

ABSTRACT

Factors contributing to lawlessness, violence and indiscipline among students
in secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago

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This thesis focuses on the sources of violence, lawlessness and indiscipline among students in secondary schools. The question of why students are delinquent has frequently been addressed in various sociological and criminological studies. These studies clearly show areas such as demographic characteristics, social and individual factors related to delinquency.

In this thesis, the approach to this social problem is twofold. The researcher combined both scientific and non-scientific methods to finding the factors contributing to delinquency. Firstly, the investigator used a positivistic approach to glean data. The investigator examined the effects of past regressor variables on delinquency. Scientific data were derived from a questionnaire developed by the researcher in 2005 and distributed to 538 students aged 13 and over from three secondary schools. Secondly, non-scientific data were derived by self-reports and observation.

The results of the analysis suggest there is one guiding principle underlying this entire thesis: delinquency is assignable to no single universal source. The question of why students are delinquent was answered using a multiplicity of quite familiar explanatory variables such as a lack of religious involvement, low self-esteem, academic performance, negative parental practice, alcohol abuse, parent's level of education and negative perception held by teachers. In addition, the home environment of the students can partly explain the upsurge of violence, lawlessness and indiscipline. The findings suggest that lawlessness, violence and indiscipline are dire social problems. The single most important social consequence of this thesis is the burgeoning need for change in the attitudes and viewpoints of society as a whole. Parents, teachers, religious leaders and politicians need to take a more active role in keeping children safe. Overall, policy makers need to focus on the family and offer an array of services such as substance abuse treatment, parenting classes and moral education classes.

Keywords: Wendy Prescott; violence, lawlessness and indiscipline, school, delinquency.