AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.16 (1), September-December, 2025 https://ajemates.org

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER RELATION AND STEALING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour among students in secondary schools in Imo State. The researchers raised three research questions and formulated a null hypothesis. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 6199 SSII students in Owerri Education Zone II. The sample of the study was 1450 students in SSII selected from Aboh Mbaise and Ngor Okpala Local Government Areas of Imo State. Two instruments were adopted and used for data collection namely: peer relation rating scale (PRRS) and stealing behaviour inventory. The instruments had a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and 0.74 respectively. Data was collected through direct delivery approach involving 20 research assistants The data collected were analyzed by applying Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistics and t-test of correlation. The study reveals that, there was high positive relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour among secondary school students in Imo State. The implication of the study was that peer relation may impede good educational outcome. The researchers recommended that school administrators should observe and float programmes for students with stealing behaviour.

Keywords: Stealing, Behaviour, Peer. Relation, Schools, Antisocial

Introduction

One strong factor associated with the development of children outside the home is the peer group. Peer influence had been identified as a major factor influencing a child's behaviour in the society. Students have shown that a child would rather prefer to spend most of his days in the midst of

peers where happiness and relaxation is guaranteed. Peers have enormous influence on their members because they provide benefits different from what is obtainable at the family circle. Through support group members discover the pleasure of fellowship status, security, protection, identity and stimulations. Adolescent is a period that needs support from parents, however, parental challenges most times weigh so much that the emotional concerns of adolescents are overlooked. Peer relations seem to fill this gap causing a stronger bond between members. Unamba, Ndubisi and Ihem (2023) identified that the urge to be accepted and loved is the reason behind peer association. Peers therefore exert great influence on members.

Peers as a group regulate the actions of its members in many ways. Peer groups set goals for members, expectations are equally rated. Members must abide to these behaviour code to be accepted (Ebegha and Atoukudu, 2023). Compliance and submission to behaviour code of the group is observed by every member without which rejection and expulsion from membership is carried out (Ohanyelu, 2022). Members who refused to comply to the groups' behaviour code are either ostracized or ejected forcefully from the group. Ignoring peer standards may be met with victimization or sanctions. Victims are coerced into a state of limited expression, ineffective development and impediment to optimum functioning. The influence which peers exert on members are mediated by the purpose and objectives of the association. Peers are therefore established for many reasons. Agbakwuru in Ngwoke (2019) posited that students may decide to come together to fight against unjust school laws or teachers' brutality. Some students may come together because they share similar ideas and believes. However, these definitions are mere conceptions because most peer groups reflect negative intentions, thereby propagating social vices (Okoiye, Anokam and Ukoha, 2021). Considering the huge influence peers have on their members, Ordua et al (2021) averred that, students from well-mannered family may become thieves, bullies or truants because of the friends they belong to.

Peer may conform to members by discarding family principles and ethnics. Parents or families with no trace of hard drug intake could eventually have children who are drug addicts because of peer influence. Peer influence according to Bashia, Fakir and Semiya (2022) constitute massive challenges to many families who conceived quality parenting to their children. Peer groups are not known for bad influence alone rather their strength may be

explored in areas of group interaction for educational advancements.

According to Ugwu and Ngwoke (2019), peer groups can share information on education through peer networking online and other avenues of social interaction to enhance communication and positive wellbeing among members. Peers can interact with one another for educational purposes an websites and social media such as: Facebook, Utube, Whatsapp, Myspace, Badoo, E-mail, Twitter, Instagram and more. The nature of one's peer group determine to a large extent, the bond of relationship. Unhealthy peer group normally exert negative influence on members. Such groups lure members into antisocial behaviour such as, stealing, hard drug intake, alcoholism, prostitution, lying, bullying, aggression, political thuggery and other similar behaviours. Stealing is widely frowned at by the society because its implication attracts a third party.

Stealing is defined as the act of taking something that belongs to someone else without their permission and with no intention of returning it. It can include using ones parent ATM card, shop lifting an item without paying for it, taking a school mate's pen without permission. It also down loading music, movies or software without paying or taking the school property without permission or intention of returning it. According to Joseph, Sinha and D'souza (2021), stealing often causes more concern to parents because it may happen outside the home and may affect a third party. Stealing is a sign of behaviour problem or it could be as a result of peer influence and the need to fit into a groups code of conduct. Stealing can take many dimensions based on the nature of the behaviour.

Generally, students indulge in stealing for many reasons. Apart from peer pressure or conforming to a groups code, students can steal because they lack certain provisions either needed to fulfill school rites or feel accepted among friends which according to Yu-Y, Wang, Yangs, Wang, Zhaox, Zhang and Lui (2020) is because they have low esteem. By stealing they can be recognized by significant others. Stealing may become a mental health disorder when it involved repeatedly being unable to resist urges to steal items that one doesn't really need. In this case and often, the stolen items have little value and may not serve any reasonable purpose. This behaviour disorder is called kleptomania.

Children under the age of three may take what doesn't belong to them because they do not fully understand the difference between what is mine and what is not. The behaviour therefore may not be a problem to parents because with time the concept of

ownership in the society will become clear to them. When young adolescents or adults are involved, it then constitutes a problem that may be assigned to a counsellor. According to Aderibigbe (2021), underlying causes for stealing could be identified by the counsellor and corrective measures applied for proper adjustment of the victims. According to Juance (2021), mental health concerns, behavioural problems, social issues, or conduct disorders are at the root of stealing. In some cases, stealing behaviour can be curbed through parental intervention and guidance. Consequences of the behaviour may also help the victim to consider stopping the act. Fostering a mentorship strategy could also help to curb stealing behaviour.

Studies from Alradaan (2017) show that peer relation or influence may not lead to kleptomania, rather, it could be fueled by group conformity or making needed provisions available to the victim. The present study investigated the relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour among secondary school students. Research has shown that not all stealing acts are motivated by peer influence example kleptomania. However, most studies reviewed did not specifically isolate the variables causing stealing behaviour among students in secondary schools in Imo State. The present study sought to identify relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour among secondary school students in Imo State. This is the gap the present study filled.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour among secondary school students in Imo State. The study specifically sought to determine;

1. Peer relation scores of secondary school students in Imo State.
2. Stealing behaviour scores of secondary school students in Imo State.
3. The relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the peer relation scores of secondary school students in Imo State?
2. What are the Stealing behaviour scores of secondary school students in Imo State?
3. What is the relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State?

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. The relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State is not significant.

Method

Research Design

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), correlation studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between variables. The design is appropriate since the study sought to collect data from the respondents in order to establish the direction and magnitude of the relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of 6,199 secondary school students in twenty secondary schools in Ngor-Okpala Local Government and Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Oweri II education zone of Imo State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study comprised 1,450 secondary school students. The sample size is made up of 23 percent of the population of secondary school students in twenty secondary schools in Ngor-Okpala Local Government and Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Oweri II education zone of Imo State. Purposively only SS2 and JS2 students were selected for the study. Then, accidental sampling was employed to select the students in their various classes.

Instruments for Data Collection

In this study, two different questionnaires were adopted. Peer relation was measured using adopted Peer Group Rating Scale (PGRS) from Njoku (2016). It was designed by Njoku (2016) to measure reasons for students to form peer groups, their code of conduct, things they share in common and how they enforce their code among students who belong to the group. The scale has 20 items designed in five-point rating scale with response options of Never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Often - 4 and Always - 5.

Again, stealing behaviour inventory was designed by Ewenwa (2021) to measure levels of deviancy among students in secondary schools in Abia State. Basically, it measured gambling, stealing, internet fraud, shop lifting behaviours. It has 28 items designed in four-point scale with response options of Strongly agree - 4, Agree - 3, Disagree - 2 and Strongly disagree - 1.

Validation and reliability of the Instruments

The instrument Peer relation scale has been validated and tested for reliability. It has a coefficient alpha of 0.83.

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Also, stealing behaviour has been validated and tested for reliability. The instrument has a reliability internal consistency coefficient of 0.74.

Methods of Data Collection

The researchers administered copies of the instruments to the respondents with the help of 20 research assistants using direct delivery approach. The researchers obtained permission from principals of the secondary schools and also sought the consent of the class teachers and students. The essence of the study was explained to them and thereafter the questionnaires were administered to them and collected back after completion. It took the researchers one weeks to conclude this process.

Method of Data Analysis

The data generated from the field were analysed using aggregate scores and percentages to answer the research questions 1 and 2, research questions 3 was answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficients. The null hypothesis was tested using t-test of correlation.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the peer relation scores of secondary school students in Imo State?

Table 1: Peer relation scores of secondary school students in Imo State

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
20 – 59	517	36	Poor peer relation
60 – 100	921	64	Good peer relation

Table 1 reveals that 921(64%) of the secondary school students in Imo State with the scores ranging from 60 and 100 have good peer relation, while 517(36%) others who scored between 20 and 59 have poor peer relation.

Research Question 2: What are the stealing behaviour scores of secondary school students in Imo State?

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Table 2: Stealing behaviour scores of secondary school students in Imo State

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
28 – 69	285	19.89	Positive stealing behaviour
70 – 112	1153	80.11	Negative stealing behaviour

In table 2, it was observed that 1153(80.11%) of secondary school students in Imo State with the scores ranging from 70 and 112 have negative stealing behaviour scores while 285(19.89%) others who scored between 28 and 69 have positive stealing behaviour.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State?

Null Hypothesis I: There will be no significant relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State.

Table 3: Pearson r on the peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State

Source of Variation	N	Peer relation r	Stealing behaviour r.	Cal t	df	0.05	Remark
Peer relation	1438	1.00	0.72	15.78	1436	0.00	High +r
Stealing behaviour	1438	0.72	1.00				

Table 3 reveals that there is high positive relationship of 0.72 existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State.

Also, it was observed that at 1436df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t15.78 with pvalue 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, there is significant relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour of secondary school students in Imo State.

The result of the study was that there is a significant high positive relationship between peer relation and stealing behaviour. This result means that peer relationship has a lateral or linear consequence on stealing behaviour. The reason for this result is that what members learn from their peer group translate into

how the behaviour or conduct themselves in the society. Members of a peer group with objectives of violating of norms and values in mind will display similar behaviours according to the intent of the group. This may result not only in stealing behaviour but violation of societal norms, propagating social vices. Peers can teach their members how to be destructive, rude or violent. Most members with such intent are antisocial resulting to many of them stealing so as to conform to the values of the group. The findings of the present study is in agreement with the finding of Njoku (2016), Ugwu and Ngwoke (2021) and Ewenwa (2022). The findings of these studies revealed that peer groups influence may result in good students learning behaviours that are against how they were raised by their parents. In the bid to conform to the code of conduct of the peer group many students are introduced to stealing even becoming armed robbers and get involve in political thuggery. The finding also revealed a significant relationship in stealing behaviour among students in secondary schools in Imo State.

Conclusion

The study concludes that most of the secondary school students in Imo State have good peer relation. Also, most of the students have negative stealing behaviour. Finally, it concludes that there is high positive significant relationship existing between peer relation and stealing behaviour among secondary school students in Imo State.

Recommendations

Based on findings the following recommended were made:

1. School heads should be watchful in determining behaviour changes in children to enable early intervention programme.
2. Parents should contact school guidance counsellors to receive feedback on their children's behaviours so as to follow-up at home. Many children tend to hid their real self at home.
3. Guidance counsellors and teachers in various schools should map out strong strategies to disband various peer groups in their schools and manage stealing behaviours among students.

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