

Analysis of the Predictive Factors among Young Adult Delinquencies (Case Study of Igbesa, Ogun State)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors associated with juvenile delinquency among 250 youths aged 18–27 years in Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and data were analysed using the Chi-square test of independence. Findings revealed that peer group and social influence ($\chi^2 = 432.960$, $p = 0.000$), personal characteristics and behaviour ($\chi^2 = 422.416$, $p = 0.000$), and family and home environment ($\chi^2 = 111.776$, $p = 0.018$) were all significantly associated with juvenile delinquency. Peer influence was the strongest predictor. The study concludes that juvenile delinquency results from the interplay of peer pressure, low self-control, poor emotional regulation, and weak family supervision. Recommendations include strengthening parenting programmes, creating prosocial youth spaces, embedding life skills education, and promoting digital literacy. Future research should employ longitudinal and multivariate designs.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency, predictive factors, peer influence, family environment, youths, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency remains one of the most pressing social problems confronting societies worldwide. It refers to the participation of minors typically individuals below the age of 18 in unlawful or antisocial behaviour. The phenomenon cuts across geographic, economic, and cultural boundaries, affecting both developed and developing nations alike. Globally, the [36] reports that youth aged 15 to 24 account for a disproportionately high share of recorded offences, including theft, assault, substance-related crimes, and cybercrime. In sub-Saharan Africa, rapid urbanisation, rising youth unemployment, and weak institutional support systems have intensified the vulnerabilities that expose young people to delinquent pathways [3]. Nigeria, with a youth population exceeding 110 million, faces an escalating challenge of juvenile delinquency, manifesting in street gang involvement, drug abuse, vandalism, and cyber-enabled fraud, commonly referred to as "Yahoo Yahoo" [29].

The consequences of juvenile delinquency extend beyond the immediate harm caused by the offences. For the individual, delinquency disrupts educational attainment, limits future employment prospects, and increases the likelihood of adult criminality [24]. For the family, it imposes emotional and financial strain, often stigmatizing households within their communities. At the societal level, high rates of youth crime erode social cohesion, discourage investment, and overburden juvenile justice and correctional systems [31]. In Nigeria, the economic cost of youth crime is significant, with billions of naira lost annually to property damage, theft, and the diversion of public resources toward law enforcement and rehabilitation [20]. These multifaceted consequences underscore the urgency of identifying the factors that predict juvenile delinquency and developing evidence-based prevention strategies.

A substantial body of research has sought to explain why some young people engage in delinquent behaviour while others in similar circumstances do not. The predictors of juvenile delinquency are complex and multidimensional, spanning individual, family, peer, school, and community domains. At the individual level, psychological traits such as low self-control, impulsivity, and sensation-seeking have consistently been linked to antisocial conduct [18]. [32], in a comprehensive meta-analysis, affirmed that low self-control remains one of the strongest and most robust predictors of delinquency across cultures and contexts. Additionally, mental

health conditions, particularly conduct disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, significantly elevate delinquency risk [16].

Family factors constitute another critical domain of influence. Poor parental supervision, inconsistent discipline, parental conflict, and family dissolution have all been identified as significant correlates of youth offending [19]. In a longitudinal study spanning five countries, [21] demonstrated that harsh parenting and low parental warmth during early adolescence predicted elevated delinquency trajectories, regardless of cultural setting. In the Nigerian context, [12] found that polygamous family structures and low parental educational attainment were significantly associated with higher delinquency rates among secondary school students in Lagos and Kano.

Statement Of The Problem

Peer influence is widely regarded as one of the most powerful proximal predictors of juvenile delinquency, particularly during adolescence when peer approval becomes highly salient. Association with deviant peers increases the likelihood of offending by providing models for delinquent behaviour, reinforcing antisocial attitudes, and creating opportunities for crime. [23] showed that peer delinquency was a stronger predictor of youth offending than family or school factors. Similarly, a study by [28] among Nigerian university students found that peer pressure was the single most reported reason for initiation into cybercrime.

School-related factors also play a significant role. Academic failure, low school bonding, truancy, and early school leaving have all been linked to increased delinquency risk [30]. The school environment can either serve as a protective factor that builds resilience or as a risk factor that accelerates deviant trajectories. In Nigeria, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning facilities, and frequent teacher strikes have contributed to student disengagement, creating fertile ground for delinquent behaviour [1].

Community and neighbourhood characteristics further shape delinquency outcomes. Young people raised in communities characterised by concentrated poverty, high crime rates, residential instability, and limited access to recreational facilities face elevated risks of offending [33]. The breakdown of informal social controls in such communities reduces the capacity of residents to monitor youth behaviour collectively. [14], in a study of urban slums in Port Harcourt and Onitsha, reported that neighbourhood disorder and exposure to community violence were significant predictors of adolescent involvement in street gangs and substance abuse.

Despite the volume of research on juvenile delinquency, significant gaps remain in the literature, particularly concerning the Nigerian context. First, most studies have relied on bivariate or simple regression techniques that examine predictors in isolation, without adequately accounting for the interrelationships among multiple factors. Delinquency is unlikely to result from a single cause; rather, it emerges from the cumulative and interactive effects of multiple risk factors operating simultaneously [15]. Statistical approaches that can handle multiple predictors, assess their relative importance, and model their joint effects are essential for a nuanced understanding of delinquency aetiology.

Moreso, the rapid social and technological changes occurring in Nigeria including increased internet penetration, social media use, urban migration, and changing family structures may be altering the risk landscape for juvenile delinquency in ways not yet adequately captured by existing studies [27]. An up-to-date empirical investigation using current data is necessary to reflect these evolving dynamics.

This study, therefore, seeks to address these gaps by conducting a **statistical analysis of the predictive factors of juvenile delinquency among youths**. It aims to identify the individual, family, peer, school, and community factors that significantly predict delinquent behaviour and to determine their relative predictive strength. By employing appropriate multivariate statistical techniques, the study will provide a more comprehensive and quantitatively grounded understanding of the determinants of youth offending. The findings are expected to inform targeted prevention and intervention programmes, guide juvenile justice policy, and contribute to the broader scholarly discourse on youth crime in developing societies.

The broad objective of this research is to identify the most significant predictive factors of juvenile delinquency and develop a predictive model among the youths in Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives Of The Study

The specific objectives are to:

- examine the relationship between family and home environment and juvenile delinquency;
- assess the relationship between peer group and social influence and juvenile delinquency;
- evaluate the relationship between personal characteristics and behaviour and juvenile delinquency;

Research Questions

To what extent :

- i does family and home environment affect juvenile delinquency?
- ii does peer group and social influence impact juvenile delinquency?
- iii personal characteristics and behavior affect juvenile delinquency?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency refers to the engagement of individuals below the statutory age of criminal responsibility in behaviours that violate established legal codes. The specific age threshold varies across jurisdictions; in Nigeria, the Children and Young Persons Act defines a juvenile as a person under the age of 17, although the Child Rights Act of 2003 pegs the age of criminal responsibility at 12 years [6]. Delinquent acts range from status offences conduct that is prohibited only because of the offender's minority status, such as truancy, running away from home, and underage alcohol consumption to more serious index offences including theft, assault, robbery, and homicide [34].

The conceptualization of juvenile delinquency has evolved significantly from early legalistic definitions toward a more nuanced understanding that incorporates developmental psychology and criminological theory. Contemporary scholars view juvenile delinquency not merely as a legal infraction but as a developmental phenomenon embedded within a complex web of risk and protective factors operating across multiple ecological levels [22]. This perspective recognizes that most young people who engage in delinquent behaviour do so transiently during adolescence and desist as they transition into adulthood, a pattern [24] famously labelled "adolescence-limited" antisocial behaviour. However, a smaller subgroup exhibits persistent offending trajectories that begin in childhood and continue well into adulthood, often rooted in early neuropsychological deficits and adverse rearing environments.

In the Nigerian context, juvenile delinquency has taken on increasingly sophisticated forms. Beyond traditional street-level offences, contemporary manifestations include cybercrime, internet fraud, cultism in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, kidnapping for ransom, and involvement in organized criminal networks [29]; [28]. Igbesa, a semi-urban community in Ogun State that hosts several tertiary institutions, presents a unique convergence of risk factors including rapid population growth, inadequate social infrastructure, youth unemployment, and the infiltration of cult groups into educational settings [4].

Predictive Factors of Juvenile Delinquency:

Predictive factors, also termed risk factors, are characteristics, conditions, or experiences that increase the probability that a young person will engage in delinquent behaviour. These factors are not deterministic;

rather, they operate probabilistically, and their accumulation significantly elevates risk [15]. Scholars have categorised these factors into several domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community.

Individual Factors

Individual-level predictors encompass biological, psychological, and behavioural characteristics. Low self-control, defined as the inability to delay gratification, consider long-term consequences, or regulate impulses, remains one of the most empirically robust predictors of delinquency [18]. [32], in an updated meta-analysis of over 100 studies, confirmed a strong and consistent relationship between low self-control and diverse forms of antisocial conduct. Impulsivity and sensation-seeking, closely related constructs, have been linked to delinquency through their influence on risk assessment and reward sensitivity [35]. Substance use, particularly early initiation into alcohol and drug use, significantly predicts both minor and serious offending, operating through pharmacological effects that lower inhibitions and through association with deviant peer networks [26]. Mental health conditions, especially conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, substantially increase the risk of youth offending [16].

Family Factors

The family is the primary socializing institution, and dysfunction within this unit is a powerful predictor of delinquency. Poor parental supervision, defined as inadequate monitoring of the child's activities, whereabouts, and peer associations, has consistently been linked to elevated offending risk [19]. Inconsistent or harsh discipline, parental conflict, and domestic violence create environments of stress and insecurity that disrupt prosocial development and model aggressive behaviour [21]. Family structure also matters: children from single-parent households or those experiencing parental separation and divorce face elevated delinquency risk, although this effect is partly mediated by reduced economic resources and parental supervision [7]. In Nigeria, polygamous family structures and the fostering of children to relatives (a common cultural practice) have been identified as additional family-level risk factors [12].

Peer Factors

Peer influence intensifies during adolescence, as young people increasingly orient toward their peer group for identity, validation, and belonging. Association with deviant peers is one of the most robust proximal predictors of juvenile delinquency. Deviant peers provide opportunities for offending, model delinquent techniques, and reinforce antisocial attitudes through differential reinforcement [5]. Peer pressure, distinct from passive association, involves active encouragement or coercion to engage in delinquent acts and has been identified as a principal pathway into cybercrime among Nigerian youths [28]. [23] demonstrated that peer delinquency exerts effects independent of self-selection, meaning that even youths without prior delinquent tendencies adopt offending behaviour when embedded in deviant peer networks.

Social and Community Factors

Beyond the immediate interpersonal environment, broader social and community characteristics shape delinquency risk. Neighbourhood disadvantage, operationalised as concentrated poverty, residential instability, and high crime rates, undermines collective efficacythe willingness of residents to intervene for the common goodand thereby weakens informal social control over youth behaviour [33]. Exposure to community violence normalises aggression and creates trauma that manifests in externalizing behaviour [17]. In Nigeria, urban slum conditions, street hawking, and the presence of area boys (neighbourhood gangs) constitute significant community-level risk factors [14]. Socioeconomic deprivation limits access to quality education, recreational facilities, and legitimate economic opportunities, creating structural conditions conducive to delinquency [20].

Theoretical Framework

Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) Theory

The ICAP theory, developed by [15], synthesizes insights from multiple criminological traditions into a

coherent developmental framework. The theory distinguishes between long-term antisocial potential relatively stable individual difference shaped by early socialization, temperament, and family environment and short-term antisocial potential situational fluctuations influenced by immediate circumstances such as boredom, anger, intoxication, or peer provocation. According to ICAP, the translation of antisocial potential into actual delinquent behaviour depends on cognitive processes, including decision-making that weighs perceived benefits against perceived costs, and on the availability of opportunities for offending.

ICAP theory identifies a comprehensive array of risk factors across the life course, including prenatal and perinatal complications, low intelligence, poor school attainment, inadequate parental supervision, harsh discipline, parental conflict, antisocial parents, large family size, low family income, delinquent peers, and high-crime neighbourhoods. The theory posits that these factors operate cumulatively and interactively, with the number of risk factors a young person experiences being a stronger predictor of offending than any single factor in isolation. ICAP is particularly well-suited to the present study because it accommodates the multidimensionality of delinquency risk and provides a framework for modelling the joint effects of individual, family, peer, and community factors.

Social Development Model (SDM)

The Social Development Model, articulated by [11], explains how prosocial and antisocial behaviours develop through socialization processes within the key institutions of family, school, peers, and community. The SDM posits that strong bonds to prosocial institutions and individuals inhibit delinquency, while bonds to antisocial individuals and groups facilitate it. Bonding occurs when individuals perceive opportunities for involvement, possess the skills to participate successfully, and receive consistent reinforcement for their participation.

When young people are provided meaningful opportunities for prosocial involvement such as in structured family activities, academic success, or community programmes and when these efforts are recognized and rewarded, they develop strong prosocial bonds that insulate them against delinquency. Conversely, when prosocial opportunities are absent or blocked, and young people instead find involvement, skills development, and reinforcement within deviant peer groups, antisocial bonds develop that promote delinquent behaviour. The SDM is valuable for this study because it shifts attention from risk factors alone toward the interaction between risk and protective factors, thereby informing prevention and intervention strategies.

Empirical Review

In a large-scale longitudinal study conducted in the United States, [25] followed a birth cohort of 1,037 individuals from age 3 to age 45. Using growth mixture modelling, the study identified distinct offending trajectories and found that childhood self-control, family socioeconomic status, and exposure to harsh parenting were the strongest predictors of persistent offending. The study's methodological rigour and long follow-up period make it a benchmark in the field, though its findings from a developed Western context may not fully generalise to Nigerian settings.

[32] conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 132 studies examining the relationship between self-control and delinquency. The analysis yielded a robust mean effect size, confirming low self-control as one of the most consistent predictors of antisocial behaviour across cultures, genders, and offence types. The study noted, however, that the effect of self-control was moderated by the strength of social bonds and the availability of criminal opportunities, underscoring the need for multivariate approaches.

In a cross-national study spanning nine countries including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and South Korea, [21] investigated the association between parenting practices and adolescent delinquency. Using multilevel modelling, the study found that harsh physical discipline and low parental warmth predicted elevated delinquency across all cultural contexts, while parental monitoring served as a protective factor. The study's cross-cultural design is particularly relevant, as it demonstrates that certain family factors exert universal effects on youth behaviour.

[23] examined peer influence on delinquency using social network analysis among 1,200 adolescents in the United States. The study found that peer delinquency was a stronger predictor of individual offending than either family or school factors, and that the effect persisted even after controlling for selection effects. The study highlighted the importance of measuring peer influence not merely as an individual perception but as a structural property of social networks.

A study by [12] investigated family correlates of juvenile delinquency among 400 secondary school students in Lagos and Kano, Nigeria. Using logistic regression, the study found that polygamous family structure, low parental education, and inadequate parental supervision were significant predictors of self-reported delinquency. The study recommended culturally sensitive family-based interventions and highlighted the need for research in semi-urban communities where family structures are in transition.

[28] employed a mixed-methods design to explore the pathways into cybercrime among 300 Nigerian university students. The quantitative component, using multiple regression, identified peer pressure, unemployment, and weak moral beliefs as significant predictors, while the qualitative findings revealed that the desire for quick wealth and the perception of cybercrime as a victimless crime were salient motivational factors. The study is notable for its focus on a contemporary form of delinquency that is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context.

[14] examined community-level predictors of adolescent offending in urban slums in Port Harcourt and Onitsha. Using multilevel modelling with data from 500 adolescents nested within 30 communities, the study found that neighbourhood disorder, exposure to violence, and low collective efficacy were significant predictors of both property and violent offending. The study's multilevel design is methodologically instructive, though its focus on large urban centres limits applicability to semi-urban communities like Igbesa.

In a Ghanaian study, [8] investigated the roles of self-control and religiosity in juvenile delinquency among 350 senior secondary school students in Accra. Using structural equation modelling, the study found that self-control had a direct negative effect on delinquency, while religiosity operated indirectly through its enhancement of self-control. The study suggested that religious engagement may serve as a protective factor in highly religious societies, a finding with potential relevance to the Nigerian context.

[3] conducted a systematic review of juvenile delinquency research in sub-Saharan Africa, covering 45 studies published between 2000 and 2021. The review identified unemployment, poverty, family breakdown, and peer influence as the most commonly reported predictors. Methodologically, the review noted a preponderance of descriptive and cross-sectional designs and called for more longitudinal and predictive modelling studies. This methodological gap is one this present study seeks to address.

A growing body of research has applied advanced statistical techniques to predict juvenile delinquency. [9] employed machine learning algorithms, including random forests and gradient boosting, to predict recidivism among 5,000 juvenile offenders in the United States. The study found that machine learning models significantly outperformed traditional logistic regression in predictive accuracy, though the "black box" nature of these algorithms raised concerns about interpretability and fairness.

Within Nigeria, [2] reviewed the methodological landscape of juvenile delinquency research and found that fewer than 10% of Nigerian studies employed predictive modelling techniques such as logistic regression or discriminant analysis. The review called for a shift from purely descriptive studies toward predictive designs that can inform risk assessment and targeted intervention. The present study responds directly to this call.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design, deemed appropriate for examining associations among multiple variables at a single point in time. The study was conducted in Igbesa, a semi-urban community in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria, which hosts several tertiary institutions and a heterogeneous youth population, making it suitable for investigating juvenile delinquency.

The target population comprised all youths' resident in Igbesa. The accessible population consisted of youths aged 18 to 27 years, capturing the developmental stages at which delinquent behaviour peaks [24]. A sample of 250 respondents was determined using the Cochran formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error [13]. A gender-stratified random sampling technique was employed, yielding 125 male and 125 female respondents.

This study utilised primary data. The choice of primary data was informed by the need to obtain specific, current, and context-relevant information directly from youths in Igbesa regarding their family environments, peer associations, personal characteristics, and involvement in delinquent behaviour.

Questionnaires were administered over four weeks using Google Forms, with the assistance of two trained research assistants. Respondents were approached at community centres, youth gathering points, and residential areas within Igbesa, where the study purpose was explained and the questionnaire link shared. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without consequence, consistent with ethical guidelines for social science research. All 250 questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) summarized demographic characteristics and responses. The Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence was employed to test hypotheses at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This test was appropriate given the categorical nature of the variables and the objective of determining significant associations between predictor domains and juvenile delinquency.

The Chi-square statistic was computed using the formula:

Where, O_{ij} represents the observed frequency and E_{ij} represents the expected frequency, calculated as:

The degrees of freedom were calculated as $df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$, where r is the number of rows and c is the number of columns. The null hypothesis was rejected where $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant association.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	128	51.2
	Female	122	48.8
Age (years)	18–20	33	13.2
	21–23	58	23.2
	24–26	88	35.2
	27 and above	71	28.4
Marital Status	Single	181	72.4
	Married	39	15.6
	Divorced	22	8.8

	Widowed	8	3.2
Education	Primary	4	1.6
	Secondary	26	10.4
	Undergraduate	164	65.6
	Postgraduate	56	22.4
Family Structure	Two-parent household	107	42.8
	Single-parent household	75	30.0
	Blended family	31	12.4
	Adoptive family	27	10.8
	Others	10	4.0

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 250 respondents who participated in the study. The gender distribution shows a near-equal representation, with males accounting for 51.2% (n = 128) and females comprising 48.8% (n = 122) of the sample. This balanced distribution reflects the stratified sampling approach adopted and ensures that gender-based comparisons are meaningful.

Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents fell within the 24–26 years age bracket (35.2%, n = 88), followed by those aged 27 years and above (28.4%, n = 71), those aged 21–23 years (23.2%, n = 58), and the smallest group aged 18–20 years (13.2%, n = 33). This indicates that the sample was predominantly composed of young adults in their mid-twenties, a demographic group for whom delinquent behaviour patterns are typically well established.

In terms of marital status, the overwhelming majority of respondents were single (72.4%, n = 181), while married respondents constituted 15.6% (n = 39). Divorced and widowed respondents accounted for 8.8% (n = 22) and 3.2% (n = 8), respectively. The predominance of single respondents is consistent with the youthful age profile of the sample.

The educational attainment of respondents revealed that the largest proportion were undergraduates (65.6%, n = 164), followed by postgraduates (22.4%, n = 56), secondary school leavers (10.4%, n = 26), and primary school leavers (1.6%, n = 4). This distribution is reflective of Igbesa's status as a host community for tertiary institutions and suggests a relatively literate sample.

Family structure data indicated that the two-parent household was the most common arrangement (42.8%, n = 107), followed by single-parent households (30.0%, n = 75), blended families (12.4%, n = 31), adoptive families (10.8%, n = 27), and other arrangements (4.0%, n = 10). While the two-parent household was the modal category, the combined proportion of non-traditional family structures (57.2%) highlights the diversity of family arrangements among youths in the study area, a factor of potential relevance to delinquency risk.

Table 2: Family and Home Environment Factors (N = 250)

Statement	High/Extensive n (%)	Moderate n (%)	Low/None n (%)
Parental involvement in your life	109 (43.6)	42 (16.8)	99 (39.6)
Family support received	99 (39.6)	42 (16.8)	109 (43.6)

Parental monitoring experienced	75 (30.0)	61 (24.4)	114 (45.6)
Family conflict experienced (frequent)	65 (26.0)	90 (36.0)	95 (38.0)
Stable home environment	97 (38.8)	57 (22.8)	96 (38.4)

Table 2 summarises respondents' reports on family and home environment factors. Concerning parental involvement, 43.6% (n = 109) reported high or extensive involvement, while a nearly equal proportion (39.6%, n = 99) reported low or no parental involvement in their lives. This near-even split suggests considerable variation in the quality of parent-child engagement within the sample.

Family support showed a similar pattern, with 39.6% (n = 99) reporting high or extensive support and 43.6% (n = 109) indicating low or no support. The finding shows that less than half of the respondents perceived strong family support is noteworthy, given the protective role of family cohesion against delinquent behaviour.

Parental monitoring emerged as a particular area of concern. Only 30.0% (n = 75) of respondents reported high levels of parental monitoring, whereas 45.6% (n = 114) indicated low or no monitoring. This suggests that a substantial proportion of youths in the study area may lack adequate supervision, a factor consistently linked to elevated delinquency risk.

Regarding family conflict, 26.0% (n = 65) reported frequent conflict, 36.0% (n = 90) reported moderate conflict, and 38.0% (n = 95) reported low or no conflict. Home environment stability was described as high by 38.8% (n = 97) of respondents and low by 38.4% (n = 96), indicating another area of notable polarization within the sample.

Table 3: Peer Group and Social Influence Factors (N = 250)

Statement	High/Often n (%)	Moderate/Sometimes n (%)	Low/Never n (%)
Time spent with friends who get into trouble	122 (48.8)	39 (15.6)	89 (35.6)
Friends' influence on your behaviour	138 (55.2)	38 (15.2)	74 (29.6)
Friends encourage delinquent behaviour	135 (54.0)	37 (14.8)	78 (31.2)
Importance of fitting in with peer group	164 (65.6)	62 (24.8)	24 (9.6)
Pressure from social media to engage in certain behaviours	136 (54.4)	31 (12.4)	83 (33.2)

Table 3 presents findings on peer group and social influence. Nearly half of the respondents (48.8%, n = 122) reported spending considerable time with friends who get into trouble, compared to 35.6% (n = 89) who rarely or never did so. This high prevalence of association with deviant peers is consistent with research identifying peer delinquency as a robust proximal predictor of youth offending.

A majority of respondents (55.2%, n = 138) acknowledged that their friends influenced their behaviour to a high degree, while only 29.6% (n = 74) reported low or no peer influence. Similarly, 54.0% (n = 135) indicated that friends frequently encouraged them to engage in delinquent behaviour. These findings underscore the powerful socializing role of peer networks during adolescence and emerging adulthood.

The importance of fitting in with peer groups was rated as high by 65.6% (n = 164) of respondents, with only 9.6% (n = 24) considering it of low or no importance. This strong drive for peer acceptance may heighten susceptibility to negative peer pressure. Furthermore, 54.4% (n = 136) reported experiencing high pressure

from social media to engage in certain behaviours, reflecting the emerging role of digital platforms in shaping youth conduct.

Table 4: Personal Characteristics and Behavioural Factors (N = 250)

Statement	High/Frequent n (%)	Medium/Sometimes n (%)	Low/Never n (%)
Self-esteem rating	170 (68.0)	34 (13.6)	46 (18.4)
Engagement in impulsive behavior	121 (48.4)	52 (20.8)	76 (30.4)
Emotional control rating (poor)	144 (57.6)	52 (20.8)	54 (21.6)
Ever engaged in delinquent behavior	137 (54.8)	29 (11.6)	84 (33.6)
Substance use (alcohol, drugs, smoking)	118 (47.2)	36 (14.4)	96 (38.4)

Table 4 displays the distribution of personal characteristics and behavioural factors. Self-esteem was rated as high by 68.0% (n = 170) of respondents, with only 18.4% (n = 46) reporting low self-esteem. While high self-esteem is generally considered a protective factor, its relationship with delinquency is complex, and inflated self-esteem coupled with low self-control may actually increase offending risk.

Engagement in impulsive behaviour was reported as frequent by 48.4% (n = 121) of respondents, while 30.4% (n = 76) reported low or no impulsivity. This high prevalence of impulsive tendencies is relevant, as low self-control and impulsivity are among the most empirically robust predictors of antisocial conduct.

Emotional control was rated as poor by the majority of respondents (57.6%, n = 144), with only 21.6% (n = 54) reporting good emotional regulation. Poor emotional control has been associated with reactive aggression and delinquency, particularly in contexts of provocation or stress.

Critically, 54.8% (n = 137) of respondents reported having engaged in delinquent behaviour such as vandalism, theft, or fighting at some point, while 33.6% (n = 84) reported no such engagement. Substance use including alcohol, drugs, and smoking was reported as frequent by 47.2% (n = 118), whereas 38.4% (n = 96) reported no use. These figures indicate that delinquent behaviour and substance use are prevalent among a substantial proportion of youths in the study area.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Association Between Predictor Domains and Juvenile Delinquency

Predictor Domain	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Family and home environment	111.776	16	0.018	Significant
Peer group and social influence	432.960	20	0.000	Significant
Personal characteristics and behaviour	422.416	21	0.000	Significant

Note: $\alpha = 0.05$; N = 250.

Table 5 presents the results of the Chi-square tests of association between the three predictor domains and juvenile delinquency. The Chi-square analysis revealed that all three predictor domains family and home environment, peer group and social influence, and personal characteristics and behaviour were significantly associated with juvenile delinquency at the 5% significance level. Among these, peer group and social influence recorded the highest Chi-square value (432.960), followed closely by personal characteristics and behaviour (422.416), while family and home environment recorded a comparatively lower but still significant

value (111.776). This pattern suggests that while all three domains are important, peer influence and individual-level factors may be the most potent predictors of delinquency in this study context.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The sample was predominantly young, single, and educated, with a near-equal gender split. Most respondents were in their mid-twenties, a life stage when delinquent behaviour typically peaks before declining [24]. Notably, over half (57.2%) came from non-traditional family structures. While this reflects broader social changes in semi-urban Nigeria, family structure alone does not determine delinquency; the quality of relationships within any household matters far more [7].

The study confirmed a significant association between family factors and juvenile delinquency ($\chi^2 = 111.776$, $p = 0.018$). This makes intuitive sense: nearly half the respondents (45.6%) reported little or no parental monitoring, and a similar proportion (43.6%) felt they received low family support. Young people who are not supervised and do not feel supported at home are more likely to seek validation elsewhere, sometimes in destructive ways. As Farrington (2021) argues, the family is the first line of defence against antisocial behaviour, and when that defence weakens, other risk factors find room to grow. That said, the p-value here was the largest among the three hypotheses, hinting that family influences may work indirectly shaping a young person's character and peer choices rather than directly triggering delinquency.

Peer influence emerged as the strongest predictor of delinquency ($\chi^2 = 432.960$, $p = 0.000$). Over half the respondents (54.0%) said their friends encouraged them toward delinquent acts, and 65.6% felt it was very important to fit in with their peer group. These numbers tell a human story: young people crave belonging. When prosocial avenues for connection are absent, deviant peer groups offer an alternative community, complete with its own norms and rewards [11]. The finding that 54.4% felt social media pressured them toward certain behaviours adds a modern twist. Peer influence is no longer confined to the street corner; it now follows young people into their pockets and bedrooms through their phones [27]. This digital dimension makes peer pressure more pervasive and harder to escape than in previous generations.

Individual-level factors were almost equally powerful ($\chi^2 = 422.416$, $p = 0.000$). Nearly half the sample (48.4%) described themselves as impulsive, and 57.6% admitted to poor emotional control. These are not abstract psychological concepts; they describe a young person who acts before thinking, struggles to manage anger, and finds it difficult to resist temptation. [18] and [32] have long argued that such traits are among the most reliable predictors of delinquency, and the present study confirms this in a Nigerian setting. Substance use was also common (47.2%), which tends to weaken judgement further and deepens involvement with deviant peers. Interestingly, 68.0% rated their self-esteem as high, yet many still offended. This suggests that self-esteem alone is not protective; what matters is whether it is grounded in prosocial values or rooted in a need to prove oneself to peers.

Comparing the three domains, peer influence and personal characteristics stood out as the most powerful predictors, while family factors, though significant, played a comparatively smaller direct role. This makes developmental sense. As children grow into young adults, the immediate influence of family naturally recedes while peers and individual identity take centre stage [24]. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss family as unimportant. More likely, early family experiences shape self-control, emotional regulation, and the kind of friends a young person chooses meaning family influences operate in the background even when they are not the loudest voice in the room.

The picture that emerges is of a young person navigating a world where home support is inconsistent, peers are powerful, and self-control is fragile. These forces do not operate in isolation; they feed each other. A poorly supervised adolescent is more likely to fall in with a deviant peer group, where impulsive behaviour is rewarded, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. This suggests that effective interventions must address multiple domains simultaneously strengthening families, providing prosocial peer alternatives, and building young people's capacity to manage their emotions and impulses.

This study has limitations that should be kept in mind. The cross-sectional design means causality cannot be assumed. All data were self-reported, and sensitive topics like delinquency may be underreported. The sample was drawn from one community in Ogun State, so findings may not apply to all Nigerian settings. Finally, the Chi-square test shows whether associations exist, but not how strong they are or in what direction.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the factors associated with juvenile delinquency among youths in Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings paint a clear picture: juvenile delinquency does not emerge from a single cause but from the interplay of family, peer, and individual factors. Three key conclusions emerge from the evidence.

The family matters, but not always in the way one might expect. Many young people in this study reported weak parental supervision and limited family support. When the home ceases to be a place of guidance and safety, young people become more vulnerable to external pressures. The significant association between family environment and delinquency reminds us that the family remains society's first and most important institution for shaping character. Yet the comparatively modest strength of this association suggests that by young adulthood, the die may already be cast; earlier family influences have shaped the person, and more immediate forces peers and personal impulses take over.

Moreover, peers are powerful. The study found that peer influence was the strongest predictor of delinquency, and this is perhaps unsurprising. Young people want to belong. They want to be seen, valued, and accepted. When prosocial communities fail to offer this belonging, deviant peer groups fill the vacuum. The added layer of social media pressure makes this reality even more challenging for today's youth, who navigate peer expectations both physically and digitally, often with little guidance.

Finally, the self is central. Impulsivity, poor emotional control, and substance use were common among respondents and strongly linked to delinquency. These are not simply moral failings; they reflect a gap in the development of skills that help young people pause, reflect, and choose differently. Many youths in this study were acting not out of malice but out of a lack of internal resources to manage the pressures they face.

Taken together, the findings suggest that juvenile delinquency in Igbesa is less a problem of "bad" young people and more a problem of weakened families, overwhelming peer pressure, and underdeveloped self-regulation. The implication is hopeful: these are factors that can be addressed through thoughtful, community-based intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- **Strengthen parenting programmes:** Local authorities and NGOs should offer community-based workshops that equip parents with practical skills in adolescent supervision and communication, given that nearly half of respondents reported poor parental monitoring.
- **Create prosocial youth spaces:** Schools, religious bodies, and youth organisations should expand access to sports, mentorship, and skills programmes that provide young people with a sense of belonging outside deviant peer groups.
- **Embed life skills education:** Schools should integrate training in emotional regulation, decision-making, and peer pressure resistance to address the high levels of impulsivity and poor emotional control observed in the study.
- **Promote digital literacy:** With over half of respondents reporting social media pressure, digital literacy programmes should be introduced to help youths critically evaluate online content and resist harmful influences.

- **Expand youth counselling services:** Accessible, non-stigmatising mental health and substance use counselling should be made available to young people in the community.
- **Encourage multi-sectoral collaboration:** Families, schools, religious institutions, and law enforcement should coordinate prevention efforts, as no single sector can address juvenile delinquency alone.
- **Conduct further research:** Future studies should employ longitudinal designs, larger samples, and multivariate techniques to build on these findings and explore causal pathways.

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