

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER RELATIONS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research was carried out to examine the relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 21,875 and a sample size of 378 was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to compose the sample. One research question was answered and also one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Researcher- designed structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Measurement and evaluation Department and Educational Foundations Department for content and construct validity which produces a validity index of 0.86. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using Richards Kuder son formula which gave a reliability index of 0.79. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the null hypothesis. Findings from the study revealed that there is significant negative relationship between peer relation and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state. The study concluded that the rate of juvenile delinquencies experienced in secondary schools in Nasarawa state is linked to peer relations. The study therefore recommended that Parents should monitor the kind of friends their children interact with to prevent negative peer influence.

Keywords: Peer relations, Juvenile delinquency, secondary school, Socialization.

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Introduction

Peer relation often reflects an understanding of the role of the peer group as an institution of socialization where membership in a delinquent gang is like membership in any other natural grouping, which can be part of the process of becoming an adult. Through such primary association, an individual acquires sense of safety and security, develops knowledge of social interactions and can demonstrate such qualities as loyalty or leadership (Hartney, 2021). In adult, societal factors such as social status, private

welfare, race and ethnicity are of great value. However, all members of children groups are essentially in an equal position and have similar opportunity for advancement in the hierarchy structure. In this group, wellbeing depends wholly on personal qualities such as strength, will and discipline.

Quite often delinquent groups can counter balance or compensate for the imperfection of family and school and for children constantly facing violent, belonging to a gang, gang can provide protection within the society. In some areas those who are not involved in gangs continually face a threat of assault, oppression, harassment or extortion on the street or at school, as one juvenile confesses that he joined juvenile gang at the age of 15 years and had a girlfriend he feared for her, and the gang was able to provide for her safety.

According to the United Nations report (2022), the result of self- report studies indicate that majority of young people who participate in delinquent behaviors are about the same age and gender. In most cases, the offenders are males acting in groups. United Nations (2022) reported that young people, who often manifest delinquency always live in different circumstances such as breakdown of the family background, peer relation, overcrowd environment and observe conditions in the home. The United Nations' Report (2022) indicated that the number of children in difficult situations is estimated to have increased from 80 million to 150 million between 2002 and 2020 (UNICEF, 2022).

Juvenile delinquency is basically a concept defined in different ways among scholars. Juvenile delinquency is defined psychologically as involvement in extreme anti social behavior by a child (Bartol & Bartol, 2021). According to Mangal (2020), Juvenile delinquency is defined as the product of social and economic conditions and is essentially a co-efficient of the friction between the individual involved and the society. Juvenile delinquency is the act of violating law , minor offenses against the legal code, especially by a minor (Ramalingam, 2019). Juvenile delinquency refers to as participation in illegal behavior by minor below the age of eighteen (18) years and that such illegal behavior will be considered as crime if committed by adult. In a society, delinquent behavior violate customs, laws, values, norms, rules and these behaviors are punishable by fine or imprisonment in some cases even death. Example of juvenile delinquency behaviors include stealing, gambling, pick- pocket, cheating, smoking, alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, truancy, examination malpractice, destruction of properties, kidnapping, rape, assaults, cultism, vandalisation and murder. There is a growing interest in examining the variables that lead children to engage in juvenile delinquency or deviant behaviour, some of these variables point out family background which include family educational background and family socio-economic backgrounds which are of prime importance to the children's lives. There is also the factor of peer influence. Children are especially vulnerable in their early teen years and subject to a great influence of peer pressure to conform to certain norms, values and behaviour (UNICEF, 2022).

Peer relation is commonly associated with episodes of teens risk taking (such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviours), because these behaviour commonly occur in the company of peers. It can also have positive effects when youth are pressured by their peer toward positive behaviour such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics (Glaser, Shelton, Marianne & van den Bree, 2020). , Peer influence indulges

youth into loitering about in the streets, watching films and attending parties during school hours (Arief & Martinx, 2021). Peer relation may be present in the workplace, at school or within the society it can affect people of all ages. It may affect people in different ways but here, the focus is on peer relation as it correlates with juvenile delinquencies in schools.

Statement of the Problem

Every parent aims at bringing up a child that will develop the right attitude of patriotism and good interpersonal relationship by educating the child to his full potentials. Unfortunately juvenile delinquency has constituted a complex problem that has impacted negatively on students' behavior and has gained such a momentum that it has become a social problem facing Nigeria, in general and Nasarawa State in particular. Juvenile delinquency has become such a complex problem that parent not only discourage and criticize it, but they want to do everything possible to eradicate it to the barest minimum. Juvenile delinquency includes truancy, destruction of school properties, injuries to teachers and students, cultism, smoking, alcoholism, aggression, theft, harassment, disrespect to parents and teachers, assault etc. these delinquent behavior are observed amongst male and female children of different ages below 18 years and also at different locations urban and rural areas. These delinquent behavior are also observed among peers. Peers can have negative influence on each other, they can encourage each other to skip classes, steal, cheat, user of drugs, alcohol or becomes involved in other violent behavior.

In Nasarawa State, public senior secondary schools, students indulge in riots, unrest, cultism and other forms of social vices, which results to destruction of school properties, causing a lot of injuries to teachers and students and in some instance results to death. This delinquent behavior has become a serious issue of concern among educational stakeholders and members of the community. This phenomenon contradicts the right assertions as contained in the National Policy on Education (Revised edition 2004) which states that education is the right of all citizens which can help them grow and become productive and good ambassadors of the society. The foregoing problems mentioned prompted the researcher to embark on this research with the hope that the findings would help to find out how peer relation correlates with juvenile delinquency of senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is as follows;

examine the relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research question:

What is the relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

Methods

This study was carried out using correlational research design. Correlational research design attempts to find out the mutual interaction between two or more variables from the same group of respondents looking for relationship on which to base predictions. Correlational research design attempts to determine the extent and the direction of the relationship between two or more variables. (Anikweze 2015). Correlational research design is considered suitable for this study because it will help to establish the relationship that exists between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among senior secondary school students in the area.

The target population for the study is 21, 875 which consist of all the public senior secondary school class two (SS II) students in Nasarawa State. There are 235 public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State. These schools are distributed across the three Senatorial zones of the state.

Table 1: Population of the Study (Students)

S/N	Zone	No. of schools	No. of students
1	Nasarawa South	105	7813
2	Nasarawa North	60	4389
3	Nasarawa West	70	9673
	Total	235	21,875

Source: Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, 2025/2026

The sample size for the study comprises of 378 SS II students from the public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State. The sample size was adopted using a table for determining sample size for research activities by Boyd (2006). The study adopted multi-stage procedure. The schools for the study were first clustered into three (3) Senatorial zones, Nasarawa South, Nasarawa North and Nasarawa West. A non-proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to draw four (4) schools from each zone; this is to accommodate zones with few schools, a total number of twelve schools were drawn to represent the entire schools. A proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to select students from the sampled school in each senatorial zone. The schools were stratified into urban and rural schools and each school again will be further stratified into male and female respondents.

The researcher purposely used SS II students as the respondents considering the fact that students at that level have been academically exposed and may be able to handle the questionnaire, while those in SS III, are preparing for their final examination and may not have time to participate in the study, and SSI are new in the school and may not be stable enough to participate as respondents.

Table 2: Sample Size of the Study

S/No	Zones	Schools	Population	M	F	Sample
		GSS Lafia	256	39	13	52
	Nasarawa	GSS Ombi I	75	11	4	15
	South	GSS Akurba	161	23	10	33
		GSS Shabu	145	22	7	29
		GSS Akwanga Central	120	16	8	24
	Nasarawa	GSS N/Eggon	206	30	12	42
	North	GSS Andaha	63	9	4	13
		GSS Gudi	119	18	6	24
		GSS Karu	84	12	5	17
	Nasarawa	G.C Nasarawa	358	47	25	72
	West	GSS Gadabuke	105	17	4	21
		GSS Laminga	180	22	14	36
		Total	1872	266	112	378

Researcher- designed structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Measurement and evaluation Department and Educational Foundations Department for content and construct validity which produces a validity index of 0.86. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using Richards Kuder son formula which gave a reliability index of 0.79.

The research instruments were administered by the researcher directly to the respondents and were collected back by the researcher immediately after completion. The questionnaires were administered to public senior secondary students while schools were in session and during school hours. This is important because the schools will provide the most suitable pool of children within the target population. The researchers were assisted by two research assistants that were recruited among the secondary school teachers in the sampled schools.

Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research question while Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to test null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question: What is the relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Table 3: Mean score and Standard deviations on Peer relations and juvenile delinquency secondary school students in Nasarawa state

Item	N	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1 My friends smoke and drink alcohol a lot, this encourages me to also engage in smoking and drinking of alcohol	378	146	103	66	41	22	3.82	0.73	Accept

2	My friends always engage in examination malpractice, this encourages me to also to engage in examination malpractice	378	153	89	57	44	35	3.74	0.87	Accept
3	My friends like beating junior students a lot this encourages me to also fight and bully other students	378	58	64	50	102	104	2.66	1.31	Reject
4	My friends form a tight group that no other students can intimidate, this encourages me to be disrespectful to teachers and other students	378	114	104	68	50	42	3.52	0.91	Accept
5	My friends like helping students that are being harassed by other students, this encourages me to develop confidence and help other students	378	125	68	60	67	58	3.35	1.01	Accept
6	My friends always come to school late and leave before time, this encourages me to engage in truancy and other anti-social behavior	378	121	82	97	54	24	3.58	0.90	Accept
7	My friends have a lot of friends from the opposite sex this encourages to engage in pre-marital sex and other anti-social behavior	378	34	56	48	111	129	2.35	1.21	Reject
8	My friends visit their friends from the opposite sex a lot, this encourages	378	42	61	89	103	83	2.67	1.14	Reject

	me to engage in truancy and pre-marital sex									
9	Parents inability to supervise their children may likely encourage them to join bad peer group, which will lead to anti-social behavior	378	104	78	107	68	21	3.47	0.96	Accept
	Grand Mean							3.24	1.02	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondent on the relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state. The table further revealed that the respondents have disagreed with items 3, 7 and 8 as seen from their mean scores of 2.66, 2.35 and 2.67 respectively which were below the bench mark of 3.00 set for this study. However, the respondents have agreed with items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 9 as evidenced from their mean scores of 3.82, 3.74, 3.52, 3.35, 3.58 and 3.47 respectively which were all above 3.00 set as bench mark for this study and in addition, the overall mean score (3.24) was also above the bench mark (3.00). This has indicated a negative relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency of senior secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

Table 4: Correlation Between Peer Relation and Juvenile Delinquency of Senior Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	df	R	r ²	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Peer Relation*	378	3.18	1.12					
Juvenile Delinquency	378	2.71	1.39	377	.762	.580	.028	Reject H0 ₃

Level of significance Alpha (α) > 0.05 shows no significant relationship

Table 4 reveals that there is a significant relationship between peer relation and juvenile delinquency of senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The result shows a negative relationship with $n = 378$, $r = .762$, $p < .05$ (p -value = .028), while the correlation coefficient (r^2) = .581; This implies that only 58.1% of the variation is accounted for in the relationship that exists between peer relation and juvenile delinquency of senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, while 41.9% of the variation is unaccounted for in the study. This clearly implied that there is significant positive relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

Summary of Findings

Findings from the research question and the null hypothesis revealed a significant negative relationship between peer relations and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa state.

Discussion

Findings from the research question and the null hypothesis in Table 3 and 4 revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between peer relation and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nasarawa State. Findings of this study confirms with the findings of Glaser, Shelton, Marianne and van den Bree, (2020) which revealed that peer relation is commonly associated with episodes of teens risk taking (such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviours), because these behaviour commonly occur in the company of peers. This is further supported by the findings of Arief and Martin (2021), that peer influence indulges youth into loitering about in the streets, watching films and attending parties during school hours, taping as alternative to stealing which may eventually graduate into armed robbery. Peer relation may be present in the workplace, at school or within the society it can affect people of all ages. It may affect people in different ways but here, the focus is on peer relation as it correlates with juvenile delinquencies in schools.

Conclusion

This study provides new evidence regarding the association between parental peer relations and juvenile delinquency amongst senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Previous researches study has empirically proven that there exists a significant relationship between the variables that was reviewed in this study. From the foregoing, it is pertinent to note that there is need for the family to rise up to the performance of its primary roles of positive child rearing and socialization and to create a healthy social environment in order to insulate the children from delinquency. Although research study has shown that a majority of delinquents come from broken families, this study found out that juvenile delinquency is also fostered by peer relation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended that:

1. Parents or care givers of the family must create awareness among their children to avoid bad peer group.
2. Parents should monitor their children by knowing the kind of friends they keep and also counsel them when necessary.

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