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Influence of Peer Relations, Domicility and Parenting Styles on Juvenile Delinquency among Adolescents in Owerri

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of peer relations, domicility and parenting styles on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey was carried out with 260 secondary school students (130 males and 130 females) aged 10 to 17 years (M = 14.3, SD = 1.89), who were drawn from three schools by convenience sampling. The participants completed the Index of Peer Relations, a 20-item Parental Care Scale and the Delinquent and Anti-Social Scale. Four null hypotheses were tested with a three-way analysis of variance. Peer relations, $F(1, 248) = 75.03$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$, and parenting style, $F(2, 248) = 66.75$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .35$, had significant main effects on delinquency, but domicility did not, $F(1, 248) = 0.09$, $p = .762$. Adolescents with poor peer relations scored higher on delinquency than those with adequate peer relations, and adolescents of permissive parents scored highest among the three parenting groups. The interaction of peer relations and parenting style was also significant but small, $F(2, 248) = 5.85$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. The study concludes that the quality of peer relations and the style of parenting matter more for delinquency than whether an adolescent lives in an urban or a rural setting. Parents, teachers and counsellors should therefore encourage positive peer groups and authoritative parenting.

Keywords: Peer Relations; Domicility; Parenting Styles; Juvenile Delinquency; Adolescents; Owerri

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Introduction

Juvenile delinquency refers to law-breaking and antisocial conduct by young people who have not reached the legal age of adulthood, which is 18 years in many countries. Delinquent acts are commonly grouped into status offences, such as truancy and running away from home, and criminal offences, such as theft, vandalism, cultism and assault. The legal age of adulthood differs from one society to another, so no single age limit defines delinquency, but the behaviour is largely a concern of adolescence.

In Nigeria, juvenile delinquency is a growing worry for parents, teachers, government agencies and society at large. News reports regularly describe adolescents who take part in armed robbery, cultism, vandalism, examination malpractice and harassment, and ThisDay has reported that teenage involvement in crime is rising sharply (David, 2022). In 2022, for example, the Ondo State security network Amotekun arrested two juveniles, aged 12 and 16, and the 20-year-old who supplied their weapons, for armed robbery in Ifedore Local Government Area, and police in Kano State arrested two youths, aged 17 and 18, in connection with a suspected murder (David, 2022). Greater access to the internet and social media, and wider contact with people of different backgrounds, may expose young people to behaviour that goes against accepted norms.

Delinquency has many causes. Three that feature prominently in research are the family, the peer group and the setting in which a young person lives. Meta-analytic evidence shows that poor parental monitoring, psychological control and rejection are linked to delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009), and that the style in which parents raise their children is related to externalising problems in childhood and

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adolescence (Pinquart, 2017). Peers matter as well. Young people who offend tend to have friends who offend, and both the choice of similar friends and the influence of friends appear to contribute to this link (Gallupe et al., 2019). In many Nigerian homes, economic pressure keeps parents away for long hours, and children are often left in the care of other people. This may weaken supervision and leave more room for peer influence.

Peer Relations

Peer relations are the social contacts, friendships and bonds that young people form with others of about the same age. They help children and adolescents to learn cooperation, communication, empathy and ways of settling conflict, and they give a sense of belonging and acceptance. During adolescence, young people spend more time with friends than with family, so the peer group becomes a major setting for social learning in which behaviour, attitudes and values are modelled and reinforced. Good peer relations are linked to:

- emotional stability and self-esteem;
- academic motivation and achievement; and
- social and communication skills, and a sense of identity and belonging.

Poor peer relations, such as rejection, bullying and exclusion, can lead to loneliness, social anxiety, school avoidance and aggression, and in some cases to involvement in delinquent acts.

Domicility

Domicile is a legal term for a person's permanent home, the place to which the person intends to return when away (Garner, 2024). It differs from residence, which is where a person lives at a given time, whether or not the stay is permanent. In this study, domicility refers to the type of community, urban or rural, in which an adolescent's family home is located. Place of residence shapes the supervision, opportunities and peer contacts that are open to a young person. Urban areas may offer more anonymity and more exposure to groups of peers and to the media, while rural areas may offer closer community control. These differences may be narrowing, however, as urbanisation, schooling and social media link young people everywhere.

Parenting Styles

Parenting is the process of guiding children towards adulthood and passing on the values they need for life in society. Parenting style is the pattern of attitudes and practices that parents use in raising and disciplining their children, together with the emotional climate in which they do it (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Baumrind (1971) described three patterns of parental authority, which she called authoritative, authoritarian and permissive, and Maccoby and Martin (1983) added a fourth, the neglectful or uninvolved style.

Authoritative parents combine warmth with firm and clear standards. They explain their rules, encourage independence and expect responsible behaviour. Authoritarian parents are strict and demanding. They expect obedience without question, leave little room for discussion and often use punishment to secure compliance. Permissive parents are warm and lenient. They make few demands, exercise little control and allow their children wide freedom to make decisions, for example in choosing their activities or setting their own bedtime. Neglectful parents are neither responsive nor demanding and are largely uninvolved in their children's lives. Across many studies, authoritative parenting is linked to fewer externalising problems, while the authoritarian, permissive and neglectful styles are linked to more (Pinquart, 2017). Studies that looked at mothers and fathers separately also link parenting styles to delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood (Hoeve et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency is a serious social problem in Nigeria. It harms the young people involved, their families and their communities, and it hinders national development. Crime is widely seen as common among the young in Owerri, where cultism, examination malpractice, armed robbery, internet fraud, rape, housebreaking, forgery and truancy are often mentioned.

Family conditions are a major concern. Inadequate supervision that results from family instability has been linked to delinquency, and children in single-parent homes tend to be supervised less closely because one parent has to cope with work, errands and household tasks (Alfrey, n.d.; Sanni et al., 2010). Single-parent families are also more likely to be financially vulnerable and to live in disorganised neighbourhoods where crime is common, which can expose children to delinquent peers and gangs (Alfrey, n.d.). It is also possible that financial strain pushes some children in these homes towards theft and extortion to meet their needs. Weak parental monitoring is linked to delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009; Kabiru et al., 2014), and it may also expose adolescents to deviant peers. Many parents and caregivers in Nigeria appear unable to supervise their children closely because of heavy economic and social demands, and this may encourage delinquency in the country and in Owerri in particular.

It is therefore important to know how far peer relations, domicility and parenting style, taken together, explain delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Owerri. The present study set out to answer this question.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of peer relations, domicility and parenting style on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the influence of peer relations on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri;
2. examine the influence of domicility (urban or rural residence) on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri;
3. examine the influence of parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri; and
4. examine the joint effects of peer relations, domicility and parenting style on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri.

Operational Definition of Terms

Peer relations: The social and emotional interaction among people of the same age group or the same level of development, measured in this study with the Index of Peer Relations (IPR; Hudson, 1982). Higher scores indicate poorer peer relations.

Domicility: The home or residential environment in which an adolescent permanently lives and receives social and emotional upbringing, classified in this study as urban or rural.

Parenting style: The psychological construct that represents the standard strategies parents use in raising their children, measured with a Parental Care Scale based on the typology of Baumrind (1971). The styles are authoritarian, authoritative and permissive.

Juvenile delinquency: Criminal or antisocial acts committed by individuals under the legal age of adulthood, which violate social norms and laws. It was measured with the Delinquent and Anti-Social Scale (DAS), a self-report scale adapted from the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale of Elliott and Ageton (1980). Higher scores indicate more delinquent behaviour.

Theoretical Review

Social Control Theory

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory holds that delinquency occurs when a person's bond to society is weak or broken. The bond has four elements: attachment to others such as parents, teachers and peers; commitment to conventional goals; involvement in conventional activities; and belief in the validity of social rules. When these ties are strong, they restrain a young person from deviant acts. When they are weak, deviance is more likely.

The theory applies directly to the variables in this study. Adolescents whose parents supervise them poorly or discipline them inconsistently may form weak bonds with authority figures and become more open to negative peer influence, and this may lead to delinquent behaviour. Peer relations can strengthen

or weaken a young person's bond to conventional society, depending on whether friends support or reject conventional norms. Place of residence may matter only to the extent that it changes the strength of these bonds.

Empirical Review

Peer Relations and Juvenile Delinquency

Dira and Subardjo (2025) examined the relationship between peer relationships and juvenile delinquency among 96 adolescents aged 15 to 21 years, selected by accidental sampling. Data were collected with a Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed with Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. Peer relationships were significantly related to delinquency (r = −.30, p = .003), and better peer relationships went with lower levels of delinquent behaviour. The authors drew attention to the value of school-based interventions and peer mentoring programmes that promote supportive peer environments.

Qu et al. (2026) studied virtual socialising and juvenile delinquency among incarcerated boys in China, using 2023 data from a youth correctional institute. Virtual socialising was associated with more delinquency, both offline and online, and association with delinquent peers, in cyberspace and in the real world, was an important link between the two. The authors called for interventions that address online activities and peer dynamics.

Gallupe et al. (2019) combined studies of the association between peer and personal offending in a meta-analysis that considered both selection, in which young people choose friends who offend, and influence, in which friends shape a young person's own behaviour.

Domicility and Juvenile Delinquency

Mack et al. (2007) examined whether family type, family processes and economic factors explain the association between the family and delinquency among adolescents in the United States. They concluded that family processes and economic factors were more important than family structure in predicting delinquency.

Sanni et al. (2010) studied family types and juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. They drew 200 students from five public secondary schools in Uyo by multistage random sampling, and they concluded that family structure was significantly related to delinquency. They also discussed the implications of their findings for counselling.

These studies concern family type and family processes, which are features of the home environment, rather than the difference between urban and rural settings.

Parenting Style and Juvenile Delinquency

Amran and Basri (2020) used a mixed-methods design to study parenting styles and delinquent behaviour (verbal, physical, sexual and antisocial). Surveys were completed by 187 students, and five students were interviewed. Authoritarian parenting was significantly related to delinquent behaviour, but authoritative and permissive parenting were not. The interviews suggested that authoritarian parents, who put a high value on control, left their children feeling conflicted, less communicative and less trusting of their parents.

Mubita and Mwaba (2025) examined maternal and paternal parenting styles and delinquency among juvenile offenders in three approved schools in Zambia: Katombora, Nakambala and Insakwe. They used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, with 132 questionnaires and 25 semi-structured interviews, and the participants were chosen by convenience sampling. Maternal authoritative parenting was the most common style. Maternal and paternal authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles were not significantly related to delinquency, but paternal neglectful parenting was. The authors recommended that parents, policy makers and other stakeholders be made aware of the link between paternal neglect, single parenting, divorce, delinquent peers and juvenile delinquency.

Githuka (2023) studied parenting styles and delinquent behaviour among boys at Kabete Rehabilitation School in Kiambu County, Kenya, using a case study design. Quantitative data came from 83 respondents, and qualitative data came from two focus group discussions and two key informants. Parenting styles were measured with the Perceived Parental Questionnaire-20, and the type of crime committed was also recorded. The link between parental responsiveness and offending differed for fathers and mothers. Responsive fathers were associated with less petty theft, violent crime and sexual offending, while responsive mothers were associated with less sexual offending but with more petty theft and violent crime.

Adebajo and Aborisade (2024) used an exploratory design to study family structure, parenting style and juvenile delinquency through the narratives of 11 participants (inmates and one official) at a juvenile correctional home in Asero, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Most of the inmates had been raised in single-parent or extended-family settings. Narrative content analysis linked delinquent behaviour to negative parenting, parental divorce and parental neglect, and four of the juveniles had been raised by single parents. The authors concluded that a warm and open relationship between parents and children is important in preventing deviant behaviour.

Kabiru et al. (2014) examined whether parental monitoring, religiosity and self-esteem protect Kenyan adolescents who have faced adverse life events from delinquent behaviour. Taken together, these studies point to the family as an important context for delinquency, but they do not agree on which parenting styles matter most.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the theory and the studies reviewed, the following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

1. Peer relations will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri.
2. Domicility will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri.
3. Parenting style will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri.
4. Peer relations, domicility and parenting style will have no significant interaction effects on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri.

Method

Participants

The participants were secondary school students in Owerri. The sample was made up of 260 adolescents (130 males and 130 females) who were drawn by convenience sampling from three schools: Government College Owerri, Federal Government Girls' College Okigwe Road and Imo Girls Secondary School Owerri. Eighty-six participants came from each of two schools and 88 came from the third. Their ages ranged from 10 to 17 years (M = 14.3, SD = 1.89).

Instruments

Three structured questionnaires were used: (a) the Parental Care Scale, (b) the Index of Peer Relations (Hudson, 1982) and (c) the Delinquent and Anti-Social Scale (DAS).

Parental Care Scale

The Parental Care Scale, which is based on the typology of parental authority proposed by Baumrind (1971), measures three parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. It has 20 items with a Yes/No response format. For the authoritarian style, one point is given for each "Yes" on items 2, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 19. For the permissive style, one point is given for each "Yes" on items 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 16 and 18. For the authoritative style, one point is given for each "Yes" on items 1, 5, 8, 10, 17 and 20. The norms are 7.80 for the authoritarian style, 13.20 for the permissive style and 7.44 for the authoritative

style. A score above the norm for a style shows that the style is dominant. An internal consistency (alpha) coefficient of .86 has been reported for the scale, and a concurrent validity coefficient of .73 has been reported for Nigerian samples, obtained by correlating the scale with the Index of Family Relations.

Index of Peer Relations

The Index of Peer Relations (IPR; Hudson, 1982) measures the quality of a person's relationships with peers. It is a 26-item scale with a five-point response format, from 1 (rarely or none of the time) to 5 (most or all of the time). Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 23, 24 and 26 are scored in reverse. Scores above the Nigerian norm indicate poor peer relations, and scores below the norm indicate adequate peer relations. An alpha coefficient of .94 has been reported for the scale.

Delinquent and Anti-Social Scale

The Delinquent and Anti-Social Scale (DAS) is a self-report measure of delinquent and antisocial behaviour, adapted from the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale of Elliott and Ageton (1980). The researchers carried out a pilot study with 40 students of Akabo High School to check its reliability and suitability, and obtained a reliability coefficient of .954. The norm of the scale is 27.65 for both males and females. Scores above the norm indicate the presence of antisocial and delinquent behaviour, and scores below the norm indicate its absence.

Procedure

The researcher obtained approval from the supervisor and a letter of identification from the Head of the Department of Psychology. Informed consent was obtained from the principal of each school, and the purpose of the study was explained to the students before the questionnaires were given out. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept strictly confidential, and they were told not to write their names, a measure intended to increase compliance in completing the questionnaires. They were also encouraged to respond honestly. The questionnaires were self-administered and took about 25 to 35 minutes to complete. In all, 260 completed questionnaires were returned and used for the analysis, and two questionnaires were not returned.

Design and Statistics

The study used a cross-sectional survey design, which is suited to identifying associations and patterns among variables in a large sample in a relatively short time. The data were analysed with a 2 (peer relations: adequate, poor) × 2 (domicility: urban, rural) × 3 (parenting style: authoritarian, permissive, authoritative) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA), using Type II sums of squares. Partial eta squared (η^2) was used as the measure of effect size (Richardson, 2011), and values of .01, .06 and .14 were taken to indicate small, medium and large effects (Cohen, 1988). The level of significance was set at .05.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and sample sizes for delinquency scores in each group of the three independent variables.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and sample sizes of delinquency scores by peer relations, domicility and parenting style

Variable	Group	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Peer relations	Adequate	21.35	5.47	69
	Poor	31.64	4.58	58
Domicility	Urban	27.52	7.51	149
	Rural	27.14	6.42	111
Parenting style	Authoritarian	24.87	5.04	60
	Permissive	33.90	2.58	106
	Authoritative	21.59	5.35	94

Note. M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *N* = number of participants. Higher scores indicate more delinquent behaviour.

Adolescents with poor peer relations (*M* = 31.64, *SD* = 4.58) scored much higher on delinquency than those with adequate peer relations (*M* = 21.35, *SD* = 5.47). The scores of urban adolescents (*M* = 27.52, *SD* = 7.51) and rural adolescents (*M* = 27.14, *SD* = 6.42) were almost the same. Scores differed clearly across parenting styles. They were highest for adolescents of permissive parents (*M* = 33.90, *SD* = 2.58), followed by those of authoritarian parents (*M* = 24.87, *SD* = 5.04) and those of authoritative parents (*M* = 21.59, *SD* = 5.35).

Table 2 presents the results of the three-way ANOVA, which was used to test the hypotheses.

Table 2. Three-way analysis of variance of delinquency scores by peer relations, domicility and parenting style

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	Partial η^2
Peer relations (A)	949.719	1	949.719	75.03	< .001	.23
Domicility (B)	1.168	1	1.168	0.09	.762	.00
Parenting style (C)	1689.891	2	844.945	66.75	< .001	.35
A × B	0.020	1	0.020	0.00	.968	.00
A × C	148.014	2	74.007	5.85	.003	.05
B × C	45.806	2	22.903	1.81	.166	.01
A × B × C	64.311	2	32.155	2.54	.081	.02
Error	3139.072	248	12.658			
Total	207546.00	260				

Note. SS = Type II sum of squares; *MS* = mean square. Partial η^2 is the effect sum of squares divided by the sum of the effect and error sums of squares. Values of *p* below .001 are shown as < .001.

Hypothesis 1 stated that peer relations will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency. This hypothesis was rejected, $F(1, 248) = 75.03$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$, which is a large effect. Adolescents with poor peer relations scored higher on delinquency than those with adequate peer relations.

Hypothesis 2 stated that domicility will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency. This hypothesis was retained, $F(1, 248) = 0.09$, $p = .762$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. Urban and rural adolescents did not differ in delinquency.

Hypothesis 3 stated that parenting style will have no significant influence on juvenile delinquency. This hypothesis was rejected, $F(2, 248) = 66.75$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .35$, which is a large effect. Adolescents of permissive parents scored highest on delinquency, followed by those of authoritarian parents, and adolescents of authoritative parents scored lowest (Table 1).

Hypothesis 4 stated that peer relations, domicility and parenting style will have no significant interaction effects on juvenile delinquency. This hypothesis was rejected in part. The interaction of peer relations and parenting style was significant, $F(2, 248) = 5.85$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, which means that the effect of peer relations on delinquency was not the same under every parenting style. The interaction of peer

relations and domicility, $F(1, 248) = 0.00$, $p = .968$, the interaction of domicility and parenting style, $F(2, 248) = 1.81$, $p = .166$, and the three-way interaction, $F(2, 248) = 2.54$, $p = .081$, were not significant.

Summary of Results

1. Peer relations significantly influenced juvenile delinquency, and adolescents with poor peer relations scored higher than those with adequate peer relations.
2. Domicility did not significantly influence juvenile delinquency.
3. Parenting style significantly influenced juvenile delinquency, and scores were highest among adolescents of permissive parents.
4. Peer relations and parenting style interacted significantly, although the effect was small. No other interaction was significant.

Discussion

The first hypothesis was rejected. Peer relations had a large effect on juvenile delinquency, and adolescents with poor peer relations scored about ten points higher than those with adequate peer relations (Table 1). This agrees with the findings of Dira and Subardjo (2025), who found that peer relationships were significantly related to delinquency, and with those of Qu et al. (2026), who found that association with delinquent peers, online and offline, was an important link between virtual socialising and delinquency. It also fits the meta-analytic evidence that peer and personal offending are associated (Gallupe et al., 2019).

Several explanations are possible. Adolescence is a stage marked by the need for acceptance, belonging and identity, and adolescents often spend more time with peers than with family, so their behaviour, attitudes and values are shaped increasingly by their peers. Students who associate with delinquent peers who engage in truancy, substance abuse or aggression are more likely to adopt similar behaviour in order to win approval or avoid exclusion. Peers also reward deviant behaviour with admiration, acceptance or status, which encourages further misconduct. Peer groups may fill the emotional gap left by absent or disengaged parents, and where antisocial behaviour is seen as a sign of strength, this may increase young people's openness to deviant peer pressure. Schools with weak teacher-student engagement or weak discipline may also let deviant cliques form. Prosocial peer groups, on the other hand, can discourage delinquency by modelling good conduct and encouraging academic effort.

Studies that focused on family structure and family processes (Mack et al., 2007; Sanni et al., 2010) were concerned mainly with family factors and do not bear directly on this result. They show, however, that delinquency has family roots too, which fits the significant effect of parenting style found here.

The second hypothesis was retained. Domicility did not influence delinquency, and the mean scores of urban (27.52) and rural (27.14) adolescents were almost identical. One possible explanation is that peer and social influences are now strong enough to override the effect of where a young person lives. Today's adolescents are connected through schools, social media and peer groups, which leads to shared patterns of behaviour that cut across residential boundaries. Urbanisation and social integration may also be blurring the differences between rural and urban ways of life.

Another possibility is that domicility acts through other factors, such as family structure, socioeconomic status and peer influence, which were not measured here. Even adolescents in stable homes or urban areas may become delinquent if they are exposed to negative peer pressure or weak parental supervision. In the present data, domicility did not interact with either of the other two variables. The earlier studies on the home environment concerned family type and family processes and not the urban-rural divide (Mack et al., 2007; Sanni et al., 2010), so the present result cannot be compared with them directly. It fits the broader view of Mack et al. (2007) that features of family life carry more weight than the formal characteristics of the home. It suggests that delinquency among adolescents is more a function of social and psychological factors than of location.

The third hypothesis was rejected. Parenting style had a large effect on delinquency, and scores were highest for adolescents of permissive parents ($M = 33.90$), followed by those of authoritarian parents (M

= 24.87) and those of authoritative parents (M = 21.59). This fits the meta-analytic evidence that authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting are linked to more externalising problems than authoritative parenting (Pinquart, 2017), and it supports the studies that link negative or uninvolved parenting to delinquency (Adebajo & Aborisade, 2024; Githuka, 2023; Hoeve et al., 2011). It differs in part from Amran and Basri (2020), who found that only the authoritarian style was related to delinquency, and from Mubita and Mwaba (2025), who found a link only for paternal neglect. Differences in samples, measures and settings may account for these differences.

Parenting style shapes a child's emotional regulation, socialisation and moral development, which are key factors in delinquent behaviour. Permissive parents set few limits and supervise little, and this is likely to weaken the attachment and involvement that, in Hirschi's (1969) theory, restrain deviance. Authoritative parents combine warmth with firm control, which encourages self-discipline, moral reasoning and positive social behaviour. Poor supervision and inconsistent discipline may also expose adolescents to deviant peers. In addition, parents who are under economic hardship or family conflict may be less attentive to the emotional and behavioural needs of their children, and children who lack emotional support at home may seek acceptance in delinquent peer groups.

The fourth hypothesis was rejected in part. The interaction of peer relations and parenting style was significant, which means that the gap in delinquency between adolescents with poor and adequate peer relations was not the same under all three parenting styles. The effect was small (partial η^2 = .05), and the cell means needed to describe its form are not available, so it should be treated with caution. A possible interpretation, in line with social control theory, is that strong bonds with parents reduce the pull of delinquent peers, but this needs to be tested directly.

Implications of the Study

The findings have several implications. First, peer relations and parenting style each had a large effect on delinquency, so prevention programmes should address both. Programmes that foster positive peer relationships, mentoring and youth engagement can channel peer influence towards prosocial and community-building activities.

Second, place of residence played a smaller part in delinquency than social and family factors. Prevention efforts should therefore focus on social, family and psychological factors and not on differences between urban and rural settings, and universal behavioural interventions may be suitable across different residential settings in Owerri.

Third, the behavioural patterns, discipline and emotional climate within the home are strongly linked to delinquency. Parenting education and community sensitisation programmes should equip parents with communication, empathy and supervision skills that foster responsibility, emotional stability and respect for social norms among adolescents.

Finally, policy makers, educators and counsellors should design intervention strategies that target peer group influence and parenting practices together. School-based behaviour modification programmes and parent workshops could strengthen moral values, improve self-control and reduce delinquent tendencies whatever the adolescent's residential background.

Limitations of the Study

The findings are specific to adolescents in Owerri and may not apply to regions with different cultural, economic or social conditions. The sample was chosen by convenience from three schools, which further limits generalisation. The data were collected with self-administered questionnaires, which may have introduced social desirability bias, so that participants may have under-reported delinquent behaviour or overstated good peer and parenting relationships.

The cross-sectional design allows only associations to be inferred between peer relations, parenting style, domicility and delinquency, and not causal relationships. Socioeconomic status, exposure to media violence, school environment and community crime rates were not controlled and could confound the relationships. Domicility was measured only as urban or rural residence. Finally, no post hoc tests were

reported for the three parenting styles, and the means needed to describe the significant interaction were not available.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should examine specific dimensions of peer influence, such as peer pressure, group conformity and friendship quality, and should use longitudinal designs to show how peer dynamics change over time. Further research should explore why domicility did not influence delinquency, using comparisons across urban, semi-urban and rural regions in Nigeria and including socioeconomic and infrastructural variables. Studies should also investigate how specific parenting dimensions, such as warmth, discipline and communication, relate to different forms of delinquent behaviour, and should include parental socioeconomic status, education and family stress.

Subsequent studies should examine whether gender and cultural expectations change the relationship between peer relations, parenting style and delinquency, because male and female adolescents may respond differently to parental and peer influences. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies should also develop and test intervention programmes for parenting education and peer group mentoring, to show whether school-based and community-led initiatives reduce delinquent tendencies among adolescents in Owerri and beyond.

Conclusion

Social and family factors play different roles in juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Owerri. Peer relations had a large and significant effect on delinquent behaviour, which shows how strongly social interaction shapes behaviour in adolescence. Parenting style also had a large and significant effect, which confirms that parental attitudes, supervision and communication affect the moral and behavioural development of adolescents. Domicility had no significant effect, which suggests that where adolescents live does not by itself determine whether they become delinquent. Peer relations and parenting style also interacted in a small but significant way. Effective parenting and supportive peer environments therefore remain vital in reducing juvenile delinquency.

Recommendations

1. Schools and community organisations should run peer mentoring and social skills programmes that encourage positive peer influence and discourage deviant behaviour among adolescents, and that promote teamwork, empathy and responsible decision-making.
2. Because domicility did not significantly influence delinquency, policy makers and social workers should concentrate on strengthening family systems, peer interactions and school environments, and not on residential location, when they design interventions for urban and rural settings alike.
3. Parents should be educated on authoritative parenting, which combines warmth with firm discipline. Government agencies and non-governmental organisations can organise parenting workshops that build communication, monitoring and emotional support skills.
4. Schools should work with parents and community leaders to set up behavioural guidance programmes that deal with the combined influence of peers and parenting, and that reward moral conduct, academic engagement and emotional stability.
5. Counselling services that deal with peer group pressure and parenting challenges together should be built into future interventions against juvenile delinquency, so that adolescents receive emotional and social guidance both at home and among their peers.

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