



Peer Influence as Correlate of Juvenile Delinquency among In-School Adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study investigated peer influence as correlate of juvenile delinquency among senior school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The study was guided by two hypotheses, tested at 0.05 level of significance. The survey research design using the correlational approach was adopted for the study. A sample size of 350 students (256 males and 94 females) was drawn from five public senior secondary school using the multistage sampling technique. The researchers used two instruments for the study. Self-structured questionnaire was used for peer group influence while Juvenile Delinquency Scale was adapted from Brown *et al* (1986). The instruments were validated by test experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, and the reliability coefficients of 0.80 and 0.86 were obtained for the peer influence and juvenile delinquency respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to test hypothesis one while the Fisher-Z statistic was used to test hypothesis. The findings showed that there is no significant relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Oredo Local Government Area. The relationship between peer influence and delinquency is not influenced by sex of senior secondary school students in the study area. It was recommended that guidance counsellors and school administrators should provide opportunities for positive peer interaction, such as clubs, sports, mentoring programmes, leadership activities. This recommendation is appropriate even though the study found no significant relationship between peer group influence and delinquency, because peer environments may still provide constructive developmental opportunities ; delinquency-prevention programmes should be made available for both male and female in-school adolescents since the study found no significant

difference by sex in the relationship between peer group influence and juvenile delinquency also further research should examine other variables that may explain juvenile delinquency, especially variables that were not included in the present study. They may also employ qualitative or mixed-method approaches to provide deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Keywords: Peer Influence, Juvenile Delinquency, Adolescents, In-school.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical development period characterized by substantial physical, emotional, cognitive and social change. During this period, young people increasingly seek independence from parents and attach greater importance to relationships with friends and age-mates. Peer groups therefore become important sources of socialization, providing adolescents with companionship, emotional support, social identity and behaviour models. Although, peer relationships can promote positive developments, they may also expose adolescents to behaviour that conflicts with accepted social and legal norms. Through interaction with peers, adolescents may adopt attitudes, values and behaviour that influence their decisions and patterns of conducts. One behavioural problem that attracts considerable attention during adolescence is juvenile delinquency.

Juvenile delinquency could be referred to as unlawful, anti-social or norm-violating behaviour committed by individuals who are below the legally recognized age of adulthood in a particular society. Adebowale et al (2020) defined juvenile as behaviour exhibited by adolescents that contravenes social rules and disrupts social harmony. Frazier and Rogers (2024) defined

juvenile delinquency as youth offending involving actions or behaviour by juveniles that may warrant intervention by juvenile's justice system. They further explained that the concept may include criminal offence as well as behaviour that are considered unlawful, specifically because of the young person's age. Delinquent behaviours are not limited to legal infractions alone, but also includes behavioural patterns that undermine social order and personal development. According to Alufohai and Osagie-Obazee (2016), some of the antisocial behaviours often associated with delinquency include vandalism, drug abuse, stealing, sexual promiscuity, truancy, thugery, rape, verbal abuse, and cultism. The development of juvenile delinquency is multidimensional and may be influenced by some factors such as the family, school, peer influence and the individual. Among these social factors, peer influence is considered in this study because adolescent spend quality time with their peers and are motivated to obtain acceptance and approval within their peer group.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency seems to be on the increase among the in-school adolescents in this contemporary period, largely due to imported values arising from information explosion and access, as a result of information technology advancement. Behaviours such as truancy, bullying, fights, gangsterism, vandalism, theft, substance abuse and other antisocial behaviours are common among them (Adeyemi, 2020). These behaviours not only disrupt the teaching-learning process but could also threaten students' psychological well-being and academic achievement. Several efforts had been made by parents, teachers, counselors, government and other stakeholders to address the problems of juvenile delinquency, but unfortunately, it seems to still persists among school attending adolescents. Numerous studies have explored peer influence and as an important factor associated with juvenile delinquency (Lasisis et al., 2021, Rudy et al, 2023), findings on the relationship between peer influence and delinquency remain inconsistent. Limited research work has examined their combined correlation among senior school attending adolescent in Oredo Local Government Area in Benin City, Edo State. Empirical evidence generally revealed that peer group influence is positively associated with juvenile delinquency, indicating that adolescents who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours. Therefore, the problem of this study is: could there be relationship between juvenile delinquency and peer

influence among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area, being a metropolitan Geo-entity?

1.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised and tested in this study:

- There is no significant relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area.
- There is no significant difference in the relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area based on sex.

2. Literature Review

Peer influence refers to the process through which individuals of similar age affect one another's attitudes, behaviours and ways of thinking over time. Peer influence is often used to describe instances where an individual feel indirectly pressured into changing his/her behaviour to match a particular peer group which may have social and psychological impact on an individual's attitude, beliefs, values and behaviours. Osagie-Obazee and Ataha (2024) opined that peer influence is a compulsion to do or obtain the same things as others in one's peer group. Among adolescents, peer influence may be positive or negative and may occur through modelling, social interaction, reinforcement, and the desire to become more similar to friends or members of the peer group. Adeyemi & Egbochuku (2020), posited that young adolescents may be very concerned about their acceptability by their peers, and if not controlled, such desire to belong can serve as negative influence on many of them to engage in risky and delinquent behaviours. Laursen and Veenstra (2021) explains that peer influence occurs when an individual acts or thinks in ways that may differ from how they would otherwise act or think as a result of other peer affiliates. In the context of present studies, peer influence refers to the extent to which adolescents' friends and age-mates influence their attitudes, decisions, and behaviours, including behaviours that may contribute to juvenile delinquency. Peer influence may be positive, such as encouraging academic achievements and prosocial behaviour, or negative, such as encouraging truancy, substance use, fighting, stealing, or other delinquent behaviours.

Olowo (2020) stated that peer influence is one of the determinant factors of juvenile delinquency among

senior secondary school students. He was of the view, that in-school adolescents who belong to peer groups that approve of antisocial behaviours are more likely to imitate and adopt such behaviours to gain acceptance and social identity. In this context of juvenile delinquency, peer group influence can be seen as the extent to which association with delinquent or antisocial peers encourages school attending adolescent to engage in antisocial behaviours and other forms of delinquency in respect of their sex.

Sex differences may exist in the level of juvenile delinquency and in pathways through which individual, peer, family, and psychological factors are associated with delinquent behaviours. However, these differences are not uniform across studies, with males generally reporting higher levels of involvement than female in delinquent acts (Fehintola et al. (2025)). These differences are evident during secondary school period (adolescence period) a critical stage of identity formation.

The concepts of peer group influence is connected to Albert Bandura's social Learning Theory (1977) which posits that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, modelling and reinforcement. Bandura opined that adolescents acquire behaviours by observing significant others, particularly their peers and are more likely to imitate behaviours that are rewarded and socially accepted. The theory explains that peer groups play a vital role in shaping adolescent behaviour. This is the group where most school attending adolescent belong. Adolescent who associates with delinquent peers may observe and imitate behaviours such as theft, vandalism, drug trafficking, armed robbery, burglary, assault, fighting and substance abuse, especially when such behaviours are reinforced by peer approval. Conversely, association with positive peers encourages socially accepted behaviours.

Fehintola et al (2025) studied the triad of influence: peer pressure, community factors and gender as determinant of delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Ibadan in a descriptive survey with a sample size of 300 adolescents. Her finding revealed that gender had a significant relationship with juvenile delinquent behaviour. Male adolescents reported higher levels of delinquency than the females peer pressure was revealed to be the strongest predictor of delinquency in the study.

Lasisi et al (2024) in their study, titled correlational study of peer influence and juvenile delinquency among secondary school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis. They used a sample size of 1200

adolescents, with the purpose to investigate the relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency. The finding of the study revealed that peer influence had a significant positive relationship with juvenile delinquency.

Njoku and Ugoji (2024) investigated the relationship between parenting styles, family structure, peer pressure and delinquent behaviour among 960 secondary school adolescents in Delta North Senatorial District, Nigeria using a correlational survey design and multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that peer pressure had no significant relationship with delinquent behaviour, therefore it is not a significant predictor of delinquent behaviour in the study area.

Farrell et al. (2017) employed a quantitative survey design among one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven urban middle school students in the United States to examine dimensions of peer influence and their relationship with adolescents' aggression, problem behaviours and prosocial behaviour. The findings of the study revealed that peer influence was associated with adolescent problem behaviour importantly the pattern of findings was generally consistent across gender.

James et al (2026) examined the relationship between peer influence and delinquency in a study titled juvenile delinquent behaviour among school adolescent: becoming the roles of peer influence and gender in Edo state with a sample size of 218 in a cross-sectional survey. The finding revealed that peer influence significantly predicts juvenile delinquency, and males reportedly significantly higher delinquent behaviour than females. Furthermore, Yeung (2023) examined the relationship between peer influence and delinquent behaviours in a cross-sectional survey study titled: a multi-system approach to investigate different forms of delinquency in female adolescents at risk: Family, School and Peers in Hong Kong China. A sample size of 236 female adolescents receiving services from front-line social workers. Findings revealed that deviant peer influence was a significant positive predator of destructive delinquent behaviours. Rudy et al (2023) examined south Korean adolescents' delinquency, disclosure, parental knowledge, parent child closeness and delinquent peer associations in a longitudinal study. Findings revealed that involvement with delinquent peers was a significant predictor of delinquency.

Juvenile delinquency is a multifaceted issue that affects individuals, families and communities. Despite efforts to prevent and intervene, the problem still persists, with peer influence emerging as

significantly contributing factors. It is against this background that this study examined peer influence as correlate of juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescent in Oredo Local government area of Edo State, with a view of providing empirical evidence that will guide counselling practice and school-based interventions aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency.

3. Methodology

The design for this study is a survey research design which adopted a correlational approach. The population of this study consisted of 2,384 adolescents in senior secondary (SS2) in public schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State (State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Edo State, 2026). The sample size for the study was 350 in-school adolescents. The multistage sampling technique was used in selecting respondents for the study. Firstly, five public mixed schools were purposefully sampled. Secondly, with the aid of proportionate stratified sampling, 50% of population of SS2 in-school adolescents in each of the five schools were sampled which gave a total of 699 students. Thirdly, the simple

random sampling technique was used to select 256 males and 94 females.

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire, titled "Peer influence and Juvenile Delinquency Scale (PIJD)", made of two sections. Section A solicited demographic information from the respondents. Section B contained items on peer influence, adapted from "Peer Pressure Inventory. (PIP)", developed by Brown et al. (1986). The original response format was modified from a 7 point Scale to a four 4 point Likert scale, based on: Strongly agree 4 points, Agree 3 points, Disagree 2 points, and Strongly disagree 1 point, in response to positive worded questions on the scale, while negatively worded questions were reversed to be Strongly agree 1, Agree 2, Disagree 3, and Strongly Disagree 4. The instruments were validated while the Cronbach Alpha Statistic was used to establish the reliability of the instruments with r values of 0.80 and 0.86 for peer influence and juvenile delinquency respectively. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistic was used to test hypotheses 1 while Fishers z was used to test hypothesis 2.

4. Results

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among the in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of peer influence and juvenile delinquency

Variable	N	"r"	2(sig-tailed)
Peer Influence and delinquency	350	-.313	0.14

Table one shows r-value of -.313 and a p-value of 0.14, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is higher than the alpha level, therefore the null hypothesis which states that "there is no relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquent behavior among school attending adolescent" is accepted. Consequently, there is no relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among in- school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State by sex.

Table 2: Fisher-Z statistics of peer influence and juvenile delinquency by sex.

Sex	N	'r'	Zr	Zcal	Zcrit
Male	256	229	0.234	0.847	±1.96
Female	94	128	0.131		

Table 2 shows a calculated z of 0.847 and Z-critical of ±1.96, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated z is less than Z-critical therefore, the null hypothesis which states that "there is no relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students based on sex" is retained. Consequently, there is no significant difference in relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency in- school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area by sex.

5. Discussion

The findings from hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents of Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. In other words, the way in-school students in Oredo local Government Area interact with peers has no statistically significant correlation with delinquent behaviours. The findings of this study is in line with the findings of Njoku and Ugoji (2024) who found that peer pressure had no significant relationship with delinquent behaviour. These findings could be attributed to several contextual factors such as effective parental supervision, positive school climate, strong moral values and individual resilience against negative peer influence by in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area. Although it is also possible that peer influence affects delinquent behaviour indirectly through other psychological variables rather than exerting a direct influence.

The finding on hypothesis 2 revealed that there is no significant difference in the relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local government Area of Edo State based on sex. This implies that the relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency is consistent across both male and female in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The findings of this study are partially in line with the study of Farrell et al. (2017) which found that the relationship between dimensions of peer influence and delinquent behaviour are generally consistent across gender. Sex may not be a significant factor in determining the relationship between peer influence and delinquency, rather factors such as the nature of peer relationships, the behaviour of the peer group and peer pressure and the level of acceptance of delinquent behaviour within the group may be more important. The findings of this study, however, contradicts that of Fehintola et al. (2025) which revealed that gender has significant relationship with delinquency. The study further showed that adolescents generally have a strong need for belonging and acceptance making them susceptible to the attitude and behaviour of their peers irrespective of sex.

6. Conclusion

The researchers concluded that peer influence have no relationship with juvenile delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. Furthermore, sex has no bearing with peer influence relationship with juvenile

delinquency among in-school adolescents in the study area.

7. Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings and the conclusion:

Guidance counsellors and school administrators should provide opportunities for positive peer interaction, such as clubs, sports, mentoring programmes, leadership activities. This recommendation is appropriate even though the study found no significant relationship between peer group influence and delinquency, because peer environments may still provide constructive developmental opportunities.

Delinquency-prevention programmes should be made available for both male and female in-school adolescents since the study found no significant difference by sex in the relationship between peer group influence and juvenile delinquency.

Further research should examine other variables that may explain juvenile delinquency, especially variables that were not included in the present study. They may also employ qualitative or mixed-method approaches to provide deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

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