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DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY, PEER INFLUENCE AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between dysfunctional family and peer influence and the deviant behavior of school adolescents. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study involved 7,615 secondary school students from Owerri municipal council of Imo state. A sample of 300 students was drawn using simple random sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were dysfunctional family Scale (DFS) and peer influence Scale (PIS) and deviant behavior questionnaire (DBS). The instruments were validated by experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, test-re-test method at interval of two weeks was done using Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.93 and 0.83 were obtained. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions while hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. It was revealed that dysfunctional family has a significant moderate relationship with in- school adolescents' deviant behavior, while peer influence has a significant high relationship with in-school adolescents' deviant behavior. The study therefore recommended among others that parents and guardians should take up childrearing as an important task which requires diligence and therefore should adopt the best parenting style which could possibly impact their children positively.

Keywords: Dysfunctional family, peer influence, school adolescents, deviant behaviour.

Introduction

Adolescence is a significant period in the human development as it is marked with progressive changes that form the individual's character and mindset. The characteristics of these changes involve physical growth and development as well as formation of behaviors that is in synchronization with the demands of such changes which may or may not be in consonance with societal expectation.

Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood and really a tough period to deal with as the adolescents are prone to making mistakes which could have temporary or permanent damage on them and those around them. Saladino et al (2020) opined that during adolescence there is an

increasing possibility of becoming a perpetrator of violence or being involved in at-risk behaviors, such as drug use and unlawful acts. Such behavioral difficulties burden families, schools, communities, and society at large.

In-school adolescents refer to the students within the adolescent age precisely 11 – 18 years which concise with the secondary school level of education. At this level, students showcase lots of behavior which may be in accordance with school rules and those that deviate from established order. Deviant behaviors among secondary school students is a rising concern and should not be neglected as no establishment could properly function where rules and regulation are trampled upon and antisocial exhibition becomes the order of day. These behaviors include substance abuse, cultism, bullying and destruction of property among others. Such behavior could be exhibited within the confines of the school environment and outside the school environment. It is therefore imperative for researchers in the field of education to discover the factors which could lead to students' display of inappropriate behavior and ways of salvaging the situation from further societal decay.

According to Ede et al (2019), adolescents are naturally inquisitive individuals and are easily influenced both positively and negatively by their socializing environments such as family and school. The school plays an essential role in molding the character of students in conformity with societal expectation and not just educating them in curricular activities which most time forms the major focus of educators. When students are not well behaved, it casts a spotlight on them and the institution they represent which is not complementary. It is a necessity to tackle issues of deviants with utmost importance attached. When deviant behavior occurs, it disrupts academic programme of the school and further damage the character of the exhibitor.

Barnes as cited in Carlson (2012) stressed on the need to identify the factors that can potentially lower the rate of delinquent participation. The essence is to identify these factors, manipulate them to reduce deviant behaviors by scholars.

In identifying the factors responsible for students' exhibition of deviant behavior one could not escape the fact that the home, school and society are the basic environment that influences one's behavior. Therefore in tackling the issue of deviant behavior of adolescents, due attention should be given to the home environment which covers the family, the school environment where the students form peers and the society at large.

The family is regarded as the first agent of socialization. It clearly consists of people bonded by blood or marriage. The development and character of a child is molded within the family as most characters displayed by children are patterned as those of the people surrounding them who serve as models. Suffice to say, the family has a great role to play in training up a child in conformity with the rules and regulations guiding the society. When the family fails in its obligation to properly train up the child,

the result is a problematic child. Nwachukwu and Nwagwu (2005) asserted that parents usually have the earlier influence on a child and parental variations in style affects children's social development. They further asserted that a child acquires his or her personality patterns through active imitation of parental attitudes and behaviors most of which the parents would not attempt to teach directly.

In view of the above, certain negative behavior exhibited by adolescents could be inculcated on them by the parents. In a family where the father or mother smokes, the adolescent is likely to engage in smoking. Also in a home where the mother dresses inappropriately, the adolescent girl is also likely to wear clothes that are not appropriate. Also in some home, parents neglect/relinquish their parental roles and as a result children are free to act as they will. In such a scenario, such a family is labeled dysfunctional.

A dysfunctional family refers to a family which accommodates inappropriate behaviors among its members and accepts the display of such behavior as norm. The acceptance of inappropriate behavior occur due to lack of effective parenting on the side of the parents; children therefore behave as they please without much ado on how it affects them, the family and the society. Zagefka et al (2020) asserted that in dysfunctional families, conflict, misbehavior, child neglect, or abuse feature regularly. It is therefore not farfetched that children raised in such an environment would deviate from appropriate behavior in the society. Nwachukwu and Nwagwu (2005) strongly believe that a child is good because he is suitably disciplined in his upbringing and surrounded by the good examples of others. On the other hand they also opined that a hostile home environment does incalculable harm to the child.

According to Carlson (2012), if a parent acts in a negative way, the child is more likely to follow their parent's negative attitude. They are also more likely to generalize this attitude to the rest of society. Thus, parents have much influence over their child's behavior. From birth, a parent will mold and shape behaviors suitable to the norms of society through childrearing. In some families where the relationship between parents are jarred, leading to divorce or separation, the adolescent might be acting out due to the stress of a hostile home environment which has further severed the bond between the parents and the child. When this bond is severed, effective parenting cannot take place as the child would be torn between spending time in different households. Krohn et al (2008), study shows that adolescents living in families who experience more transitions, such as divorces or economic hardships, experience lower levels of parental attachment and supervision, as well as less consistent discipline, and more hostile family environments. In same line, Eze and Agulanna as cited in Nwachukwu and Nwagwu (2005) discovered that parents who have higher marital discord have more deviant children. Most times when the relationship between parents and children deters, there is a lack in the adequate monitoring of the association the children form. It is normal that during adolescence,

children begin to form relationship with people of same age group which most times might be harmful when formed with the wrong group; this group is referred to as peers.

According to Eke (2005), next to the family, peers have a tremendous influence on children, their attitudes, their performance level, their values and morals and their behavior generally. The adolescent age is associated with common occurrence of delinquency. It is plausible that the adolescent child would easily be influenced by the peers they keep. The stage in development is sandwiched between childhood and adulthood and therefore the adolescent tries to pry themselves from the dominance of their parents and attain some level of authority through walking together and imitating their peers. According to Chinweuba et al (2019), at this phase of their lives, peers' advice tend to replace that of their parents and this is why some of them have serious disagreement with their parents or guardians. Okafor and Nnoli as cited in Chinweuba et al (2019) asserted that adolescents create separate world for themselves using slangs, coded language, facial expression and body language which can only be understood by their peers. They further opined that these adolescents rely on peer counsel and regard their parents as "old School" or "old fashion". The adolescent most times may be found moving along with gangs or cliques of same age grade and in so doing learns from one another certain behaviors which initially do not form the character of the adolescent. These behavior may include smoking, wearing of skimpy clothes, sagging of trousers, keeping late night among other behavior that can be worrisome.

The peers that the adolescent child forms affect their behavior positively or negatively. Carlson (2012) stated that when parents do not have a strong bond with their child and do not teach them pro-social values, the adolescent has difficulties in school. These difficulties lead to rejection by conventional peers and they drift into association with deviant peers. He further asserted that when the adolescent is relatively unrestrained from the opinions of parents, teachers, and conventional peers, their new deviant friends encourage and reinforce them to participate in deviant behaviors. Peer influence has been an important topic in education due to its association with adolescence. It is therefore part of the adolescents to form group of persons of same age and experience which most time influence their actions. The adolescent child would try to imitate his peers in order to have a sense of belonging and such imitation sometimes could constitute nuisance.

Empirically, Zakaria et al (2022) study on the role of family life and the influence of peer pressure on delinquency revealed that parental un-involvement, parent separation, peer pressure, criminal gang membership, and parents' involvement in crime were the important factors for involvement in delinquency. Yahaya et al (2019) investigated the impact of family atmosphere on the adolescent deviant behavior and discovered a significant relationship between the traits of family behaviour, parenting style and parental love towards adolescent deviant

behavior. Tome et al (2012) study discovered that peers have a direct influence in adolescents' risk behaviors.

Deviant behaviours are exhibitions displayed by individuals which do not follow the normal guideline governing a place. In a society, there are known behaviors which are acceptable and those which are not. The school, a miniature society according to Uzoka & Ononuju (2016) has guidelines which govern its process and its members (students and teachers), which strict adherence is expected. When deviant behavior occurs, the rules and regulations of the school are neglected and therefore the environment is made non-conducive for effective teaching and learning. It is therefore imperative that much attention be paid to the possible causes of deviant behavior among adolescent students in order to save the educational system and the future of the scholars.

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between dysfunctional family, peer influence, and deviant behavior of school adolescents. Specifically, the researcher sets out to examine:

1. The relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents
2. The relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents

The following research questions were answered in this study

1. What is the relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents?
2. What is the relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents?

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents

Research Method

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The participants comprised of 300 senior secondary two (SS2) students from Owerri municipal council which has a population of 7,615 secondary school students and 7 secondary schools in the area. The participants were selected through simple random sampling technique. The instruments for the research were a self-constructed titled "Dysfunctional Family Scale (DFS)" "Peer Influence Scale (PIS)" and Deviant Behavior Scale (DBS)". The instruments have a 4 point likert scale which ranges from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 point), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instruments were validated by experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation from Imo state university Owerri. To test the reliability of the instrument, 75 respondents randomly selected from secondary schools in Okigwe L.G.A, who were not part of the real

study, were given the instrument to respond to, on two weeks interval. The data obtained from the pilot test was used to compute the internal consistencies of the instrument using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach Alpha of 0.93 and 0.83 were gotten which is considered appropriate for the study. The researcher visited the schools and administered copies of the instruments to the respondents. Copies of the instrument were collected from the respondents the same day. This ensured that no copy was lost. The data was analyzed and using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Table 1: Pearson analysis on relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents

N	Pearson r.	Remark
300	0.50	Moderate Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows a calculated Pearson r value of 0.50 which shows a moderate positive relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents. This implies that increase in the independent variable (dysfunctional family) leads to an increase in the dependent (deviant behavior).

Table 2: Summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient statistics analysis of relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents

N	R	∞	Df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Decision
300	0.50	0.05	298	9.97	1.96	Reject H_{01}

Table 2 shows the Summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient statistics analysis of relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents. The t-cal of 9.97 is greater than the t-tab of 1.96 which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between dysfunctional family and deviant behavior of school adolescents in favor of the alternative.

Table 3: Pearson analysis on the relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents

N	Pearson r.	Remark
300	0.71	High Positive Relationship

Table 3 shows a calculated Pearson r value of 0.71 which indicates a High positive relationship between Peer Influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents. This implies that increase in the independent variable (Peer Influence) leads to an increase in the dependent (deviant behavior).

Table 4: Summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient statistics analysis of relationship between Peer Influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents

N	R	∞	Df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Decision
300	0.71	0.05	298	17.40	1.96	Reject Ho_2

Table 4 shows the Summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient statistics analysis of relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents. The t-cal of 17.40 is greater than the t-tab of 1.96 which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between peer influence and deviant behavior of school adolescents in favor of the alternative.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the relationship between dysfunctional family, peer group and deviant behavior of school adolescents. This study is imperative due to the occurrence of anti-social behavior perpetrated by students of various institutions of learning which in its exhibition is not educationally enhancing. The study investigated the role of dysfunctional family and discovered a significant influence of dysfunctional family on behavior of school adolescents. The discovery is in consonance with the findings of Yahaya et al (2019) which investigated the impact of family atmosphere on the adolescent deviant behavior and discovered a significant relationship between the traits of family behavior, parenting style and parental love and adolescent deviant behavior. The study also examined the relationship between peers and adolescent deviant behavior and discovered that the peer group the adolescent keeps has a significant influence on his behavior. This agrees with the investigation conducted by Tome et al (2012) which discovered that peers have a direct influence on adolescents' risk behaviours.

The peers that the adolescents form could affect their behavior negatively. Most times these peers could lead to behaviors which are damaging to the adolescent, school and society at large. The study further agrees with that of Zakaria et al (2022) on the role of family life and the influence of peer pressure on delinquency revealed that parental un-involvement, parent separation, peer pressure, criminal gang membership, and parents' involvement in crime were the important factors for involvement in delinquency.

Conclusion

The importance of education to national development makes this study vital as most behaviors of school adolescents are not encouraging when assessed with the effort of stakeholders to provide the necessary requirements for effective education to take place. Deviant behavior has always been a rampant occurrence in schools and society at large and therefore becomes necessary for researchers in the field of education to ascertain its probable cause. Dysfunctional family and peer influence are being investigated of having an impact on the deviant behaviors of adolescents. The study revealed a significant relationship between dysfunctional family, peers influence and adolescent deviant behavior.

Recommendations

With the aim of curbing the occurrence of deviant behavior of school adolescents, the researcher devised the following means:

1. Parents and guardians should take up childrearing as an important task which requires diligence and therefore should adopt the best parenting style which could possibly impact their children positively.
2. Adequate monitoring of child's activities is imperative to discover when one's child deviates from appropriate behavior and exhibits inappropriate ones in order to begin an early correction.
3. Parents should be good role models to their children as most behaviors of adolescents are emulated from home.
4. Students should deviate from associating with groups which could jeopardize their education and rather form groups which could help them academically excel.
5. A guidance counselor should be employed in schools to deal with issues of deviants
6. Adequate punishment for deviants should be stipulated in order to control its occurrence in schools.

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