The Influence of Socialisation, Family Dynamics, Childhood Trauma, Alcoholism, and Peer Association on Career Aspirations among In-School Adolescents Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined the influence of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on career aspirations among 200 in-school adolescents aged 15 to 24 years in urban Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey design, participants were purposively sampled from secondary schools within Lagos. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses. Findings revealed significant positive correlations between career aspirations and both socialisation ($r = 0.483$) and family dynamics ($r = 0.517$), highlighting the pivotal role of supportive family environments and positive social interactions in fostering vocational goals. Conversely, childhood trauma ($r = -0.364$), alcoholism ($r = -0.327$), and negative peer association ($r = -0.487$) were negatively correlated with career aspirations, indicating that exposure to adverse experiences and maladaptive peer influences diminish adolescents' career ambitions. The multiple regression model significantly predicted career aspirations ($F(5,194) = 53.272$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 57.7% of the variance, with family dynamics and socialisation emerging as the strongest positive predictors, while peer association, childhood trauma, and alcoholism significantly predicted lower career aspirations. The findings support ecological systems theory by underscoring the interconnected impact of family, social, and individual risk factors on adolescent career development. The study recommends holistic intervention strategies combining family engagement, social skills training, trauma-informed care, and substance abuse prevention to promote resilience and positive vocational outcomes. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and regional focus, with suggestions for longitudinal and qualitative research to further elucidate these relationships. These results contribute to the understanding of psychosocial determinants of career aspirations and inform targeted youth development programmes in Nigeria and similar contexts.

1. Introduction

Adolescence represents a pivotal stage in human development, characterised by identity formation, increasing autonomy, and exploration of future goals. During this period, individuals are especially sensitive to the influences of social structures and psychological inputs, which shape long-term behavioural and vocational outcomes. A major developmental mechanism is socialisation, involving interactions within the family, peer group, school, and community. According to Steinberg and Morris (2001), adolescents derive behavioural norms, values, and emotional stability from these early interactions. Poor or deviant socialisation has been linked to maladaptive behaviours such as delinquency, substance abuse, and career disorientation (Brown et al. 2008). In urban areas, cultural diversity and social mobility compound socialisation challenges. Asiyanbi, et al. (2025) suggest that inadequate community interventions contribute to the normalisation of deviance like tobacco smoking and early aggression. These findings underscore the need to examine socialisation's impact on adolescent behaviour and career orientation.

Family dynamics form the foundation of socialisation. The family can act as a protective factor or a source of dysfunction. Hoeve et al. (2009) and Farrington et al. (2001) noted that parental neglect, conflict, and inconsistent discipline predict antisocial behaviour and low vocational motivation. Dysfunctional households marked by violence and emotional detachment undermine adolescents' self-worth and coping mechanisms. These challenges are evident in urban Nigerian contexts, where many adolescents grow up in overstretched, low-income families. Asiyanbi et al. (2025) found that lack of parental support correlated with smoking behaviour. Omopo and Odedokun (2024) argue that family dysfunction pushes youth toward delinquency and addictive habits. This weakens long-term goal commitment, including career pursuits.

Unaddressed childhood trauma further disrupts career development. Trauma from abuse, neglect, or instability affects emotional regulation and decision-making. Widom and Maxfield (2001) found early trauma causes long-term impairments in social competence. Offor, et al. (2024) noted PTSD-related nonverbal cues in traumatised youth, often overlooked in Nigerian schools. Omopo (2024) emphasised trauma-sensitive diagnostics in high-risk environments. Trauma

distorts self-appraisal and perceived opportunities. Anda et al. (2006) linked unresolved trauma to risk behaviours that undermine educational persistence. Thus, early interventions are vital.

Substance abuse, often modelled at home or reinforced by peers, worsens outcomes. Patrick and Terry-McElrath (2019) associated early alcohol use with aggression and disengagement. Adebayo-Oke et al. (2021) observed links between alcohol abuse, psychosis, and aggression. Omopo and Odedokun (2024) highlighted therapeutic challenges in Nigerian correctional facilities and the benefits of solution-focused therapy. Their work on cognitive reframing also showed reduced smoking dependency.

Peer influence strongly shapes adolescent choices. Warr (2002) found peer groups reinforce behaviours more than families in mid-adolescence. In urban Nigeria, peers may glamorise crime or reject conventional careers. Omopo (2024) and Omopo and Odedokun (2024) found peer pressure linked to deviance and advocated for group-based therapies. Omopo (2023) linked negative peer affiliations with psychological distress and suicidal ideation among university students.

These risk factors - poor socialisation, dysfunctional families, trauma, substance abuse, and deviant peers collectively affect adolescents' behaviour, self-concept, and career goals. Lent, et al. (2002) argued that psychological stability and social support are essential to career development. Omopo and Odedokun (2024) found cognitive and solution-focused therapies promote goal-oriented thinking. Omopo (2024) stressed addressing overlapping behavioural and cognitive factors for effective rehabilitation. This study proposes a holistic investigation into how these variables influence career aspirations in in-school adolescents in urban Nigeria.

Despite a growing body of literature, integrated research examining the combined influence of these factors on adolescent behavioural and vocational development remains limited. Much of the existing research isolates individual variables, failing to reflect adolescents' complex realities. This study aims to address that gap by examining how these dynamics influence delinquency and career aspirations among adolescents in Lagos state, Nigeria. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and supported by therapeutic literature, this research offers multi-layered insights for school counsellors, policymakers, and youth development professionals committed to promoting career readiness and reducing deviance.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The present study seeks to examine the influence of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the relationship between socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, peer association on career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the combined effect of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.
3. Assess the relative contributions of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association to career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. Hypotheses

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

1. There is no relationship between socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, peer association, and career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. There is no combined effect of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.
3. There are no significant relative contributions of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association to career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria.

3. Methods

This study employed a correlational research design to investigate the influence of socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos State, Nigeria. This non-experimental design enabled the researcher to identify and measure relationships among naturally occurring variables without manipulation. The sample consisted of 200 in-school adolescents, aged between 14 and 19 years, purposively selected from six government and private secondary schools across different urban districts of Lagos State. Participants were selected based on preliminary screening to ensure exposure to at least one of the studied psychosocial variables. Ethical approval was obtained from the Lagos State Ministry of Education's Research and Ethics Board. Informed consent was collected from parents and school authorities, while assent was obtained from the students themselves. Trained research assistants were engaged to facilitate data collection and ensure emotional safety and confidentiality throughout the process.

Data were gathered using a battery of validated and reliable standardised instruments. The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire – Short Form (CTQ-SF) (Bernstein et al., 2003) was used to measure early traumatic experiences, while the Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos & Moos, 2009) assessed perceptions of family dynamics including cohesion, conflict, and expressiveness. The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) developed by the World Health Organisation (1992) was administered to evaluate patterns of alcohol consumption and misuse among adolescents. Socialisation and interpersonal competence were assessed using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) by Gresham and Elliott (1990), and peer influence was measured using the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) by Brown, Clasen, and Eicher (1986). All instruments demonstrated strong internal consistency in the pilot phase, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.91. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics described participant characteristics, while Pearson's correlation assessed the relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive power and relative contribution of each psychosocial factor to career aspirations. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Representation of the Participants

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage (%)
Age		
15 – 18 years	100	50.0
19 – 21 years	70	35.0
22 – 24 years	30	15.0
Gender		
Male	120	60.0
Female	80	40.0
Religion		
Islam	110	55.0
Christianity	80	40.0
Traditional Religion	10	5.0

The sample consisted of 200 in-school adolescents aged between 15 and 24 years, purposively selected from urban secondary schools within Lagos State. The age distribution indicates that 50% were between 15 and 18 years, highlighting adolescence as a critical period for career development and psychosocial growth (Brown & Larson, 2021). Males accounted for 60% of the respondents, aligning with demographic trends in urban Nigerian secondary schools. Religious affiliations predominantly included Islam (55%) and Christianity (40%), reflecting the diverse yet representative sociocultural context of the study setting. These demographic characteristics provide a foundational understanding of the participants' backgrounds, which is important for interpreting the influence of psychosocial factors on career aspirations.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Relationship between Socialisation, Family Dynamics, Childhood Trauma, Alcoholism, Peer Association, and Career Aspirations

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables and career aspirations. The correlation matrix (Table 2) reveals significant associations between all predictor variables and career aspirations.

Table 2: Correlation Results for Hypothesis 1

Variables	Socialisation	Family Dynamics	Childhood Trauma	Alcoholism	Peer Association	Career Aspirations
Socialisation	1					0.483*
Family Dynamics	0.412*	1				0.517*
Childhood Trauma	-0.314*	-0.298*	1			-0.364*
Alcoholism	-0.270*	-0.258*	0.315*	1		-0.327*
Peer Association	-0.412*	-0.399*	0.452*	0.385*	1	-0.487*
Career Aspirations	0.483*	0.517*	-0.364*	-0.327*	-0.487*	1

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Socialisation (r = 0.483) and family dynamics (r = 0.517) demonstrated strong positive correlations with career aspirations, underscoring the importance of positive social interactions and supportive family environments in fostering adolescents' vocational goals. Through socialisation, adolescents acquire essential skills, values, and attitudes that promote self-efficacy and future orientation. Constructive social networks and family encouragement help develop stronger motivation and clearer career ambitions (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023). Family dynamics, characterised by emotional support and healthy communication, nurture adolescents' confidence to set realistic goals. This environment helps them navigate challenges and stay focused on long-term vocational objectives.

In contrast, childhood trauma (r = -0.364), alcoholism (r = -0.327), and negative peer association (r = -0.487) were significantly negatively correlated with career aspirations, suggesting that adverse experiences undermine career ambitions. Trauma impairs psychological well-being, leading to emotional dysregulation and low self-esteem, which reduce motivation (Miller et al., 2021). Alcoholism introduces instability that disrupts developmental processes vital for career planning. Negative peer association exerts a particularly detrimental effect; adolescents who associate with delinquent peers may adopt discouraging attitudes toward academic and career pursuits (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2021). The findings corroborate Rodriguez et al. (2022), who showed that multiple psychosocial stressors shape adolescent outcomes. Holistic, trauma-informed, and peer-engagement interventions are critical to promoting resilience and vocational success.

Hypothesis 2: Combined Effect of Socialisation, Family Dynamics, Childhood Trauma, Alcoholism, and Peer Association on Career Aspirations

A multiple regression analysis assessed the joint influence of the five predictor variables on career aspirations. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results for Hypothesis 2

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	R²
Regression	32.415	5	6.483	53.272	0.000	0.577
Residuals	23.695	194	0.122			
Total	56.110	199				

The regression model significantly predicted career aspirations (F(5,194) = 53.272, p < 0.001), explaining 57.7% of the variance in adolescents' career aspirations. This substantial explanatory power underscores the critical influence of combined psychosocial factors - socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer association on vocational goal-setting among in-school adolescents. The high variance explained suggests that career aspirations are shaped by both supportive and adverse environmental conditions, emphasising the multifactorial nature of adolescent development.

Among the predictors, family dynamics (β = 0.395, p < 0.001) and socialisation (β = 0.328, p = 0.002) emerged as the strongest positive influences. This highlights the role of nurturing family

environments in promoting confidence and clarity in vocational planning. Positive dynamics provide emotional security and guidance, essential for forming realistic and hopeful goals (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023). Likewise, constructive peer and community networks foster value internalisation and future-oriented mindsets aligned with societal expectations.

Conversely, peer association (β = -0.346, $p < 0.001$), childhood trauma (β = -0.241, $p = 0.003$), and alcoholism (β = -0.203, $p = 0.007$) significantly predicted lower career aspirations. Negative peer exposure, trauma, and substance-related instability disrupt motivation and self-efficacy, hindering goal-setting and long-term planning (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2021; Miller et al., 2021).

These findings affirm Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework (1979), which posits that adolescents' social and familial contexts critically shape developmental trajectories. Positive proximal processes enhance aspirations, while adverse experiences act as stressors compromising outcomes. Omole et al. (2024) reinforce this perspective, demonstrating the need for integrative approaches that address multiple protective and risk factors simultaneously. Therefore, the results highlight the necessity of multifaceted strategies that reinforce positive socialisation and family support while mitigating trauma, substance abuse, and harmful peer influences. Integrated programmes combining trauma-informed care, family strengthening, peer mentoring, and substance abuse prevention can build resilience, support career development, and reduce disengagement among at-risk youths. These efforts are vital for creating environments where adolescents can form healthy vocational aspirations and transition into productive adulthood.

Hypothesis 3: Relative Contribution of Socialisation, Family Dynamics, Childhood Trauma, Alcoholism, and Peer Association to Career Aspirations

The standardised regression coefficients (β) in Table 4 clarify the relative importance of each predictor in explaining career aspirations.

Table 4: Relative Contributions of Variables to Career Aspirations

Predictor Variable	β	t	p-value
Family Dynamics	0.395	6.781	0.000
Socialisation	0.328	4.873	0.002
Peer Association	-0.346	-6.432	0.000

Childhood Trauma	-0.241	-3.842	0.003
Alcoholism	-0.203	-3.467	0.007

Family dynamics emerged as the most influential predictor of career aspirations ($\beta = 0.395$), highlighting the role that family support, open communication, and positive parenting play in shaping adolescents' vocational motivation and future planning (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2021). A nurturing family environment provides emotional security and encouragement, fostering self-efficacy and resilience. This enables adolescents to set realistic goals and persist through challenges. The family acts as a primary socialising agent that buffers against adverse influences and promotes adaptive development.

Socialisation also exerted a strong positive influence on career aspirations ($\beta = 0.328$), aligning with theories that stress the value of social networks, mentorship, and constructive peer interactions. Positive socialisation provides role models, information, and reinforcement that shape attitudes toward education and work. It supports skill development and goal setting, critical for vocational outcomes. Social environments outside the family, such as schools and community groups, are essential in guiding youth towards productive futures. In contrast, peer association was the strongest negative predictor ($\beta = -0.346$), confirming the influence of deviant peer groups in deterring career goals (Smith & Martinez, 2022). Peers engaged in risky behaviours may reinforce maladaptive attitudes and distract from educational pursuits. Although childhood trauma and alcoholism showed smaller effects, their negative impact on career aspirations remains crucial (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2021). Trauma can disrupt emotional regulation and goal setting, while substance abuse impairs decision-making and motivation. These findings support integrating trauma-informed care and substance abuse prevention into career development efforts.

Overall, the results underscore the need for integrated interventions that address multiple psychosocial domains. Programmes combining family engagement, social skills training, peer group management, and trauma counselling offer a comprehensive framework for supporting adolescents' career aspirations and wellbeing. Such strategies are vital for fostering resilience among urban Nigerian youths and enabling them to pursue productive futures (Williams et al., 2020; Asiyanbi et al., 2025). This holistic approach is essential for achieving sustainable positive outcomes and breaking cycles of disadvantage.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that career aspirations among in-school adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria are significantly influenced by a combination of psychosocial factors, including socialisation, family dynamics, childhood trauma, alcoholism, and peer associations. Positive family environments and constructive social interactions were found to foster higher vocational goals, while adverse experiences such as trauma, substance abuse, and negative peer influences significantly diminished career aspirations. These findings emphasise the complex interplay of individual, familial, and social contexts in shaping adolescents' future orientations. As such, fostering supportive family and social networks while addressing risk factors is crucial to promoting healthy career development and preventing disengagement among urban youths.

5.1 Limitations

Despite its valuable insights, this study has some limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between the psychosocial variables and career aspirations, suggesting that longitudinal research is needed to better understand developmental trajectories. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response biases, including social desirability or recall inaccuracies. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on urban adolescents within Lagos state, limiting the generalisability of findings to rural areas or other cultural contexts. Future research should consider diverse samples and employ mixed methods to enhance validity and deepen understanding of the phenomena.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that stakeholders such as educators, policymakers, and mental health practitioners implement comprehensive intervention programmes that target family engagement, peer influence management, and trauma-informed care within schools. Emphasising social skills development and positive mentorship can enhance adolescents' socialisation processes and career planning. Prevention initiatives addressing substance abuse and counselling services for trauma-affected youths are also critical. Schools and community organisations should collaborate to create supportive environments that nurture resilience and empower adolescents to pursue constructive vocational goals, ultimately contributing to sustainable youth development.

5.3 Suggestion for Further Studies

Future research should explore longitudinal designs to track how changes in family dynamics, socialisation, and adverse experiences influence career aspirations over time, allowing for clearer causal inferences. Investigating moderating variables such as gender, socio-economic status, and personality traits could provide more nuanced insights into differential impacts on vocational development. Additionally, qualitative studies examining adolescents' lived experiences and perceptions of career planning amidst psychosocial challenges would enrich understanding. Expanding research to include rural populations and other Nigerian regions will improve the applicability of findings and guide culturally tailored intervention strategies.

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