino. These two characters represent both sides of gender. Babino represents the male folks, while Rabito is the female. The dialogue between these two looks like a prologue to the text of the play. Set in a boarding school, Babino wants to lure Rabito into sex using his position as a senior student, in response, Rabito reminds him of the dangers involved.

Babino: Hm, I love you, Rabi, you are the only sweet in my mouth.

Rabito: Hey, stop that and get off me (cleaning her face with the back of her palm). Why did you do that?

Babino: To show my love, Rabi.

Rabito: But I don't like it. Are you not scared?

Babino: Of what? My parents have the money to take care of anything, disease, just name it.

Rabino: Including HIV and AIDS?

Babino: Even pregnancy Rabi.

Rabino: You mean abortion? (Pp.3-4)

The above dialogue is synonymous with what the present generation of the youth expects society to be; a society where teenage or pre-marital sex is moral. Sex has become a culture where AIDS

and abortion are not threats; a society where underage children are eager to have sexual intercourse. The conversation of the duo puppets brings home a lesson to the audience or readers. Rabino's replies and questions bring hope for the girl child who is willing to protect herself from shameful situations of unwanted pregnancy, abortions, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The opening of the play gives Tor Iorapuu the position of a conscious counselor of young children. Segment one of the play, which looks like a prologue captures the totality of the play and at the same time establishes a pedagogy for the attention of the children and believes in a better living for the children and for their better tomorrow without regrets. This corroborates with an Australian Theatre for Young Adult specialist Tony Mack who said that

We believe that respect and attention to childhood, the acknowledgement of children's needs and potentialities, the visibility of scientific research, the scope of childhood policies, the organizational and pedagogical models of educational services, the training activities for educators and teachers, teamwork, pedagogical coordination and the participation of parents and citizens in the management of services (and these are all basic aspects of the education system in Emilia Romagna) are amongst the most significant indicators for the quality of a social system (qt. in Manon van de Water, 2012: 123)

Juxtaposing the play with Mack's position, segment two of the play opens with a group of young boys and girls dancing and singing, mocking one of the girls who is pregnant.

The Hausa song:

Waa yo Asabetu,

Asabetu kin ba mu kunya,

kin je makeranta mu na muma

sai hin dawo da chikin shege.

Babanki pastor,

mamanki uwar zumunta,

amma kin ba mu kunya.(p.31)

Translation:

Oh Asebetu

Asebetu, you brought us shame

You went to school

We were happy

But you came back with an unwanted pregnancy

Your father is a pastor

Your mother, a women fellowship leader

Still you put us all to shame. (p.33)

The above song is a conscious attempt by the playwright to have a result-oriented drama with the youth which authenticates one of the cardinals of youth drama or children's theatre is the simplicity of language. Consequently, the father and mother quarrel over the untimely pregnancy of their daughter. This quarrel could be a result of the numerous consequences envisaged by the father.

With an unwanted pregnancy especially, the mother is more likely to seek prenatal care after the first trimester or not to obtain care. The child of an unwanted conception is at greater risk of dying in its first year of life, of being abused, and of not receiving sufficient resources for healthy development. The mother may be at greater risk of physical abuse herself, and her relationship with her partner is at greater risk of dissolution. Both mother and father may suffer economic hardship and fail to achieve their educational and career goals. The health and social risks associated with a mistimed conception are similar to those associated with an unwanted conception, although they are not as great (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK232137/>)

This kind of approach is didactic as far as

Education can take place in an enormous variety of ways -not least through the medium of the arts. Any good theatre will of itself be educational- that is, when it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience, when it makes us look afresh at the world, its institutions and conventions, and at our place in that world, when it expands our notion of who we are, of the feelings and thoughts of which we are capable, and of our connection with the lives of others (Jackson 1993: 35).

Considering the above insinuations, *Had I Known...* offers the audience a true reflection of what the society is lacking; morality and good upbringing of the 21st Nigerian child. The children are into active sex life without recourse to the dangers. Parents hardly monitor their children's

movements and other hidden things they do. In the end, shame is brought to the family as exemplified in the above song that chastises Asebetu who brought shame to her family by getting pregnant at a tender age. This act of sexual abuse, the child's sex, and the consequences are what inform the title of the play. Now that Asebetu is put in a family way, what can she say to convince society? Regret is what we can conjecture.

The play becomes more serious as it exposes the filthiness of the youth, represented by Doo, Old Man, Boma, Karty, Zainab, Mafeng, Jogwu. The Old Man in the play at this point engages the youth (characters) in a conversation by trying to establish the virtue of virginity.

Old Man: ...Like I was before that sweet rhythm interrupted me, my wife was a sweet virgin and that made my parents take another big pig to my in-laws (He laughs boisterously)

Mafeng: That was many, many years ago old one. I guess not any one of these girls can admit virginity. (Girls jump up at that)

Boma: What do you mean?

Doo: Just watch what you say. Well I am sure of myself; you should be talking to her (Pointing to Zainab)

Zainab: You are very stupid. He should be talking to who? You mean I am not a virgin; (slaps Mafeng who attempts to calm her) Leave me alone: after all, you boys are responsible.

Jogwu: (As if waiting for the opportunity). Aha aa! Irresponsibility! Yes, Baba, that boy (meaning Mafeng) is very irresponsible. Any time he sees moving legs in skirts, his legs begin to tremble and his temperature rises. The moment he impregnates any, he runs away. This is his third school; very soon he will have a record with all the schools in Nigeria.

Old Man: Is that so my boy, but why have you not told me this since?

Mafeng: (Angered by this exposure) So you want us to expose ourselves, okay! What about you? (p.9)

The above dialogue is a clear indication that these young men and women know and understand themselves in all ramifications. The dirty things they do are already captured by themselves in their encounter with the Old Man. This playback affirms drama as a tool to correct societal ills as pointed out by Okeyika, Juliet Ifunanya that

Drama as a vehicle for social reconstruction portrays or explains drama as a device that can be used to correct societal ills and in doing so, moves society ahead of all the negative or social vices to make the society a better place to live in. It deals with the way drama works to change, reform and re-affirm society. Reconstruction becomes necessary when general damage has been

done. On the other hand, reconstruction becomes relevant when something has gone wrong with the social behavior, moral standards, norms, ethics, and orientation of a people or tradition and these cannot be corrected, repaired or amended with drugs, physical torture, detention or imprisonment but it can only be corrected through art that is by the use of literature (drama) where all these ills will be portrayed and tackled against to effect a positive change in the society. ...Some who are deeply concerned, felt the need to use their pen and paper as a means of correcting these societal ills for the benefit of the masses and society (2020: 266)

Thus, the playwright in achieving his aim for social reform in this play text shows that to reconstruct such a damage, it requires serious dialoguing to expose every secret behind such vices. Grounded on the this outlook, it has been showed that as a committed playwright, he is conscious of his society and it falls on him to make his people aware of the social, economic and political problems as well as find the causes and possible cure for such problems. In recognizing the need for drama to be used as an instrument for social change, it seems that the playwright finds more comfort and solace in using jokes and satirical ridicule in accomplishing an ideal social change.

In the play, the playwright blames the parents, schools, and religious houses for not helping with the social reconstruction of the children. Sometimes parents or family has nothing to do with the delinquent behavior of the juvenile, neither do the teachers or religious houses have to do with the delinquent behavior of the teenager as presented in the dialogue below;

Kartay: But even parents won't help matters.

Old Man: Your Parents?

Boma: They only intimidate us about the cultural implications.

Old Man: And the religious houses?

Zainab: Ah! Baba, it is a sin to mention female breast, and a taboo to talk about sex.

Old Man: And your so-called schools?

Boma: Hmm! The teachers are shy and scared to their pants of what our parents might say.

Old Man: Then we are in deep trouble.

Mafeng: And the economy won't help matters.

Old Man: kuku! How?

Kartay: (Painfully) Our parents no longer have time for us because they go out in the morning and come back at night.

Mafeng: All for our sake.

Boma: And most of the time come home empty.

Doo: So we are without food and knowledge.

Zainab: Then we begin to find ways to look after ourselves and support our parents. (p.11)

Thus, looking at the statement made by Boma that, "Hmm!" "The teachers are shy and scared to their pants of what our parents might say". The fear by the teachers that, informing teenagers about ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, could embolden them and make them more promiscuous. For example, there is a belief that general facts about condoms will inspire adolescents to become more licentious, and by speaking about sex in schools, we are also encouraging it as a part and parcel of juvenile life. In doing so, we hearten those who want to have sex and make those who don't feel abnormal. This fuels promiscuity and a casual attitude towards sexual relations, leading teens to take more sexual partners.

Considering the above critically, one can say, that the parents are the basic socialization supports for the children. Teen-agers acquire rudimentary ideas about virtuous and unscrupulous from their household; they brand their standards and set the rules of society, which means, a family can make or mar the personalities of their children. In a family, the most important role is played by the parents. Most of the youngsters who show felonious conduct in any form fit families that could not give a strong foundation to the children. The play, *Had I Known...* shows concern for the lack of good parenting, in which children are left alone to reason, think, and fend for themselves.

What the play, *Had I Known...*, emphasizes is that the family should have an affirmative attitude toward life and towards society. Parents should show the children optimistic ethics, standards and values of the culture. In this manner the kids will be gifted to show accurate conduct to the society. It is the message of the play that, the family is the role archetypal of every single child and a typical behavior by the parents can give inspiration to the child to behave absolutely. From the dialogue above, it follows that government should support families that have poor monetary status so that they can expand their economic condition. When parents are not at home all day, how will they teach their children the importance of respecting the laws of society? When will they have the time to tell their progenies the magnitudes of flouting laws that the government has made for public safety and betterment? The parents must make sure that they (children) observe equality of rights, and justice and condemn discrimination.

A close reading of *Had I Known...* reveals that the parents can take the blameworthiness of fighting against any abnormal that their children have in their dispositions. Children particularly

young kids have not gotten the age of prime of life where they know the difference between good and evil. Their parents do know what's good and what's not and they should keep an eye on their children. They should know about the friends of their children and their other mates. In case of any disability parents and teachers should talk to the teens about their problems and they should try to solve their problems. From early childhood parents should ensure and monitor that their children meet their peers who are of good manners so that they can learn how to behave in society. Monitoring of the children's peer grouping is fundamentally discussed in the play; in the flashback and play-within-a play, the issue of peer influence is histrionically revealed in the play:

Jogwu: My problem started in form three. I was fourteen then, my friends deceived me into visiting a prostitute. (p.14)

This statement brings a motivation for the reenactment of 'Flashback One' where the dramatis personae acted out their experiences with the prostitutes.

Prostitute 1: Hey, I can hear voices (They quickly adjust their positions. Mafeng, Kartay & Jogwu arrive.)

Mafeng: (aside with Jogwu & Kartay) Now, we are here. There are three rooms. Kartay, you can take room one (he disappears immediately.) I will take room two. Jogwu, you will take room three, (before long, Kartay is back and Jogwu is baffled.)

Jogwu: Just like that?

Kartay: There is no time to waste (Buttons up.)

Mafeng: (to Kartay.) What room did you go to?

Kartay: One new cyber café for room one. She just dey speak smooth English (p.17).

The dialogue continues, and many things are revealed; all manner of dirty things they do. This shows that peer group is a very strong force that can cause antisocial behavior in the juvenile. When groups commit criminality, young people often copy to do it and they cannot comprehend the imports of the misconduct. In some cases, peer group rejections can also be the cause of adolescent felonies; juveniles can show aberrant behavior when they cannot get comparable possessions as their groups have. This also explains the fact that parents should ensure that their children are sagging out with groups who belong to their class as this will avert juvenile jealousy which can root several delinquencies in young people. Parents should also see that their children are going out with good friends who belong to decent families. They should not become part of any gang.

Conclusion

From the text of the play, it seems poverty appears to be the major reason for juvenile delinquency. Many children are left to fend for themselves as a result of independent living they get in contact with friends who change their lives negatively. Children looking for self-reliance and meaning in life are likely to turn to friends for direction and syndicate and, if joining gangs, do so seeking companionship, not trouble. Yet, joining abnormal groups increases the likelihood of trouble, of having criminal models, and of being labeled delinquent, thereby decreasing attachment to the broader community, limiting openings, and decreasing the odds of breaking the cycle (Jodi Lane, 2022: 285). This explains that Adolescents can effortlessly become a member of a clique at their age because they consider it suitable to be controlling and to be part of a hefty group. Habitually, these assemblages and cliques are coddled in negative actions. Thus, this influence can be affirmative and destructive. Thus, the government at all levels ought to step up efforts to advance the frugality of parents in society, as a matter of urgency. This can be done by stemming the tide of poverty, and unemployment, improving the recompense of workers, improving infrastructure, creating job opportunities, and endowing the masses in various plausible ways. This would go a long way to nurture the socio-economic situation of most parents thus decreasing the poverty rate in the realm. This is eminent because stealing, dishonesty, arrogance, stubbornness, bullying, cultism, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual offences and teenage pregnancy, assault and insult and lying are the most common forms of juvenile offenses. Parents and guardians should exercise proper parental supervision and give adequate care to transmit positive societal values to their children. In addition, the government, the police, prosecution and courts, non-governmental organizations, parents, teachers, education administrators and other stakeholders should develop a child justice system that strives to prevent children from entering deeper into the criminal justice process while holding them accountable for their actions by means of diversion programs (Kester Efe Fregene & Caleb Chukwuebuka Iwuala, 2024:1620)

Thus, using the play (*Had I Known...*), it is instructive that school administrators should step-up efforts to curb every form of truancy and loitering in and around their respective schools so that students may be disciplined to stay put in schools and pay attention to their lessons. Parents and guardians should not neglect their responsibility to provide for members of their family irrespective of whether they are related by blood or by adoption. The family as an agent of socialization should be educated on the psychological effect of broken homes on a juvenile's behavior. The role of juvenile justice institutions should be extended and strengthened to monitor juvenile behaviors in schools.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Authors hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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