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Abstract of Culture-Conflict and Delinquency: A Case Study of Colonial Lagos

Colonialism has been regarded by social scientists as a major vehicle of social change in Africa. In line with this general notion, the British colonisation of Nigeria had forcefully imposed western culture on the people of Nigeria, which resulted in a culture-conflict.

Consequently, a great deal of the indigenous socio-political and cultural settings was partially or completely burnt away, or totally overhauled. Thus, in colonial Lagos, new styles were observable in food, clothing, housing and other social behaviours, which caused some far-reaching consequences of both positive and negative natures. However, the major focus of this study is to examine the negative consequences of the social change heralded by the advent of colonialism in Lagos as it relates to youths.

This is the social problem called juvenile delinquency. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to trace the root cause of juvenile delinquency in colonial Lagos to the advent of colonialism. The argument of this paper is that the sudden rise in juvenile delinquency in the 1920s had its root in the advent of colonialism which brought with it urbanisation and Western culture both of which created an irreparable damage to the institution of family.

The immediate effect of this damage was the sudden upsurge in social vices by Lagos youth such as stealing, gambling, wandering, drug addiction, hawking, juvenile prostitution, and pick-pocketing, just some examples which caught the attention of the colonial officials in the 1930s. In addition to the foregoing, the paper tries to argue that these delinquencies are typical of an urban city. In other words, juvenile delinquencies could be regarded as a feature of cosmopolitanism.

To justify this argument, the advent of colonial rule and the resultant dramatic transformation of Lagos into a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous urban city will be adequately examined. This paper will also examine the reaction of colonial government to the problem which led to the creation of the social welfare department in the colony of Lagos saddled with the responsibility of curbing these delinquencies.