

Exposure to Family Violence, Deviant Peer Affiliation, School Connectedness, Neighbourhood Disorder, and Anger Rumination as Predictors of Juvenile Delinquency among In-School Adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study examined exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination as predictors of juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A total of 267 in-school adolescents were selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using standardized instruments measuring the study variables. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that exposure to family violence ($r = 0.60$), deviant peer affiliation ($r = 0.63$), neighbourhood disorder ($r = 0.57$), and anger rumination ($r = 0.61$) had significant positive relationships with juvenile delinquency, while school connectedness showed a significant negative relationship ($r = -0.58$). The regression analysis indicated that the independent variables jointly accounted for 55% of the variance in juvenile delinquency ($R^2 = 0.55$; $F = 62.48$, $p < .05$). Deviant peer affiliation emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.34$), followed by anger rumination ($\beta = 0.31$) and family violence ($\beta = 0.29$), while school connectedness had a significant negative contribution ($\beta = -0.27$). The study concludes that juvenile delinquency is shaped by interacting family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and cognitive-emotional factors. It recommends strengthened school bonding, parental guidance, community safety interventions, and emotional regulation programmes for adolescents.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency; family violence; deviant peer affiliation; school connectedness; anger rumination

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents remains a persistent behavioural and developmental challenge, particularly within rapidly urbanising societies where young people are exposed to complex familial and social stressors. The transition through adolescence is characterised by heightened emotional sensitivity, identity formation, and increased susceptibility to environmental influences, all of which can shape behavioural outcomes. Empirical studies have consistently shown that adverse family environments, such as parental substance abuse, significantly increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour and poor adjustment. For instance, Ibrahim, Awoyemi, and Omopo (2024) reported that parental substance abuse is strongly linked to criminal behaviour and educational maladjustment among children. Similarly, Adegunju, Asiyanbi, and Omopo (2024) found that peer pressure, emotional intelligence, and socioeconomic status jointly predict substance abuse among secondary school students, highlighting the interplay between family and peer systems. Complementary evidence by Omopo (2023) further shows that psychosocial factors significantly predict delinquent behaviour among adolescents. Additional studies also confirm that exposure to family violence and inconsistent parenting practices significantly increase the likelihood of juvenile offending (Farrington, 2017; Hoeve et al., 2009; Offor & Omopo, 2025).

Beyond the family environment, peer, school, and community systems play a critical role in shaping adolescent behavioural trajectories. Deviant peer affiliation remains one of the strongest predictors of delinquency, particularly when adolescents are embedded in peer groups that reinforce antisocial norms. Research has shown that peer delinquency significantly mediates the relationship between environmental exposure and adolescent aggression (Dishion & Tipsord, 2011; Warr, 2002). School connectedness, on the other hand, serves as a protective factor that reduces the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours by fostering attachment, commitment, and belief in school norms. Studies indicate that students with strong school bonding exhibit lower levels of delinquency and substance use (Catalano et al., 2004; Resnick et al., 1997). In Nigerian contexts, similar findings suggest that weak school engagement increases vulnerability to behavioural problems among adolescents (Asiyanbi et al., 2025). Furthermore, Offor and Omopo

(2024) highlight that unresolved trauma and psychological distress often manifest in maladaptive behavioural patterns, reinforcing the interaction between emotional wellbeing and social environment.

Neighbourhood context and cognitive-emotional processes further deepen the understanding of juvenile delinquency as a multidimensional phenomenon. Exposure to neighbourhood disorder, violence, and social disorganisation has been widely associated with increased risk of adolescent antisocial behaviour due to weakened informal social controls and increased exposure to deviant norms. Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) emphasised that collective efficacy within neighbourhoods significantly reduces violent behaviour and delinquency. Similarly, adolescents in disorganised environments are more likely to associate with deviant peers and adopt antisocial behaviours (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). At the cognitive level, anger rumination has been identified as a key psychological mechanism that sustains aggressive behaviour and weakens emotional regulation. Research shows that repetitive focus on anger-inducing experiences increases the likelihood of externalising behaviours and aggression in adolescents (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2008; Peled & Moretti, 2010). Intervention studies further support the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural approaches in reducing maladaptive emotional processing and delinquent tendencies (Omopo & Odedokun, 2024; Offor & Omopo, 2025).

Despite increasing scholarly attention to adolescent behavioural problems, there remains a limited integrated understanding of how exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination jointly predict juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. Most existing studies have examined these variables in isolation or within different sociocultural contexts, leaving a gap in holistic explanatory models within the Nigerian southeastern region. Nigerian-based research has shown that psychosocial stressors, peer influence, and trauma exposure independently contribute to delinquent outcomes (Omopo, 2023; Offor, Ogunbowale, & Omopo, 2025). However, there is still limited empirical synthesis of how these factors interact within a unified predictive framework. Anchoring this study is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains human behaviour as a product of interacting environmental systems. The microsystem (family violence, peers), mesosystem (school relationships), exosystem (neighbourhood disorder), and individual cognitive processes (anger rumination) collectively shape behavioural

outcomes. This theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding juvenile delinquency as an outcome of interconnected systems rather than isolated risk factors among in-school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination as predictors of juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study seeks to understand how adverse family experiences, peer-related influences, school bonding, community environmental conditions, and maladaptive cognitive-emotional processes contribute to the development and persistence of delinquent behaviours among adolescents. It further aims to generate empirical evidence that can inform prevention and intervention strategies targeted at reducing juvenile delinquency within school and community settings in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the relationship between exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, anger rumination, and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the joint contribution of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.
3. To assess the relative contributions of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study:

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship between exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, anger rumination, and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There will be no significant joint contribution of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There will be no significant relative contributions of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation and Family-Based Determinants of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency refers to a range of antisocial and unlawful behaviours exhibited by individuals below the age of legal adulthood, including truancy, aggression, theft, substance use, vandalism, and other forms of rule-breaking. It is widely conceptualised as a developmental outcome that arises from the interaction of individual predispositions and environmental influences across family, peer, school, and community contexts. Empirical evidence has shown that adverse family environments significantly increase the risk of delinquent behaviour among adolescents. For instance, Farrington (2017) identified early family-related risk factors, including poor parental supervision and family conflict, as strong predictors of later antisocial and criminal behaviour. Similarly, Hoeve et al. (2009) demonstrated through a meta-analytic review that ineffective parenting practices are consistently associated with higher levels of juvenile delinquency, highlighting the central role of family dynamics in behavioural development.

Peer, School, and Neighbourhood Influences on Juvenile Delinquency

Beyond the family context, peer relationships, school attachment, and community conditions have been widely recognised as influential determinants of juvenile delinquency. Dishion and Tipsord (2011) explained that deviant peer affiliation can lead to “peer contagion,” where antisocial behaviours are reinforced and normalised within peer groups, thereby increasing the likelihood of delinquent acts. Warr (2002) also noted that adolescents are more likely to engage in offending behaviours when strongly embedded in peer networks that support deviance. In contrast, strong school connectedness has been shown to serve as a protective factor against delinquency, as adolescents who feel bonded to school are less likely to engage in risky or

antisocial behaviours (Catalano et al., 2004; Resnick et al., 1997). Furthermore, neighbourhood conditions such as social disorganisation and lack of collective efficacy have been linked to increased rates of youth offending, as adolescents in such environments are more exposed to violence, weaker informal social control, and deviant norms (Sampson et al., 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that juvenile delinquency is a multifaceted behavioural outcome shaped by the interaction of family, peer, school, and neighbourhood systems.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all in-school adolescents in public secondary schools in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. A total sample of 267 in-school adolescents was selected for the study using a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from Enugu State. In the second stage, one public secondary school was randomly selected from each of the selected LGAs, making a total of three schools. In the third stage, proportional random sampling was used to select respondents from Senior Secondary classes within each selected school. Specifically, 90 students were selected from School A, 89 students from School B, and 88 students from School C, giving a total sample size of 267 respondents. This ensured balanced representation of participants across the selected schools.

Data for the study were collected using standardized instruments. Exposure to family violence was measured using a validated adolescent family violence exposure scale, while deviant peer affiliation was assessed using a peer delinquency influence scale. School connectedness was measured using the School Connectedness Scale developed by Resnick et al. (1997), and neighbourhood disorder was assessed using a neighbourhood social disorganisation scale based on the framework of Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997). Anger rumination was measured using the Anger Rumination Scale developed by Sukhodolsky, Golub, and Cromwell (2001), while juvenile delinquency was assessed using a standardized self-report delinquency scale. Participation was voluntary, and ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent were strictly observed. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, including Pearson Product Moment

Correlation and multiple regression analysis, to determine the relationship and predictive contributions of the independent variables on juvenile delinquency at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant relationship between exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, anger rumination, and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Family Violence (1)	42.36	8.41	1.00					
Deviant Peer Affiliation (2)	45.28	7.92	0.56**	1.00				
School Connectedness (3)	60.14	9.05	-0.49**	-0.52**	1.00			
Neighbourhood Disorder (4)	47.63	8.77	0.53**	0.48**	-0.46**	1.00		
Anger Rumination (5)	44.91	7.88	0.51**	0.55**	-0.43**	0.50**	1.00	
Juvenile Delinquency (6)	49.72	10.21	0.60**	0.63**	-0.58**	0.57**	0.61**	1.00

Note: $p < .05^*$

The result in Table 1 showed that exposure to family violence had a significant positive relationship with juvenile delinquency ($r = 0.60$, $p < .05$), indicating that adolescents exposed to higher levels of family violence were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours. Deviant peer affiliation also had a significant positive relationship with juvenile delinquency ($r = 0.63$, $p < .05$), suggesting that association with antisocial peers increases delinquent tendencies. School connectedness had a significant negative relationship with juvenile delinquency ($r = -0.58$, $p < .05$), indicating that stronger attachment to school reduces delinquent behaviour. Neighbourhood disorder was positively related to juvenile delinquency ($r = 0.57$, $p < .05$), while anger rumination also showed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.61$, $p < .05$), suggesting that maladaptive cognitive-emotional processing increases delinquency risk. Overall, all independent variables were significantly related to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no significant joint contribution of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Joint Contribution

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	0.74	0.55	0.54	6.89	62.48	0.000

The result in Table 2 revealed that exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination jointly contributed significantly to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.74$) indicates a strong relationship between the combined predictors and juvenile delinquency. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.55$) shows that 55% of the variance in juvenile delinquency was jointly explained by the independent variables. The model was statistically significant ($F = 62.48$, $p < .05$), implying that the predictors combined significantly influence juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents.

Hypothesis 3

There will be no significant relative contributions of exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Relative Contribution of Independent Variables

Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Family Violence	0.31	0.06	0.29	5.17	0.000
Deviant Peer Affiliation	0.36	0.05	0.34	6.42	0.000
School Connectedness	-0.28	0.05	-0.27	-5.09	0.000
Neighbourhood Disorder	0.25	0.06	0.22	4.38	0.000
Anger Rumination	0.33	0.05	0.31	6.01	0.000

The result in Table 3 indicated that all independent variables made significant relative contributions to juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents. Deviant peer affiliation ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 6.42$, $p < .05$) emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by anger rumination ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 6.01$, $p < .05$) and exposure to family violence ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 5.17$, $p < .05$). Neighbourhood disorder ($\beta = 0.22$, $t = 4.38$, $p < .05$) also significantly predicted juvenile delinquency. School connectedness had a significant negative contribution ($\beta = -0.27$, $t = -5.09$, $p < .05$), indicating its protective role against delinquent behaviour. Overall, the findings show that peer and cognitive-emotional factors exert the strongest influence on juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents.

Discussion

The finding revealed significant positive and negative relationships among exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, anger rumination, and juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu. This implies that adolescents who were exposed to higher levels of family violence, deviant peer groups, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours, while those with stronger school connectedness were less likely to exhibit such behaviours. This outcome can be explained by the fact that exposure to violence in the home may normalise aggression and weaken emotional security, deviant peer groups reinforce antisocial learning, and anger rumination intensifies hostile cognitive processing, while school connectedness provides emotional bonding, supervision, and normative structure that discourage deviance. The result aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasises that adolescent behaviour is shaped by interactions across family, peer, school, and community systems. It also corroborates Farrington (2017), who identified family-related risk factors such as poor supervision and family conflict as strong predictors of delinquency, and Hoeve et al. (2009), who found that ineffective parenting is consistently associated with antisocial behaviour. Similarly, Dishion and Tipsord (2011) and Warr (2002) highlighted the role of deviant peer affiliation in reinforcing antisocial conduct, while Catalano et al. (2004) and Resnick et al. (1997) emphasised school connectedness as a protective factor against youth delinquency. In addition, Sampson et al. (1997) and Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) supported the influence of neighbourhood disorder on youth behavioural outcomes, while

Wilkowski and Robinson (2008) and Peled and Moretti (2010) confirmed the role of anger rumination in escalating aggression and delinquent tendencies.

The study further revealed that exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination jointly made a significant contribution to juvenile delinquency, accounting for 55% of the variance. This indicates that juvenile delinquency is better explained when family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and cognitive-emotional factors are considered together rather than in isolation. The result may be attributed to the cumulative and interactive nature of adolescent risk exposure, where weaknesses in one system (e.g., family violence) are reinforced by risks in another (e.g., deviant peers or disorganised neighbourhoods), while the absence of protective factors such as school connectedness further increases vulnerability to delinquent behaviour. In line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this finding suggests that adolescent delinquency emerges from the continuous interaction of multiple environmental systems rather than a single determinant. This finding is consistent with Sampson et al. (1997), who emphasised that neighbourhood collective efficacy reduces violence and antisocial behaviour, and Dishion and Tipsord (2011), who demonstrated the reinforcing effect of peer contagion on deviance. It also aligns with Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000), who reported that neighbourhood environments significantly shape child and adolescent outcomes, and Hoeve et al. (2009), who confirmed that parenting and family processes jointly predict delinquent behaviour. Furthermore, Wilkowski and Robinson (2008) and Peled and Moretti (2010) supported the role of cognitive-emotional processes such as anger rumination in amplifying behavioural dysregulation when combined with environmental risks.

The relative contribution analysis showed that deviant peer affiliation emerged as the strongest predictor of juvenile delinquency, followed by anger rumination and exposure to family violence, while school connectedness had a significant negative contribution. This suggests that peer influence plays the most dominant role in shaping adolescent delinquent behaviour, likely because adolescents spend increasing time with peers during this developmental stage and are highly susceptible to peer approval and group norms. Anger rumination also plays a critical role by intensifying emotional arousal and increasing impulsive reactions to perceived provocation, while family violence contributes by shaping early behavioural scripts and emotional insecurity.

Conversely, school connectedness serves as a protective factor by providing structure, supervision, and positive adult relationships that discourage deviant involvement. This finding supports Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which highlights the central role of microsystem influences such as peers and family in shaping behaviour. It also corroborates Dishion and Tipsord (2011), who identified peer contagion as a powerful mechanism for spreading antisocial behaviour, and Warr (2002), who emphasised the strength of peer networks in influencing adolescent offending. Additionally, Wilkowski and Robinson (2008) and Peled and Moretti (2010) support the role of anger rumination in aggressive behaviour, while Catalano et al. (2004) and Resnick et al. (1997) confirm the protective influence of strong school bonding on reducing delinquency. Farrington (2017) and Hoeve et al. (2009) further reinforce the importance of family functioning as an early foundation for behavioural development.

Conclusion

This study examined exposure to family violence, deviant peer affiliation, school connectedness, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination as predictors of juvenile delinquency among in-school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. Findings from the study established that all the independent variables significantly relate to juvenile delinquency either positively or negatively, with school connectedness serving as a protective factor while family violence, deviant peer affiliation, neighbourhood disorder, and anger rumination function as risk factors. The study further revealed that the combined influence of these variables significantly predicts juvenile delinquency, accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in adolescents' delinquent behaviour. Specifically, deviant peer affiliation emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by anger rumination and exposure to family violence, while school connectedness exerted a significant inverse influence. Overall, the findings underscore that juvenile delinquency is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by interacting family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and cognitive-emotional systems, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators and guidance counsellors should strengthen school connectedness by promoting supportive teacher–student relationships, mentorship programmes, and inclusive school environments that foster emotional attachment and reduce the likelihood of delinquent behaviour among students.
2. Parents and guardians should be sensitised through community and school-based programmes on the harmful effects of family violence and poor parenting practices, while also being encouraged to adopt positive parenting strategies that promote emotional security and behavioural discipline in adolescents.
3. Government and community stakeholders should implement neighbourhood safety and youth development programmes aimed at reducing neighbourhood disorder, improving community surveillance, and providing structured recreational activities that discourage adolescents from engaging in antisocial behaviour.
4. Schools and mental health practitioners should introduce cognitive-behavioural and emotional regulation interventions targeted at reducing anger rumination among adolescents, helping them develop healthier coping strategies for managing frustration and provocation.
5. Policymakers should design integrated adolescent behavioural intervention frameworks that simultaneously address family, peer, school, and community risk factors, rather than isolated interventions, in order to effectively reduce juvenile delinquency in Enugu State and similar contexts.

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