

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCES AS CORRELATES OF ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

This study is focused on adolescent deviant behaviour in relation to the socio-economic influences. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 540 adolescents from Secondary Schools in the Benin Metropolis was randomly selected for this study. A sample of 90 adolescents was randomly selected from 6 schools. Three experts determined the content validity of the instrument, and subsequently administered to 40 adolescents in a Secondary School, who were not part of the sample of study. After an interval of three weeks the instrument was re-administered to the same 40 adolescents. The data obtained from these two administrations was subjected to Pearson's correlation statistic; and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.96 was obtained. The mean and standard deviation was employed to answer the research questions, while the Pearson product moment and the point bi-serial correlation statistics was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The results show that socio-economic contexts, parental income, peer group influence, adolescents' gender and age are linked to adolescents' attitude toward deviant behaviour. Recommendations are made to parents or guardians, child protection and helping professionals to engage in intervention measures in response to the phenomenon of deviant behaviour in order to improve the well-being of adolescents in the Nigerian context.

Key words: socio-economic; adolescents; attitude; deviant behaviour; income; gender; age; peer

INTRODUCTION

Deviant behaviour among adolescents is fast becoming an increasing daily feature of most societies. In recent times, there has been a public outcry in the Nigerian context over the ever-increasing level of deviant behaviour among adolescents both at home and in educational institutions (Osunde and Omoruyi 2012). Deviance describes an action or human behaviour that is contrary to the socially prescribed behaviour in any social system, human group, organization, community, or so-

ciety (Clark 2001). Similarly, Macionis (2012) defined deviance as a behaviour that violates the standard of conducts or expectations of a group or society; and it involves the violation of group norms, which may or may not be formalized into law. A maturity gap encourages adolescents to imitate deviant behaviours in ways that are normative and adjustable (Moffitt 1993). The phenomenon of deviant behaviour among adolescents in schools, homes and other settings could be seen as delinquency; while other antisocial behaviours maybe simply be part of the

growing up process and of challenging the boundaries with adults (Lasoncz and Tyson 2007). Murray and Farrington (2012) observe that there are some deviances that do not necessarily involve crime, such as persistent lying and deceit, truancy, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity and other objectionable behaviours that are not illegal. Although deviance is an inevitable problem of the global society, studies indicate that the intensity of deviant behaviour among adolescents has increased and it creates a massive interference in the stability of societies (Osunde and Omoruyi 2012, Rebellow 2015).

The behavioural models establish that long-lasting deviant behaviours develop in chains of probable steps, beginning at a very young age (Patterson et al. 1989). Deviant attitudes and behaviour of adolescents could be the source of a number of contemporary social issues in society. The research of Akpan et al. (2010) indicates that behavioural problems in children have often been seen as part of their growing process, these problems are often transient, may not even be noticed and may be exhibited in certain settings (such as the home, school and public places). Adolescents experience critical changes in their lives that are characterized by a host of turning points, which are displayed in pressures, conflicts and frustrations. During this period, a considerable number of adolescents often get confused within the context of changing conditions about what to do when they are faced with the various issues of relationships, societal laws and order, school rules and regulations (Osunde and Omoruyi 2012). It is in the process of responding to these misperceptions and conflicts (and due to inappropriate assistance) that the adolescents are likely to engage in deviant behaviours. It seems that certain socio-economic contexts wane the ethical behaviours of adolescents.

Local and international researchers have recognized the need to understand the reasons correlating to attitudes of adolescents towards deviant behaviours, i.e. the aberration from social norms (Clark 2001, Fatoye and Morakinyo 2002, Macionis 2012, Rebellow 2015). Ajake et al. (2010) substantiate that there is high rate of complaints about deviant behaviour among adolescents. This can occur in different forms; as a result of socio-economic disenchantment or stress, peer

group influences, gender or age. According to James (2001), the income of the family (wealth and social status) could be one of the core reasons for adolescents engaging in deviance. Bamgbose (2002) affirms that the blame for the proliferation of deviance lies squarely on the low financial status of parents, as the cause of sexual promiscuity and stealing by adolescents is largely a socio-economic factor.

However, some adolescents from a high parental income display deviant behaviours, given their bad foundation for growing up. Peer group pressure is also one of the things that encourage deviant activities among adolescents. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) observed that peer group influence has a bearing on adolescents' participation in deviancy, such as substance use, cultism, prostitution, and the violation of other norms of a society or group (Iwuagwu 2016). Lasoncz and Tyson (2007) affirm that gender has a link in the involvement of most adolescents in deviant activities. Researches indicate that male and female adolescents differ in their disposition towards deviant behaviour (Hadjar et al. 2007, Tracy et al. 2009). Svensson (2003) added that a number of adolescents (in a bid to meet their needs or express a need) engage in deviant behaviour due to their gender. Lasoncz and Tyson (2007) posit that age has created a vacuum in the lives of a number of adolescents at home or school. This is because the older among them are more easily misled into gang and deviant activities.

Statement of the problem

Every society presents its own sets of norms and values to which it expects adherence by its members, and those who violate such norms and morals are seen as deviants. Although adolescents have the potential to influence the social and economic development of the country, their high involvement in deviant behaviours impedes the peaceful functioning of some societies. Deviant behaviour, among other things, has become a feature of a number of societies. Varying attempts have been made to reduce the incidence of deviant behaviour among adolescents, yet the phenomenon persists. It has become noticeable that such behaviours generate severe peril on adolescents' development

and/or on the entire society. Researches have been conducted on the notion of deviant behaviours, but there seems to be a lack of depth in the insights into the socio-economic contexts that influence deviant behaviours among adolescents. There is a need therefore, to develop suitable intervention measures to tackle the anti-social or deviant behaviour of Nigerian adolescents. It is in anticipation of this response that this study attempts to gain an understanding of the likely socio-economic contexts as correlates of adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviours.

The specific aims and objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the involvement of adolescents in deviant behaviours.
2. To examine whether parental income influences adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviours.
3. To examine whether peer group influence encourages adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviours.
4. To examine whether the gender of adolescents influences their attitude towards deviant behaviours.
5. To examine whether the age of adolescents influences their attitude towards deviant behaviours.

Research question

1. What is the level of adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviours?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between parental income and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour.
2. There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour.
3. There is no significant relationship between age of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour.
4. There is no significant relationship between the sex of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this

study consists of adolescents' in Secondary Schools in the Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. A sample of 540 adolescents was selected using the stepwise random sampling procedure. To arrive at this sample, 6 schools were randomly selected from the schools in the metropolis. 90 adolescents were then selected from each of the selected schools. There was a structured questionnaire requesting demographic information that covered age and sex. Section B consisted of 20 four-point Likert type statements, with 4 items on the involvement of adolescents towards deviant behaviour and 16 items on their attitude towards deviant behaviour. The instrument, as well as the research question and hypotheses, were presented to three experts in the Department of Social Work and Educational Measurement at the University of Benin, Nigeria. The 3 experts agreed that the instrument was capable of generating data to answer the research question and hypotheses; hence the instrument is content valid. The researchers thereafter administered the instrument to 40 adolescents in a Secondary School, who were not part of the sample of study. After an interval of 3 weeks the same instrument was re-administered to the same 40 adolescents. The data obtained from these 2 administrations were subjected to Pearson's correlation statistic; and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.96 was obtained. With the help of two research assistants, the researchers administered the instrument to a sample of 540 adolescents. The data collected was analysed and the mean, standard deviation at 2.5 criterions were calculated to answer the research question; Pearson's product moment correlation and point bi-serial correlation statistics were used to test the hypotheses, at 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

Research question: What is the level of adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviours?

Table 1 reveals a calculated mean value of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.66 for fighting and destroying things, which falls within 3.00 and 4.00 showing high involvement. For cheating in examinations there is a calculated

mean value of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 0.67, and for sexual involvement there is a mean of 2.50 and a standard deviation of 0.98 (these means fall within 2.00 and 2.99 showing moderate involvement). The mean and standard deviation on stealing from

friends and neighbours is 1.80 and 0.40 respectively (showing low involvement). The composite mean value is 2.48 and falls within the moderate level showing that adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviour is at a moderate level.

Table 1 – Deviant behaviour among adolescents

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	Sometimes I fight and also destroy things	540	3.00	0.63	High
2.	I sometimes cheat in examinations	540	2.60	0.67	Moderate
3.	I indulge in sexual activities because I feel I am big enough	540	2.50	0.98	Moderate
4.	I sometimes steal from my friends or neighbours	540	1.80	0.40	Low
	Total	540	2.48	0.67	Moderate

Key: 1.00–1.99 = Low; 2.00–2.99 = Moderate; 3.00–4.00 = High.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between parental income and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour.

Table 2 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient r of -0.281 and a p value of 0.000 . Testing at α level of 0.05 , the p value is less than α level. Therefore, the null

hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between parental income and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour, is rejected. This implies that parental income influences adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour. Since the r value is negative it shows that adolescents from less affluent homes have a more negative attitude towards deviant behaviours.

Table 2 – Pearson's correlation of parental income and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour

Variable	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Parental income	540	-0.281	0.000
Attitude of adolescents towards deviant behaviour			

Note: $\alpha = 0.05$.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour.

Table 3 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient r value of 0.232 and a p value of 0.000 , testing at α level of 0.05 , the p value

is less than the α level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour, is rejected. This implies that peer group influences adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour.

Table 3 – Pearson's correlation of peer group influence and adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour

Variable	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Peer group influence	540	0.232	0.000
Attitude of adolescents towards deviant behaviour			

Note: $\alpha = 0.05$.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant relationship between the age of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour.

Table 4 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient r of 0.115 and a p value of 0.010, testing at α level of 0.05, the p value is less than the α level. Therefore, the null hypothesis,

which states that there is no significant relationship between the age of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour, is rejected. This implies that the age of adolescents influences their attitude towards deviant behaviour. Since the r value is positive it means older adolescents are more prone to deviant behaviours.

Table 4 – Pearson's correlation: the age of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour

Variable	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Adolescents' age	540	0.115	0.010
Attitude of adolescents towards deviant behaviour			

Note: $\alpha = 0.05$.

Hypothesis four: There is no significant relationship between the sex of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour.

Table 5 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient r of 0.120 and a p value of 0.007, testing at α level of 0.05, the p value is less than the α level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no

significant relationship between the sex of adolescents and their attitude towards deviant behaviour, is rejected. This implies that the sex of adolescents influences their attitude towards deviant behaviour. Since the r value is positive, the male being the focal group, it means that male adolescents are more prone to deviant behaviours.

Table 5 – Point Bi-serial correlation of adolescents' sex and attitude towards deviant behaviour

Variable	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sex of adolescents	540	0.120	0.007
Attitude of adolescents towards deviant behaviour			

Note: $\alpha = 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviour is at a moderate level. This finding agrees with Osunde and Omoruyi (2012) in that a considerable number of adolescents often get confused within the context of relationships, school rules and societal norms and laws, hence they are predisposed towards deviant behaviours. This study also found that parental income encourages adolescents' attitude toward deviant behaviours. This agrees with the findings of James (2001) that parental income is a core reason why adolescents engage in deviance. Similarly,

Bamgbose (2002) agrees that the blame for the increase of deviance lies on the level of parents' financial status; as the cause of sexual promiscuity and stealing by adolescents are largely socio-economic factors. This indicates the influence of the parental high or low income on adolescents' inclination to antisocial activities. The study further revealed that peer groups influence adolescents' engagement in deviant behaviours. This is supported by Ajake et al. (2010) who agree that peer group influence is one of the reasons for adolescents engaging in various deviant acts. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) corroborate in their study that peer group influence has a bearing on substance use, cultism (Iwuagwu 2016), and

prostitution, along with the loss of cultural value for the dignity of human life and of a society.

This study also found that adolescents' age influences their attitude towards deviant behaviour. This agrees with the findings of Lasoncz and Tyson (2007) which showed that age has created a vacuum in the lives of a number of adolescents, as the older among them are more easily misled into gang and deviant activities. This finding is in agreement with the study of Svensson (2003) that adolescents of older ages tend to have more deviant tendencies compared to the younger ones. Furthermore, this study reveals that the difference in the gender of adolescents has a connection with their attitude towards deviant behaviour (as indicated by the research participants). The indication is that male adolescents are more predisposed to engaging in deviant behaviours than female adolescents. Consequently, the finding is supportive of researches that indicate that male and female adolescents differ in their disposition towards deviant behaviour (Hadjar et al. 2007). Tracy et al. (2009) concur that male adolescents have a greater proportion of deviant behaviours and are more likely to persistently be inclined to engage in more serious acts of deviance (Svensson 2003), than females.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that adolescents are moderately involved in deviant behaviours, and that adolescents of low economic means, as well as older adolescents and male adolescents are more prone to deviant behaviours. The researchers also conclude that peer groups influence adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviours.

Thus it seems that the socio-economic contexts that influence adolescents' disposition towards deviant behaviours cannot be ignored, but need to be understood. The results of this study offer considerable evidence in support of the need to improve adolescents' attitude towards approved and acceptable behavioural patterns. The notion of parental income as explicated in this study appeared as one of the socio-economic

variables that influences adolescents' attitude towards deviance. A number of teenagers indulge in indecent behaviours because of their parents' income, which could be high or low, and this encourages their aberrant conduct. The inclination to deviate from the contextual norm or standard when parents could not find well-paid jobs, or conversely over pampered due to high income, shows that adolescents' attitude towards deviant behaviour is dependent on the level of available income in their families.

Some adolescents engage in indecent activities because they have been lured into them and encouraged by their peers who are also deviants. Adolescents' reliance on peers or friends for direction implies that parents could not adequately supervise them; hence the children are engrossed in aberrant conducts. Indeed, children are unlikely to be predisposed towards deviant activities if their parents have a sustainable income and are able to provide for their needs sufficiently and if they are properly guided. Indeed, the age of adolescents encouraged their engagement in deviant behaviour. In some instances adolescents engaged in deviant acts due to the level of their age, as the older they are, the greater the chances of them being lured or encouraged into deviancy. In some other cases, deviant activities were influenced due to adolescent gender; as the phenomenon is more constant with male than female adolescents. This implies that male adolescents have more of a tendency to carry out deviant acts, perceive it as ideal, and are often more engaged in serious deviant acts than female adolescents. Hence, this tolerance reflects the notion that the attitude of adolescents regarding deviance correlates with their socio-economic contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the various socio-economic contexts that are responsible for adolescents' predisposition towards deviant behaviour, the researchers make the following recommendations based on the findings of this study: Awareness-raising as a significant approach in responding to adolescents' deviant behaviours should be encouraged by social workers, counsellors and other

helping professions. These enlightenment programmes will educate children, parents, adults and other community members about the phenomenon of child labour. They will also provide information regarding the evils of deviancy to adolescents, parents, communities and society, and the available measures in response to the phenomenon.

The following recommendations are:

- engage in sensitization and education programmes for adolescents in schools and other settings considering the repercussions of deviant behaviours on the youths and the society;
- engage adolescents with behavioural problems in interventions in response to their negative attitude towards adherence with the societal norms and rules;
- encourage parents, guardians or teachers to develop positive and academic environment for adolescents and to be observant of their behaviour tendencies;
- engage social workers, counsellors and other professionals in providing behaviour modification therapy for adolescents through the student guidance and counselling centres in schools, and social agencies in order to address their academic and individual problems given the involvement in deviant activities;
- promote the provision of assistance for adolescents and their parents or guardians to protect, reinforce, and stabilize households to provide a safe family environment.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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