

INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN KWARA STATE

Ajokpaniovo, M. ¹; Awoyemi, A. O. ²; Okesina, F. A. ³; Anyanwu, F. ⁴

Department of Counsellor Education
Faculty of Education,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. ^{1, 2, 3}

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Department of Social Studies
Nigeria Army College of Education (NACOE), Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria ⁴

Abstract

Adolescents have needs and problems that arise from organic, psychological and social pressures. These pressures in turn exert influences on them, which makes them exhibit behaviours that are not in consonance with the societal norms leading to delinquency. This might be the reasons why in-school adolescents involve themselves in delinquent behaviours such as examination malpractice, bullying, stealing, truancy, destruction of school properties and even drug use. The problem of delinquent behaviour affects in-school adolescents irrespective of gender, family type and parents' literacy level though the degree and magnitude vary from school to school. Thus, this situation calls for concern in order to avert further challenges the phenomenon could exert on the society. This paper examined the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour as expressed by in-school adolescents in Kwara State. A researcher designed questionnaire entitled "Peer Pressure and Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire (PPADBQ)" was used to collect necessary data for the study. The t-test was used to test the three null hypotheses. Two were accepted while one was rejected. The findings of this study showed that peer pressure did not exert much influence on delinquent behaviour as expressed by in-school adolescents in Kwara State. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that school authorities should reinforce in her mode of enforcing school rules and regulations as this will go a long way to reduce students' misbehaviours in school.

Keywords: Influence, Peer Pressure, Delinquent Behaviours, and In-School Adolescents

Introduction

Adolescents could be considered as the wealth and pride of a nation. This is because the future of any nation depends on the young ones who constitute the potential human resources needed for the continuity of the society. They are the vehicle for development and social transformation. Thus, to achieve sustainable development of a society, the adolescent's behavioural conditions, care and upbringing will determine the spate and direction of such nation's development. Hence, the achievement of the nation's growth could be possible when the society is able to find solutions to the problem of delinquent behaviours among the adolescents, particularly the in-

school young boys and girls. The study of the adolescents' behaviour is therefore very crucial for any forward-looking society.

The adolescents constitute a high population in every given country and with the high rate in a developing country like Nigeria, it is expected that the number of adolescents will continue to grow dramatically over the next decades (Busari, 2010). Adolescence is a transition period and like all transitions, it is full of challenges for adolescents themselves, parents and teachers. The adolescence period, according to Busari (2010), is a period of 'stress and storm', a period of ambivalence and conflict, a period of explosion. It is said to be a period when guidance counsellors, psychologists, social workers, teachers and enriched family and social environment could be supportive in order to enable adolescents navigate successfully through the threshold of stress, conflict into wholesome adulthood. Hence, the future of any society rests on how well the society succeeds in preparing adolescents to be productive adults who will be useful to themselves and society at large.

The term Adolescence has been variously defined by different authors. According to Adegoke (2012), the word adolescence comes from a Latin word *adolescere*, which means, "to grow up," pointing to the period of life between childhood and adulthood. Thus, adolescence begins with the onset of puberty which technically refers to the time at which an individual reaches the ability to reproduce. Adolescence is commonly used to describe the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. It is a critical period in human development where the individual begins to develop a stance towards the world for an identity (Chibuike, Chimezie, Ogbuinya & Omeje, 2013).

It is widely accepted that adolescence is a time of transition involving multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological including cognitive and social. Biologically, adolescents are experiencing pubertal changes, changes in brain structure and sexual interest, as a start. Psychologically, adolescents' cognitive capacities are maturing. Adolescents experience social changes through various agents such as the roles they are assigned to play in family, community and school (National Research Council (NRC), 2002). These changes occur simultaneously and at different paces for each adolescent within each gender, with structural and environmental factors often impacting adolescents' development. Among the factors responsible for such are socio-economic background, family type, school type, self-concept, play mate pressure to mention a few. Different variables may interplay to determine the types and levels of unacceptable behaviours that the individual adolescent exhibits.

Consequently however, there are lots of things that happen in the life of adolescents which usually may not conform with the norms of the society where they found themselves, particularly the school setting. Adolescents sometimes are involved in delinquent behaviours such as examination malpractices, bullying, stealing, truancy, destruction of school properties, staying away from school activities and even drug use which ideally, one may not imagine would happen at such stage of development. Akpan (1990) stated that adolescence period is a dramatic challenge, one requiring adjustment to changes in the self, in the family, and in the peer group. Eke (2004) stated that adolescence is a period of stress and storm. Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2003) listed environmental factors; social factors, physical factors, psychological factors; peer group influence, drug abuse and the family factor as the main causes of delinquency among adolescents.

Hallahan (2006) defined delinquent behaviour as a disruptive act characterized by covert and overt hostility and intentional aggression towards others. Scholars are of the view that delinquent behaviour could be covert or overt. Delinquent behaviour is overt when it involves aggressive

actions against siblings, peers, parents, teachers or other adults, such as verbal abuse, bullying and hitting while covert when involving aggressive actions against property such as theft, vandalism and fire-setting. Covert delinquent behaviour in early childhood may include non-compliance, sneaking, lying or secretly destroying another's property. Delinquent behaviour also includes drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, cultism, examination malpractice, stealing, truancy, inferiority complex, bullying, cheating, lying, rape, smoking, cybercrime and high-risk activities involving self and others. Delinquent behaviour is apparent when an individual finds it very difficult to adhere to the norms or standard of his/her social environment like home or school (Hallaham, 2006). According to Roberts (2011), a particular behaviour is not acceptable or delinquent if any of these three criteria are seen; firstly, if the behaviour does not allow a person to function effectively with others as member of the society, secondly, if the behaviour does not permit the person to meet his/her own needs and lastly, if the behaviour has a negative effect in the well-being of others.

By and large, delinquent behaviour can be viewed as any form of misbehaviours which the student(s) can display in the following ways: general disobedient to constituted authority, destruction of school property, poor attitude to learning, abuse of seniority, immoral behaviour, drug abuse, stealing, lateness to school, truancy, dirtiness, bullying, quarrelsome, use of abusive or foul languages, rudeness, gangsterism or cultism among others as the forms of delinquent behaviour in schools are inexhaustible (Ali, Dada, Isiaka & Salmon, 2014).

There are factors that can make in-school adolescents exhibit various delinquent behaviours. According to Morongwa (2010), some factors that are responsible for delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents include: parental / home influence; teachers / educators; political, social and economic factors; learners with emotional problems; head teachers/principals factor; influence of gender and race; and public schools versus private schools. Parson (2004) also listed the school, the society, wrong ideals, idleness, lack of good leadership, injustice, lack of realistic rules, mass media, the curriculum, bad home training and upbringing as factors that can make in-school adolescents exhibit these various behaviours. However, closely linked with their behavioural pattern is peer pressure which is very crucial to their academic pursuit and could be of paramount importance than aforementioned factors.

During adolescence, peer relationships take on increasing importance and play a critical role in adolescents' development of intimacy, social skills and self-concept (Klarin, 2006). Through interactions with significant others, adolescents create their identity and build self-concept. Adolescents, because they want to be accepted by their peers, may willingly abandon many of the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours learned previously (e.g. from parents, school, etc). There are different mechanisms of mutual influence process, and one of the most frequently mechanisms referred to is youth peer pressure. Peer pressure is often used to transmit group norms and foster loyalty to the group (Vander Zanden, 2000). According to Kiran-Esen (2003), peer pressure is defined as persuading or encouraging another person to engage in certain types of behaviour. It can be direct or indirect.

Peer pressure, according to Adesoji (2010) is the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his or her attitudes, values or behaviour in order to conform to the group. Peer influence is a characteristic of the adolescence period. In-school adolescents could be influenced by their peers in some aspects of life, such as sexuality, behaviour pattern, decision making and occupational choices. Some of the social vices that are found in Nigeria secondary schools and society in general could be traced to the results of peer group influence on adolescents. Animashaun (2004) found that in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour such as

examination malpractice, rape, theft, truancy, drug addiction, smoking, cybercrime, lateness to school among others were due to parents' lack of watchfulness over the types of friends kept by their adolescent children.

Ungar (2004) observed that peer pressure among in-school adolescents is particularly common because most in-school adolescents and youths alike are forced to spend large amount of time in fixed groups such as schools and other sub-groups within them regardless of their opinions about those groups which they may lack the maturity to handle. Also, in-school adolescents are more willing to behave negatively towards those who are not members of their own peer groups. This could be attributed to ideological differences that do exist among different group of people. However, influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents can also have positive effects on their overall development. For instance, if an in-school adolescents associates with a group of adolescents who are ambitious and hardworking to succeed, he/she might feel pressured to follow suit to avoid feeling excluded from such group. Undergraff (2001) stated that adolescents spend more than half of their time in the company of their peers, and therefore it is not surprising that peers play an influential role in the adolescents' lives. He added that credibility, authority, power and the influence of peers are greater during adolescence (that is, senior secondary school age) than any other time in life. This therefore suggests that peer pressure on in-school adolescents could generate or exert both positive and negative influences on adolescents' behaviour.

In the light of foregoing, the trend of delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Nigeria has become a phenomenon of concern to all and sundry because of its attendant threat on the security, social and economic existence of the country. It is on this basis that the researcher deemed it fit to investigate the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of delinquent behaviour affects the society (particularly the school) irrespective of gender, family type and parents' literacy level though, the degree and magnitude vary from school to school. According to Jacob, Olawuyi and Jacob (2015), most secondary school students in Nigeria are in the adolescence stage. The adolescent has needs and problems that arise from social pressures. These pressures in turn exert influences on them, which make them exhibit behaviours that are not in consonance with societal norms leading to delinquency.

The objective of secondary school education in Nigeria is to provide students with academic and vocational skills as well as moral ethics, but it is quite unfortunate that these objectives have not been fully achieved due to the high level of students' involvement in delinquent behaviours. In-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour could be detrimental to the success of students, teachers, school administrators, parents and the society at large. In most cases, adolescents imitate maladaptive behaviours of their peers and when left uncontrolled, it particularly hampers their behaviour in school and sometime outside the school.

Delinquency is a disturbing issue confronting adolescents, parents and teachers alike. Taking together the increase in the number and severity of such acts and their overwhelming cost for the society validates the notion that delinquency has become a prominent national issue. In all its ramifications, delinquency has destructive and dysfunctional effects on the lives of individuals involved. Delinquency becomes problematic because it affects the delinquent academic achievement.

Mahoney and Stattin (2000) carried out a study on the relationship between the adolescents' delinquent behaviour and peer pressure and found no relationship between the adolescents' delinquent behaviour and peer pressure. In the same vein, Oyeleke, Ajiboye, Isaac and Pius (2015) studied perceived youth gangs and peers imitation as correlates of adolescent delinquent behaviour in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. The finding indicated that adolescent delinquency increases as youth gangs' increases, this means that as adolescents form an attachment with gangs the more they become delinquent, and as peer imitation increases, so does delinquent behaviour increases.

Although there have been works done on delinquent behaviour generally but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has used only the independent variable of this study. It is against this background that this study in clear terms, with particular consideration and emphasis seeks to determine influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State. This study therefore filled the existing gaps thereby advancing knowledge on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents.

Research Question

A research question was raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. Would peer pressure influence delinquent behaviours of in-school adolescents in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were generated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State based on family type.
3. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State based on parents' literacy level?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted. It was adopted to obtain information from a representative group based on such samples; inferences were drawn about the behaviour of the entire population. The population for this study comprised all secondary school students in Kwara State. The target population comprised all SS 1 and SS 2 students in selected secondary schools in Kwara State totaling 6,325 students (Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development, 2017). The suggested sample size for a population of 6,325 according to Research Advisor (2006) is 365. However, 5% of the figure was added in order to cater for attrition thereby totaling 372.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. At stage one, two Local Government Areas were purposively selected from each of the three existing senatorial districts in the state making six Local Government Areas in order to give equal distribution across the three senatorial zones. At stage two, the school that has the largest population of students was purposively selected from each of the six local government areas. At stage three, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 62 students in each school sampled. At stage four, the respondents were stratified according to the moderating variables of the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used in collecting data for this study is a questionnaire entitled “Influence of Peer Pressure on Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire (IPDBQ)”. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section “A” contained demographic data while section “B” consisted of twenty (20) items on peer pressure sub-scale. The four-point Likert type response format was adopted for use in section B as thus: Strongly Agree (SA) – (4 points); Agree (A) – (3 points); Disagree (D) - (2 points); and Strongly Disagree (SD) - (1 point).

The highest possible mean score obtainable in section B is 4 while the lowest is 1. The mean score (mid-point) is 2.5 ($4+3+2+1/4$). Therefore, any mean score ranging from 2.5 and above was adjudged to indicate influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour while mean score below 2.5 indicated that no influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour.

Validity: Validity described the extent to which an instrument can be relied upon to measure what it purports to measure accurately. In order to validate this instrument, the researcher gave the questionnaire to five experts in the Department of Counsellor Education. The experts’ corrections and suggestions were effected before the final version of the questionnaire was produced.

Reliability: Reliability measures dependability or trustworthiness of an assessment instrument. It has to do with consistency and stability of an instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using a test re-test reliability procedure. The instrument was administered twice to 20 secondary school students who did not form part of the sample within an interval of four weeks to determine its consistency. The two results were correlated using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis at 0.05 alpha level. A co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained. Therefore, the instrument was adjudged to be reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The data for this study were subjected to percentage for the demographic section while mean score and rank order was used to answer the research question. The t-test was used to test the research hypotheses all at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the result of the analysis of data obtained from the field. The demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, while t-test was used to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Demographic Data

This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on their Personal Data

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	165	44.5
Female	206	55.5
Total	371	100.0
Family Type:		
Polygamy	320	86.3
Polygyny	51	13.7
Total	371	100.0
Parents' Literacy Level:		
Literate	343	92.5
Illiterate	28	7.5
Total	371	100.0

Table 1 shows that 372 respondents participated in the study out of which 165 (44.5%) were males, while 206 (55.5%) were females. Based on family type, 320 respondents representing (86.3%) came from polygamous family, while 51 respondents representing (13.7%) came from polygynous family. Based on parents' literacy level, 343 representing (92.5%) were literate, while 28 (7.5%) were illiterate.

Research Question: *Would peer pressure influence delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Kwara State?*

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of Respondents' Score on Influence of Delinquent Behaviour among In-school Adolescents in Kwara State

Item No:	As far as I am concerned, my peers influenced my:	Mean	Rank
1	lateness to school	2.66	1 st
8	inattentiveness in class	2.57	2 nd
15	disobedience to school rules and regulation	2.54	3 rd
16	dressing indecently	2.33	4 th
10	hurting/insulting others	2.14	5 th
9	disturbance in class	1.99	6 th
20	being aggressive/hostile to others	1.67	7 th
19	littering school environment with waste/refuse	1.45	8 th
13	involvement in verbal aggression	1.35	9 th
6	fighting with others	1.29	10 th
7	involvement in examination malpractice	1.28	11 th
14	involvement in destruction of school property	1.26	12 th
17	drinking alcohol	1.26	13 th
3	smoking habit	1.25	14 th
4	abuse of drug	1.24	15 th
11	telling lies to cheat others	1.24	16 th
18	being bunk off classes regularly	1.23	17 th
12	sexual harassment in the school	1.23	18 th
5	stealing	1.22	19 th
2	bullying others in the school	1.21	20 th

Table 2 presents the mean score on influence of delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents. From the table, it would be observed that peers influence in-school adolescents on lateness to school, inattentiveness in class and disobedience to school rules and regulation. The three items on the instrument ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd with mean scores of 2.66, 2.57 and 2.54 respectively. Other items did not have mean scores up to 2.50 (the average mean) hence, not depicting influence. By implication, peers do not significantly influence delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents.

Hypotheses Testing

Three null hypotheses were generated and tested for this study:

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents based on gender*

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test comparing male and female respondents on the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour on the basis of gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	165	32.29	9.408	369	-.239	1.96	.811
Female	206	32.50	7.457				

Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of -.239, critical t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of .811. Since the calculated t-value of -.239 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96, the hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara State based on family type*

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test comparing male and female respondents on the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour on the basis of family type

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal t-value	Crit t-value	p-value
Male	320	32.28	8.002	369	-.761	1.96	.447
Female	51	33.24	10.445				

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of -.761, critical t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of .447. The calculated t-value of -.761 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 and thus, the hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour on in-school adolescents on the basis of family type.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents based on parents' literacy level*

Table 5: Mean Standard Deviation and t-test comparing male and female respondents on the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour on the basis of parents' literacy level.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal t-value	Crit t-value	p-value
Male	343	31.73	7.758	369	-5.716	1.96	.000
Female	28	40.75	10.929				

Table 5 shows a calculated t-value of -5.716, critical t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of .000. The calculated t-value of -5.716 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour on in-school adolescents on the basis of parents' literacy level.

Discussion of Findings

The general objective of this study was to carry out an investigation on the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings are therefore discussed in this section.

The findings of this study showed that in-school adolescents are influenced by their peers to involve in lateness to school, inattentiveness in class and disobedience to school rules and regulation. This is in line with Animashaun (2004) who found that in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour such as examination malpractice, lateness to school, inattentiveness in class, truancy, disobedience to school rules and regulation among others were due to imitation of friends by the in-school adolescents.

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there was no significance difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in kwara state on the basis of gender was accepted. This is in line with the findings of Alamu (2007) that there is no significant difference in male and female reactions towards delinquent behaviour. This indicates that peer influence on delinquent behaviour has nothing to do with gender.

Hypothesis two which stated that there was no significance difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in kwara state on the basis of family type was accepted. This is contrary to Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2003) who found that family factor, bad home training and poor upbringing are the factors that made in-school adolescents exhibit various delinquent behaviours.

Hypothesis three which stated that there was no significance difference in the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviour of in-school adolescents in Kwara state on the basis of parents' literacy level was accepted. The findings of this study corroborates that of Popoola (2001) who found that the level of parental educational background added much to the attitudes and behaviours of in-school adolescents. The finding also contradicts that of Izundu (2005) who revealed significant relationship between parents' educational qualification and academic

performance of secondary school students. This implies that the children from illiterate parents tend to drop out of schools more than children from literate parents because of lack of incentives or other forms of encouragement from the parents.

Conclusion

Delinquent behaviour in schools continued to be a matter of great concern globally and it varies from one society to another. These unacceptable behaviours have caused many adolescents to become drop out. Some students are remanded in juvenile homes while many others have lost their academic and career dreams as a result of expulsion from school. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that peers influence in-school adolescents on lateness to school, inattentiveness in class and disobedience to school rules and regulation. Thus, peer pressure did not exert much influence on delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents.

Implications for Counselling

The findings of this study revealed that adolescents need educational guidance and counselling to guide them against involvement in delinquent behaviours. Counselling Association of Nigeria and Association of Professional Counsellors (CASSON & APROCON) can take up advocacy efforts with the government on ways of curbing delinquent behaviours among in-school adolescents in the country.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward in line with the findings of this study:

- ❖ Though, the result revealed that peers did not significantly influenced delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents but school authorities should reinforce in her mode of enforcing school rules and regulations as this will go a long way to reduce students' misbehaviours in school.
- ❖ There should be a planned effort to involve other professionals, such as counsellors and psychologists in addressing the students' inattentiveness in class. Such students should be made to face punishment. By so doing, they (students) will be afraid of engaging in such act and with this; its likely adverse effects will be eradicated.
- ❖ Regular Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings should be organized from time to time in order to discuss the issue of lateness to school and other issues affecting the students and how to curb them.

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