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Title of Article: ‘Sentencing Youthful Criminals: The Need to Juxtapose Penalty with Techniques of Character Modification’

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Abstract: Crimes are broadly classified as misdemeanour or felony. In practice, they are also labelled as heinous and non-heinous offences. In either the former or latter classification, different penalties are provided in the code to reflect the seriousness and non-seriousness of the misconduct of an individual after conviction has been made by the Court. The punishment passed by the court seems targeted at crime reduction but crime rate speaks to the contrary particularly among young persons who reside in rural areas. The objective of this article is to evaluate the punishment schemes in the Code with a view to determining its role in meeting the objective(s) for its use. The paper adopts doctrinal research methods in the analysis of issues relating to punishment and the impact of same on youthful criminals. The article finds that offence-centered sentence seems to have less impact on the character modification of youthful criminals than a holistic sentence comprising the peculiarities of young offenders and the offence committed. The paper recommends a review of the law so that sentence will inter alia reflect the nature of young criminals and their level of exposure. The article has re-affirmed the need for sentence orders to be complimented where necessary with character modification techniques for better actualization of the goals of sentence.

Keywords: Youthful criminals; Character modification techniques, Non-heinous offences; Custodial sentence; Penalty.