

**Influence of Peer Pressure, Substance Abuse, Delinquency, and Academic Amotivation on  
Career Choice among Adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria**

By

**Kabiru Adewale Adegunju**

Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ilorin, Nigeria  
[kabiruadegunju259@gmail.com](mailto:kabiruadegunju259@gmail.com)

**Mutiat Asiyambi**

Department of Psychology, Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Nigeria  
[asiyanbimutiat017@gmail.com](mailto:asiyanbimutiat017@gmail.com)

**Abiodun Babatunde Oluwabusola**

Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria  
[paulabiodun66@gmail.com](mailto:paulabiodun66@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

This study explored the relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice among adolescents in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and three LGAs Ibadan North, Egbeda, and Ogbomoso North were purposively selected based on their demographic diversity and prevalence of adolescent behavioural challenges. The study targeted adolescents aged 13 to 19 years currently enrolled in public secondary schools within these LGAs. A total of 180 adolescents participated, with samples drawn proportionately from each LGA using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire assessing demographic variables, peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice. The instruments were validated by experts and demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.75$ ) in a pilot study. Data collection occurred over a four-week period following ethical clearance from the relevant educational authorities. Informed consent and assent were obtained from parents/guardians and participants, respectively. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis via SPSS version 26. The study found significant negative relationships between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice. Together, these factors significantly predicted career choice, explaining 30.2% of its variance, with academic amotivation being the strongest predictor. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that address both motivational and social challenges to enhance career decision-making among adolescents in Oyo State.

**Keywords:** Career Choice, Peer Pressure, Substance Abuse, Delinquency, Academic Amotivation

**Introduction**

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterised by increased sensitivity to social influence, identity exploration, and behavioural experimentation (Steinberg, 2014). Globally, this

period often witnesses heightened vulnerability to peer pressure, which significantly shapes adolescents' behaviour, decision-making, and long-term aspirations. Scholars such as Prinstein and Dodge (2008) have observed that peer affiliations can either bolster pro-social development or instigate risk behaviours, including substance abuse, delinquency, and disengagement from academic pursuits. These behavioural tendencies, when left unchecked, diminish educational persistence and compromise future career goals (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory provides a theoretical lens to understand these dynamics, suggesting that adolescents model and internalise behaviours prevalent in their peer environments.

Across various global contexts, substance abuse has emerged as a predominant concern among adolescents. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022) reported a steady increase in substance use among youth, particularly involving cannabis, prescription opioids, and alcohol. The consequences extend beyond immediate health risks to include impaired academic functioning, low career motivation, and increased propensity for deviant conduct (Moffitt et al., 2011; Dube et al., 2003). Furthermore, peer groups are a strong predictor of adolescent drug use and criminal engagement, with studies confirming that youth often conform to group norms to maintain acceptance or avoid rejection (Brown & Larson, 2009). In low- and middle-income countries like those in sub-Saharan Africa, this problem is exacerbated by systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education (Onya et al., 2012).

Within the African context, adolescent involvement in delinquent and substance-abuse behaviours is increasingly attributed to the strong influence of peer networks. In Nigeria, for instance, Omopo, Offor, and Ogunbowale (2024) found that childhood trauma and peer dynamics jointly predict substance abuse among psychiatric patients in Ibadan. In a related study, Omopo (2024) identified peer influence and social marginalisation as strong correlates of drug dependence and criminal conduct among inmates at the Agodi Correctional Centre. These findings align with Adegunju et al. (2024), who reported that peer pressure significantly contributes to substance use among secondary school students in Oyo State. These behaviours, when reinforced within peer clusters, often lead to truancy, poor academic performance, and weak career orientation.

Moreover, the relationship between delinquent behaviour and academic amotivation is well documented. Omopo (2023) observed that many secondary school students in Ibadan who engaged in fighting, theft, and class disruption reported little interest in school tasks or future goals. Internationally, Legault et al. (2006) explained that academic amotivation stems from a lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, often compounded by negative peer influence and poor emotional regulation. Similarly, Dishion and Tipsord (2011) found that deviant peer clusters not only intensify antisocial behaviour but also alienate students from constructive learning environments. In Nigeria, Omopo and Odedokun (2024) demonstrated the potential of cognitive reframing therapy in mitigating the adverse effects of peer-led substance abuse and improving academic engagement among incarcerated youth.

Effective psychological interventions are gaining traction in Nigeria, especially among high-risk adolescent populations. Reality Therapy and Solution-Focused Therapy have shown promise in addressing smoking dependency and peer-driven behavioural issues (Asiyanbi et al., 2025; Omopo & Odedokun, 2024; Omopo & Odedokun, 2024). These approaches reinforce findings by Hser et al. (2011), who noted that early behavioural interventions enhance long-term career stability and personal development. Ogunbowale et al. (2025) also revealed that adverse childhood experiences significantly correlate with poor emotional regulation and low self-esteem—factors that negatively affect adolescents' educational motivation and vocational aspirations.

In light of these findings, the present study seeks to examine the combined effects of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents in Oyo State. Although these variables have been studied individually, there is a paucity of research that integrates them within a comprehensive framework. Grounded in Social Learning Theory, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating how peer group influences shape adolescents' educational and vocational trajectories within the Nigerian sociocultural context.

## **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to examine the relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquent behaviour, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.
2. To determine the combined predictive effect of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.
3. To assess the relative contributions of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation to career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.

## **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.
- Ho2: There is no significant combined effect of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.
- Ho3: There is no significant relative contribution of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation to career choice among adolescents in Oyo State.

## **Methods**

This study utilised a descriptive survey design to examine the relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) Ibadan North, Egbeda, and Ogbomoso North were purposively selected for their diverse socio-economic characteristics and known prevalence of adolescent behavioural issues. The target population included in-school adolescents aged 13 to 19 years attending public secondary schools within these areas. Using snowball sampling, 180 participants were recruited, comprising 64 from Ibadan North, 57 from Egbeda, and 59 from Ogbomoso North. Data were gathered via a structured questionnaire

covering demographic information and the study variables, all measured using validated scales with demonstrated reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.76–0.85).

The questionnaire instruments underwent expert review for content validity and were pilot-tested on 30 adolescents outside the study LGAs. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities, and both parental consent and participant assent were secured. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires in confidential settings within schools to reduce bias. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics to profile participants, Pearson's correlation to explore relationships between variables, and multiple regression to evaluate the combined and relative effects of the psychosocial factors on career choice, with significance determined at  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic Representation of the Participants

The demographic characteristics of the 180 adolescent respondents are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Representation of Participants**

<b>Demographic Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n = 180)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
13 – 14 years	64	35.6
15 – 17 years	84	46.7
18 – 19 years	32	17.7
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	94	52.2
Female	86	47.8
<b>Local Government Area (LGA)</b>		
Ibadan North	64	35.6
Egbeda	57	31.7
Ogbomoso North	59	32.8

The sample consisted of 180 adolescents, predominantly aged 15 to 17 years (46.7%). The gender distribution was nearly balanced, with males slightly outnumbering females (52.2% vs. 47.8%). Participants were drawn fairly evenly from three local government areas: Ibadan North (35.6%), Egbeda (31.7%), and Ogbomoso North (32.8%), ensuring diverse regional representation. This demographic spread supports the generalisability of the study findings within the target population.

## Hypothesis One

**There is no significant relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, academic amotivation, and career choice among adolescents.**

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients among the variables:

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients among Variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Career Choice	1				
2. Peer Pressure	-0.412**	1			
3. Substance Abuse	-0.367**	0.463**	1		
4. Delinquency	-0.391**	0.425**	0.487**	1	
5. Academic Amotivation	-0.429**	0.394**	0.419**	0.432**	1

**p < .05**

The correlation matrix reveals significant relationships among the study variables. Career choice is negatively correlated with peer pressure ( $r = -0.412$ ,  $p < .01$ ), substance abuse ( $r = -0.367$ ,  $p < .01$ ), delinquency ( $r = -0.391$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and academic amotivation ( $r = -0.429$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that higher levels of these risk factors are associated with poorer career decision-making. Positive correlations exist between peer pressure and substance abuse ( $r = 0.463$ ,  $p < .01$ ), delinquency ( $r = 0.425$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and academic amotivation ( $r = 0.394$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting these behaviours tend to co-occur. Substance abuse is also positively linked to delinquency ( $r = 0.487$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and academic amotivation ( $r = 0.419$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while delinquency correlates positively with academic amotivation ( $r = 0.432$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Overall, these findings highlight the intertwined nature of peer influence, risky behaviours, academic disengagement, and their detrimental impact on adolescents' career choices.

The inverse relationship between peer pressure and career choice aligns with previous findings that suggest peer influence can undermine adolescents' vocational clarity by promoting conformity to risky behaviours rather than future planning (Brown & Larson, 2009). Substance abuse and delinquent behaviours also interfere with cognitive and emotional processes necessary for effective career decision-making, as supported by research highlighting their detrimental effects on goal-directed behaviour (Sussman, Skara & Ames, 2008). The strongest correlation with academic amotivation corroborates studies showing that disengagement from academic

pursuits leads to reduced career aspirations and increased uncertainty (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). These findings underscore the critical need to address both social and motivational barriers in career counselling for adolescents. By identifying how negative social influences and behavioural issues erode career-oriented thinking, stakeholders in the education and mental health sectors can implement structured, context-specific support systems. Such systems may include peer mentoring programmes, academic motivation workshops, and life planning sessions tailored to address individual challenges. Without strategic interventions, adolescents may continue to experience compromised career trajectories, resulting in increased unemployment and social dysfunction in the long term.

## Hypothesis Two

**There is no significant combined effect of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on career choice among adolescents.**

The multiple regression analysis is summarised in Table 3:

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
Regression	45.376	4	11.344	19.832	0.000	0.302
Residuals	131.854	175	0.754			
Total	177.230	179				

The multiple regression analysis shows that peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation collectively have a significant impact on career choice among adolescents ( $F(4, 175) = 19.832, p < 0.001$ ). The model explains 30.2% of the variance in career choice ( $R^2 = 0.302$ ), indicating that these factors together account for nearly one-third of the differences in how adolescents make career decisions. This suggests that these psychosocial and behavioural variables play a meaningful role in shaping career outcomes during adolescence.

The significant combined effect indicates that peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation collectively impact career decision outcomes, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasising the interplay of multiple environmental and personal factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This finding mirrors prior research demonstrating

that adolescent career development is shaped by a constellation of behavioural and social influences rather than isolated variables (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000). The explained variance of approximately 30% is substantial given the complexity of career choice, reinforcing the importance of multifaceted intervention approaches (Nauta, 2010). Practitioners should thus design integrated programmes targeting peer relations, substance use, behavioural regulation, and academic engagement. In practical terms, the finding suggests that adolescents do not make career decisions in a vacuum, but within a dynamic network of contextual pressures and internal states. School-based interventions should therefore incorporate psychoeducational curricula that raise awareness of peer dynamics and substance use consequences while simultaneously fostering motivation and resilience. Counsellors should also conduct periodic assessments to detect early signs of academic disengagement or behavioural deviance. These proactive steps will support adolescents in navigating the complex landscape of career planning and help curtail the likelihood of poor vocational outcomes.

### **Hypothesis Three**

**There is no significant relative contribution of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation to career choice among adolescents.**

Table 4 shows the beta weights and significance levels:

**Table 4: Relative Contributions to Career Choice**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Academic Amotivation	-0.321	-5.274	0.000
Peer Pressure	-0.248	-4.102	0.000
Delinquency	-0.204	-3.512	0.001
Substance Abuse	-0.176	-2.879	0.005

The regression coefficients indicate that all four predictors, academic amotivation ( $\beta = -0.321$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), peer pressure ( $\beta = -0.248$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), delinquency ( $\beta = -0.204$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), and substance abuse ( $\beta = -0.176$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) significantly and negatively predict career choice among adolescents. Academic amotivation emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that adolescents who are disengaged from their studies are less likely to make positive career decisions. Peer pressure, delinquent behaviours, and substance use also negatively influence



career choice, highlighting how social and behavioural challenges can undermine adolescents' future planning and career aspirations.

The dominance of academic amotivation as a predictor confirms research that places academic engagement at the core of successful career development (Guay, Ratelle & Chanal, 2008). It suggests that motivational deficits in school-related activities translate directly into less effective career decision-making. The significant contributions of peer pressure, delinquency, and substance abuse echo findings by Simons-Morton et al. (2012), who highlighted how social and behavioural risks compound challenges in adolescent vocational development. This nuanced pattern underscores the need for educators and counsellors to prioritise interventions that foster academic motivation while simultaneously addressing social pressures and risk behaviours, thereby creating a supportive environment conducive to positive career outcomes. Furthermore, the relative weights of these predictors suggest that although peer and behavioural factors are influential, intrinsic academic motivation holds the greatest leverage in shaping adolescents' career paths. Programmes designed to enhance goal-setting skills, provide mentorship, and promote self-regulated learning may therefore have profound effects. Integrating motivational interviewing techniques and strength-based counselling into the academic system could further assist adolescents in aligning their school efforts with long-term aspirations. Ultimately, a holistic approach that cultivates both personal motivation and social resilience is necessary to guide young people towards constructive and well-informed career decisions.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this study underscore the significant influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and academic amotivation on adolescents' career choices. Academic amotivation emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the pivotal role of school engagement in shaping vocational outcomes. The interplay of social and behavioural factors indicates that adolescent career decision-making is a multifaceted process influenced by both individual motivation and external pressures. These results support existing theoretical frameworks that view adolescent development as a complex interaction of environmental and personal factors, reinforcing the need for comprehensive career guidance interventions targeting these domains.

## **Limitations**

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences, making it difficult to determine the directionality of the relationships observed. The sample was drawn from specific local government areas, which may limit the generalisability of the results to broader adolescent populations. Self-reported data could introduce bias due to social desirability or inaccurate recall. Additionally, other potentially relevant factors such as family background, socioeconomic status, and school environment were not included, which may have further explained variations in career choice.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that educators, counsellors, and policymakers develop integrated intervention programmes that simultaneously address academic motivation, peer influence, substance use, and behavioural challenges among adolescents. Schools should implement motivational enhancement strategies to foster engagement and reduce academic amotivation. Peer support initiatives and substance abuse prevention programmes could help mitigate negative social influences. Career counselling should be holistic, incorporating psychological and social dimensions to better support adolescents in making informed career decisions that align with their abilities and aspirations.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to explore causal pathways between psychosocial factors and career choice over time. Expanding the sample to include diverse geographic and socioeconomic contexts would improve generalisability. Further studies might also examine the role of family dynamics, school climate, and mental health variables in adolescent career development. Qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of adolescents facing these challenges, enriching understanding and informing more tailored intervention strategies.

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