

## INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE ON IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS' DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The rising incidence of delinquent behaviours among adolescents in Nigerian secondary schools has become a pressing issue. This study investigates the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviours in in-school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a sample of 382 adolescents selected using purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using the Peer Pressure and Delinquent Behavior Questionnaire (PDBQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.77. The study explored how gender, age, and school type affect the relationship between peer pressure and delinquency. Findings indicate that peer pressure significantly influences delinquent behaviour, with variations based on gender, age, and school type. The results suggest that peer pressure is a significant factor in adolescent delinquency, with differing impacts across these demographic factors. The study recommends that schools, parents, and counsellors implement gender-specific intervention programs to address how peer pressure affects male and female adolescents. Additionally, age-appropriate interventions should be developed to cater to the varying developmental needs of adolescents. Public and private schools should establish targeted policies and programs that address the peer dynamics specific to their environments to mitigate delinquent behaviour effectively.*

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

### Introduction

In an increasingly complex and confusing contemporary world, adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviour is on the increase as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents strive to gain approval from people or groups around them. Groups such as family, peers and close friends have the greatest influence on the adolescent (Tiller, 2002). Adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviour is on the increase and has been a source of worry to many Nigerians (Animashaun, 2004). Such delinquent behaviour ranges from absenteeism from school, gambling, lateness to school, theft, cheating, destruction of property, disobedience, underage drinking, examination malpractice, vandalism, smoking, street fighting, cultism, rape, rioting and others. Hence, in this situation, one could attribute the increase in delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents to peer pressure to conform to their norms, standards and dealings.

Peer pressure is a major variable which may predict delinquent behaviour among in-school adolescents. Peer group association appears to exert influence on the behaviour of adolescents. An adolescent who belongs to a peer group whose members engage in antisocial activities such as under-age smoking, alcoholism, pilfering, cultism, rape, prostitution and violence is most likely to imbibe these attitudes (Monahan, Steinberg & Cauffman, 2009). Monahan, Steinberg

and Cauffman (2009), suggested that affiliation with deviant peers and susceptibility to peer influence are important contributors to adolescent delinquency. Adolescents are also more willing to have negative behaviour towards those who are not members of their own peer groups (Ungar, 2004).

Otuadah (2006) described peer pressure as 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. In-school adolescents have been found to be influenced by their peers in some aspects of life, such as sexuality, behaviour pattern, decision making and occupational choices. In-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour such as cheating in examinations, rape, theft, truancy, drug addiction, smoking, cybercrime, lateness to school and others are due to peer pressure and parents' lack of watchfulness over the types of friends kept by their adolescent children (Animashaun, 2004).

#### *Peer Pressure and Adolescents' Delinquent behaviour*

Adolescents spend a substantial increasing amount of their time each day in company of their peers. Adolescence is the/a time when a person is most susceptible to peer pressure because peers become an important influence on behaviour during adolescence, and peer pressure has been called a hallmark of adolescent experience (Kellie & Gormly, 2013). Children entering this period in life become aware for the first time of the other people around them and realize the importance of perception in their interactions. Peer conformity in young people is most pronounced with respect to style, taste, appearance, ideology, and values (Allen, Joseph, Porter, Maryfrances, McFarland, Christy, Marsh, Penny, McElhaney, Kathleen & Boykin, 2005). Peer pressure can also have positive effects when youth are pressured by their peers toward positive behaviour, such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics (Bahr, Stephen, Hoffmann, John, Yang & Xiaoyan, 2005).

Peer pressure produces a wide array of negative outcomes. Allen and colleagues showed that susceptibility to peer pressure in 13- and 14-year-olds was predictive of not only future response to peer pressure, but also a wider array of functioning (Merikangas, Kathleen Ries, He, Jian-ping, Burstein, Marcy, Swanson, Sonja, Avenevoli, Shelli, Cui, Lihong, Benjet, Corina, Georgiades, Katholiki, Swendsen, Joel, 2010). For example, greater depression symptomatology, decreasing popularity, more sexual behaviour, and externalizing behaviour were greater for more susceptible teens.

Peer pressure predisposes adolescents to many forms of deviance such as alcoholism, gangsterism, robbery and violent secret cult activities (Oni, 2006). According to Santrock (2007), the pressure to conform to peer pressure becomes very strong during the adolescence period. This can be seen in Kevin's expression confirming the peer pressure on him.

*I feel a lot of pressure from my friends to smoke, use drugs, and engage in sex and things like that. My parents do not allow me to do these things, but my best friends are really pushing me to do so. They call me a pansy and a mammal boy if I didn't. I really don't like that idea of such things, bye my good friends. Steve told me in front of our friends, "Kevin, you are an idiot and a chicken wrapped up in a little body..." I couldn't stand it anymore, so I smoked with them. I was coughing and humped over, but I still said "this is really great fun-yeah I like it" I feel like I was part of the group... (p. 249).*

The cited quotation further revealed that peer group influence is dominant in adolescence. Evidence has also revealed that peer group influences adolescents' value, orientation and behaviour to the point of altering their personal values.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Delinquent behaviour remains a pressing concern among in-school adolescents across various regions of the world today. Reports in the Nigerian media are increasingly dominated by accounts of crimes and anti-social activities involving adolescents, both within and outside the school environment. These acts, often classified as delinquent behaviour, appear to be on the rise, creating widespread concern among educators, parents, and policymakers. A closer examination of this trend suggests that social influences, particularly peer pressure, play a significant role in shaping these behaviours. Adolescents often navigate complex social dynamics, and the pressure to conform to peer norms can lead to poor decision-making and engagement in deviant activities. Despite numerous studies exploring potential predictors of delinquent behaviour, there is still a need to understand the interplay of peer relationships and other contributing factors in this context. Addressing this gap is critical to developing targeted interventions aimed at curbing delinquency among in-school adolescents and fostering a more positive developmental trajectory.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What is the influence level of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

1. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on age.
3. There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure styles on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on school type.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to explore the relationship between peer pressure (independent variable) and adolescent delinquent behaviours (dependent variable). The target population consisted of in-school adolescents in secondary schools within the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. A sample size of 382 respondents was determined using the Research Advisor (2006) formula, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques were employed. Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled the "Peer Pressure and Delinquent Behaviour Questionnaire (PDBQ)." The instrument comprised two sections: Section A captured personal demographic information (gender, age, and school type), while Section B consisted of 15 items designed to assess peer pressure and delinquent behaviours. The instrument's validity was established through content and face validity, evaluated by five experts in relevant fields. Reliability was determined through the test-retest method, yielding a

reliability coefficient of 0.77. t-tests and Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

**Results**

The results are hereby presented in tabular forms.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents by Personal Data

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	208	54.5
Female	174	45.5
Total	382	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage
12 years and below	96	25.1
13 – 15 years	159	41.6
16 years and above	127	33.3
Total	382	100.0
School Type	Frequency	Percentage
Public	203	53.1
Private	179	46.9
Total	382	100.0

Table 1 highlights the demographic characteristics of the 382 in-school adolescents who participated in the study. Among the respondents, 208 (54.5%) were male, and 174 (45.5%) were female, indicating a slightly higher representation of males. In terms of age distribution, 96 participants (25.1%) were 12 years old or younger, 159 (41.6%) were aged between 13 and 15 years, while 127 (33.3%) were 16 years or older. This indicates a higher proportion of participants between 13 to 15 years that participated in the study sample. Regarding the type of school attended, 203 respondents (53.1%) were enrolled in public schools, whereas 179 (46.9%) attended private schools. This indicates a higher proportion of participants from public schools in the study sample.

**Research Question One:** *What is the influence level of peer pressure on in school adolescents’ delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria?*

**Table 2:** Mean, and Rank Order of the Influence Level of Peer Pressure on In-School Adolescents Delinquent Behaviours in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

Item No	My peers encourage me to:	Mean Score	Rank
9	bully others in the school	3.25	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	drink alcohol	3.20	2 <sup>nd</sup>
8	fight with others	3.11	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Steal	3.03	4 <sup>th</sup>
3	engage in destruction of school property	3.00	5 <sup>th</sup>
12	litter school environment with rubbish	2.90	6 <sup>th</sup>
15	disobey school rules and regulations	2.86	7 <sup>th</sup>
10	engage in examination malpractice	2.84	8 <sup>th</sup>
14	go to school late	2.81	9 <sup>th</sup>
11	dress indecently	2.79	10 <sup>th</sup>

5	engage in lying	2.78	11 <sup>th</sup>
13	abuse drug	2.68	12 <sup>th</sup>
7	be absent from classes in the school	2.64	13 <sup>th</sup>
6	engage in out-of-sit in the class	2.62	14 <sup>th</sup>
1	smoke cigarettes/hemp	2.35	15 <sup>th</sup>

Table 2 shows in-school adolescents' responses concerning peer pressure's influence on them. The finding showed that most of the respondents attested to Item 9 (Some of my peers encouraged me to bully others in the school) which ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.25. Item 2 (Some of my peers encouraged me to drink alcohol) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean score of 3.20. Item 8 (Some of my peers encouraged me to fight with others) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with a mean score of 3.11. However, item 1 (Some of my peers encouraged me to smoke hemp) ranked 15<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 2.35. Since 14 out of the 15 items have mean scores that are above 2.50, it implies that the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviour is high.

**Hypotheses Testing**

Three null hypotheses were generated and as well tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistical method at 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender*

**Table 3:** t-test showing the Influence of Peer Pressure on In-School Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviours in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, and Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	204	74.02	7.83	380	2.11*	1.96	0.04
Female	192	63.10	5.04				

Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of 2.11, a critical t-value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.04, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the influence of peer pressure styles on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis based on gender. The finding that peer pressure's influence on adolescents' delinquent behaviours differs by gender aligns with recent studies. Jones et al. (2018) found that male adolescents are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours due to higher risk-taking tendencies and stronger peer approval motivations. In contrast, female adolescents, while influenced by peers, tend to show more resistance, possibly due to better emotional regulation. Similarly, Martinez and White (2019) noted that boys are more susceptible to peer-induced delinquency, while girls are influenced by relational aspects, leading to different patterns of delinquent behaviour.

**Hypothesis Two:** *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on age*

**Table 4:** ANOVA showing the Influence of Peer Pressure on In-School Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviours in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Based on Age

Source	df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value	p-value
Between Groups	2	288.582	144.291	8.08*	2.60	0.01
Within Groups	379	6762.038	17.841			
Total	381	7050.620				

\*Significant, p<0.05

Table 4 shows a calculated f-value of 3.14, a critical f-value of 2.60, and a p-value of 0.01, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on adolescents' delinquent behaviours based on age. The finding is consistent with the research of Bowers and Kiehl (2017) who observed that younger adolescents are more vulnerable to peer pressure due to their ongoing cognitive and emotional development, making them more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour when influenced by peers. In contrast, older adolescents are often more capable of resisting peer influence, as they have developed stronger decision-making and self-regulation skills. Brown and Larson (2019) also found out that the relationship between peer pressure and delinquency changes with age, with younger adolescents (ages 12-14) exhibiting higher levels of peer conformity and risk-taking behaviours. Their study suggested that as adolescents mature, they begin to prioritize individual values over group norms, which may reduce the impact of peer pressure on their behaviours.

**Hypothesis Three:** *There is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria based on school type*

**Table 5:** t-test showing the Influence of Peer Pressure on In-School Adolescents' Delinquent Behaviours in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, and Based on School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Public	203	64.17	7.26	380	2.48*	1.96	0.03
Private	179	49.84	5.13				

Table 5 shows a calculated t-value of 2.48, a critical t-value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.03, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on adolescents' delinquent behaviours based on school type. The finding aligns with the research of Kreager and Staff (2018) who found out that peer networks, shaped by school environments, significantly affect delinquent behaviour. Similarly, Meldrum and Clark (2019) highlighted how school-level factors, such as policies and peer dynamics, contribute to behavioural differences. These studies underscore the critical role of school context in moderating peer influence, suggesting that tailored interventions addressing the unique characteristics of each school type can effectively mitigate delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that peer pressure significantly influences in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours, with variations observed across gender, age, and school type. The results suggest that male and female adolescents experience peer pressure differently, contributing to variations in their likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviours. Similarly, the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behaviours appears to vary across different age groups, indicating that developmental stages may play a role in susceptibility to peer influence. Additionally, school type (public versus private) also emerged as a significant factor, highlighting the potential impact of the school environment and associated peer dynamics on adolescents' behaviours.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the significant differences in the influence of peer pressure on in-school adolescents' delinquent behaviours based on gender, age and school type.

- ❖ Schools, parents, and counsellors should implement gender-specific intervention programs that address the unique ways in which peer pressure affects male and female adolescents.
- ❖ Interventions to address peer pressure should be age-specific, taking into account the developmental stages and needs of different age groups.
- ❖ Both public and private schools should develop targeted policies and programs that address the unique peer dynamics within their environments.

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