

## **Influence of Personality and Social Factors on Delinquent Behaviour among Secondary School Adolescents in Rivers State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated influence of personality and social factors on delinquent behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. The design for the study was ex-post-facto. The sample for the study was 300 students. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study and they were Adolescent delinquent Behaviour and Neo-Personality inventory with reliability of 0.77 and 0.82 respectively. Five research questions as well as five hypotheses were answered and tested for in the study. Responses for answering research question 1 were analysed with multiple regression, those for research question 2 with beta values associated with multiple regression. Research question 3 and 4 were answered with mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses 1 was tested with ANOVA associated with multiple regression, hypotheses 2 was tested with multiple regression while hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested with independent t-test. The study found that, extraversion and openness to experience jointly had about 5.4% influence on the variations on the development of delinquent behaviour, Furthermore, adolescents whose peer group is clique had a higher mean scores on the development of delinquency than those whose peer group is isolates. Based on the findings; it was recommended that, educational programmes should be organized which will help young people learn how to engage in positive self-appraisal, deal with conflict and control aggression. Contributions to knowledge were made.*

**Keywords:** Personality Traits, Adolescents, Delinquent Behaviour, Peer Group

### **INTRODUCTION**

In an organized society, there are people who do not abide by the laws of the land. Their behaviour invariably constitutes a threat to the citizenry and indeed the society. They are labelled criminals if they are adults and delinquents if they are adolescents and youths (Encyclopedia of Science, 2001) in Mason (2005). According to Mason (2005) delinquency is defined as the behaviour consequent upon the failure of personal and social control to produce behaviour in conformity with the norms of the social system to which legal penalties are attached. Juvenile delinquency is a legal term for behaviour of adolescents and youths that deviates from the normal. Delinquents break the norms and values of the society whereas non-delinquents conform to the societal norms and values.

Delinquents can deny any form of authority. Their activities are usually threatening to the societal order, whereas non-delinquents maintain laws and order and respect constituted authority. Delinquents, unlike non-delinquents, perceive themselves as lazy, bad and ignorant.

Delinquency implies conduct that does not conform to the legal or moral standards of society; it usually applies only to acts that, if performed by an adult, would be termed

criminal. In developed countries, delinquent behaviour is most common in the 14- to 15-year-old age group. At age 14, most delinquent conduct involves minor theft. By age 16 or 17, more violent and dangerous acts, including assault and the use of weapon, becomes prevalent. Most delinquents do not continue this behaviour into their adult life, for, as the circumstances of their lives change and they get a job, marry, or simply mature out of their turbulent adolescence years, their conduct usually falls in line with societal standards (Mason, 2005). Although the evidence is ambiguous, most delinquents adjust to a non-criminal life, yet the proportion of delinquents who become criminals is higher than that of non-delinquents. In the United States, boys make up 80 percent of the delinquent population, and this rate is similar throughout Europe and Japan. Schools are often the forum in which delinquent behaviour originates. Most delinquents perform poorly in school and are unhappy in the school environment. Many delinquents are dropouts who leave school at an early age but have no job opportunities. Juvenile gangs often perform delinquent acts, not solely out of frustration with society but also out of a need to attain status within their group. A gang can provide the rewards an adolescent cannot get from his school or other institutions (American Psychological Association, 1993) in Mason (2005).

Efforts have been made to identify potential delinquents at an early age in order to provide preventive measures. Such predictions of delinquent behaviours generally depend not only on the child's behaviour in school but, the quality of the child's home life. There are many elements that delinquents share in their home lives. Their parents are frequently heavy drinkers who are involved in crime themselves and are unable to provide emotional or financial support for their children. Discipline is inconsistent and often relies on physical force. Most attempts to detect future delinquents have failed; indeed it has been found that the stigma of being identified as a potential delinquent often causes the child to commit delinquent acts (Zamora, 2005).

Personality traits are conceptualized as dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions across events, developmental periods and contexts (McCrea & Costa, 2003). Advances in the field of personality have put more emphasis on the interface between personality and how it influence youths behaviour and have the potential to facilitate identification of the youths most at- risk for engaging in health-compromising behaviours for example, involvement in unprotected sex, drunk driving, stealing, preoccupation with drugs to mention but a few. At transition and change, individuals rely on their perceived resources to help them adjust and gain equilibrium (Caspi & Moffit, 1991). Van-Dam (2007) believes that there is a relationship between personality and delinquent and perpetration of crime.

Corff and Toupin (2009) have shown that adolescents who commit delinquent activities are different from the non-delinquent adolescents in many aspects of personality characteristics and that, these differences tend to be obvious in neuroticism and the lack of adaptation. That is, the delinquent adolescents possess these two specifications more than non-delinquent adolescents. People, who score high on neuroticism are anxious, depressed and react very strongly to aversive stimuli. Neuroticism is determined by the overall level of liability in the person's Central Nervous System (CNS).

Johnson (2000) stated that, there is a relationship between personality disorders of the juveniles and their violence and criminal behaviours. Supporting this view however, Väfors (2008) found a relationship between personality characteristics, parents' treatment, misuse of alcohol and the perpetration of crime. Extraversion refers to activity level, sociability and dominance, and is associated with externalizing behaviours and delinquent among adolescent males (John, 1994). Extraversion is determined by the overall level of arousal in the person's

Central Nervous System (CNS) and Autonomous Nervous System (ANS). High Extraversion scores have a low level of arousal and therefore need more stimulation from their environment. Openness to experience describes an individual's originality, imagination, intellect, and creativity. In previous research cases, neither neuroticism nor openness to experience has shown consistent relationship with youth's at-risk behaviours (Gullone & Moore, 2000; John, 1994; Markey, 2001).

Many adolescents are influenced by peers they admire and respect. Adolescents who engage in deviant behaviours seek out friends who are engaging in similar acts. Youth who gravitate towards delinquent peer groups are at the greatest risk for frequent involvement in illegal activities. Delinquent escalates within group settings because youth reinforce and model delinquent behaviours with other group members (ACT for Youth, 2001). Studies by Siegel, Larry, Welsh and Brandon (2011) have documented the association between poverty and conduct problems in both childhood and adolescence. Youth who contend with overcrowding, inadequate housing, under-re sourced schools, and dangerous neighbourhoods are more likely to have behavioural problems as well as social and emotional deficits compared to youth from more favoured homes and neighbourhoods. For many families, the stress associated with economic hardship can lead to aggression and delinquent among youth. To a great extent, adolescent onset of delinquent behaviour is environmentally determined. When a person with a genetic predisposition to engage in aggressive and antisocial behaviour encounters these environmental factors, he or she is more likely to become enmeshed in criminal activity (Siegel, Larry, Welsh and Brandon, 2011).

Family characteristics such as poor parenting skills, family size, home discord, child maltreatment, and antisocial parents are risk factors linked to juvenile delinquent (Derzon and Lipsey, 2000; Wasserman and Seracini, 2001). McCord's (1979) study of

250 boys found that among boys at age 10, the strongest predictors of later convictions for violent offenses (up to age 45) were poor parental supervision, parental conflict, and parental aggression, including harsh, punitive discipline.

Adolescence is the life stage that bridges childhood and adulthood. In general, it represents the second decade of life. Many psychologists separate this life stage into early adolescence (10-13 years), traditional or mid-adolescence (14-18 years), and late adolescence or youth (19-23 years). Adolescent delinquent behaviour is a pressing problem all over the world. Almost 2.3 million juveniles are arrested annually. Over one billion dollars per year is required to maintain the juvenile justice system (Swenson & Kennedy, 1995). Adolescents under 18 years of age account for 16% of arrests for violent crimes, and 34% of property crime arrests (Snyder, 1992).

Patterson, Debaryshe, and Ramsey (1989) describe the process of delinquent behaviour as beginning with a lack of positive family interaction, leading to school failure and social rejection, then to membership in a deviant peer group. In an exhaustive review of the literature, Patterson et al describes family management factors as having the best ability to predict future and current delinquent, followed by child problem behavior, and school performance. Low predictors were SES and living in a single-parent home.

These studies indicated that adolescents are helped by consistent discipline, strong support, and parental monitoring (Kazdin, 1992). From the description given so far, the researcher is motivated to examine the underlying personality and social factors influencing delinquent behaviour among secondary school adolescents.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The adolescent period is a period of transition period from childhood to adulthood. It is a period of puberty which involves the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics. As a result, adolescent growth and development involves a lot of experimentation behaviours. In developing countries in the world including Nigeria, almost 2.3 million juveniles are arrested annually. Over one billion dollars per year is required to maintain the juvenile justice system. Adolescents under 18 years of age account for 16% of arrests for violent crimes, and 34% of property crime arrests. The relationship between juveniles and violent crime varied considerably over time. For example, in 1988 and 1992 arrests for violent crimes committed by juveniles increased to 47%, while violent crime arrests for adults only increased 19%. However, 1997 statistics have indicated a drop in violent crime among juveniles. Studies indicate that juvenile delinquents are more likely than non-delinquents to suffer problems in adulthood, such as unemployment, alcoholism, and involvement in welfare.

Adolescents that take to delinquent behaviours spend their time on activities outside school work, and this may be responsible for their poor performance in school; in addition they suffer from low self-esteem when they realize they have gone astray. They may display temper tantrums, poor self-control and deviance prone behaviours, when they suffer from frustrations. The essence of this research study however, is to find out the influence of personality types and social factors on delinquent behaviours among secondary school adolescents.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. To what extent do personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience influence delinquent behaviour among secondary school adolescents?
2. To what extent does socioeconomic status (High/low) influence adolescents' delinquent behaviour?
3. To what extent does peer group (clique/isolates) influence adolescents' delinquent behaviour?
4. To what extent does family types (nuclear/extended) influence adolescents' delinquent behaviour?

## **HYPOTHESES**

1. Personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience) will not jointly influence delinquent behaviour among secondary school adolescents
2. Socioeconomic status (high/low) does not significantly influence delinquent behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools
3. Peer pressure (clique/isolates) does not significantly influence delinquent behaviour among adolescents
4. Family type (nuclear/extended) does not significantly influence delinquent behaviour among adolescents

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The design for this study is ex-post-facto. It is appropriate here because the researcher identified the adolescents with delinquent behaviour, collected the required data and analyzed without manipulating any of the variables under study.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for this study consisted of all the 6,115 Senior Secondary School II (SS2) students in all the 16 public Secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample of the study consisted of 300 students who were identified as delinquent adolescents. The researcher randomly and independently selected the participants for the study using the simple random sampling.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

The face validity of the instruments was determined by giving some copies to three experts in Guidance and Counselling, measurement and evaluation to scrutinize the items in the instrument in terms of clarity, suitability and otherwise.

However, for the construct validity of the two instruments, it was determined using divergent validation process where the scores of students in shyness and NEO personality were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique. After the correlation a low negative coefficient -0.39 was obtained indicating that the two instruments are measuring different construct. Hence, both instruments possess construct validity.

### **Reliability of the Instruments**

The reliability of the two instruments originally determined by test-retest methods were 0.77 and 0.82 respectively for personality inventory and crime behaviour battery for adolescent's delinquent behaviour. However, due to change in locality the reliability of the two instruments was re-determined using test-retest methods. In this method, the two instruments were administered twice to a sample of twenty students within the interval of three weeks. The scores from the initial and retest were correlated using Pearson moment correlation technique for each section of the personality trait and crime behaviour battery for adolescent's delinquent behaviour. Thereafter, the coefficients obtained are 0.83 respectively for neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience. Hence, the overall reliability coefficient was obtained by computing the mean of the two coefficients and it is 0.78. Then for the second instrument, after the correlation, the coefficient obtained is 0.60. Thus, all the instruments possess reliability.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Responses to answer research question 1 were analysed with multiple regression, those for research question 2 with beta values associated with multiple regression. Research question 3 and 4 were analysed with mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis 1 was tested with ANOVA associated with multiple regression; hypothesis 2 was tested with multiple regression while hypothesis 3 and 4 were tested with independent t-test.

## **RESULTS**

### **Research Question 1**

To what extent do personality factors of neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion jointly correlate with delinquency among secondary school adolescents?

To answer this research question, multiple regression was employed.

**Table 1. Joint correlation of Neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience and delinquency**

<i>Explained Variable</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>R</i>	$R^2$	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>
Neuroticism	26.16	4.58	0.267	0.071	0.062
Extraversion	26.70	3.34			
Openness to Experience	25.46	4.55			
Delinquency	38.92	7.40			

Results in Table 1 revealed that, the mean scores of the students in neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience and delinquency are 26.16, 26.70, 25.46 and 38.92 respectively. On the other hand, the standard deviation of their scores is 4.58, 3.34, 4.55, and 7.40. A further look at the table also showed that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) obtained as the joint influence of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience on the development of delinquency. The multiple regression coefficient squared  $R^2$  is 0.071 while the adjusted multiple regression squared is 0.062. Consequently, it means that neuroticism extraversion and openness to experience can jointly contribute to about 6.2% variations in the development of delinquency among adolescents, while the remaining 93.8% may be accounted for by other factors outside the scope of this study.

**Hypotheses 1:** The personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience do not jointly contribute to delinquency among adolescents significantly.

To test this null hypothesis, the analysis of variance associated with multiple regression was employed. The results obtained are as presented below in table 2

**Table 2. Analysis of variance associated with multiple regression showing the significance of the joint influence of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience on delinquency**

<i>Sources of Variance</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Regression	1168.28	3	389.43	7.59	0,000
Residual	15193.80	296	51.33		
Total	16362.08	299			

Results in Table 2 showed that the F-calculated value 7.59 was significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $P < 0.05$ ). This means that, the null hypotheses is rejected, hence the personality factor of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience jointly contribute to the development of delinquency among adolescents.

**Research Question 2**

To what extent do the personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience contribute to the development of delinquency among adolescents?

**Hypotheses 2:** The personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience do not independently contribute to the development of delinquency among adolescents significantly

To answer this research question, beta values associated with multiple regression were used while in testing the corresponding hypotheses, the t-test statistics associated with multiple regression was used. The results obtained are presented together in table 3.

**Table 3. Beta and t-test values showing the independent contribution of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience on the development of delinquency among adolescents**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficient</i> <i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficient</i> <i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
(Constant)	48.803	4.838		9.92	.000
Neuroticism	0.127	0.091	0.115	2.05	0.042
Extraversion	-0.111	0.125	-0.068	-1.198	0.232
Openness to Experience	-0.398	0.092	-0.240	-4.259	0.000

Results in table revealed that the unstandardized coefficients (B) of the variables are 48.803, 0.127, -0.111 and -0.398 respectively for constant Neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience.

Hence, the model for the production of the development of delinquency is  $Y = 48.803 + 0.127X_1 + 0.111 X_2 + -0.398 X_3$ . On the other hand, Table 3 revealed that the Beta value of 0.115, -0.068 and 0.240 were obtained respectively for neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience. This implies that, openness to experience had the highest influence (although negatively) followed by neuroticism and then extraversion. On the basis of the significance of their t-values, table 3 revealed that, for neuroticism the t-value of 2.05 obtained was significant ( $P = 0.042 < 0.05$ ) at 0.05 level of probability. For extraversion a calculated t-value of -1.198 obtained was not significant ( $P = 0.232 > 0.05$ ) at 0.05 level of probability. However, for openness to experience, the calculated t-value of -4.26 obtained was significant at 0.05 level of probability ( $P = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Hence, neuroticism and openness to experience independently had a significant contribution on the development of delinquency among adolescents although, openness to experience significantly have a negative contribution on the development of delinquency among adolescents in the secondary school while extraversion had insignificant contribution.

**Research Question 3**

To what extent does parental socioeconomic status (high/low) influence delinquency among adolescents?

**Hypotheses 3:** Parental socioeconomic status high/low influence on delinquency.

To answer this research question and test its corresponding null hypothesis, the students were first classified into high and low parental socioeconomic status based on their responses on the parental socioeconomic status scale. Later, their scores on the delinquency scale were subjected to mean and standard deviation and independent t-test statistics. The results obtained are as presented together in table 4.

**Table 4. Mean and standard deviation and independent t-test analysis on the influence of parental socio-economic status on development of delinquency**

SES	N	MEAN	SD	Df	t	Sig
High	92	34.93	6.47	298	6.64	0.000
Low	208	40.68	7.10			

Results in Table 4 revealed that the adolescents from high and low socioeconomic status were numbered 92 and 208 respectively and their mean scores on the delinquency scale are 34.93 and 40.68 respectively for students from high and low socioeconomic status families. Based on their mean scores, it is deduced that adolescents from low socioeconomic families are more involved in delinquency than those from high socioeconomic family. Furthermore, Table 4 also revealed that the t- calculated value of 6.64 obtained was significant at 0.05 P = 0.000 < 0.05). This indicated that parental socioeconomic status of the adolescents significantly influences the development of delinquency.

**Research Question 4**

To what extent does peer group (clique/isolates) influence delinquency among adolescents?

**Hypotheses 4:** Peer group (clique/isolates) does not significantly influence delinquency among adolescents To answer this research question and test its corresponding null hypothesis, the delinquency mean scores of the adolescents who are categorized into clique and isolates were subjected to mean and standard deviation and independent t-test statistics. The results obtained are presented in table 5.

**Table 5. Mean. Standard deviation and independent t-test on the influence of peer influence on the development of delinquency among adolescents**

Peer Influence	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig
Clique	203	39.80	7.36	298	3.03	0.003
Isolates	97	37.07	7.27			

Results in table 5 revealed that the adolescents who belong to clique and isolates are 203 and 97 in number respectively. The mean scores of the adolescents on the delinquency scale are 39.80 and 37.07 for clique and isolates groups. The standard deviations of their scores are 7.36 and 7.27 respectively for clique and isolates. Based on their mean scores, it is deduced that the adolescents who are isolates are involved in delinquency than the cliques. A further look at the table 5 revealed that the calculated t-value of 3.031 obtained was significant P = 0.003 < 0.05). This indicated that peer group of the adolescents significantly influence their development of delinquency.

**DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

**Joint Influence of Neuroticism, Extraversion and Openness to Experience on the Development of Delinquency among Adolescents**

The results in Table 1 revealed that, neuroticism; extraversion and openness to experience jointly had about 5.4% contribution on the variations in the adolescent’s delinquency while the remaining 93.6% variations in the delinquency are influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study.



Table 2, it was revealed that the joint influence of the three personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience on the development of delinquency among adolescents was significant. This finding is to some extent in line with that of Bandura, Reese and Adams (1987) they reported that behavior is determined by a host of inter-related factors and not just a factor.

### **Independent Influence of Neuroticism, Extraversion and Openness to Experience on the Development of Delinquency among Adolescents**

The results in table 3 revealed that openness to experience had the highest influence on the development of delinquency followed by neuroticism, and then extraversion. Furthermore, the t-value of 4.259 obtained was significant which indicated that openness to experience independently made a significant contribution on the development of delinquency among adolescents. This finding is somehow expected since openness to experience had the highest but negative beta value of -0.240. The negative beta value indicated that as the adolescents level in openness to experience increases, the level of delinquency development decreases.

For neuroticism, the result revealed that based on its associated t-value of 2.047 which was significant at 0.05 ( $P = 0.042 < 0.05$ ). It is an indication that its contribution was significant in the development of delinquency behavior.

For extraversion, the result revealed that, extraversion with the beta value of -0.068 and associated t-value of -1.198 had insignificant influence or contribution on the development of delinquency among adolescents. This disparity in the level of contributions of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experience made on the development of delinquency is in line with the observation made by Tenibiaje (1995) that personality characteristics of juvenile delinquents and criminals were not similar in terms of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism.

### **Influence of Parental Socio-Economic Status on the Development of Delinquency among Adolescents**

The results in table 4 revealed that, the adolescents from the low parental socioeconomic status are more prone to delinquency than those from high parental socio-economic status. This mean difference was proven to be significant when tested with independent t-test. It is in line to that of Corney (2013) who reported that family socioeconomic status is a significant factor to delinquent behavior.

### **Influence of Peer Group on Delinquency among Adolescents**

The result in table 5 revealed that the adolescents whose peer group is clique had a higher mean score in the delinquency scale than those whose peer group is the isolates. The mean difference was proven to be significant when tested with an independent t-test.

This finding is in line to that of Kim and Goto (2000) who found that there is a direct and positive relationship between delinquent peer association and delinquent behavior. On a second thought, this finding of the present study is in line with that of Thai (2003) who found that Vietnamese adolescents who associate with delinquent peers have problems in the home, school or neighborhood and are apt to become delinquent or join gangs.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that neuroticism is a key determinant of delinquent behaviour while openness to experience had an inverse influence on delinquent

behaviour. On a second thought, parental socio-economic status and the adolescents peer group play significant role on the development of delinquent behaviour among adolescents.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Students should be encouraged to develop good personality traits that will inhibit delinquent behaviour. This can be achieved by subjecting them to some psychotherapy and some counselling services.
2. Government and non-government organization should endeavour to organize some sensitization programme that will help to create awareness on good personality traits.
3. Parents, should also help to supervise and monitor the kinds of friends their children keep
4. Adolescents should also try to withdraw from peers/friends who exhibit delinquent behaviours.

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