

Impact of Peer Grouping on Juvenile Delinquency among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

Ebenezer Oyetide Olalere¹, Bosede Ladoba², Kayode Oladapo³, Rachel Adeyinka⁴, Hezekiah Alamu⁵, Bayonle Bamidele⁶, Josiah Innocent⁷, Moses Adejo⁸

*Baptist Mission Schools of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,
22, Awolowo Avenue, Bodija, Oyo State, Nigeria*

Abstract: This study investigated the impact of peer-group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria. It explored the problems surrounding juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Specifically, it examined bullying of friends, students fighting, poor moral character and improper dressing by students. The research was built on the social learning theory as developed by Travis Hirshi. 600 respondents cross sectionally drawn from the population under study were selected as sample subjects. To these were distributed by the researchers using google form to design a structured questionnaire to elicit their views on the problem under study. The data from the filled questionnaires were statistically analyzed for decisions for each of the three hypotheses designed to focus on the problem under study. It was discovered that there was a significant impact of peer group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria. This finding implies that while there is an impact of peer group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria, the impact was significant. Among other things, it was recommended that the school management should become interested in the socialization of students especially the peer grouping. The management can organize school seminars to mass educate students on those dangers in wrong peer group characteristics that produce juvenile delinquency. Also, the Government should formulate policies to arrest the incidents of juvenile delinquency in schools. Also fund should be allocated for this effort. This can be disbursed to the school management for research purposes and organization of workshops.

Keywords: Peer Group, Juvenile Delinquency, Bullying, Moral Character, Improper Dressing

Date of Submission: 15-05-2021

Date of Acceptance: 31-05-2021

I. Introduction

It can be observed in most public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria that there exists student's juvenile delinquency. All over the state, some students strolling late to school when school is in session branching into public houses to purchase substances that should not be ingested at their age. While school has long opened, they can be seen under trees chatting away. Bullying has been the order of the day, within and outside the school premises. Bullying of junior students is the outcome of peer-group association which regularly attracts punishment by the school authority. Police arrest of students for cultism and vandalization. But students' cultism and vandalization of school property is responsible.

Among offences committed by public secondary school students is fighting. Fighting is caused by bullying friends and this is caused by violent verbal interaction. Actually, boxing each other has become regular every day and it is more varied. Bullying students should not result to students throwing object at each other but they also stab each other with dangerous objects and it is becoming alarming. Nowadays, regardless of gender, male and females students of secondary schools in Lagos State arrange parties with bad friends and this brought about students smoking. Partying with friends is not bad, but partying with bad friends makes it possible for students to light cigarette in the toilet smoking. The problem of partying with bad friends also caused the students smell cigarette when greeting the teacher due to night party attended with bad friends. Often time students caught smoking explained they learnt it while partying with bad friends.

Although, the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with the present secondary school students. Sexual harassment is on the rampage, this is caused by late night outing. Female students report to teacher for sexual harassment perhaps by late night outing. Therefore, they might have been forced into their late night outing. This might equally lead to teenage pregnancy.

Secondary school students who have delinquent friends are likely to be at risk of problematic behavior. Improper dressing is not left out, this may be as a result of poor moral character. Sagging of trousers by male students has become rampant in secondary schools today. On the other hand female students are having face make-up. All these do not dignify the norms and culture of our society. These are likely characteristics of peer-group juvenile delinquency.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Peer-grouping is acceptable age-long association characteristic of students in secondary school. This could have created negative outcomes that necessitate academic investigations. Peer group, if not studied is likely to mutate into juvenile delinquency among students. Problems arise when adolescents are loyal to their peer group. Quite a few of them believe in their peer and this is the characteristic of their style. Students are likely to be engaged with bad friends as the adage “goes evil association corrupt good manners”. The citadel of learning might actually become the nursing ground breeding juvenile delinquency. It is worrisome to note that there are numerous maladaptive behaviours which the peer groups manifest without one pointing out the limitation. For instance, issues about fence-jumping, gate crashing, improper dressing, lateness, bullying, insubordination, class cutting, truancy, vulgar language and many others are unbecoming of adolescents. What is quite disturbing is that there is lack of monitoring on the part of the parents, teachers and significant others like Pastor, Imam and neighbours. They forget that students spend eight hours at school and sixteen hours at home. It could be possible that poor moral character imbibed from the various peer group characteristics as narrated above might indeed be responsible for student delinquency in Nigeria. This study therefore, embarks on the investigation of the impact of peer-groups on juvenile delinquency of students in secondary schools in Nigeria.

1.3 Research Question

The study will address the following questions:

1. What are the significant impacts of peer-groups on student’s delinquency?
2. What are the significant impacts of bullying friends on students fighting?
3. What are the impacts of student’s poor moral character on improper dressing of students?

1.4 Hypothesis

For this study, the following hypotheses were formulated to be tested:

- H₀₁: There is no significant impact of peer-group on juvenile delinquency.
H₀₂: There is no significant impact of bullying friends on students fighting.
H₀₃: There is no significant impact of poor moral character on student’s improper dressing.

1.5 Justification of the study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will enable the school management to develop new policies on peer-group association in secondary schools. And it is also expected that this study will create awareness of the negative outcome of peer-group ideas and activities in secondary schools. This awareness, it is anticipated, will make the government and education planners create statutory regulations that will govern social interactions among secondary schools. It is also anticipated that the parent-teacher-association will create processes to identify the practice of peer-groups in the schools with the view to stamping-out juvenile delinquency arising from peer interactions.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory

The attempt to explain and describe the causes of delinquency in young people has led sociologists and crime specialists to generate theories. Over the years, delinquency has been blamed on many factors including heredity, mind poisoning, social strain and the oppression of children. In order to know whether a theory reflects real-life situation and experiences, it has to be evaluated on the basis of specific criterion. Theories matter because according to [1], ideas have consequences. The four commonly used criteria are simplicity, testability, empirical validity and logical consistency[2]. It is based on these criteria that the social learning and control theories will be adopted for this study.

Social learning theory posits that Juveniles or children learn to engage in delinquency through association with or exposure to others as developed by Travis Hirshi an American criminologist in the late 1960s. This implies that individuals learn delinquency from others [3]. The theory explains that behaviour is a reflection of people observing and imitating others and imagining the consequences of their own behaviour. This inspired others to develop more elaborate explanations. One of these was Albert Bandura, who believes that juveniles learn their behaviours from others with whom they interact in their social environment.

Delinquent behaviour may be learned from direct, face to face interaction or through observation of other person or symbolically in literature, films, television programs and music. Children learn their behaviours both positive and negative – through behaviour they observe from others [4]. Social control theories intend to explain conformity not delinquency. Delinquency is presented as expected behaviour; without control all juveniles will break the law. Therefore, what needs to be explained is why children obey rules. Social control theories blame delinquency on a defective social control system. This leads to inadequate socialization, which produces negative social experiences that result in low self-esteem and delinquency. This group of theories assumes people are born amoral; all children are potential delinquents. Children conform because they are bounded to society. The goal of policies derived from social control theories are to re-attach delinquents to parents and schools, to get them to commit themselves to the demands of childhood, and to involve them in a heavy routine of conventional activities, and above all, to have them acquire beliefs in the morality of laws. Social learning theory argues that aggressive behaviour is learned as parents or peers display aggressive behaviour [5]. One way to do this is for families and neighbourhoods to actively participate with children in their education, recreation and other activities. This will help children to build stronger ties to the social order and to develop a greater stake in conformity.

This theory was selected amongst others because of its link with and relevance to the discussion of juvenile delinquency and for their relationship with the factors that resulted in increase on the incidence of young offenders in Nigeria during the period covered by this study.

2.2 Conceptual Review

The Concept of Peer Group

Before the late 1800s, children and adolescents remained at home working side by side with their parents, so that they constantly lived under the direct or indirect control of an adult. With industrialization, there was migration to towns and cities and with more parents working away from home and children increasingly came to be on their own.

Peers are a pervasive aspect of our social life. They entail a broad range of people who surround us in our everyday lives from early childhood until old age. Members of the same classroom, community, and work or sports team constitute important and highly salient peer group contexts. In addition, we seek and maintain a number of dyadic relationships with peers, such as with a close friend, an acquaintance, a flat mate, a colleague, a fellow-student, or a neighbour. Considering the omnipresence of peers in our lives, it is likely that they influence who we are. This might be particularly true in contemporary society, in which people switch partners more often than in the past and in which families are spread out over larger distances—changes that might render peers an influential social factor.

Peer groups contain hierarchies and distinct patterns of behaviour. 18 year olds are not in a peer group with 14 year olds even though they may be in school together, just as teachers do not see such students as a peer group. In my opinion, a peer group is a social group that consists of individuals of the same social status who share similar interests and are close in age. This means that a 4-year-old would not be in a peer group with 12-year-olds. Similarly, college professors would not be in the same peer group as their students [6].

[7] defines peer group as a social group consisting of people who are equal in such respects as age, education or social class. These people usually share a common interest and background. They can also be very diverse, with people from different social and economic backgrounds, race, culture and so on. Peer relationships provide a unique context for social and emotional development of a person enhancing persons' reasoning abilities, concern for others, cooperating with people. Modern research echoes these sentiments, showing that social and emotional gains are indeed provided by peer interaction.

The Concept of Juvenile Delinquency

A "Juvenile" or "Child" means a person who has not lived for eighteen years of age. The impression of Juveniles is at times used interchangeably with other thoughts like a child, an adolescent and a youth [8]. It is also a person not legally of age, or who is younger than an age that may be charged with an offence. A *juvenile* is a child or young person who is not yet old enough to be regarded as an adult. A juvenile is a person who is under the age of 18. The age limit below which it should not be permitted to deprive a child of his or her liberty should be determined by law. A juvenile can be defined as a child who has not attained a certain age at which he, like an adult person under the law of the land, can be held liable for his criminal acts. The juvenile is a child who is alleged to have committed /violated some law which declares the act or omission on the part of the child as an offence. Juvenile and minor in legal terms are used in different contexts. Juvenile delinquency, also known as "juvenile offending", is participation in illegal behaviour by minors (juveniles, i.e. individuals younger than the statutory age) [9].

2.3 Empirical Review

The manifestation of delinquency among secondary school students has remained an age long problem in the Nigerian secondary school system. In a study carried out by [10] shows that there is a high rate of school complaints about student's delinquency. At this juncture, the family has an enormous task of ensuring that the adolescent grows appropriately in this regard. The extent to which parents and other adults in the family make provision for the holistic growth of their adolescent, with the view of curbing societal ills has generated a lot of concern in contemporary Nigeria. Increased attention is being given to the ability of individual and family to successfully remedy the negative impact on delinquency.

With regard to the risks, one of the most consistent scientific data, according to the review studies, is that there is a strong association between the juvenile delinquents' behaviour and their peers, that is, adolescents who report having delinquent friends are more at risk to develop problematic behaviour than the ones who say they have few or no delinquent friends [11].

For many young people today, traditional patterns guiding the relationships and transitions between family, school and work are being challenged. Social relations that ensure a smooth process of socialization are collapsing; lifestyle trajectories are becoming more varied and less predictable. The restructuring of the labour market, the extension of the maturity gap from 16 years to 21 years (the period of dependence of young adults on the family) and arguably, the more limited opportunities to become an independent adult are all changes influencing relationships with family and friends, educational opportunities and choices, labour market participation, leisure activities and lifestyles. It is not only the developed countries that are facing this situation; in developing countries as well, there are new pressures on young people undergoing the transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The design study for this research is the survey research design. This is because the study embarks on correlation of the views of the respondents so as to make decision on each of the hypothesis. 600 sampling subjects were selected for the study as indicated in Table 1.

3.2 Population and Sample

The correlation under this study comprises all the secondary schools (day and boarding) under the Directorate of Baptist Mission Schools of the Nigerian Baptist Convention with 15 principals and 798 staff members and over 4000 students. The method for selecting the sample is stratified random sampling techniques. The stratification is under the level of teachers, vice principals, principals, H.O.Ds and students of all the fifteen (15) missionary secondary schools summing up to 600 respondents as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Sampling Frame

S/N	School	Staff	Students
1	Baptist Academy, Obanikoro, Lagos State	20	20
2	Baptist Girls' Academy, Obanikoro, Lagos State	20	20
3	Reagan Memorial Girls' Secondary School, Yaba, Lagos State	20	20
4	Baptist Boys' High School, Abeokuta, Ogun State	20	20
5	Baptist Girls' College, Abeokuta, Ogun State	20	20
6	Olivet Baptist Academy, Oyo, Oyo State	20	20
7	Baptist High School, Benin, Edo State	20	20
8	Baptist High School, Jos, Plateau State	20	20
9	Baptist High School, Makurdi, Benue State	20	20
10	Baptist High School, Masaka, Nasarawa State	20	20
11	Baptist High School, Port Harcourt, Rivers State	20	20
12	Baptist High School, Orerokpe, Delta State	20	20
13	Baptist Girls' High School, Agbor, Delta State	20	20
14	Baptist Model Secondary School, Obinze, Imo State	20	20
15	Baptist Model High School, Jos, Plateau State	20	20
	Total	300	300

3.3 Research Instrument

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit the view of the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, section A and B. Section A consists of the indices of respondent or statistical analysis of the respondents. A four point Likert's scale was used in weighing the responses of the

respondents as follows: Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, Strongly Disagree 1. Split-Half reliability test method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument at 0.82. Hence, there is high positive correlation which shows that the instrument is reliable. The instrument was administered on the respondents in their various schools with the help of google form. Copies of the instrument were filled and returned online correctly.

IV. Results

The technique used for data analysis was t-test statistics in finding out the impact of peer-groups on juveniledelinquency of students in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Hypothesis I

There is no significant impact of peer groups on juvenile delinquency

To test this hypothesis, t-test was to determine if there is no significant impact of peer groups and juvenile delinquency. The analysis of data is as reflected in the table below:

Table 2 t-test of mean responses by peer groups and juvenile delinquency

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Decision
Peer Group	600	10.59	2.75	599	14.9	Reject
Juvenile Delinquency	600	17.55	5.80			

t-tab = 1.96 at p = 0.05

From table 2, it was found that a calculated t-value of 14.9 resulted as the relationship between peer group and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. This calculated t-value is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 give 599 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was accepted. This means that there is significant impact of peer group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

Hypothesis II

There is no significant impact of bullying friends on students fighting.

To test this hypothesis, t-test was to determine if there is no significant impact of bullying friends on students fighting. The analysis of data is as reflected in the table below:

Table 3 t-test of mean responses by bullying friends and students fighting

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Decision
Bullying Students	600	16.54	2.40	599	23.2	Reject
Students Fighting	600	16.38	2.26			

t-tab = 1.96 at p = 0.05

From table 3, it was found that a calculated t-value of 23.2 resulted as the relationship between bullying friends and students fighting among secondary school students. This calculated t-value is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 give 599 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was accepted. This means that there is significant impact of bullying friends on students fighting among secondary school students.

Hypothesis III

There is no significant impact of poor moral character on student's improper dressing.

To test this hypothesis, t-test was to determine if there is no significant impact of poor moral character on student's improper dressing. The analysis of data is as reflected in the table below:

Table 4 t-test of mean responses by poor moral character and student's improper dressing.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Decision
Poor moral character	600	2.33	0.96	599	12.63	Reject
Student's improper dressing	600	2.52	0.93			

t-tab = 1.96 at p = 0.05

From table 4, it was found that a calculated t-value of 12.63 resulted as the relationship between poor moral character and student's improper dressing among secondary school students. This calculated t-value is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 give 599 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was accepted. This means that there is significant impact of late night outing on students' sexual harassment among secondary school students.

V. Discussion of Findings

In discussing the findings, references are made to other researchers. Similarly, the implications and relevance of findings have been presented. The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant impact of peer group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. The finding showed that there is significant impact of peer group on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. This means that the existence or inexistence of peer groups can lead to or discourage juvenile delinquency. This finding supports earlier studies by [12] "friendship networks are very heterogeneous in terms of members' participation in delinquent behaviour with the majority of adolescents belonging to networks containing both delinquent and non-delinquent friends." The intimacy and mutual trust reported in prior delinquent peer researches therefore may primarily reflect delinquents' ties to non-delinquents [13]. A focus on groups permits classification of peer delinquency along a continuum (i.e., more or fewer delinquent friends; higher or lower average group delinquency). Peer groups are formed for different reasons. For example, if the peer group is formed for the purpose of friendship then it will generally serve to provide a sense of belonging, together with social and emotional support for the group members [14].

The second hypothesis sought to establish no significant impact of bullying friends and students fighting. It was discovered that there was a significant impact between bullying friends and student fighting. This is in accordance to the earlier study "although often conflicted, delinquents' friendships are as trusting, intimate, and reciprocal as non-delinquents' friendships" [13].

The last hypothesis is determined to find out the impact of poor moral character and students improper dressing. It was discovered that there was a significant impact between poor moral character and student's improper dressing. This could be due to peer pressure. Many studies have been done to gain a better understanding about the effects of peer pressure, and this research will allow parents to understand their children's behaviours and obstacles they will face due to their peer groups and how to handle such. Learning how peer pressure impacts individuals is a step to minimizing the negative effects it leads to [15].

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established through this study that juvenile delinquency among secondary school student in Nigeria is majorly influenced by delinquent peer groups through variables such as bullying friends, fighting, engagement with bad friends, poor moral character, students improper dressing, peer group and their relationship with juvenile delinquency. Consequently, the interactions between these variables determine the extent to which they affect juvenile delinquency. Based on the results of the analyses, the following conclusions were reached:

1. There is significant impact of peer-group on juvenile delinquency.
2. There is significant impact of bullying friends on students fighting.
3. There is significant impact of poor moral character on student's improper dressing.

From the study, peer group has negative impact on juvenile delinquency but the impact is insignificant. Therefore, the following recommendations are given to completely eradicate those negative areas of peer group association that produces juvenile delinquents.

- The school management should become interested in the socialization of student's especially the peer grouping. The management can organize school seminars to educate students on those dangers in wrong peer group characteristics that produce juvenile delinquency.
- The school Guidance Counsellor should be equipped with relevant resources to look into issues like bullying friends and its impact on students fighting. This can be achieved through interviews of those bullied as well as those caught fighting. Recommendations can be made to arrest the situation.
- Seminars on party types, smoking outcomes of partying with bad friends are subjects to be addressed in seminars. In boarding houses, the gates should be shut at specific time of the evening and a roll call taken in each dormitory to ensure that each student is present.
- The Government should formulate policies to arrest the incidence of juvenile delinquency in schools. Also fund should be allocated for this effort. This can be disbursed to the school management for research purposes and organization of workshops.

Acknowledgement

The research is financed by The Directorate of Baptist Mission Schools (The Directorate of Baptist Mission Schools (BMS) is primarily responsible for the establishment and effective management of Secondary Schools owned by the Nigerian Baptist Convention.)

REFERENCES

- [1]. Regoli, R.M and John D.H (2006). *Delinquency in society- A child Centred Approach*. New York: McGraw.
- [2]. Akers, R.L., & Sellers, C.S. (2013). *Criminological theories: Introduction, evaluation, and application*. New York: Oxford
- [3]. Ugwuoke, C.U & Duru, O.U (2015). Family Instability and Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria: A Study of Owerri Municipality. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 20, Issue 1, Ver. V (Jan. 2015), PP 40-45
- [4]. Adebowale, T.A & Anifowose, A.A (2017). Family Background, School Environment and Peer Group as Predictors of Juvenile Delinquency Among Secondary School Students in Abeokuta, Nigeria. *Journal of Society, Development and Public Health*. Volume 5, June 2017
- [5]. Ojo, M.O., Akinlotan, R.A, Edegbai, M.A, Abisoye, A.O, & Olaniyi, M.I (2017). Opinion Survey on Parental and Peer Group Factors of Juvenile Delinquency in Ketu-Adie Owe Community in Ogun State. *International Journal of Social & Management Sciences, Madonna University (IJSMS)* Vol.1 No.1, March 2017; pg.154 – 170
- [6]. Steinberg, Laurence (2010). *Adolescence*. New York: McGraw Hill. pp. 1–434. ISBN 978-0-07-353203-5.
- [7]. Jain Shikha (2015).Information Management Group, Indian Institute of Technology, Rishikesh Inc, Roorkee, India.
- [8]. Adegoke, N. (2015). Factors Responsible for Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria: A Case Study of Selected Primary Schools in Ikorodu Lagos State, Nigeria. *Research on Humanities*
- [9]. Siegel, L. J. and Senna, J. J. (2001).*Juvenile delinquency theory, practice and law*. U.S.A.: West Publishing Company.
- [10]. Ajake, U.E, Etuk, G.R & Omori, A.E (2010).Child rearing style and brutal behaviour among senior secondary school students in *Cross River State*. In *journal of counselling Association of Nigeria*.CALJOCAN.4 (4).162-167. ISSN 1119-4383.
- [11]. Bazon, M.R., & Estevão, R. (2012). Juvenile Criminal Behavior and Peers' Influences: A Comparative Study in the Brazilian Context. *Universitas Psychologica, 11*, 1157-1166.
- [12]. Haynie, D. L. (2002). Friendship Networks and Delinquency: The Relative Nature of Peer Delinquency. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 18*(2), 99-134. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015227414929>
- [13]. Knecht, A., Snijders, T.A.B., Baerveldt, C., Steglich, C.E.G. and Raub, W. (2010). Friendship and Delinquency: Selection and Influence Processes in Early Adolescence. *Social Development, 19*: 494-514. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2009.00564.x>
- [14]. Ellis, W. & Zarbatany, L. (2007). Peer Group Status as a Moderator of Group Influence on Children's Deviant, Aggressive and Prosocial Behaviour. *Child Development, Vol. 78, Issue 4*.
- [15]. Curtis, J. E., Tepperman, L., & Albanese, P. (2008). *Socialization. Sociology: a Canadian perspective* (2nd ed., p. 112). Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press.

Ebenezer Oyetide Olalere, et. al. "Impact of Peer Grouping on Juvenile Delinquency among Secondary School Students in Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(05), 2021, pp. 47-53.