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**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS  
IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: CHALLENGES  
AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA**

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## ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, juvenile delinquency is still a major social issue that has a significant impact on neighborhood safety, social stability, and national advancement. By encouraging rehabilitation, reintegration, and preventive measures, social work interventions are essential in addressing the root causes of juvenile delinquent behaviour. Numerous obstacles, such as insufficient institutional and policy frameworks, a lack of funds and resources, a lack of qualified social workers, and a lack of cooperation amongst juvenile justice system players, restrict the efficacy of these interventions. There are encouraging opportunities to advance social work practice in Nigeria in spite of these obstacles. Viable routes to better results include bolstering legal and policy frameworks, funding social worker capacity building, incorporating community-based strategies, and using technology for juvenile rehabilitation. This study looks at the difficulties social work interventions in juvenile delinquency face in Nigeria and considers the possibilities for developing a system that is more inclusive, durable, and responsive. The study adds to the conversation on improving the role of social work in fostering positive youth development and changing juvenile justice by pointing out both challenges and opportunities.

**Keywords:** Juvenile Delinquency, Social Work Interventions, Juvenile Justice, Rehabilitation.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In many developing countries, including Nigeria, where minors are more likely to engage in deviant and criminal behaviors due to factors like rapid urbanization, economic inequality, unemployment, family disintegration, and exposure to crime, juvenile delinquency has become a serious social problem (Alemika, 2016; UNODC, 2020). Meanwhile, the concept of juvenile behaviour has to do with the involvement of young people, usually under the age of 18, in actions that contravene established legal codes, social standards, or criminal laws is referred to as juvenile delinquency (Ojo & Olatomide, 2018). Juvenile crimes like stealing, truancy, cultism, drug misuse, and violent crimes are common, endangering social harmony and impeding the country's social and economic advancement. Weak institutional frameworks, overcrowded juvenile detention facilities, insufficient rehabilitation programs, and the stigmatization of young offenders all contribute to the situation in Nigeria (Ojo & Olatomide, 2018).

Through the provision of preventive, remedial, and rehabilitative services, social work interventions offer vital tools for tackling adolescent delinquency. Through counseling, family therapy, community sensitization, skill-building initiatives, and advocacy for the defense of children's rights, social workers concentrate on reversing deviant behaviours (UNICEF, 2019). Assuring that restorative rather than just punitive measures are used, they also play a role in bridging the gap between juvenile offenders and the criminal justice system (Ekpe & Mba, 2021). Since punitive measures by themselves have not been successful in reintegrating young offenders into society or reforming them, these interventions are essential (Chukwuma & Agbu, 2020).

The efficiency of social work interventions in Nigeria is hampered by several issues, notwithstanding their significance. These include societal stigma against

offenders, a lack of appropriate juvenile justice legislation, a lack of professional competency, poor inter-agency collaboration, and insufficient funding for social welfare services (Okoye, 2018). Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of cults, peer pressure, and social media-driven lifestyles has led to new aspects of adolescent delinquency that are difficult for current solutions to address (Ojo, 2019). Nonetheless, there are still a lot of opportunities to enhance interventions through community-driven strategies that prioritize prevention and reintegration, legislative changes, social service funding, and social worker capacity building. Thus, it is pertinent and crucial to look at the difficulties and opportunities of social work interventions in juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. In addition to adding to scholarly discussions, this kind of research helps stakeholders, practitioners, and policy-makers improve institutional frameworks and tactics to lower juvenile delinquency and promote youth development.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Forms of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria

Because of the intricate interactions between economic hardship, fast urbanization, inadequate family structures, and structural shortcomings in justice and education, juvenile delinquency has grown to be a major social concern in Nigeria. Although juvenile criminality is not new, recent trends show that the type and frequency of delinquent behaviour among youth have changed.

According to studies, young people in Nigeria are becoming more involved in violent crimes such as gang-related violence, assault, cultism, and armed robbery. This is prevalent particularly in urban areas like Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Kano (Ajah & Nwokeoma, 2019). Property crimes, such as theft, pickpocketing, and burglary, are still common and are frequently caused by peer pressure, unemployment,

and poverty (Otu, 2020).

The rise of cultism, especially in secondary and university institutions, is a characteristic pattern of juvenile crime in Nigeria. Cult groups combine extortion, drug addiction, violent rivalries, and even violence with political motivations (Okpi, 2018). Peer pressure, identity issues, and young people's desire for safety or social acceptance are the main causes of this trend.

Both the cause and the effect of drug addiction on adolescent delinquency have been identified. Risky behaviors, violent crimes, and truancy are closely associated with the usage of cannabis, codeine-based syrups, tramadol, and methamphetamine among Nigerian youths (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2018; Ajah et al., 2021). Adolescent substance use is more common in underprivileged metropolitan areas and areas where there is instability.

Cybercrime, or "Yahoo Yahoo" is becoming more common among young Nigerians. Young people are frequently driven to commit financial frauds, identity theft, and online fraud by peer pressure, materialism, and exposure to international digital cultures (Adeiran, 2008; Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). This illustrates how traditional street crimes are giving way to offenses mediated by technology in delinquency.

Recent reports indicate a rise in female engagement, especially in drug misuse, sex work, and online fraud, despite the fact that male juveniles are disproportionately involved in delinquent behaviours (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). This evolving trend calls into question the conventional wisdom that delinquency is mostly a male problem.

## **2.2 Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors Influencing Juvenile Delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency has strong roots in socioeconomic and cultural factors that influence opportuni-

ties, attitudes, and behaviors rather than being just the result of personal decisions. Youth involvement in deviant and criminal activities is facilitated by cultural influences, poor social institutions, and economic deprivation in several contexts, including Nigeria and other developing cultures.

### **2.2.1 Socio-Economic Factors**

**Poverty and Economic Deprivation:** One of the best indicators of adolescent criminality is still poverty. Due to a lack of access to social opportunities, high-quality education, and basic necessities, children from low-income households are more likely to turn to gang membership, petty stealing, or truancy as survival tactics (Farrington et al., 2017). Economic hardship is a major factor in street selling, begging, and child labor in many Asian and African countries. These activities are frequently preludes to delinquent behavior (Ajah & Nwokeoma, 2019).

High youth unemployment rates cause stress and dissatisfaction, which can push young people to commit crimes. According to Agnew's (2019) strain theory, young people choose illegal means when their access to legal avenues for accomplishing socially acceptable goals is restricted. Increased participation in violent crimes, cultism, and cybercrime (such as "Yahoo Yahoo") has been connected to unemployment and economic inequality in Nigeria (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017).

Dropping out of school or having limited access to high-quality education makes people more likely to become delinquent. Disengagement from schools eliminates a vital source of structure and socialization, as schools are protective settings (Maguire et al., 2019). Cultism, drug misuse, and gang involvement have been closely linked to school dropouts and truancy in Nigeria (Okpi, 2018).

Delinquent subcultures are more likely to flourish in areas that are rapidly becoming more urbanized, overcrowded, and poorly constructed. According to Shaw

and McKay's (1942/2013) social disorganization theory, delinquency flourishes in these settings because informal social control is diminished by weak community institutions, such as families, schools, and religious organizations.

Cultural changes in family structures, including the increase in single-parent households, divorce, or foster care, can have an impact on discipline and supervision, which raises the likelihood of delinquency. Community kid monitoring has decreased in collectivist African contexts due to the breakdown of extended family structures (Otu, 2020). According to Hoeve et al. (2011), harsh or authoritarian parenting, which is prevalent in some cultures, can also encourage disobedience and deviance in young people.

Youth identities and peer groups are shaped in part by culture. According to Haynie (2002), adolescents frequently fit into delinquent subcultures that place a high value on aggressiveness, substance abuse, and material achievement. When reliable family or community support is lacking, gangs and cult organizations in Nigeria act as powerful cultural influences, giving people a sense of identity and belonging (Okpi, 2018).

In certain cultural contexts, corruption, gender inequity, and violence are seen as normal, which subtly promotes adolescent delinquency. For example, the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria exposes children to exploitation and criminal recruitment through street begging by children under the guise of religious education (Aghedo & Eke, 2013). Likewise, in areas impacted by political violence or militancy, young people are frequently used as weapons of mass destruction (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

Adolescent behaviour is also influenced by globalized media and popular culture. The normalization of computer crime among young people has been facilitated by the glamorization of wealth, quick lives, and cyber fraud in Nigerian music and film (Adeniran,

2008). As consumerism and "get-rich-quick" ideas take precedence over moral or social conventions, this represents a societal shift in values.

### **2.3 The Legal Framework and Juvenile Justice System in Nigeria**

Children and young people who transgress the law can be treated, rehabilitated, and reintegrated into society through the Nigerian Juvenile Justice System (JJS). The system, which has its roots in both statutory and customary traditions, seeks to strike a balance between the protection of juveniles' rights and welfare and the requirement for accountability (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). But even with innovative legal tools, their efficacy has frequently been hampered by operational issues. Several laws, including one from the early colonial era that created juvenile courts, sanctioned schools, and borstal institutions for young offenders, form the basis of Nigeria's juvenile justice system. A domestication of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). In addition to offering specific juvenile detention facilities, the CRA offers a rights-based framework that prioritizes rehabilitation, diversion, and non-custodial measures for adolescents in confrontation with the law (Olokooba & Yekini, 2018).

### **2.4 Preventive Social Work Interventions**

Interventions in preventive social work are proactive measures intended to lessen the probability of social issues before they arise or worsen. Prevention focuses on early detection, risk reduction, and capacity-building within families, schools, and communities rather than reacting after harm has occurred (Payne, 2020). Preventive interventions are essential for enhancing resilience and fostering social well-being in the areas of substance misuse, family dysfunction, and juvenile delinquency.

Since the family is the main socialization unit, fam-

ily-focused therapies are crucial to preventing children from engaging in maladaptive and delinquent behaviours. Parent-child bonds are strengthened, and the likelihood of neglect or abuse is decreased by programs that teach good parenting techniques, effective discipline, and communication (Hoeve et al., 2011). To resolve conflicts, enhance parenting techniques, and lessen risky behaviours in young people, preventive social work interventions use systemic strategies such as functional family therapy and counselling (Alexander et al., 2013). Families under financial strain are also more susceptible to child abuse and juvenile criminality. A preventive safety net is provided by offering access to healthcare, social welfare programs, and financial aid (Murray & Farrington, 2010).

Schools play a crucial role in influencing behavior, fostering social skills, and lowering the likelihood of deviance. Improving protective factors and reducing hazards are common goals of preventive social work interventions in schools. In order to address behavioural, intellectual, and emotional concerns, school social workers assist in identifying kids who are at risk and offer counselling and referral services (Kelly et al., 2010). Peer mediation and conflict resolution training are examples of structured programs that reduce violence and promote inclusive educational environments. To discourage drug misuse, truancy, and dangerous behaviours, preventive treatments include resilience training, peer support groups, and health education.

The larger context in which children and families live is provided by communities, and structural and environmental concerns are addressed by community-based social work interventions. Social workers raise awareness and gather resources for campaigns against drug misuse, child labor, domestic violence, and juvenile criminality. In order to prevent criminality and social isolation, sports, the arts, vocational training, and mentorship programs assist in directing young people's energies toward constructive endeav-

ours (Catalano et al., 2012). To address the underlying reasons of vulnerability, preventive community social work also include advocating for laws that increase access to child protection, healthcare, education, and housing (Reisch, 2016).

## **2.5 Social Work Corrective and Rehabilitative Interventions**

The main goals of social work practice are to address current issues, lessen harmful habits, and encourage reintegration into society through corrective and rehabilitative interventions. Corrective and rehabilitative techniques address people, families, and organisations that are already dealing with social, psychological, or behavioural issues, as opposed to preventative treatments, which aim to lower risks before they materialize (Payne, 2020). The dedication of social work to social justice, empowerment, and restoration is reflected in these interventions. Corrective interventions, which are frequently implemented in situations like juvenile delinquency, substance addiction, domestic violence, or school maladjustment, are prompt reactions to maladaptive or detrimental behaviours.

Rehabilitation emphasises long-term rehabilitation, reintegration, and empowerment in addition to correction. It is particularly pertinent to post-trauma reintegration, addiction treatment, and criminal justice settings. Rehabilitative therapies for adults and juveniles leaving correctional facilities prioritise halfway homes, mentorship, and vocational training to facilitate a seamless transition back into society. Rehabilitative efforts also include restorative justice programs that encourage offenders to make apologies to victims and communities (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2019).

Social workers are essential to drug rehabilitation programs because they help with family participation, therapy, and relapse prevention. Therapeutic communities and multi-systemic therapy offer organised assistance for sustained sobriety (Brooks & McHenry, 2009). Rehabilitation combines education, psycholog-

ical skill development, and vocational training to help clients create sustainable livelihoods and avoid reoffending or relapsing (Catalano et al., 2012).

## **2.6 The Role of Social Workers in Correctional Facilities in Nigeria**

Nigerian correctional facilities, such as prisons, remand houses, and borstal institutions, are required to rehabilitate prisoners in addition to punishing them. However, these objectives are frequently undermined by overcrowding, underfunding, and punitive dispositions (Ajah & Nwokeoma, 2019). In this regard, social workers are essential in fostering rehabilitation, reintegration, and human rights protection, making sure that prisons fulfil their transformative mission rather than acting as harsh punishment facilities.

**Casework and Psychosocial Support:** For prisoners with emotional, psychological, and behavioural issues, social workers in Nigerian prisons offer psychosocial interventions and therapy. They deal with problems like trauma, depression, substance misuse, and anger management through both individual and group therapy (Roberts, 2019). In order to lower recidivism and get prisoners ready for a smooth transition back into society, this help is essential.

**Programs for Rehabilitation and Reformation:** Social workers create and carry out rehabilitation programs that include literacy instruction, life skills training, behavioral modification programs, and vocational training. The goal of these programs is to give prisoners the coping mechanisms and skills they need to successfully reintegrate into society after being released (Gendreau & Andrews, 2017). Societal workers' participation in skills training offers long-term societal advantages in Nigeria, where poverty and unemployment are factors that lead to reoffending.

**Advocacy and Human Rights Protection:** Nigerian prisons are frequently criticized for their overcrowding, cruel treatment, and violations of the rights of their inmates (Ene, 2020). As advocates, social work-

ers make sure that prisoners' rights to healthcare, education, legal representation, and dignity are respected. To combat systemic inequities, especially for women, children, and vulnerable groups, they also collaborate with NGOs and legal aid agencies.

**Services for Reintegration and Aftercare:** One of social workers' most important responsibilities is to prepare prisoners for life after prison. To lessen stigma and promote acceptance, they plan for release and communicate with companies, communities, and families. Social workers offer post-release aftercare services, such as monitoring, job placement, and counselling, to reduce recidivism (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2019).

**Restorative justice and mediation:** Social workers frequently mediate disputes between victims, offenders, and communities to support restorative justice procedures. These programs lessen the need for punitive actions while fostering accountability, healing, and reconciliation. Social worker-mediated restorative justice techniques offer an alternative to incarceration in Nigeria, where prison overcrowding is still a concern (Animasawun & Siyanbola, 2017).

**Policy, Institutional Reform, and Research:** In addition to providing direct services, social workers support reforms that humanize Nigeria's criminal system and participate in studies on correctional procedures. They impact policies toward more restorative and rights-based corrections by drawing attention to rehabilitation gaps (Reisch, 2016).

## **2.6 Social Work Collaboration with Law Enforcement and Judiciary in Nigeria**

Particularly in situations involving crime prevention, juvenile justice, family conflicts, and human rights advocacy, social work practice in Nigeria is rapidly overlapping with the fields of law enforcement and the judiciary. This partnership underscores the understanding that a multidisciplinary, human-centred approach is necessary to combat crime and social issues, as punitive measures alone are insufficient (Ajah &

Nwokeoma, 2019). Social workers enhance the legal and enforcement roles of the justice system by contributing their knowledge of rehabilitation, mediation, and psychosocial support.

## 2.7 Collaboration with Law Enforcement

To guarantee that victims and criminals are treated humanely, social workers collaborate with law enforcement and other security organisations. Social workers collaborate with law enforcement to guarantee safety and justice while offering counselling, crisis intervention, and referrals to victims of crime, including survivors of gender-based violence, human trafficking, and abuse (Okoye, 2014). Instead of incarcerating young people, social workers and police officers work together to promote diversionary measures including counselling, community service, and restorative justice (Animasawun & Siyanbola, 2017). With an emphasis on human rights-based policing, social workers frequently help law enforcement increase its capability, especially when it comes to managing vulnerable populations like women, children, and people with disabilities (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019).

## 2.8 Collaboration with the Judiciary

In order to achieve justice that is restorative, rehabilitative, and corrective rather than just punishing, the judiciary offers a formal forum where social workers' knowledge is essential. In order to guide sentence decisions, judges sometimes rely on social workers to submit probation or social inquiry reports that evaluate an offender's history, family circumstances, and chances for rehabilitation (Ene, 2020). Social workers offer expert testimony, psychosocial evaluations, and suggestions that are in the best interests of the child in custody disputes, child protection cases, and juvenile delinquency hearings (Olokooba & Yekini, 2018).

To ensure compliance and provide continuing counselling and reintegration support, social workers work in conjunction with probation officers and court authorities to monitor offenders serving non-custodial

sentences (Gendreau & Andrews, 2017). Restorative justice approaches, in which social workers mediate between victims and offenders to promote reconciliation, restitution, and decreased recidivism, are becoming more accepted by courts (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2019).

## 2.9 Challenges of Social Work Interventions in Nigeria

In Nigeria, social work plays a critical role in tackling social issues such substance misuse, family difficulties, poverty, juvenile delinquency, and gender-based violence. The profession nevertheless faces systemic and structural challenges that limit its influence, despite its continued significance. The core challenges are discussed below:

- **Inadequate Institutional and Policy Support:** In Nigeria, the effectiveness of social work interventions is hampered by the lack of robust institutional structures. Nigeria has yet to grant the profession sufficient legal recognition and autonomy, in contrast to nations where social work is completely professionalized and incorporated into governance systems (Okoye, 2014). Uneven domestication among states restricts consistency in implementation, though the Child Rights Act (CRA, 2003) and accompanying policies offer a legal basis for child welfare (Olokooba & Yekini, 2018). Social workers' capacity to impact legislation, uphold children's rights, and provide successful interventions is compromised by this disparity.
- **Limited Resources and Funding:** One of the biggest obstacles to effective social work is still underfunding. Compared to infrastructure, politics, or security, the government spends very little on social services (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). As a result, there are insufficient rehabilitation facilities, understaffed establishments, limited professional training opportunities, and an ex-

cessive dependence on non-governmental organizations and donor agencies for vital initiatives. Social workers' capacity to provide tailored and long-lasting interventions is sometimes hampered by their heavy caseloads and limited resources (Ene, 2020).

- **Stigma and Societal Perceptions:** In Nigeria, social work is sometimes misinterpreted as volunteer or philanthropic labour rather than a vocation needing specific education and training. In interdisciplinary partnerships with law enforcement, the judiciary, or healthcare providers, this view diminishes practitioners' legitimacy and limits their impact (Okoye, 2014). Cultural stigma deters vulnerable groups, offenders, and abuse victims from interacting with social workers at the community level. For instance, victims of domestic abuse may be silenced by cultural expectations of endurance, while children involved in legal issues are frequently viewed as "lost causes" (Ajah & Nwokeoma, 2019).
- **Weak Implementation of Juvenile Justice Laws:** Nigeria has adopted the CRA (2003) and ratified international treaties including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but enforcement is still patchy and ineffective. Due to insufficient remand houses and borstals, many adolescents are still held in adult jails, where they are subjected to seasoned offenders and their rights are violated (Ene, 2020). Due to a lack of institutional capacity, inadequate training, and poor collaboration with law enforcement, social workers who need to be at the forefront of diversion, probation, and rehabilitation are marginalized. This undercuts juvenile justice's emphasis on rehabilitative practices.
- **Systemic Corruption:** Nigeria has adopted the CRA (2003) and ratified international treaties including the United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child, but enforcement is still patchy and ineffective. Due to insufficient remand houses and borstals, many adolescents are still held in adult jails, where they are subjected to seasoned offenders and their rights are violated (Ene, 2020). Due to a lack of institutional capacity, inadequate training, and poor collaboration with law enforcement, social workers who need to be at the forefront of diversion, probation, and rehabilitation are marginalized. This undercuts juvenile justice's emphasis on rehabilitative practices.

## **2.1 Prospects for Effective Social Work Interventions in Nigeria**

There are many opportunities to improve social work interventions in Nigeria, despite major obstacles. Social work may make a significant difference in tackling problems including family crises, community-based rehabilitation, and juvenile delinquency by utilizing creative next section discusses the most potential areas are discussed below;

- **Strengthening Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Reforming and implementing laws and policies is a significant opportunity to enhance social work interventions. Although Nigeria already has frameworks like the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA, 2015) and the Child Rights Act (CRA, 2003), their implementation is still lacking. A stronger basis for safeguarding vulnerable populations and empowering social workers will result from the efficient domestication and enforcement of these laws in every state (Olokoba & Yekini, 2018). Additionally, accountability, recognition, and long-term policy support would be guaranteed by the formal professionalization of social work through regulatory bodies and integration into public sector organizations (Okoye, 2014).
- **Capacity Building for Social Workers:** Effective interventions require social workers to be more

competent, which can only be achieved through ongoing education and training. Practitioners can be prepared to handle new societal concerns by receiving specialized training in fields like digital literacy, trauma-informed care, restorative justice, and forensic social work (Turner, 2017). Professional associations can guarantee ethical standards and ongoing professional growth, while partnerships between academic institutions, governmental bodies, and international organizations can foster skill development. A more robust staff will improve the quality of services provided by courts, community initiatives, and correctional facilities.

- **Integrating Community-Based Approaches:** It is important to address social issues in the social and cultural circumstances in which they arise. Social workers can encourage rehabilitation and reintegration by bolstering community-based interventions and utilizing regional networks, resources, and established support systems (Okoye, 2014). While encouraging inclusion and acceptance, initiatives like community restorative justice programs, family support groups, and peer mentoring might lessen the need for correctional measures. Sustainability is also improved by community involvement since local ownership increases the likelihood that programs will be successful.
- **Leveraging Technology for Juvenile Rehabilitation:** Technology is a potent instrument for enhancing social work treatments, including juvenile rehabilitation. E-learning possibilities, case management mobile applications, and online counselling platforms can increase access to psychosocial support and skill development (Catalano et al., 2012). By remotely connecting young people to mentorship, educational materials, and vocational training, digital tools can help support diversion programs. Additionally, social workers may better track progress, keep an eye on recid-

ivism, and assess program results with data-driven techniques. Technology integration guarantees that interventions are adaptable to the reality of a generation that is linked to the internet.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, social work interventions are crucial for tackling complicated socioeconomic problems such as family dissolution, gender-based violence, juvenile delinquency, and community disintegration. However, cultural stigma, a lack of finance, a lack of institutional support, a lack of enforcement of juvenile justice legislation, and systemic corruption limit their efficacy. Notwithstanding these challenges, there are excellent chances to improve interventions through technological innovation, community-based strategies, professional capacity building, and legal reforms. Social work must be acknowledged and encouraged as a vital component of social development and justice if Nigeria is to become a more equitable and restorative nation. This study advances knowledge by offering a sophisticated comprehension of the socioeconomic factors, trends, and patterns influencing adolescent delinquency in Nigeria. This study adds to the body of knowledge in criminology and social work by placing juvenile delinquency within Nigeria's own cultural, economic, and political contexts, since most of the previous literature generalizes it throughout Africa.

By investigating the integration of preventive, corrective, and rehabilitative interventions to offer a comprehensive approach to juvenile justice in Nigeria, the study contributes to the body of knowledge. It highlights social work as a crucial pillar in the prevention and rehabilitation of delinquent children by bridging theoretical insights with real-world models that support restorative justice.

This study highlights structural flaws that impede efficient social work practice in Nigeria by examining

issues such systemic corruption, poor institutional support, and the lax application of juvenile justice legislation. By showing how better legislative frameworks, capacity building, and community integration can improve service delivery and guarantee justice for juveniles, it adds to policy discussions.

The research presents novel avenues for social work practice in a fast digitizing society by suggesting digital tools like data-driven monitoring systems, mobile-based skill acquisition programs, and e-counseling platforms.

#### **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

By creating a regulating body, incorporating social workers into government agencies, and guaranteeing the Child Rights Act is domesticated and upheld nationally, the Nigerian government should completely professionalize social work. It is important to allocate sufficient funds for community rehabilitation centres, prisons, and social welfare initiatives. Partnerships between the public and commercial sectors can also raise more funds for long-term solutions. To improve service delivery, ongoing professional training in specific fields including digital case management, trauma-informed care, forensic social work, and restorative justice should be offered. In order to lessen stigma and increase sustainability, social workers should actively involve local communities in the planning and execution of rehabilitation programs. They should do this by utilizing peer networks, family systems, and cultural values. Digital tools should be used for vocational training, counselling, and tracking the results of rehabilitation. By guaranteeing accountability in case management and resource distribution, technology can help increase transparency and decrease corruption.

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