

# **Prevalence and Patterns of Offences among Undergraduate Students in Nigerian Private Universities**

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## **Abstract**

Studies of offenses and crimes among Nigerian undergraduates are mostly focused on state-owned universities in Nigeria and may not reflect the realities of private universities. With recent explosion in the population of adolescents in private universities in Nigeria, there is need to understand the nature and dynamics of offenses and crimes among adolescents in this sociological space. Therefore, this study investigated the patterns and reasons for students' offences and crimes using AA University as a case study. A mixed method research combined survey and case study research designs was adopted. Three hundred and fifty of 16-item survey questionnaires were returned from the 365 distributed to AA UNIVERSITY students across 34 departments in six colleges. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling. Two focused group discussions were held with a total of 20 students. Social Learning Theory was used as theoretical framework for the study. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the quantitative data, while content analysis was employed in analysing qualitative data.

The first four most prevalent offences and crimes are vandalism

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(83%), alcohol offences (74%), drugs and substance abuse (72%), and loitering (69%) (VADL). The first four offences and crimes most committed by female students are vandalism (77%), alcohol offences (77%), loitering (71%), and drug and substance abuse (66%) (VALD), while they are vandalism (89%), examination malpractices (83%), drug and substance abuse (77%) and fraud (73%), (VEDF) among male students. Alcohol is more popular among female students than males. Across age groups, drug and substance abuse and examination malpractices seem to increase with age. Alcohol offences and drug and substance abuse (committed by at least about 70%) are both very high among the age groups. Nine of the 16 listed offences are committed 'very often'. These are theft (100%), drug and substance abuse (95%), possession of hard drugs (90%), vandalism (87%) and tobacco offence (87%), loitering (85%), simple assault or battery (79%), possession of stolen property (78%), disorderly conduct (76%). Examination malpractices (73%) and alcohol offences (63%) are committed 'often', while the others are committed rarely. Peer influence, reported as the reason for committing 75% of listed offences and crimes, and low moral value constitute the main major drivers of offences and crimes in private universities. This confirms the propositions of the theoretical framework of the study.

The rate of offences and crimes in AA University is very high, most of them are committed very often, and are mainly driven by peer pressure and poor moral value among the students. Curbing the menace of offences and crimes among undergraduate in private universities, therefore, requires collaborative effort by parents, universities, and the larger society. Parents need to instil in their children a healthy ego in order to prevent the bad peer influence. Also, they need to instil in them good moral values. Universities need to put in place mechanisms to discourage, prevent and punish offences and crimes. The society needs to promote right values through appropriate punishment and reward.

**Keywords:** Adolescent Crimes, AA UNIVERSITY, Nigerian Private Universities, Youth Offences.

### **Introduction**

Adolescents have been a group of interest for study and interventions by psychologists, sociologists, educationists, counsellors, social workers. Linguistically, the word ‘adolescent’ is a Latin word meaning ‘to grow up’ or to ‘come to maturity.’ Hence, adolescence refers to the process of growing up or to the period of life from puberty to maturity. Adolescence as a concept is said to have appeared in literature in the 15th century. Prior to that, during the Middle Ages in Europe, children were treated as miniature adults. Children and adolescents were believed to entertain the same interests as adults and, since they were simply miniature adults, they were treated as such, with strict, harsh discipline.

During the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher, offered a more enlightened view of adolescence. Rousseau, did more than any other individual to restore the belief that a child is not the same as an adult. Rousseau argued that treating the child like a miniature adult is not appropriate and is potentially harmful. He believed that children up to the age of 12 or so should be free of adult restrictions and allowed to experience their world naturally, rather than having rigid regulations imposed on them (Koops, 2012). Social and historical conditions have led a number of writers (Baughman, 1981) to argue that adolescence is a social construct. While adolescence clearly has biological foundations, nonetheless social and historical occurrences have contributed to the acceptance of adolescence as a transitional time between childhood and adulthood. This denotes the Inventionist View of adolescence. However, adolescence is marked by significant changes in physical development, physiological changes or dramatic change in size and shape and the inception of puberty.

Buhler (1954) sees adolescence as an in-between period beginning with the achievement of physiological maturity and ending with the assumption of social maturity, which is with the assumption of social, sexual, economic and legal rights and duties of the adult. The definition is biological at the outset, but except for the word “sexual,” its termination is entirely in social terms. Adolescence starts at the age of 12 or 13. In principle, therefore, the outset of adolescence can be determined objectively, for example, by the presence of the gonadotropin hormone in the urine and it lasts until anything from 22 to 25. In other words, its termination is determined by the achievement of the society’s criteria of psychological maturity. And so, we

have a biological definition of the beginning of adolescence and a sociological definition of its termination. The termination of adolescence may be culture-specific. Adolescence is therefore a developmental period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, cognitive and social changes.

Biological changes involve physical development, cognitive changes involve thought, intelligence, and language; social changes involve relationships with other people in emotions, in personality and in the social context. These changes can make them behave in ways that are detrimental to themselves, the society and their environment. Eya (2001) describes adolescents as those individuals who have suddenly grown away from childhood, biologically who tend to be emotional, idealistic, highly imaginative, egocentric and unsure of themselves and yet with a high need of independence. They are battling with characteristics such as their new maturation. They sometimes experience peer pressure and bad influence making them susceptible to various vices. Adolescence is, therefore, a stage of significant growth and potential but also a high-risk period. A lot of adolescents are facing pressures to use alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs and to start sexual relationships, thereby putting themselves at high risk for intentional injuries.

In Nigeria, there is a growing concern over the problem of indiscipline, offences, and crimes among adolescents, a large number of whom are in the university. Adolescent offences range from alcohol offences to smoking habits, drug and substance abuse, sex abuse, truancy, harassment, rape, assault and battery, vandalism, internet fraud, examination malpractice to mention a few. Students vandalise everyday, thereby putting an institution at risk; harass themselves, thereby putting their lives at risk; and commit so many other offences. The consequences of adolescent offences are grievous. Although, most offenders see them as pleasurable, seeking change or being different, however, they are social menaces as they affect the offenders' personal life and that of the people around them, sometimes leading to permanent damage to lives and properties. Hence, the need to investigate offences and crimes with a view of understanding their spread and pattern.

Nigerian universities consist of adolescents hence, they are usually a zone of adolescent offenses and crimes. Most studies focus on public universities with very few focusing on private universities. However, the sociology of private universities is different from that of the public universities. For instance, majority of students in private universities are children from well-to-do families with high social status, compared to students from public universities. The former has access to more money and quite different upbringing and outlook on life. Therefore, this study empirically investigates students' offences in private universities to determine various types and patterns of offences and crimes committed by undergraduates and the reason for committing them. The study was carried out in the 2015/16 academic session in AA University, located in the southwestern part of Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The study is a mixed method research, which combined survey (quantitative) and case study (qualitative) research designs. The study population comprises the 4,645 students enrolled across the six colleges from 100 to 500 Levels. A representative sample size of 365 (determined using Bourley's formula for representative sample of a known population) was selected using multi-staged stratified random sampling. Quantitative data were collected through a Survey of Students' Offences and Crimes (SSOC) Questionnaire. The SSOC, a self-reporting questionnaire, comprises two sections— bio-data and types and frequency of offenses sections. The first section has two items including the sex and age of respondents. The second section is a table consisting 16 items which measured responses to 16 offences and crimes (including theft, vandalism, tobacco offences, drugs and substance abuse, alcohol offences, harassment, loitering, false reporting, possession of stolen property, disorderly conduct, simple assault or battery, possession of hard drugs, fraud, burglary, examination malpractice) on three dimensions of offences 'heard of', 'victim of', and 'committed' by respondents. Responses were sought on frequency to these, using four-point Likert scale comprising of 'very rarely', 'rarely', 'often' and 'very often'. The frequency of occurrence of the dimensions for each offence and crime were then aggregated as a measure of prevalence of the offence and crime. Similarly, the frequency of respondents' choice of the four levels were aggregated

for the four levels to determine how regularly such were committed. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency table, simple percentages, and charts). Qualitative data were collected through two focus group discussions held with 10 students per discussion. A total of 9 males and 11 female students participated in the discussions. The interview guide consisted of two main questions which covered participants' understanding of offences and why they commit 12 of the 16 offences and crimes identified as the most prevalent from the analysis of the responses from the survey questionnaire.

Qualitative data were analysed using conversation analysis. Examples of what constitute some of the offenses and crimes were provided. For example, vandalism (drawing/writing on walls, tables, doors, cutting car tyres, and others).

#### **Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory (SLT)**

Social learning theory (SLT) was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory's central argument is that people learn values, norms, modes of behaviour from agents of socialisation such as family, friends, schools, the mass media, and religion. This implies that offences and criminal behaviours are learned through close relations with others, hence, children born good learn to be bad. It also implies that all people have the 'opportunity' to become offenders and criminals through various means of illegal activity provided by the society. Bandura (1977) holds that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. He believes that humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behaviour and its consequences. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. Children and young people observe the people around them behaving in various ways. This is illustrated during the famous Bobo Doll Experiment, (Bandura A. R., 1961). Individuals that are observed are called models. In society, young people are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters on children's TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models provide examples of behaviour to observe and imitate, e.g. masculine and feminine, pro and anti-social etc. Children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour. At a later time, they may imitate (i.e. copy) the behaviour they

have observed. They may do this regardless of whether the behaviour is “gender appropriate” or not but there are a number of processes that make it more likely that a child will reproduce the behaviour that its society deems appropriate for its sex.

First, the child is more likely to attend to and imitate those people it perceives as similar to itself. Consequently, it is more likely to imitate behaviour modelled by people of the same sex. Second, the people around the child will respond to the behaviour it imitates with either reinforcement or punishment. If a child imitates a model’s behaviour and the consequences are rewarding, the child is likely to continue performing the behaviour. For instance, if parents see a little girl consoling her teddy bear and says “what a kind girl you are,” this is rewarding for the child and makes it more likely that she will repeat the behaviour. Her behaviour has been reinforced, that is, strengthened. Reinforcement can be external or internal and can be positive or negative. If a child wants approval from parents or peers, this approval is an external reinforcement, but feeling happy about being approved of is an internal reinforcement. A child will behave in a way which it believes will earn approval because it desires approval. Positive (or negative) reinforcement will have little impact if the reinforcement offered externally does not match with an individual’s needs. Whether reinforcement is positive or negative, the important factor is that it will usually lead to a change in a person’s behaviour.

Third, the child will also consider what happens to other people when deciding whether or not to copy someone’s actions. This is known as vicarious reinforcement. This relates to attachment to specific models that possess qualities seen as rewarding. Young people have a number of models with whom they identify. These may be people in their immediate world, such as parents or elder siblings, or could be fantasy characters or people in the media. The motivation to identify with a particular model is that they have a quality which the individual would like to possess. Identification occurs with another person (the model) and involves taking on (or adopting) observed behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes of the person with whom you are identifying. The term identification as used by SLT is similar to the Freudian term related to the Oedipus Complex. For example, they both involve internalising or adopting another person’s behaviour. However, during the Oedipus Complex, the child can only identify with the same sex parent,

whereas with SLT the person (child or adult) can potentially identify with any other person. Identification is different to imitation as it may involve a number of behaviours being adopted whereas imitation usually involves copying a single behaviour.

Within the context of this study, SLT's arguments is that our society provides undergraduates in private universities with the opportunities, means and medium to learn how to commit offences and crimes. Hence, there must be offences and crimes and offenders and offences in within that sociological space. The uniqueness of the sociology of private universities suggests that the patterns of offences and crimes will also be unique.

**Table 1 Composition of Respondents on College Basis**

S/N	Colleges	No of administered questionnaire	Male	Female	Male	Female	No of returned questionnaire	Deviation
1	Law	59	28	31	55	25	30	-4
2	Social & Management Sciences	134	65	69	127	62	65	-4
3	Arts & Humanities	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
4	Engineering	71	34	37	68	33	35	-3
5	Medical & Health Sciences	71	34	37	67	34	33	-4
6	Sciences	33	15	18	32	15	17	-1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	176	193	<b>350</b>	169	181	<b>19</b>

*Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2015)*

Return Rate=  $350/369 \times 100\% = 95\%$

### **Results, Findings and Discussion**

All listed offences and crimes were committed by respondents except false reporting, sexual offences i.e. rape and harassment and burglary. The

frequency of offences and crimes committed are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Offences and crimes committed by AA UNIVERSITY students**

SN	Offences	Frequency	Percentage
1	Vandalism	290	82.9
2	Alcohol offences	260	74.3
3	Drugs and substance use	252	72
4	Loitering	243	69.4
5	Simple assault or battery	222	63.4
6	Disorderly conduct	214	61
7	Possession of hard drugs	211	60
8	Tobacco offences	210	60
9	Examination malpractice	190	54
10	fraud	179	51
11	Possession of stolen property	26	7.4
12	theft	19	5.4
13	Harassment	18	5

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2015)

The table above shows the number and percentage of respondents who have committed the offences and crimes. Vandalism, alcohol offenses, and drug and substance abuse, and loitering with about 83%, 74%, 72%, and 69% respectively top the list of offence and crimes committed by undergraduates in AA UNIVERSITY.

**Patterns of Offences and Crimes Committed by AA University Students**

Tables 3 and 4 below present the frequency and patterns of offences and crimes among AA University students using age and gender parameters. The value for each item was computed by aggregating respondents' choices. For example, the total number of respondents who picked theft is 19

representing 5% of the entire sample size. For age group 15-19, 8 respondents, representing 5.7% of that age group and 42% of the total number (19) of respondents that chose ‘theft’. The table shows that nine of the 16 (56%) listed crimes and offences are reportedly committed by at least 50% of the students. This suggests a high rate of offences and crimes among the studied population.

**Table 3: Age Group Differentials in Offences and Crimes Committed by AA UNIVERSITY Students**

S/N	Offences/Ages	15-19 39.70%	20-24 50%	25-29 7.70%	30-34 2.60%	Total 100%
1	Theft	8 5.7% 42%	10 5.7% 53%	1 3.8% 5%	0	19 5%
2	Vandalism	110 79% 38%	165 94% 57%	8 29.60% 3%	7 78% 2%	290 83%
3	Tobacco Offences	98 71% 47%	101 58% 48%	9 33% 4%	2 29% 1%	210 60%
4.	Drugs and substance abuse	100 72% 40%	121 69% 48%	22 82% 8.70%	9 100% 3.60%	252 72%
5.	Alcohol offences	102 73% 39%	128 73% 49%	23 85% 9%	7 78% 3%	260 74%
6.	Harassment	15 10.8% 83%	2 1% 1%	1 3.7% 0.56%	0	18 5%
7.	Loitering	108 78% 44%	111 63% 46%	18 67% 7.4%	66 7% 2%	243 69%
8.	Possession of stolen property	9 6.50% 35%	12 6.90% 46%	2 7.40% 8%	11 4% 4%	26 7.40%
9.	Disorderly conduct	85 61% 40%	109 62% 51%	15 56% 7%	5 56% 2%	214 61%

10. Simple assault or battery	100 72% 45%	100 57% 45%	18 67% 8%	4 44% 2%	222 63%
11. Possession of hard drugs	91 66% 43%	101 58% 48%	12 44% 6%	77 8% 3%	211 60%
12. Fraud	57 41% 32%	98 56% 55%	18 67% 10%	66 7% 3%	179 51%
13. Examination	77 55% 41%	89 51% 47%	17 63% 9%	77 8% 3.7%	179 51%

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2015)

From Table 3 above, the four most prevalent offences and crimes are: vandalism (83%), alcohol offences (74%), drugs and substance abuse (72%), and loitering (69%) (VADL). Vandalism is committed by 94% of 20-24 year olds and 79% of teenagers. From Table 4 below, 89% and 77% of male and female respondents (constituting 52% and 48% of total offenders) respectively, were involved in vandalism. Eighty-five percent of 25-29, and 73% each of 15-19 and 20-24 groups were involved in alcohol offences. Surprisingly, Table 4 shows that higher percentage 77% (54% of total offenders) of female respondents and 71% (46% of total offenders) of male respondents were involved in alcohol offences. Drug and substance abuse seemed to increase with age (except for a drop with the 20-24 age groups 69%), with 72% of teens involved and 82% and 100% of 25-29 and 30-34 age groups. This may suggest that the older a student is, the more likely s/he is to be involved in drugs and substance abuse. This stands to reason because an older student in a private university is likely to have been rusticated or expelled from (an)other university(ies). Sixty-six percent of female and 77% of male respondents reported having committed drugs and substance abuse. Alcohol offences and drug and substance abuse are both very high among the age groups. At least about 70% of each age group is involved in each offence and crime. Loitering is highest among the youngest age group at 78%. There is a significant drop in the next age at 63%, before it increased to 67% in the next age groups. This may be

explained by the tendency for fresh students to want to explore their new found freedom which is much higher than what they probably enjoyed at the pre-university level. They may want to forge new relationships thereby increasing the tendencies for loitering. However, disappointed relationships and the need to focus more on academics may account for sharp drop in loitering as they grow older. Moreover, majority will be in their final years between the ages of 21 to 24, so they might have less motivation to loiter but rather focus on improving their graduating cumulative grade point average (CGPA). In addition, by this age, they would have been in more stable relationships that might reduce the need for loitering. A higher percentage of female students (71%) reported loitering as against 68% for male students.

**Table 4: Gender Differential in Offences and Crimes Committed by AA UNIVERSITY Students**

S/N	Offences	Female Respondents (181)	Fem Rank	Male Respondents (161)	Male Rank	Total
						350
1	Theft	10 5.52% 53%	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 5.33% 47%	13 <sup>th</sup>	19
2	Vandalism	140 77% 48%	1 <sup>st</sup>	150 89% 52%	1 <sup>st</sup>	290
3	Tobacco Offences	100 55% 48%	7 <sup>th</sup>	110 65% 52%	8 <sup>th</sup>	210
4	Drugs and substance abuse	120 66% 48%	4 <sup>th</sup>	130 77% 52%	3 <sup>rd</sup>	252
5	Alcohol offence	140 77% 54%	1 <sup>st</sup>	120 71% 46%	5 <sup>th</sup>	260
6	Harassment	120 84% 44%	13 <sup>th</sup>	10 6% 56%	12 <sup>th</sup>	18

7	Loitering	129 71% 53%	3rd	114 68% 47%	6th	243
8	Possession of stolen property	14 8% 54%	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 7% 46%	11 <sup>th</sup>	26
9	Disorderly conduct	105 58% 49%	6 <sup>th</sup>	109 65% 51%	8th	214
10	Simple assault or battery	114 63% 51%	5 <sup>th</sup>	108 64% 49%	10th	222
11	Possession of hard drugs	100 55% 47%	7th	111 66% 53%	7 <sup>th</sup>	211
12	Fraud	56 31% 31%	9th	123 73% 69%	4 <sup>th</sup>	179
13	Examination malpractice	50 28% 26%	10th	140 83% 74%	2nd	190

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2015)

Among female students, the four most common offences and crimes are vandalism, alcohol offences, loitering, and drug and substance abuse (VALD), while they are vandalism, examination malpractices, drug and substance abuse and fraud (VEDF) among male students.

The next four prevalent offences reportedly committed by at least 60% of respondents were simple assault and battery (63%), disorderly conduct (61%), tobacco offences (60%), and possession of hard drugs (60%). About same percentage of female (63%) and male (64%) respondents have experienced simple assault and battery. The offence is highest (72%) among the youngest age group and lowest (44%) among the oldest age group. The 15-19 and 20-24 group commit 90% of this offence. The result may suggest that the older the students grow, the better they are at managing

their emotions and that of others in order to prevent this offence. Also, it might be that they have come to realise the consequences of such offence and were therefore less motivated to commit it. Disorderly conduct is committed by 65% of male and 58% of female respondents, highest (about 62%) among the younger age groups (15-19 and 20-24). Tobacco offences is highest among the youngest age groups at 71% but significantly reduces as the age groups get higher to 29% among the 30-34 years old. It is higher among male students (65%) than female 55% students. Possession of hard drugs is far higher among male students (66%) than female students at (55%). It is highest among the oldest group at 78%, followed by the youngest group at 66%. This may be because an older student is more likely to be a drug dealer. Examination malpractices is highest among the older student groups at 78% and 63% among the 30-34 and 25-29 years old. This suggests that an older student is more likely than a younger one to be involved in examination malpractices. This is understandable because an older student will be desperate to pass her/his examinations and may resort to malpractices. Also, since s/he is more likely to have been expelled from other schools, s/he might have developed habits (e.g. class truancy, ill-preparedness for examinations) that might make her/him desperate in examination situations. At 83%, significantly higher percentage of male students are involved in examination malpractices as compared to 28% of female students.

### **Regularity of Offences and Crimes among AA University Students**

Apart from knowing the percentage of students involved in the offences and crimes, it may be useful to know how regularly they are committed. Respondents' perceptions of regularity of the offences and crimes were computed by aggregating individual respondent's choices of 'often' and 'very often' for each offence and crime. The aggregate score represents the values for the offence and crime. Table 5 presents the regularity of the results.

**Table 5: Regularity of offences and crimes among AA University Students**

S/N	OFFENCES	VERY RARELY	RARELY	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN	Often+ Very Often
1	Theft	0	0	165 47%	185 53%	<b>350</b>
2	Vandalism	16	30	100 29%	204 (58%)	<b>304</b>
3	Tobacco offences	10	36	104 30%	200 (57%)	<b>304</b>
4	Drugs and substance abuse	01	15	99 28%	235 (67%)	<b>334</b>
5	Alcohol offences	40	91	30	189 (54%)	<b>219</b>
6	Harassment	187	122	40	1 (0.2%)	<b>41</b>
7	Loitering	23	33	199 57%	95 (27%)	<b>294</b>
8	False reporting	111	144	30	65 (19%)	<b>95</b>
9	Possession of stolen property	32	45	200 57%	73 (21%)	<b>273</b>
10	Disorderly conduct	39	44	111 32%	156 (45%)	<b>267</b>
11	Simple assault or battery	27	37	190 57%	86 (25%)	<b>276</b>
12	Possession of hard drugs	15	19	116 33%	200 (57%)	<b>316</b>
13	Fraud	177	169	30	34 (10%)	<b>64</b>
14	Burglary	80	270	0	0	<b>0</b>
15	Examination malpractice	17	77	89 25%	167 48%	<b>256</b>
16	Sexual offences	100	113	77 22%	60 17%	<b>137</b>

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2015)

Key:

0-87 very rarely

88-175 rarely

176-263 often

264-350 very often

Although theft is only committed by 5% of the student population, it is the recurrent offence and crime, as all 350 respondents (100%) reported it as often and very often. This is followed by drug and substance abuse with a value of 334, possession of hard drugs (316), vandalism (304) and tobacco offence (304), loitering (296), simple assault or battery (276), possession of stolen property (273), disorderly conduct (267). These nine offences and crimes are all committed very often in the university because they fall within the 264-350 aggregated values. Theft and possession of stolen property are noteworthy. They are committed by only 5 and 7% of the population, however, committed very often. This suggests an existence of a syndicate perpetrating these offences and crimes. Examination malpractices (256) and alcohol offences (219) occur often. Burglary (0), harassment (41), fraud (64), are very rarely and false reporting (91) rarely committed.

#### **Students' Opinions about Reasons the Offences and Crimes are Committed by Undergraduates**

Why do students commit these offences and crimes? Answer to this was derived through focus group interview/discussion with groups of students as described in the methodology. The reasons given by the respondents are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Students' Opinions about Reasons the Offences and Crimes are Committed**

S/N	Offences	Reasons students commit the offences and crimes
1	Theft	Theft They need money to buy drugs They are rebelling against authority They think they can get away with it When pocket money isn't enough They like the thrill that comes with stealing They want revenge for pain They crave what others have but cannot buy
2	Vandalism	"When I'm bored in class" "When the lecturer is not loud enough" They believe they look cool when they disobey authority Peer influence No self-worth so they want to be noticed
3	Tobacco offences	"Because it is not legal" "To smoke it and get high" "To chew it to avoid stress of smoking" "It is medicinal" "It cures my constipation" "Not to be caught while smoking"
4	Drugs and substance abuse	"When I read, I assimilate better" "To fight depression" "To get high" "To fit in" "To do things I wouldn't rather do if I were normal" "It is medicinal" "Before engaging in sexual intercourse" "Because my friends take it"

5	Alcohol offences	<p>Less presence of parents</p> <p>Finding out who they are</p> <p>Parents take alcohol</p> <p>To misbehave and get noticed</p> <p>Allows people to have more fun</p> <p>Facilitates sexual opportunities</p> <p>Makes women sexier</p> <p>Makes food taste better</p>
6	Harassment	<p>Lack of attention from friends</p> <p>Just to feel popular</p> <p>When someone intimidates you</p> <p>To feel tough and cool</p>
7	Loitering	<p>Bad company</p> <p>Peer influence</p> <p>To carry out illegal activities</p> <p>To engage in 'light' (intimate) activities</p>
8	Disorderly conduct	<p>Why would you curse at a teacher?</p> <p>"If I don't like such a teacher"</p> <p>"Because other people are doing it"</p> <p>"If the teacher fails me continuously"</p> <p>"If I'm bored in class"</p>
9	Possession of hard drugs	<p>"To gain respect among peers"</p> <p>"To feel among"</p> <p>"To impress girls as big boys"</p> <p>"To sell when I go broke"</p> <p>"To use as exchange for sex from female addicts"</p>
10	Burglary	<p>"To get money"</p> <p>"It's a fast and easy way to get rich"</p> <p>"The fear of leaving school and not getting any job"</p> <p>"Bad influence"</p> <p>"Oppression from others committing fraud"</p>

11	Examination malpractice	“The fear of failing” “Being unsure of answers” “The questions are too hard” “Having fun in the exam hall” Feeling among.
12	Sexual offences	“Some people secretly like being harassed” “I love the feeling of domination” “To take revenge.”

From Table 6 above, expectedly, students steal to get money to afford things they think they might otherwise not be able to afford. However, surprisingly, some steal to revenge, because they feel they can get away with it and because of the thrill that comes with stealing. Peer influence is part of the reasons for 75% of the offences listed, including examination malpractice, burglary, possession of hard drugs, disorderly conduct, loitering, drug and substance abuse, harassment, alcohol offences, and vandalism. The VADL, VALD, and VEDEF, with the exception of F (fraud) offences are captured in the list. This suggests that peer influence is a major driver of 75% of the listed offences. The implication is that if the negative effect of peer influence on these young adults is taken care of, the rate of offences and crimes among them might reduce.

Opportunities for sexual offences or activities were connected with alcohol offences, drugs and substance abuse, and possession of hard drugs. False feeling of importance among peers was identified as a strong reason to possess hard drugs, harass, and take alcohol. Surprisingly, some students' reason for tobacco and drugs and substance abuse is the erroneous thinking of their medicinal value, while playing down their addictive tendency. Rebellion against authority is a reason for theft and vandalism. Equally surprising is the notion that some commit alcohol offences, examination malpractices, and theft for the fun of it. For instance, the 'good' feeling that comes with it. This suggests poor moral value among the offenders. Interestingly, alcohol offences and examination malpractices were the second most common offences and crimes committed by female and male students respectively. This suggests that if students are taught to imbibe good values, they will have less motivation to get involved in vices.

From the arguments of the SLT, the study population have learnt to embrace the offences and crimes first, because they observed it in people they perceive as similar to themselves. This explains why majority of them modelled the behaviour successfully. Secondly, they have somehow found the reward they get from modelling this behaviour far outweighs the punishment. Hence, they are motivated by this positive reinforcement. The reinforcement was from external sources being inspired by outside forces, most especially, their peers. Moreover, since female and male experience life differently, hence, it stands to reason that their preferred offences and crimes might be different as confirmed by the findings of the study. It is important to factor in the psychological components of human beings here. The psychological components of man are id, ego, and superego. The last two are relevant to this discourse. Ego- the essence of man, including self-knowledge, and it is internal. It breeds a good sense of personal worth, when properly fed. It could be a good antidote to negative peer pressure. Internal reinforcement feeds an individual's ego. The superego is external and gotten from peers, family, and larger social context. It's the source of external reinforcement. An individual with a weak ego is in a precarious situation because s/he will be looking for external acceptance from peers, society for approval, acceptance, and commendation. This make the individual susceptible to peer-sanctioned activities for self-assurance and sense of personal worth. Hence, her/his superego will dominate and eventually destroy the ego. On the other hand, an individual, who looks inward to feed her or his ego, deriving his/her sense of worth from his/her knowledge of his/her personal resources (abilities or potentials) and achievements will be less susceptible to peer-sanctioned activities for self-assurance and sense of personal worth. A healthy ego and good moral value could be mutually reinforcing.

### **Recommendations**

Parents, primary and secondary schools, higher institutions, and the larger society have their roles to play in raising children that have healthy ego and are morally upright. Parents have the responsibility to train children with healthy ego, whose ego are fed from within themselves. Also, parents need to help their children embrace good moral values through teaching them and showing them by example. At the pre-university stage, the school system

should also include the development of a healthy ego and good value system in their curricular. Universities, especially private ones, considering the social statuses of most of their students, and the unique sociology of campuses, should, as a matter of necessity, put in place mechanism to build the ego of their students and encourage them to embrace good moral values as they come in into the university. Deliberate attempts should be made to build the ego of freshers through curricular and extra-curricular activities. These initiatives should be monitored and evaluated for continual improvement. The society, on its part, should reinforce the need for healthy ego and good morals through social processes and activities in the public spaces of politics, economics, and law through appropriate systems of acknowledgment and reward of desirable behaviour and punishment for the undesirables.

### **Conclusion**

Offences and crimes are high in Nigerian private universities because the society, one way or the other, have encouraged undergraduates to choose these modes of behaviour. This is the argument of the SLT as propounded by Albert Bandura. Vandalism, alcohol offences, drugs and substance abuse, and loitering are the first four most prevalent offences and crimes. There are gender and age group differentials in the pattern of the offences and crimes. Female students often commit vandalism, alcohol offences,

loitering, and drug and substance abuse, while the male students often commit vandalism, examination malpractices, drug and substance abuse and fraud. Across age groups, drug and substance abuse and examination malpractices increase with age. Alcohol offences and drug and substance abuse (committed by at least about 70%) are both very high among the age groups. Most of the 16 listed offences are committed 'very often' and are driven by peer influence and low moral value, confirming the propositions of the theoretical framework of the study. Curbing the menace of offences and crimes among undergraduate in private universities, therefore, requires collaborative effort by parents, universities, and the larger society. Parents need to instil in their children a healthy ego in order to prevent the bad peer influence. Also, they need to instil in them good moral values. Universities need to put in place mechanisms to discourage, prevent and punish offences and crimes. The society needs to promote right values through appropriate punishment and reward. To curb these menaces, therefore, the whole society

needs to be repositioned in the way it presents the opportunities and disincentives for offences and crimes to young people.

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