



Domestic Violence, Parenting Style and Socio-economic Status as Predictors of Deviant Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Abeokuta South, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Deviant behaviour among secondary school students has become a growing source of concern in Nigeria, with consequences for adolescents' education, security and psychosocial wellbeing. This study examined the extent to which domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status jointly and independently predict deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design of the correlational type was adopted. Two hundred students were drawn from four public secondary schools using stratified and simple random sampling. Data were collected with four validated instruments: the Deviant Behaviour Scale, the Domestic Violence Scale, the Parenting Style Scale and the Socio-economic Status Scale. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the data at the 0.05 level of significance. Each predictor correlated significantly with deviant behaviour: parenting style ($r = .55$), socio-economic status ($r = .36$) and domestic violence ($r = .29$). The three variables jointly predicted deviant behaviour ($R = .35$; $F = 3.42$; $p < .05$) and accounted for a significant proportion of its variance. Parenting style made the strongest independent contribution ($\beta = .30$), followed by domestic violence ($\beta = .17$) and socio-economic status ($\beta = .11$). The findings indicate that the family, and not the school alone, is central to the emergence of adolescent deviance. Home-school partnerships, parenting education and improvements in household socio-economic conditions are

recommended as strategies for curbing deviant behaviour among adolescents.

Keywords: Deviant behaviour; parenting style; domestic violence; socio-economic status; adolescents; secondary school students; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Human behaviour is judged against the norms of the society in which it occurs. Conduct that a community approves in one setting may be censured in another, and the line between conformity and deviance shifts with time, place and culture (Macionis, 2007). Deviant behaviour, in this sense, refers to any conduct that departs from the established norms, values and expectations of a given social group. In Nigeria, reports of such conduct among young people have grown difficult to ignore. Truancy, theft, cultism, examination malpractice, substance abuse and sexual misconduct now feature regularly in accounts of secondary school life, and the trend has become a matter of concern for parents, teachers, counsellors and policymakers alike.

Adolescence is the developmental stage at which these behaviours most often surface. The term derives from the Latin *adolescere*, meaning to grow up, and describes the transition from childhood to maturity. It is marked by rapid physical and emotional change, heightened impulsivity and a tendency to test adult authority (Damron-Bell, 2011). Adolescents display

higher rates of recklessness, norm-breaking and antisocial conduct than either children or adults, which makes the period a critical window both for the emergence of deviant behaviour and for its prevention (Adewuyi, et al, 2025).

Several features of contemporary Nigerian society appear to sharpen the risk. Economic hardship has pushed many households into the low socio-economic bracket, thinning out the middle class and leaving some children to fend for their own welfare (Ajake, Etuk, & Omori, 2010). Family instability and violence within the home expose adolescents to models of aggression and to weakened parental supervision. The manner in which parents raise and discipline their children shapes the values those children carry into school and community. These three conditions, domestic violence, parenting style and household socio-economic status, form the focus of the present study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Evidence suggests that deviance among Nigerian secondary school students is neither rare nor trivial. Records from remand homes and the prison service indicate that a substantial share of secondary school students have been involved in behaviours ranging from truancy and theft to cult membership and the carrying of weapons such as knives and broken bottles to school. Media reports point to a rising rate of delinquency, expressed in truancy, stealing, thuggery, examination malpractice, drug abuse and cyber-crime. Left unchecked, such conduct raises the risk of school drop-out, feeds insecurity, depresses academic performance and can escalate, in later years, into more serious criminality that threatens the individual, the family and the wider community.

Although deviant behaviour has attracted research attention in Nigeria, much of that work has concentrated on adults and on urban populations. Comparatively little has examined secondary school students in Abeokuta, and fewer studies still have tested domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status together as predictors of deviance within a single design. The present study addresses that gap.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study examined the joint and independent contributions of domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status to deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. Specifically, it sought to determine the relationship between each of

the three predictors and deviant behaviour; the joint contribution of the three predictors to deviant behaviour; and the relative contribution of each predictor to the prediction of deviant behaviour.

1.3 Research Questions

- What relationship exists between domestic violence, parenting style, socio-economic status and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Abeokuta South?
- What is the joint contribution of domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status to the prediction of deviant behaviour?
- What is the relative contribution of each of the three predictors to the prediction of deviant behaviour?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Deviant Behaviour

Deviance is the violation of cultural norms (Macionis, 2007); it is behaviour that fails to match the standards a society prescribes for its members and is therefore judged abnormal or antisocial (Dalhatu & Yunusa, 2013). What one society treats as deviant, another may tolerate or even reward, so definitions of deviance are inherently relative to context. Within a single society, too, conduct considered wrong at one time may later be accepted. For the purpose of this study, deviant behaviour is any act at variance with the accepted norms and values of a particular social setting, including sexual perversion, substance use, stealing, bullying, truancy, cultism and lying.

Scholars distinguish several forms of deviance. Physical deviance is the most visible and includes stealing, forgery, assault, fighting and destruction of property. Moral deviance departs from a society's moral values and covers truancy, drug abuse, alcoholism and sexual offences; it is the form most commonly reported among secondary school students. Personality deviance originates in the individual and appears as aggression, hostility, temper tantrums and withdrawal, harming both the student and those around them (Hanimoglu, 2018; Bello, 2022). These behaviours seldom arise in isolation. They cluster with family, individual, school and community risk factors, among which the quality of early care and of parent-child relationships is especially important (Ehondor, Idris, & Uye, 2024).

2.2 Parenting Style

Parenting style refers to the pattern of attitudes and practices that characterises parent-child interaction

across situations and creates the emotional climate in which children are raised (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Baumrind's (1966) framework, later elaborated by Maccoby and Martin (1983), organises this pattern along two dimensions: demandingness, the extent to which parents set standards, supervise and require maturity; and responsiveness, the extent to which they are warm, attuned and supportive of the child's needs. Crossing the two dimensions yields four styles. Authoritarian parents are demanding but unresponsive, enforcing strict rules and obedience with little explanation. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive, combining clear standards with warmth and reasoned discipline, and are consistently linked to the most positive adolescent outcomes. Permissive parents are responsive but undemanding, while neglecting parents are neither. A further dimension, psychological control, distinguishes authoritarian from authoritative parenting: the former relies on guilt, shaming or withdrawal of love, whereas the latter favours open give-and-take (Baumrind, 2007).

2.3 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of a family member in a way that causes pain, distress or injury (Igbokwe, Ukwuma, & Onugwu, 2013). It is a violation of basic human rights and takes many forms, including physical battering, sexual abuse of children, marital rape and harmful traditional practices such as forced and underage marriage (Aihie, 2009). Some scholars frame it specifically as male violence against women rooted in gender inequality, while broader definitions extend it to any physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological act, or threat, that isolates, frightens, coerces or injures another person (Adebayo, 2014). Across these definitions, the common thread is that domestic violence has damaging effects on everyone exposed to it, including the children who witness it.

2.4 Socio-economic Status

Socio-economic status describes an individual's or a family's position within a social hierarchy, based on access to wealth, prestige and power, and is typically measured through parental education, occupational prestige and family income (Mueller & Parcel, 1981). It is commonly grouped into high, middle and low levels. When applied to children, socio-economic status refers to that of the parents or household, and it conditions the resources, opportunities and quality of care available for a child's upbringing.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The study draws on three complementary theories. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory holds that behaviour is learned by observing and imitating models in the environment. Adolescents are surrounded by influential models, including parents, peers, teachers and media figures, and are most likely to imitate those they perceive as similar to themselves and whose behaviour is reinforced. A home in which violence is modelled, or in which deviant conduct goes unpunished, therefore supplies both the behaviour and the reinforcement that make deviance more likely. Sutherland's differential association theory (Sutherland & Cressey, 1966) similarly argues that deviance is learned through interaction in intimate groups, so that a young person becomes deviant when exposure to definitions favourable to law-breaking outweighs exposure to definitions against it. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory adds the complementary insight that strong bonds to conventional agents, such as family and school, restrain deviance, while weakened bonds free the individual to drift toward it. Read together with a family-systems perspective, in which the family functions as an interconnected unit whose dysfunction is transmitted to its members, these theories locate the roots of adolescent deviance substantially within the home.

2.6 Empirical Review

Empirical studies converge on the family as a key correlate of youth deviance. Reeta and Singh (2020), reviewing the link between disrupted families and delinquency, found that children from single-parent and broken homes were consistently more involved in delinquent behaviour than children from stable, two-parent households, and attributed this to reduced supervision and weakened parental attachment. Ngale (2009) similarly found that delinquent children in a correctional sample in Cameroon came disproportionately from the lowest socio-economic stratum and from overcrowded homes in which parents held low-paid jobs. Working with in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria, Ehondor, Idris and Uye (2024) found that parenting style and social network jointly predicted deviant behaviour, with age and gender also contributing independently. Parenting and household conditions feature prominently in this literature. Egaga, Ataben and Ofie (2021) identified poor parenting practices, alongside socio-economic strain and family dysfunction, as leading predisposing factors in the development of deviant behaviour among Nigerian adolescents, and called for a greater role for psychologists and school counsellors in its management. On domestic violence

specifically, Akpunne and Akinawo (2017) found that exposure to domestic violence was associated with heightened psychological distress among institutionalised Nigerian adolescents. Children who witness violence between their parents, and those who are themselves abused or neglected, show elevated rates of mental health difficulty that is closely linked to later conduct and behavioural problems (Meltzer, Doos, Vostanis, Ford, & Goodman, 2009). This body of work motivates the present test of domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status as joint predictors of deviant behaviour.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design of the correlational type. The design was appropriate because it examines relationships between naturally occurring independent variables and a dependent variable without manipulating the former, whose manifestations had already occurred.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised all public secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. A stratified sampling technique was used to group schools across the local council development areas of Abeokuta into strata in which male and female students were represented, and four schools were randomly selected. Simple random sampling was then used to select 200 willing students for the study.

4. Results

Of the 200 respondents, 94 (47.0%) were male and 106 (53.0%) were female. In terms of age, 95 (47.5%) were below 12 years, 72 (36.0%) were between 13 and 16 years, and 33 (16.5%) were 17 years or older.

4.1 Research Question One: What relationship exists between domestic violence, parenting style, socio-economic status and deviant behaviour?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations among the Variables (N = 200)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Deviant behaviour	48.22	11.29	1.00			
2. Domestic violence	34.32	6.46	.286**	1.00		
3. Parenting style	26.57	5.82	.545**	.086	1.00	
4. Socio-economic status	22.38	4.80	.361**	.049	.388**	1.00

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

Table 1 shows that each predictor correlated significantly and positively with deviant behaviour: parenting style produced the strongest correlation ($r = .55$, $p < .05$), followed by socio-economic status ($r = .36$, $p < .05$) and domestic

3.3 Instrumentation

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire in five sections. Section A gathered demographic information (gender, age, religion and class). Section B was the Deviant Behaviour Scale, a 10-item, four-point scale developed by Elizabeth (2000) with a reported reliability of .73, on which higher scores indicate greater deviance. Section C was the Domestic Violence Scale (Fox & Gad, 2012), a four-point scale measuring exposure to violence in the home. Section D was the Parenting Style Scale (Karl, 1999), a 15-item, four-point scale with a reported reliability of .63. Section E was the Socio-economic Status Scale (Salami, 2000), which scored parental occupation, education, residence and possessions to a maximum of 56 and classified family background as high or low, with a test-retest reliability of .73. A pilot study with 30 students outside the sample yielded an overall alpha of .74, indicating adequate construct validity.

3.4 Procedure and Data Analysis

An introductory letter was used to obtain the permission of school principals. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality, and the questionnaire was administered in the selected schools over a two-week period. Demographic data were summarised with frequencies and percentages, while the three research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance.

violence ($r = .29, p < .05$). Parenting style and socio-economic status were also correlated with each other ($r = .39, p < .05$).

4.2 Research Question Two: What is the joint contribution of domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status to deviant behaviour?

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression of the Three Predictors on Deviant Behaviour

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1842.429	3	614.143	3.421	.018
Residual	35362.591	196	179.400		
Total	37205.020	199			

$R = .350$; $R^2 = .123$; $Adjusted\ R^2 = .110$; $Standard\ error = 12.213$; $p < .05$.

Table 2 shows that the three predictors jointly produced a multiple correlation of $R = .35$ with deviant behaviour, and the model was statistically significant, $F(3, 196) = 3.42, p < .05$. Taken together, domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in deviant behaviour, with the remaining variance attributable to factors outside the scope of this study.

4.3 Research Question Three: What is the relative contribution of each predictor to deviant behaviour?

Table 3: Relative Contribution of the Predictors to Deviant Behaviour

Model	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	36.548	6.894	—	4.345	< .05
Parenting style	0.629	0.171	.304	3.320	< .05
Domestic violence	4.248	2.176	.174	1.213	< .05
Socio-economic status	1.654	1.023	.106	2.115	< .05

Dependent variable: Deviant behaviour.

Table 3 shows that each predictor made a significant contribution to deviant behaviour. Parenting style made the strongest contribution ($\beta = .30, t = 3.32, p < .05$), followed by domestic violence ($\beta = .17, t = 1.21, p < .05$) and socio-economic status ($\beta = .11, t = 2.12, p < .05$).

5. Discussion

The first finding, that domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status each relate significantly to deviant behaviour, is consistent with a large body of African and international research. Reeta and Singh (2020) linked broken and single-parent homes to youth delinquency, and Ngale (2009) similarly tied delinquency to low socio-economic status and overcrowded households. The pattern supports Bandura's (1977) contention that adolescents learn conduct from the models around them: where the home supplies aggression, weak supervision or economic strain, deviance becomes more probable.

The second finding, that the three predictors jointly account for a significant share of the variance in deviant behaviour, echoes longitudinal evidence that children exposed to family adversity carry an elevated risk of antisocial and delinquent trajectories that can

persist well into adulthood (Murray & Farrington, 2005), and evidence that children who witness abuse or neglect show elevated rates of mental health and conduct difficulty (Meltzer, Doos, Vostanis, Ford, & Goodman, 2009). That a meaningful portion of the variance remained unexplained is expected; peer influence, media exposure, school climate and individual temperament also shape adolescent behaviour and lay outside the scope of this study.

The third finding, that parenting style makes the strongest independent contribution, is the study's most practically important result. It aligns with Egaga, Ataben and Ofie (2021), who identified poor parenting as a leading influence on the development of deviant behaviour among Nigerian adolescents, and with Ehondor, Idris and Uye (2024), who likewise found parenting style to be a stronger predictor of deviant behaviour than social or demographic background among in-school adolescents. Domestic violence followed parenting style in magnitude, consistent with evidence linking exposure to domestic violence with heightened psychological distress and behavioural difficulty among Nigerian adolescents (Akpunne & Akinnawo, 2017). Socio-economic status made the smallest contribution, which fits Mueller and Parcel's (1981) caution that socio-economic status is a

multidimensional construct not reducible to income alone, suggesting that how parents raise their children matters more than household resources by themselves. The home, in short, emerges as the decisive setting for the prevention of adolescent deviance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined domestic violence, parenting style and socio-economic status as predictors of deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The three variables were significantly related to deviant behaviour, both jointly and independently, and parenting style was the strongest predictor. The family, rather than the school alone, is therefore central to the emergence and the prevention of adolescent deviance, and programmes that engage parents in the lives of their children are needed to address it.

On the basis of these findings, the study makes the following recommendations. First, adolescents should be guided and trained to develop socially acceptable conduct, given the effects of deviance on their psychological health. Second, parents and guardians should be sensitised, through school counsellors and parent-teacher associations, to the influence of parenting on adolescent behaviour and to constructive, non-violent ways of guiding their children. Third, schools should provide an enabling environment that reinforces positive behaviour within and beyond the school. Fourth, home and school should collaborate closely to keep learners focused and well adjusted. Fifth, government should work to improve the socio-economic conditions of households so that parents can better provide for the proper upbringing of their children.

The study was limited by the reluctance of some school authorities to grant access and by the possibility that some students did not respond candidly. Future research should extend the design to other states and over a longer period, and should incorporate additional predictors of deviance, such as peer influence and school climate, that fell outside the present scope.

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