

## PEER INFLUENCE AS PREDICTOR OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DUTSIN-MA METROPOLIS, KATSINA STATE

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### Abstract

*The study investigates the influence of peers as predictor of delinquency behaviour among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma metropolis. The samples for the study were 100 (N=100) recruited from public secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma, Nigeria. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of the sample. Standard self-administered questionnaires were employed to gather data among the selected schools. They were Resistance to Peer Influence (RPI) and Self Report Delinquency Scale. The result revealed that there is a negative and significant correlation between peer influence and delinquency behaviour among secondary school students, thereby suggesting that peer influence encourages delinquent behaviour among the students. As an implication, adolescents should be sufficiently educated and trained as a preventive measure to ensure they make friends with the right people and socialize themselves in conformity to the social expectation.*

**Keywords:** Peer Influence, Delinquency behaviour, Adolescent.

### Introduction

The issue of delinquency is observing to be as also humanity itself. There is no gainsaying of the fact that, a proportion of adult criminals have a background of early delinquency. Farrington (2004) describe delinquency as crimes committed by young people. Delinquency comprises legal infractions ranging from littering to murder. Even through the crimes committed by adults, because it is assumed adolescents could be the same as those committed by adults, because it is assumed adolescence are yet to comprehend fully the consequences of their actions, they are tried differently by the juvenile court system, the type of punishment they received to prevent them from committing illegal act. The society or the environment where the child lives has much to do with his behaviour.

Santrock (2007) confirmed this assumption when he said that, a community with a high crime rate, cannot but express its adolescence to criminal activities since they have to copy models who are into criminality. Santrock also identified predictors of delinquency to include conflict with authority, minor convert acts followed by property damage, minor aggression followed by fighting and violence. More signs of delinquency according to Loeber and Farrington (2002), Stettheimer – Loeber *et al.*, (2002), included authority conflict. This has to do with show of stubbornness before the age of twelve. Covert behaviour which include minor convert acts; such as lying leading gradually to more serious delinquency.

Breivik et al (2009); a sense of social insistence occurs in which the poor and the wealthy live close to one another. Income inequality causes feeling of anger and hostility which precede criminal behavior, Blaus (2001) reported that adolescents residing in poor lower city area will experience delinquency producing a state frustration. Other research found that the variable best to predict crime rates was proximity in which poor and wealthy people lived together. Siegel, (2001) found that income inequality

along with peer relation, predict crime rate. Siegel's analysis has higher achievement aspiration but few economic opportunities. These studies indicate that young people living in deteriorated areas of the city that are close to more affluent neighborhood will most likely resort to such crime as homicide robbery.

Battin (2013) purported that the rationale of peer counselling is based on the assumption that people who share similar characteristics and ages tend to influence one another. Similarly Cherishe (2013) in Zimbabwe reiterated the importance of peer counselling in schools when he argued that information was easily disseminated through peer counseling. Peer counselling is consistent with the social cognitive theory which informs this study and which purports that social variable, such as peers, which may influence earner's career choices. Peers influence career choice through peer interaction. It was rereleased in Uganda (Okiror & Otabong, 2015) and in Kenya (Walaba & Kiboss, 2013) that peer interactions influence students in choosing careers. As the students interact, they share information about careers. This is in line with Krumboltz' Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of learners interacting with one another in their environment. Still on the roles puff the teachers towards their student, Buzzeli and Johnston (2002), went further to describe teachers as moral agents in the live of their students.

A primary point of contention among theorists concerns whether deviant peers make a unique contribution to the development of delinquent behaviour or simply reflect a common underlying explanatory factor (i.e., homophily) among those with a predisposition to criminality (Glueck and Hirschi, 2009). Recent, large-scale longitudinal studies of the development of delinquent behaviour have allowed researchers to examine the temporal ordering of deviant peer involvement and delinquent behaviour more closely. Rather than asserting the primacy of either deviant peer influence or dispositional characteristics in the development of delinquent behavior, such studies suggest that these factors influence each other reciprocally over the course of an adolescent's criminal career (Thornberry, 2012).

Closely related to the question of whether deviant peer influences operate differently for early- and late starters is the question of whether these influences operate differently at different phases of delinquency. Elliott and Menard's (2006) analysis of the National Youth Survey (NYS) data provides the most detailed account to date of the developmental transitions in delinquent behavior, association with deviant peers, and the relation between these two variables. Consistent with prior studies (e.g., Farrington, 2014), youth in the NYS sample followed a trajectory of delinquent behaviour characterized by movement from minor to more serious delinquency. Specifically, both minor and index offending increased over the period of mid-adolescence, with peak prevalence of minor offenses at age 14 and index offenses at age 15. After age 17 or 18, the prevalence of both minor and major offenses began to decrease with only a minority of juvenile offenders continuing their criminal careers into adulthood. Developmental transitions in deviant peer group involvement follow a similar trajectory, increasing until age 15, remaining stable until age 18, then decreasing to rates comparable to pre-adolescence by the early 20s.

Deviant peer influence in the context of gang involvement may differ in important ways from the influence of deviant peers in more informal peer structures. Findings from the Rochester Youth Study suggest that gang membership may provide a unique form of deviant peer influence. Comparing the

criminal activity of gang members and non-gang members who are involved with delinquent peers, Battin et al. (2013) found that gang involvement made a unique contribution to criminal behavior, even after controlling for both prior delinquency and the number of delinquent friends. These findings suggest that gang membership influences delinquent behaviour in a way that cannot be adequately explained by mere association with delinquent peers. Apparently, the culture of a gang exerts influence that goes well beyond the individual influences of each member. Understanding differences between processes that influence delinquency within gangs and those that operate in more informal peer networks is necessary in order to understand the mechanisms of peer group influence.

Another aspect of context that has been examined is the quality of the peer relationship in question. Although some researchers have suggested that peer influence is stronger in the context of close or intimate relationships, others have argued that strong attachment to peers is not necessary, or may in fact lessen the likelihood of deviance (i.e., Hirschi's Social Control Theory). Osgood and Haynie (2003) used data from the Adolescent Health Survey to examine peer influences on deviant behaviour as a function of the quality of the peer relationship. They found that the level of attachment to peers and time spent with peers were unrelated to delinquency and did not moderate the impact of peers' deviance on individual deviant behavior. Similar findings have been reported by Elliott and Voss (2004).

Vitaro, Brendgen, and Tremblay (2014) assessed three sets of moderator variables in the relation between best friend's deviance and a male's delinquency in early adolescence: child characteristics (disruptive behaviour in childhood, attitudes toward delinquency), family characteristics (attachment to parents, parental monitoring), and social-setting characteristics (deviance in extended peer network). They found that boys' history of disruptive behavior, attachment to parents, and attitudes toward delinquency all served as moderators of the link between best friends' deviance and the boy's own delinquent behavior.

The utility of delinquency training as a mechanism for explaining the influence of deviant peers on deviant behaviour has been supported in several follow-up studies. Deviancy training has been linked to increases in tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use between the ages of 15 and 17 (Dishion, Capaldi, Spracklen, & Li, 2009), serious adolescent violence (Dishion, Eddy, Haas, & Spracklen, 2011), and aggression toward female partners (Capaldi, Dishion, Stoolmiller, & Yoerger, 2008). Of importance in each of these studies, the delinquency-training process contributed to escalation of drug use and delinquency, after controlling for previous levels of these behaviors. It is notable that these predictions are made on the basis of merely 25 min of videotaped observations.

The search for developmental mechanisms that account for peers' influence on increases in problem behaviour at all stages of development is only beginning, and to date, has focused on behavioral influence strategies. It is likely that other mechanisms involving social-cognitive factors are potentially important to explore. Additional possible mechanisms, which await empirical inquiry, have been proposed by Dodge and Pettit (2003), including self- and public-labeling effects of being identified as part of a group that is known to display deviance, exposure to new opportunities for deviance, adoption of attitudes and norms based on observational learning, increased provocations by peer-group members, and lack of exposure to the prosocial and tempering influences of normative peer groups.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Recently, the incident of delinquent behaviours among secondary school students has been on the increase. This has in turn resulted into many social problems in Nigerian society. The resultant problems have been of great concern, not only to parents but also governments at all levels. Delinquent behaviours among secondary schools students deserve careful study as it affect their academic performance.

An environment with indifference, ignorance, social discord, improper family care and guidance, permute deviant behaviours among the youth. This makes a student grow as an ill-trained person, socially maladjusted or fiddle minded individual and uncaring to an extent. The ability of such a student to learn is greatly impaired. The government's efforts through the ministry of education to appoint a guidance and counselling teacher in all schools with aim of helping students to overcome this challenge. Moreover, the government also help learners help learners at all levels so as to remain in school and complete their studies. This has been evidence by provision of bursaries, school feeding programs, classrooms built by constituency of development founds (CDF) and provision of subsidized secondary school fees. Despite all these efforts and attempts, the influence of negative peer pressure has still persisted hence the need to establish the peer influence as predicator of delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma local government area of Katisna state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

1. To determine the influence of peer on academic performance of students in Dutsin-Ma metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised to serve as a guide to the study:

1. What is the relationship between peer influence and academic performance students in Dutsin-Ma metropolis?

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between peer influence and academic performance of students in Dutsin-Ma metropolis.

### **Methodology**

The study employed descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The design was used since it enabled the researcher collect data across the sampled population using the same instruments at the same time. The idea behind this is study frequencies, average and other statistical calculations. This was done with the believed that the interaction of the variables on each other has been completed before the researcher begins the research. Data collection from respondents for this survey research was done using Likert-type questionnaire. The study was conducted in Dutsin-Ma Local Government area of Katsina State, the population of the study comprised of adolescents from five (5) secondary school randomly selected in Dutsin-Ma metropolis. The population was extremely large to be managed within a reasonable time for the study. It therefore becomes impossible to include the whole population.

The study involved an interactive survey of five out of the remaining public schools in the study area through stratified random sampling. This means that about 60% of the public schools were selected to participate in the study. All the students in the selected stream was allowed to take part in the study. Using the sample size, it was adopted for the questionnaire administration. Consequently, proportional distribution technique was adopted.

The study made use Peer Influence Questionnaire (PIQ) and Delinquency behaviour Secondary School Questionnaire (DBSSQ). The present study uses Pearson's correlation were used to test the hypotheses.

## Results

### Testing Hypotheses

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between peer influence and delinquency behaviour among secondary school students in metropolis.

**Table 1: Pearson’s correlation analysis between Peer Influence and Juvenile Delinquency (n=100)**

Variables	R	p
Delinquency behaviour	-----	-----
Peer influence	-.119	0.032

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To analyse the hypothesis that states there is no significant relationship between peer influence and delinquency behaviour among secondary school students. Data collated on peer influence and delinquency behaviour using a four-point response questionnaire was sorted, computed, and analysed. The result revealed that there is a negative and significant correlation  $r = -.119$ ;  $p < .032$  between peer influence and delinquency behaviour among secondary school students, thereby suggesting that peer influence encourages delinquent behaviour among secondary school students (see Table 2). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that a significant relationship does not exist between peer influence and delinquent behaviour is rejected.

## Discussion

Peer influence has shown a significant influence on delinquent behaviours among adolescents. The result suggested that Peer influence strongly encourages delinquent behaviour among adolescents. The result of the current study supported other researchers in the field, which claims that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency. Peer influence also showed a significant influence on delinquent behaviours among adolescents. The result suggested that peer influence encourages delinquent behaviour among adolescents, this is in consonance with Sullivan, Childs and Gann (2018) whose study found that peer delinquency significantly predicted adolescent delinquency, it also coherent with the research conducted by Vitulano et al (2010), on delinquent peer influence on childhood delinquency, their findings reveal that children who exhibit low levels of impulsivity are particularly vulnerable to delinquent peer influences. From research, Gao et al (2013) found that many ethnic comparisons of peer influence on delinquent behaviour have found that those with peers who engage in negative behaviour are more likely to participate in delinquent behaviour irrespective of ethnicity.

Utržan et al (2018) also claimed that peers provide adolescents with perceptions, encouragement and rationalization that promote delinquent activity and provide opportunities to participate in delinquent actions. This appears to be congruent with Andrews and Bonta (2010) research pointing to the association of negative influence peers as one of the most prominent risk factors contributing to juvenile delinquency. Based on these observations, Ikani et al (2015) proposed that individual peer influence



starts in early adolescence, tend to escalate in sophistication and size. So, at this stage, adolescents are tilting towards friendship, and if they are bad friends, it leads to delinquency. The research findings show that most individuals become delinquent by associating themselves with delinquent peers who see the act as a way of life and that delinquent acts are learnt primarily within groups, particularly peers.

### Conclusion

This study concluded that peer influence encourages delinquent behaviour among adolescents. It is becoming clear that one of the major ways that deviant youth become even more deviant is through unrestricted interaction with deviant peers. Ironically, many of the common treatments for deviant youth involve placing them in settings that aggregate them with other deviant youth. Certainly, more complex, and updated studies should be developed on the relationship between the possible interactions experienced by the delinquent juvenile, concomitantly, in the family, at school and with different types of peers.

### Recommendations

1. To minimize the influence of negative behaviour of peers, adolescents should be psychologically and instrumentally prepared. They should be attended by the family, community, experts such as counselling psychologists and other related stakeholders to benefit them in choosing the right friends.
2. Government, counselling psychologists and other stakeholders should sensitize the community on the effects of poor socialization, violence, and drug abuse and substance usage on adolescent behaviour.

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