Influence of Peer Pressure on Gang Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Osun State, Nigeria

Wasiu Olasunkanmi Adeniyi and Afusat Temilade Jinadu

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the prevalence and types of gang behaviour among Secondary School Students in Osun State. It also determined the influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among the students. These were with a view to providing information on the predisposing factor of students' gang behaviour. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all students in public secondary school in Osun State. The sample size consisted of 895 public secondary school students who were selected using the multistage sampling technique. A simple random sampling technique was used to three Local Government Areas (LGAs) from each of the three senatorial districts in the state and four secondary schools from each of the LGAs selected. Seventy-five students were selected from Junior Secondary Class 3 (JSS3) to Senior Secondary Class 2 (SS2) using a stratified random sampling technique. Two adapted instruments titled Questionnaire on Students' Gang Behaviour (QSGB), and Peer Pressure on Adolescents' Behaviour Questionnaire (PPABQ) were used to elicit information from the students. Frequency counts, percentages, and Linear Regressions were used to analyse the data. The results showed that gang behaviour was prevalent among 20.8% of the JSS3 students, 29.0% of the SS1 students and 17.2% of the SS2 students. Also, the result showed that intimidating/threatening other students ($RSI = 0.5911$), involvement in drug and alcoholism ($RSI = 0.5223$) and engaging in underage drinking ($RSI = 0.5148$) were the common gang behaviours among the students. Lastly, the result showed a significant influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among the students at F-value ($\beta = 0.261$, $F = 48.70$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that peer pressure could predispose secondary school students in Osun State to gang behaviour.

Keywords s: behaviour, gang, peer pressure, secondary school students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent time, gang behaviour has become a major challenge among adolescents, and it has gone beyond ordinary youthful exuberance to committing heinous crimes. The young ones who are believed to be the hope of the nation, the future leaders and the strength of the country are turning into criminals by the day. It is therefore sufficient to state that the whole country is resting on a keg of gun powder that may explode any time soon. The participation of adolescents in gang activities is becoming out of control to parents, school administrators, police and other organs saddled with the responsibility of handling such issues. [1] opined that gang behaviour among students has become a worldwide affair. Gang behaviour among secondary school students has constituted a great worry to schools, parents, governments, and the society at large. This act may take place in small schools, large schools, single-sex, coeducational schools, traditional and progressive schools. Schools are potentially excellent location for gang activities as friendship and common experience already binds many young people. These acts may have a deteriorating effect on

schools and learning as their presence is threatening and intimidating for others, who feel unsafe and edgy.

The rate at which adolescents exhibit gang behaviour such as truancy, fighting, shouting, bullying, cheating, viewing pornography, threatening teachers, aggression, cultism, riot, agitation, physical assault, rape, verbal assault, destruction of school property, drinking, smoking, drug abuse and sales, examination malpractices, weapon carrying, gambling, laziness, sluggishness, rudeness, among others is seen as a threat to peaceful co-existence and societal serenity. [2] and [1] stated that misbehaviours are rampant in schools due to the activities of students who constitute themselves into gangs in schools. These disruptive behaviours among secondary school students are seen as a major threat to the administrative efforts of the school authority [3]. This is because students who are indisciplined are arrogant, lack respect for elders in general and teachers in particular. They also have the tendency to destroy school properties. These behaviours are detrimental to their achievement, self-esteem, and employment potentials. Consequently, it would lead to low self-esteem, poor

academic performance, and may also cause students to drop out of school [4].

A gang is a group of persons, usually youths, who share a common identity and who generally engage in criminal behaviour. One of the first gang definitions was published in Frederic Thrasher's 1927 study of gangs in Chicago and in it he defined a gang as an interstitial group originally formed spontaneous, and then integrated through conflict. [5] defined gang as a group of two or more members which carries out criminal activities as its primary or secondary objective relatively durable, predominantly street-based groups of young people for whom crime and violence are integral to the group's identity. [6] defined a gang as a group of people who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity or control over a particular territory or type of enterprise. Similarly, [1] saw a gang as a group of people that do things together or hang out together. She mentioned that the youth gang can be defined as a group of three or more youths who band together for social, cultural, or other reasons and intentionally plan and commit anti-social or illegal acts. [7] opined that some gangs, but not all, have strong leadership, formalized rules, and extensive use of common identifying symbols. In most cases, some gangs associate themselves with a particular geographic area or type of crime, and some use graffiti as a form of nonverbal communication. Members of the gangs typically share common social, cultural, and psychological characteristics [8]. There is no doubt that most of the students who join gangs do so because of protection, enjoyment, respect, money, or because a friend is in a gang.

[9] stated that gang is becoming a place for youth violence and this youth violence has become an occurring thing in Nigeria. [10] expressed that school is a natural social setting for adolescents and it is also the place where the behaviours of adolescents are influenced and manipulated. Basically, gang behaviour has become a huge threat to the social security of the country. In the opinion of [11] gang behaviour does not only affect the students, but also the school and ultimately the community. Irregular attendance for individual students means that they fail to learn what is needed to compete in the employment market. This means that gang behaviour jeopardizes students' chances of achieving their educational goals. Gang behaviour is also associated with various psychosocial factors such as parental control, school interest, motivation, self-concept, gender, school environment, spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, creativity, goal setting etc.

The first of the students' gang group in Nigeria is widely believed to have been formed in the University of Ibadan in 1953 by seven students whose acclaimed reason for the formation of the gang was to resist the injustices of the university authority towards students of poor background. However, there are currently more than fifty different students' gangs in Nigeria. Over the past four decades' Nigerian society has seen an increase in gang culture and its associated violence. In addition, the composition and nature of gang culture have shifted. Gang members are getting younger, the geographical territory is transcending their local habitat, drug territory and violence is increasingly

chaotic. The general increase in gang-related deaths of young people and in particular the numbers of high-profile murders are alarming. For example, over the past decade, the failure of national and local government to act decisively on the gradual integration of the youth into the mainstream of the economy has allowed gangs to become entrenched in some of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods [5].

In Osun State Nigeria, there been series of reports on the involvement of gang behaviour activities among secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. For instance, Olarinoye Gbenga [12], a report of Vanguard Newspapers, reported a gang activity that happened in Baptist High school, Iwo, Osun State on February 5, 2014, where some secondary school students mobilized masquerades to the school. It was gathered that some of the students appeared in masquerade attire and prevented academic activities in the school for several hours. It was also gathered that the masquerades were mobilized to the school by some students with the collaboration of some traditionalists in the town. Twenty-four students in the school were suspended indefinitely for alleged immoral, cult activities and disruption of the academic programme in the school. The suspension of the affected students followed the investigation conducted by the institution's authority where it was discovered that the students actually belong to a cult group.

Also, Makinde [13] a reporter with Punch Newspaper carried out a report, on the 4th of February 2016, that some secondary school students in Osun State staged a violent protest against the decision of the State Government to stop the payment of the West Africa Senior School Certification Examinations fees. He explained that hundreds of students trooped out in Ile-Ife, to protest the new policy and some of them reportedly attacked some motorists while some of them vandalized properties belonging to Orisun FM, a radio station owned by the State government.

Meanwhile, studies have examined factors associated with gang and anti-social behaviours among secondary school students. These behaviours include indiscipline, bullying, truancy, drug abuse, and smoking among others. Factors such as peer influence and school climate [14] have been examined against this outcome. Also, [4] assessed family background with respect to how it contributes to the level of truancy in school. [2] are of the opinion that truancy, fighting, stealing, drug addiction occurs as a result of inadequate parental care, political, social and economic problems, poor implementation of the school curriculum and peer group influence among others. Besides, [15] noted that learner's misbehaviour is a result of learners' relationship with their family, the teachers' leadership skills and teachers' level of interaction with the students. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of research on what constitutes gang behaviour, how to prevent gang behaviour and how the needs of those identified as gang members are addressed to live productive, violent-free lives. However, this study focuses on peer pressure as one of the likely causes of gang behaviour among secondary school students in Osun State.

The word peer is derived from the Latin word "par" meaning equal, it describes individuals who are equals for instance in terms of their age, status, or skills. Peer group is

a common term used by psychologist to describe people of similar age, often when talking about adolescents. The term peers usually refer to individuals in the same life stage [16]. According to [17] peer refers to a group of people that belongs to the same societal group especially based on age, grade, or status. Peer is among the most significant social contexts in adolescence, they help to establish the norms of behaviour and normally develop a culture that manifests itself in aspects like languages, dressing, hairstyle, sports, and drinking habits. Adolescents often experience peer influence to be like other peers at a time when they are trying to be more independent [18].

A peer group consist of people or individuals that are within the same age range. Peer relationships are common in schools and homes, and it plays an important role in the socialization of children in Nigeria, and if not well managed can lead to the formation of a bad group or a bad gang. Pressure is the process that influences people to do something they might not want to do [19]. Peer group is an association of significance in the social, psychological, and educational development of students because students transform into their real personality and feel more comfortable when they are with their peers [20]. Thus, the peer group is a source of affection, sympathy, understanding, and a pace for experimentation [21]. Peer influence can be both positive and negative. Positive peer influence makes students in school volunteer for various community services, participate in sport and other productive activities, and engage in fruitful activities that would add positive values to their lives. On the other hand, negative peer influence leads students to engage in antisocial behaviours (skipping classes, stealing, bullying, truancy, examination malpractices, cheating, and use of drugs or alcohol etc.) which are common among gang members [22], [23] believed that peer usually provides students information on how to behave. Oftentimes, adolescents experience peer influence to be like other peers at a time when they are trying to be more independent. This explains why the majority of the students with substance abuse problems began using drugs or alcohol as a result of peer pressure, which may also make them get involved in gang activities.

Literature indicated that peers who are interested in academic activities are more likely to associate with students who have the same view because they usually study together, share course materials, and information. It has been noted that peers with positive influence study hard, engage in positive activities and try as much as possible to desist from bad gang behaviours like smoking, stealing, truancy, bullying, examination malpractice etc. [21]. According to [10], adolescents are more likely to give in to peer pressure and exhibit unacceptable behaviours that may have a negative impact on themselves and on others. There are different ways by which peers have an influence on one another; one of such ways is appearance. Peers often push themselves to change their appearance, this is a negative influence because it pushes the adolescent to lose his self-identity and conform to what his peers want him to do. Members of a peer can wear gang fashion to show that they are violent and belong to a particular gang group. The desire for conformity also lead peers to do what other members of

the peer do and this can lead to the use of the substance by peers which bring about social setbacks and can lead to addiction, health problems, mental disorders and exhibition of violent behaviours [24]

The adolescent displays disruptive behaviour when they are in the group and not individually, and this can be associated with the social learning theory which says that the individual learns to display socially unacceptable behaviours when they interact with others. These gang members yield to peer pressure by engaging in nefarious activities like breaking school rules and regulations, destroying school properties [10]. For instance, [25] conducted research on the influences of peer group on adolescents, a selected school in Ogun State. The study investigated the influence of peer group on adolescent performance. The findings of the study revealed that peer group could positively influence the academic performance of in-school adolescents. [26]'s study revealed that peer relationship, peers' pattern of socialization, peer location, motivation by peers, use of drug among peers influence the academic performance of secondary school students, while peer religion affiliation has no influence on the academic performance of secondary school students. Also, the result of the study conducted by [27] showed that there was no significant influence of peer pressure on social behaviour, self-concept, gender, and the parental rearing pattern of adolescents. However, the studies carried out by [28] found out that peer group had a positive influence on adolescent students' academic performance, and that peers' relationship, socialization, and identity formation. In another study, [29], [30] study revealed a positive relationship between aggressive behaviours and peer pressure/interaction, and it was also established that adolescents learn much of their behaviour patterns from modelling the behaviour of others, especially their age group. In view of the variations in opinions of the above scholars on the relationship between peer pressures on gang behaviour of students; the present study is aimed at providing more empirical information on the influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in Osun State.

A. *Objective of the Study*

- a. investigate the prevalence of gang behaviour among secondary school students in Osun State;
- b. identify types of gang behaviour that are common among the secondary school students; and
- c. determine the influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area.

B. *Research Questions*

The under listed research questions were raised for the study

1. What is the prevalence of gang behaviour among secondary school students in Osun State?
2. What are the types of gang behaviour that are common among the secondary school student?

C. Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all public secondary school students in Osun State. The sample size consisted of 895 students from public secondary schools who were selected using the multistage sampling technique. Using a simple random sampling technique, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected from each of the three senatorial districts in the state and four secondary schools were selected from each of the LGAs using a simple random sampling technique. Seventy-five students were selected from Junior Secondary Class 3 (JSS3) to Senior Secondary Class 2 (SS2) using a stratified random sampling technique. This is because, at this stage of life, students begin to move closer to their peers and experience different emotions. Two adapted instruments titled Questionnaire on Students' Gang Behaviour (QSGB) and Peer Pressure on Adolescents' Behaviour Questionnaire (PPABQ) were used to elicit information from the students.

The first instrument (Questionnaire on Students Gang Behaviour (QSGB) was divided into two; Students' Gang Behaviour and Type of Students' Gang Behaviour. The Students' Gang Behaviour comprised 12 selected items adapted from [31]. It was designed to get the perception of students on gangs and gang membership. The original instrument was made up of 23 items, some of the items were eliminated because they were not relevant to the study. Some of the items were reconstructed for easy understanding by the respondents. Each item was responded to on a 4-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from 'Strongly Agree' (4 points), 'Agree' (3 points), 'Disagree' (2 points) and 'Strongly Disagree' (1 point).

Also, the second instrument (Peer Pressure on Adolescents' Behaviour Questionnaire (PPABQ) was adapted from Bruce Simons-Morton, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2002). The original questionnaire had 10 items; however, 8 items were added. The items were modified to reflect the age of the students. Each item was responded to on a 4-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' (4 points), 'agree' (3 points), 'disagree' (2 points) and 'strongly disagree' (1 point). The Cronbach Alpha reliability results of the two instruments were 0.927, 0.941 and 0.861 respectively. Frequency counts, percentages, and Linear Regressions were used to analyse the data.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of gang behaviour among secondary school students in Osun State?

To answer this question, participants responded to Section B of the study instrument 'Students' Gang Behaviour' (SGB). The scoring ranged from four points to one point for strongly agree to strongly disagree respectively. On the SGB scale, the minimum and maximum score obtained were 23 and 88 respectively with an average score value (= 30.69 and standard deviation (SD=10.15). On this scale in the study, scores that ranged between the minimum score and the mean score plus one standard deviation (23–41) implies that gang behaviour is not prevalent while scores higher than the mean scores plus one standard deviation implies the prevalence of gang behaviour among the students. Data obtained based on the categorization in terms of students' sex and class were then analysed with the use of frequency count and percentage and the result is as presented in Table I.

TABLE I: PREVALENCE OF GANG BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OSUN STATE

Variable	Variable Levels	Prevalence of Students' Gang Behaviour		Total
		Not Prevalent	Prevalent	
Class	JSS III	236(79.2%)	62(20.8%)	298
	SS I	213(71.0%)	87(29.0%)	300
	SS II	246(82.8%)	51(17.2%)	297
Sex	Male	292(75.3%)	96(24.7%)	388
	Female	403(79.5%)	104(20.5%)	507
Total		695(77.7%)	200(22.3%)	895

Result as presented in Table I showed that while gang behaviour was prevalent among 20.8% of students in JSS III, gang behaviour was prevalent among 29.0% of SS I students and 17.2% of SS II students engaged in gang behaviour. The result also showed that with respect to sex, gang behaviour was prevalent among 24.7% of the boys and it was prevalent among 20.5% of the girls. In general, it could be observed from the table that 22.3% of the sampled students engaged in gang behaviour.

Research Question 2: What are the types of gang behaviour that are common among the secondary school students?

To answer the question, data on the type of students' gang behaviour were collated with the use of frequency count and percentages the number of students that agreed to have engaged in the identified gang behaviour were determined and with the use of RSI each of the identified gang behaviour was ranked among others. The result is as presented in Table II.

TABLE II: TYPES OF GANG BEHAVIOUR THAT ARE COMMON AMONG THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Types of Gang Behaviour Common among the Students	Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Always	RSI	Rank
Intimidating/threatening other students.	428(47.8%)	38(4.2%)	104(11.6%)	325(36.3%)	0.5911	1
Involvement in drug and alcoholism.	471(52.6%)	72(8.0%)	153(17.1%)	199(22.2%)	0.5223	2
Engaging in underage drinking.	487(54.4%)	93(10.4%)	90(10.1%)	225(25.1%)	0.5148	3
Harassment of opposite sex.	582(65.0%)	56(6.3%)	116(13.0%)	141(15.8%)	0.4486	4
Involvement in school unrest.	526(58.8%)	149(16.6%)	110(12.3%)	110(12.3%)	0.4453	5
Fighting in/outside the school.	551(61.6%)	106(11.8%)	124(13.9%)	114(12.7%)	0.4444	6
Involvement in stealing.	654(73.1%)	56(6.3%)	73(8.2%)	112(12.5%)	0.4003	7
Practicing absenteeism.	652(72.8%)	94(10.5%)	17(1.9%)	132(14.7%)	0.3964	8
Destruction of school properties.	695(77.7%)	36(4.0%)	52(5.8%)	112(12.5%)	0.3830	9
Involvement in drug sales and use.	635(70.9%)	128(14.3%)	56(6.3%)	76(8.5%)	0.3807	10
Bullying other students.	654(73.1%)	93(10.4%)	72(8.0%)	76(8.5%)	0.3799	11
Involvement in gambling.	652(72.8%)	114(12.7%)	72(8.0%)	57(6.4%)	0.3698	12

Results as presented in Table II showed that intimidating/threatening other students was the most engaged type of gang behaviour among secondary school students and it ranked first with (RSI=0.5911), This was followed by involvement in drug and alcoholism (RSI=0.5223). Engaging in underage drinking was the third common gang behaviour identified by the respondents (RSI=0.5148). Table II also showed that involvement in drug sales and use (RSI = 0.3807) bullying other students (RSI = 0.3799) and involvement in gambling (RSI=0.3698) as the 10th, 11th and 12th among the identified gang behaviour that were common among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area

To test this hypothesis, regression analysis was carried out on the available data using the data obtained on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area as dependent variable and data collected on peer pressure using the accumulative score of students on the “Peer Pressure Scale” as independent variable. The result is as presented in Table III.

TABLE III: INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE ON GANG BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE STUDY AREA

R = 0.229 R ² = 0.053 Adj. R ² = 0.052 F = 48.70* (Constant) Peer Pressure	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	19.221	1.652		11.635	0.000
Peer Pressure	0.261	0.037	0.229	6.978	0.000

The coefficient of determination (R²) for the regression model value (R² = 0.053) indicated that 5.1% of the variance in gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area can be explained by their peer pressure. The significant F-value (F = 48.70, p<0.05) as observed in the Table indicated that the model predicted the outcome accurately. Table III also showed the constant or intercept term and the regression coefficients (β) for each independent variable. The constant value (19.22) represents the intercept, which is the predicted gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area. The unstandardized beta values (β = 0.261) for peer pressure showed that there is a significant predicted increase of 26.1% in gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area. Thus, it could be concluded that there is a significant influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area. The regression equation therefore is:

$$\text{Gang behaviour} = 19.22 + 0.261(\text{Peer Pressure})$$

IV. DISCUSSION

It was discovered that gang behaviour was not prevalent among secondary school students in the study area. It was also revealed that with respect to sex, gang behaviour was not prevalent among boys and girls. In general, it could be observed that a quarter of the sampled students engaged in gang behaviour. However, it is believed that the incidence of gang behaviour is on the rise in the study area. For instance,

it is noted that unlike in the past, when students respect and obey the school rules and regulations; the students are no longer having regard for anybody in the school even the school principals. The above point was supported by [12] report of Vanguard Newspapers as well as [13] Punch Newspaper report as of various nefarious activities among gang students in secondary school in Osun State.

The research question two revealed that the common types of gang behaviour among secondary school students, which are, intimidating/threatening other students as the most engaged type of gang behaviour among secondary school students. This is followed by involvement in drug and alcoholism, engaging in underage drinking, bullying other students, and gambling. The above corroborated the findings of [2] and [1] that threatening teachers, aggression, cultism, riot, agitation, physical assault, rape, verbal assault, destruction of school property, drinking, smoking, drug abuse and sales, examination malpractices, weapon carrying, gambling, laziness, sluggishness, rudeness are related to belonging to gangs in the schools. While buttressing the above, [26]’s study found that gang involvement is related to students’ use of drug. The study also revealed that the degree of adolescents’ involvement in violence is relatively very high.

Finally, the finding on the influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students revealed a significant influence of peer pressure on gang behaviour among secondary school students in the study area. This is in line with studies by [29, 30] that there was a significant positive relationship between adolescent misbehaviour and peer pressure in schools and also a significant difference in the prevalence of adolescent misbehaviour in advantaged and disadvantaged schools as more misbehaviour acts were reported in disadvantaged schools than in the advantaged schools. However, [26] and [27] discovered that there was no significant influence of peer pressure on social behaviour, self-concept, gender, and the parental rearing pattern of adolescents. It was also revealed in the study that, self-control was not a spurious reflection of the relationship which was established between delinquency and deviant peer network. However, low self-control and deviant peer association were found to independently increase adolescents’ chances of engaging in delinquent acts. Moreover, self-control together with deviant peer associations were discovered to be interrelated in forecasting adolescent involvement in delinquency.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study established that there was a low prevalence of gang behaviour among secondary school and that the common types of gang behaviour among secondary school students are intimidating/threatening other students, involvement in drug abuse, alcoholism, underage drinking bullying and gambling. It was also established that peer pressure could predisposed students to gang behaviour.

Arising from the findings and conclusion of this study, various recommendations are proposed to provide insight into the factors predisposing students to gang behaviour and how they can be tackled at an early stage. The underlisted recommendations are given:

In order to address gang behaviour in secondary schools, teachers should be trained to identify various behaviours in the students that can lead them to join a gang. School rules and regulations need to be emphasized and given enough awareness so as to enable students to understand them. It will help the students avoid any kind of antisocial behaviour. Besides, social development programmes should be encouraged in schools because this programme seeks to provide children with social and emotional skills to solve problems and deal with conflicts. Finally, it would be necessary to train teachers and parents to be more positive role models for students. It has been explained from the study that students learn from the behaviour of people that they look up to. Sometimes, the adults in the home and society do not sufficiently portray desirable examples for students' positive development. It, therefore, follows that there is a need to provide them with more positive role models from whom they can learn more appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

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