



# **Prevalence of Primary and Secondary Deviance among Secondary School Students in Southwestern Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

The study examined the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance among secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria. It also determined the relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and students' gender and family structure. The sample size comprised 627 students selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. A researcher-designed and validated instrument tagged "Deviance Behaviour Scale (DBS)" and Socio-metric Guide were used to collect data for the study. Frequency counts, percentage and Chi-square were used to analyse the data used for the study. Results revealed that primary deviance was more prevalent among secondary school students in the study area. Also, while a significant relationship was found between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and students' gender, there was no significant relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and students' family structure in the study area. The study concluded that that primary deviance was more prevalent among secondary schools' students in Southwestern Nigeria. However, while students' gender was a determinant factor of engagement in deviant behaviours but family structure was not.

*Keywords:* Deviance, gender, family structure, Nigeria, students.

## **Introduction**

Every society has ways of preparing the younger generation for effective integration and functioning within the system. Through education and socialization processes, the individual members of the society are adequately equipped with the needed knowledge, skills, attitudes and other virtues considered as important for adequate adjustment in the society. However, to guide and control individual behaviour in the course of interactions that will be involved among the people, there are certain norms, customs, rules and laws established in every society or culture. As stated by Saldana (2013) every culture has a set of established

norms, customs, rules and laws, which are expected to be obeyed by all members of the society. Nevertheless, as important as the society established norms, customs, rules and laws are in creating an atmosphere for peaceful coexistence, some individuals still act contrary to these set rules. This kind of behaviour is usually term as deviance and the individuals involved are described as deviants. In other words, a deviant is an individual who breaks significant societal or group norms. Deviant behaviour is described by Idris (2016) as any behaviour exhibited by members of a group or society that are at variance with the rules established by such a group or society.

While deviants can be found in every segment of society, it becomes more pertinent to be concerned about the children and the young adolescents at the secondary school level. This is because such individuals are at an important stage of life where the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, characters and other important virtues are laid. As observed by Jacob and Adegboyega (2017), the issue of deviant behaviour among adolescents is becoming worrisome to parents, teachers, law enforcement agents as well as the entire society. These behaviours if not checked at an early stage, most especially in schools, may escalate to more aggressive forms of behaviour such as terrorism and other criminal acts in the society (Aute, Poipoi & Khasakhala, 2020). In recent times, deviant behaviour and other forms of anti-social behaviour among the youths are on the increase globally (Asiyai, 2019). These anti-social behaviours among the youths are not only peculiar to the developed nations but also the developing nations such as Nigeria (Adegun, 2013; Asiyai, 2019).

While acknowledging that the dynamics of deviance phenomena vary from one country to another, Nabiswa, Misigo and Makhanu (2016) posited that behaviours such as truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, skipping class, riots, smoking, vandalism, fighting, reporting late for class and insulting, resistance to change and a host of other negative behaviours constitute deviant acts in the school environment. The exhibition of these kinds of behaviours tends to negatively influence the learning and teaching process in the school system and may thereby undermine the ultimate goal of shaping and conforming learners' behaviour following the nation's philosophy of education (Agboola & Salawu, 2011). There is no doubt that deviant behaviours are inimical in schools as well as society in general. Thus, there is a need to examine how these behaviours occur among the group of people.

In their attempts to help us understand why deviance occurs, Sociologists have adopted several theories such as strain, control, and differential association. Nevertheless, labelling theory which explains deviance in terms of a

socially created phenomenon is found more appropriate in this current paper. Labelling theory states that deviant behaviours are always a matter of social definition. In other words, it is believed that deviance exists when individuals are labelled as deviants by some members of a group or society. Labelling theory, therefore, explains that society creates deviance by identifying particular members as deviant (Shepard & Greene, 2002). In the opinion of Howard Becker recognized as a pioneer of labelling theory, it is the society that creates deviance by making rules whose infraction now constitutes deviance. This clearly shows that deviance does not reside in the quality of the act committed by an individual but a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to whoever breaks the rules. According to Becker (1991) deviant is someone whom that label has successfully been applied while deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label.

Sociologist such as Edwin Lemert was interested in exploring the process by which our behaviours can cause us to be labelled as deviants and lead to us being excluded from society. Lemert (1972) clarified primary deviance from secondary deviance and this clarification helps our understanding of the labelling process. Primary deviance involves the occasional breaking of norms or laws that is not a part of a person's lifestyle or self-concept. Secondary deviance on the other hands explains deviance in which an individual's life and identity are organized around breaking society's norms or laws. The individual at this level has taken deviance as a lifestyle and as a personal identity. Labelling individuals as deviants can sometimes cause pain and suffering and this can as well determine the direction of their lives (Shepard & Greene, 2002).

Incidences of secondary school adolescents' involvement in behaviour contrary to the acceptable conducts expected from individual learners within the school system are well documented in the literature. A study carried out by Temitayo and Lukman (2014), revealed that truancy, absenteeism, fighting, stealing and drug addiction among others as typical examples of disciplinary problems experienced in secondary schools in the study area. The study also revealed

parental/home, political, social and economic, school environment, school curriculum and peer group influence among others as the causes of disciplinary problems in secondary schools in Nigeria. Asiyai (2019) found deviant behaviour prevalent in urban secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria as assault (86%), lateness to school (84%), examination malpractices (83%), noise-making and fighting (882%), stealing (79%), improper dressing (77%), violent acts (71%), sexual molestation (60%) and absenteeism (57%). However, in schools located in rural areas, the prevalent deviant behaviours among students include examination malpractice (93%), absenteeism (90%), noise-making (84%), improper dressing (80%), stealing (74%), fighting (75%) and lateness to school (65%).

The root of behaviour and character possessed by any individual can be traced to the kind of family structure in which the individual is brought up. Family structure is explained in terms of how the individual family in which the child is nurtured is being constituted (Ekwok, 2020). Family structure can be intact in which children live with both parents or broken where the two parents are no longer living together and the children living with either of the parents. It is also possible for the individual child to live with a guardian. The nature of the family structure in which a child is nurtured has implications on the experiences of the children as well as their behaviours. A study has found negative sexual behaviour common among children from divorced families that were raised by female parents (Douglas, 2004). Conanor and Philips (2002) reported that the absence of a father in the family set-up contributes to delinquency in the home. When compared with children from intact homes, students from single-parent tend to be more prone to deviant acts (Nkhata & Mwale, 2016). In a recent study conducted by Ekwok (2020) among 567 students in public secondary schools in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, it was found that family structure has significant influence on deviant behaviour of the students. Students from broken homes recorded higher significant means across the stealing, fighting, truancy and aggression components of deviant behaviour examined in the study.

Another variable usually considered as significant determinant factor when comparing the behaviour of the individuals is gender. Individual gender is one of the primary elements of our social being, which influences behaviour, tastes and desires, experiences, relationships, political beliefs, and career choices (Newman, 1995). Studies suggest that socialization experiences of parents influence the ways they also integrate their children as they tend to provide different socializing environment for boys and girls (Berenbaum, Martin, & Ruble, 2008). It has also been found that acting in non-stereotypic ways is associated with peer victimization including physical, verbal, and relational aggression (Aspenlieder, Buchanan, McDougall, & Sippola, 2009), and social exclusion (Killen & Stangor, 2001; Lee & Troop-Gordon, 2011).

Studies on the influence of gender on deviant behaviour of adolescents suggest gender as significant contributor to adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviours. For instance, Shek and Lin (2016) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the changes in delinquent behaviour during the high school years and its socio-demographic, personal, and family correlates among 3328 adolescents selected across 28 government-aided secondary schools in Hong Kong. It was found that male adolescents exhibited higher levels of delinquent behaviour as well showed a greater increase in delinquent behaviour when compared with female adolescents. Also, to understand processes that contribute to adolescents risk-taking behaviours, McCoy, Dimler, Samuels and Natsuaki (2017) reviewed 26 qualitative studies on gender differences in adolescents' susceptibility to deviant peer pressure. It was found that male adolescents appear to be more susceptible to peer influences that encourage risk-taking behaviours when compared with female adolescents. Though, they found no consistent gender differences in susceptibility to such peer influences and only two studies out of 26 studies reviewed suggested that female adolescents are more prone to deviant peer pressure than male adolescents. Oyeyemi, Adeyemo and Udofia (2018) found significant gender difference in deviant behaviour of students. Male students

were found as exhibiting more deviant behaviours than their female counterparts. Similarly, the findings of Aute, Poipoi and Khasakhala (2020) suggest that gender contributes to the deviant behaviour of students. In their study carried out among 512 secondary school students in Homabay County in Kenya, it was found that boys are more deviant than girls.

#### *Statement of the problem*

Adolescents and youths are considered the future of any nation. Consequently, to safeguard the future of Nigeria, adolescents and youths in our various secondary schools need adequate attention than ever before. Presently, in Nigeria, most of the social vices constituting insecurity challenges are being perpetrated by adolescents and young adults. The implications of these nefarious acts on Nigeria and Nigerians are better imagined than described. Various deviant behaviours exhibited by secondary school adolescents need immediate intervention to nip them in the bud. Nevertheless, while various studies have examined various negative behaviours that constitute deviance in society, a study is yet to delve into the phase or nature of these behaviours in terms of whether such deviant behaviours are of the primary or secondary state. This understanding is paramount for effective intervention on curbing the menace of deviant behaviours among secondary school adolescents. This study, therefore, examined the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance among secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria, as well as determine the relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance in the area.

### **Method**

#### *Design*

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of a cross-sectional type. The cross-sectional survey is suitable if the researcher intends to gather data on a certain phenomenon of interest at one point in time (Ary, Jacob, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010). Consequently, since this study is designed to explore the prevalence of primary and secondary deviant behaviours with gender and family structure, this design is considered appropriate for the study.

#### *Participants*

The population for the study consisted of 2,007,860 students in public secondary schools in southwestern states in Nigeria. The Research advisor was used to determine the sampling frame at 99% confidence level and 0.05 margin of error. As a result, 684 secondary school students were selected as the sample for the study. In selecting the sample, three states were selected first using the simple random sampling technique. One Local Government Area (LGA) was selected randomly from each of the three senatorial districts of the selected states. From each LGA, one school was selected through the purposive sampling technique, making nine schools. The schools were selected purposively because they were popularly known in the locality for having students that demonstrate serious deviant behaviours. From each of the nine schools, 76 students were selected {66 through stratified random sampling technique using classes (JSS 1- SSS 3) as the strata, and 10 through the use of socio-metric guide} as participants.

#### *Instruments*

A researcher designed and validated instruments tagged “Deviance Behaviour Scale (DBS)” and Socio-metric Guide were used to collect data for the study. The DBS was used to identify deviant behaviour exhibited by secondary school students while Socio-metric Guide was used to identify students that are known for the identified deviant acts in the schools selected for the study. DBS comprised two sections: Section A elicited demographic information from the respondents, while Section B (DBS) consisted of 36 self-constructed items which requested information from the respondents concerning their demonstration of deviant acts. The socio-metric guide consisted of 20 items, designed to locate Socio-metric stars for deviant behaviour and isolate for conforming conducts. Items in the Socio-metric Guide asked the students to nominate students in the school who demonstrate and are well known given their deviant behaviour. Items on DBS took on a six-point Likert scale response format ranging from “always” (6), “most of the times” (5), “sometimes” (4), “rarely” (3), “only once” (2), and “never” (1). Before the actual use of the

instrument, items on DBS were pilot-tested on 40 students on two occasions of two week-intervals. Data generated were subjected to a reliability test via the test-retest approach. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.878.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data collected through DBS was collated and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts and percentage were used to answer research questions 1 while Chi-square statistics was used in testing the two stated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

#### **Results**

Out of 684 copies of the questionnaires administered, 627 copies were found usable in the analysis of the study. To identify deviants, non-deviants, primary and secondary nature of deviant behaviours, for each of the deviant acts, those who claimed to demonstrate any of the listed behaviour in DBS as ‘‘always’’, ‘‘most of the time’’ or ‘‘sometimes’’ are regarded as deviants for such behaviour while those who claimed to demonstrate such behaviours as ‘‘rarely’’, ‘‘only once’’ or ‘‘never’’ are regarded as non-deviants. The result is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

**Descriptive analysis of the categories of deviation for individual deviant acts**

S/N	Deviant Acts	Non-deviant		Primary		Secondary	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Skipping school pretending to be sick	357	56.9	221	35.2	49	7.8
2	Getting actively involved in school riots	390	62.2	192	30.6	45	7.2
3	Absenting yourself from school	426	67.9	152	24.2	49	7.8
4	Wearing unapproved cloths within the school compound	432	68.9	160	25.5	35	5.6
5	Belonging to a group who sometimes get into fights	443	70.7	146	23.3	38	6.1
6	Leaving school before closing time	446	71.1	135	21.5	46	7.3
7	Belonging to a group who sometimes cause disturbance	442	70.5	147	23.4	38	6.1
8	Taking someone else's money without the intention of returning it	429	68.4	160	25.5	38	6.1
9	Damaging things in school or any other public place	437	69.7	153	24.4	37	5.9
10	Fighting other people (students or strangers) in the school or the street	445	71.0	134	21.4	48	7.7
11	Breaking into school properties	455	72.6	146	23.3	26	4.1
12	Stealing things out of cars in the school or outside	459	73.2	147	23.4	21	3.3
13	Carrying some kind of weapon in case it is needed in a fight	448	71.5	144	23.0	35	5.6
14	Drinking alcohol before coming to school	464	74.0	130	20.7	33	5.3
15	Buying alcoholic drink for a friend	459	73.2	134	21.4	34	5.4
16	Buying cheap, or accepting as a present, anything known or suspected of being stolen (e.g phone, laptops, ipads or clothes)	420	67.0	180	28.7	27	4.3
17	Accepting as a present, anything known or suspected of being stolen (e.g phone, laptops, ipads or clothes)	432	68.9	169	27.0	26	4.1
18	Struggling or fighting to get away from a discipline	432	68.9	151	24.1	44	7.0
19	Attacking or fighting a teacher or police officer who is trying to arrest someone else	437	69.7	166	26.5	24	3.8
20	Watching pornographic film	436	69.5	150	23.9	41	6.5
21	Sending pornographic pictures or films to friends	439	70.0	154	24.6	34	5.4
22	Threatening someone else by calls and text messages	447	71.3	142	22.6	38	6.1
23	Taking illegal drugs	462	73.7	131	20.9	34	5.4
24	Writing graffiti on a locker, on school walls, on toilet wall or doors, or on anything else in a public place.	438	69.9	149	23.8	40	6.4
25	Committing acts of vandalism in sporting events	435	69.4	164	26.2	28	4.5
26	Cheating during class work, school tests or examination	437	69.7	148	23.6	42	6.7
27	Being sent out of class room because of "bad" (e.g., cheating, noise, making, etc)	444	70.8	145	23.1	38	6.1
28	Being suspended from school	444	70.8	145	23.1	38	6.1
29	Being in trouble at school such that your and parents were invited	456	72.7	150	23.9	21	3.3
30	Threatening to hit a teacher	469	74.8	139	22.2	19	3.0
31	Hitting a teacher	463	73.8	147	23.4	17	2.7
32	Threatening to hit your parent(s)/guardian(s)	456	72.7	154	24.6	17	2.7
33	Hitting your parent(s)/guardian(s)	462	73.7	145	23.1	20	3.2
34	Bribing teachers with money for marks in tests and exams	456	72.7	150	23.9	21	3.3
35	Using juju or threats of its use against teachers or fellow students	448	71.5	160	25.5	19	3.0
36	Bribing teachers with sexual gratification for marks in tests and exams	464	74.0	150	23.9	13	2.1

Table 1 showed the areas in which students are non-deviant, or demonstrate primary or secondary deviance. Most of the students (74.8%) indicated that they never or rarely participate in “Threatening to hit a teacher” while they mostly demonstrate primary deviance with regards to “skipping school pretending to be sick”. Demonstration of secondary deviance can be observed mostly (7.8% each) by students in “skipping schools pretending to be sick” and “absenting oneself from school”. These set of students were labelled for these behaviours and they confirm the label having integrated these into their self-image. Other noticeable areas where students were found to demonstrate secondary deviance included “fighting other people (students or strangers) in the school or in the street” (7.7%), “Leaving school before

closing” (7.3%), “Getting actively involved in school riots” (7.2%) and “Struggling or fighting to get away from discipline” (7.0%). Finally, it was, decided that once someone demonstrates deviant behaviour, the respondent is regarded as a deviant (primary or secondary) in this study. Also, someone is regarded as a secondary deviant if the individual has been labelled for such behaviour and confirms that he/she frequently demonstrates the behaviour. However, if an individual is only labelled but refuse to confirm such behaviour or if the individual is not labelled but claims to demonstrate such behaviour, then s/he is regarded as a primary deviant. Consequently, a descriptive analysis of those who demonstrated one form of deviant behaviour or the other was undertaken and the result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Prevalence of primary and secondary deviance among the students

Categories	Frequency	%
Non deviants	257	41.0
Primary	291	46.4
Secondary	79	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 showed the prevalence of primary and secondary deviants among secondary schools in Southwestern, Nigeria. It could be seen from the table that 12.6% of the sampled students were

secondary deviants, 46.4% were primary deviants, while 41% of the sampled students were non-deviants.

**Table 3**

Chi-square Analysis of the relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and gender of the students

Gender	Categories of Deviance		Total	$\chi^2$	df	p
	Primary	Secondary				
Male	186(50.3%)	63(17.0%)	249(67.3%)	7.074	1	.008
Female	105(28.4%)	16(4.3%)	121(32.7%)			
Total	291(78.6%)	79(21.4%)	370(100.0%)			

*Note: Total number of students with either primary or secondary deviance is equal to 370*

Table 3 showed a significant relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and gender of the students,  $\chi^2$  (n = 370) = 7.074, df = 1, p = .008. The null hypothesis is

rejected. The result further showed that male students have the largest percentage in the two categories of deviance.

**Table 4**

Chi-square Analysis of the relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and family structure of the students

Family Structure	Categories of Deviance		Total	$\chi^2$	df	p
	Primary	Secondary				
Both parents	205(55.4%)	62(16.8%)	267(72.2%)	3.397	2	.183
Only father/mother	64(17.3%)	10(2.7%)	74(20.0%)			
Relative	22(5.9%)	79(21.4%)	370(100.0%)			
Total	291(78.6%)	79(21.4%)	370(100.0%)			

*Note: Total number of students with either primary or secondary deviance is equal to 370*

Table 4 showed no significant relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and family structure of the students,  $\chi^2$  ( $n = 370$ ) = 3.397,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .183$ . The null hypothesis is upheld.

### Discussion

The study found that the primary form of deviance is more prevalent among the secondary schools' students in Southwestern Nigeria and students mostly demonstrate primary deviance in skipping school pretending to be sick. This implies that the majority of the secondary school students are yet to internalize the behaviour into their self-concept, and if appropriate actions are taken in good time, it can prevent the students from becoming secondary deviants. Nevertheless, students demonstrate secondary deviance in skipping schools pretending to be sick, absenting oneself from school, fighting other people (students or strangers) in the school or the street, leaving school before closing, getting actively involved in school riots, and struggling or fighting to get away from discipline. This finding is consistent with the findings of a study carried out by Temitayo and Lukman (2014), which revealed that truancy, absenteeism, fighting, stealing and drug addiction among others are typical examples of disciplinary problems experienced in secondary schools in the study area. This finding is also similar to Asiyai's (2019) findings that reported lateness to school as one of the deviant behaviour prevalent among students in urban and rural schools in Edo State, Nigeria.

Findings of the study also found a significant relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and gender of the students. The result further showed that male

students have the largest percentage in both primary and secondary deviance. This suggests male students are more prone to deviant behaviour than their female counterparts. The finding further corroborates findings of McCoy et al. (2017), Oyeyemi et al. (2018) and Aute et al. (2020) that all reported in their studies that male students involved more in deviant activities than their female counterparts. The findings of the study found no significant relationship between the prevalence of primary and secondary deviance and family structure of the students. This outcome implies that the family structure of the students is not a significant determinant factor of engagement in deviant behaviour. This finding however contradicts the findings of Nkhata and Mwale (2016) and Ekwok (2020) that found family structure as significant determinant of deviant behaviours among students. The difference in the outcome of the present study and the previous ones might be attributed to approaches taken to arrive at conclusions for each study. While Nkhata and Mwale (2016) and Ekwok (2020) examined significance difference in their studies, the present study examined the relationship and as a result of the different statistical method adopted, the outcomes might be different. However, more studies might be needed in this direction.

### Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of this study, the study, therefore, concludes that primary deviance is more prevalent among secondary schools' students in Southwestern Nigeria. Students' gender is also found as a significant determinant of engagement in deviant behaviours and male students are more susceptible to deviant acts than females while family structure cannot be



regarded as a determinant factor of deviant behaviour.

### Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the study, the following recommendations were made. Appropriate intervention strategies can help curb deviant behaviours among secondary school students since most of them are yet to internalize such behaviour. Therefore, the school authority, teachers, parents and other stakeholders should work together to bring positive changes in the students exhibiting deviant behaviours in the schools. More attention should be focused on male students in any intervention put in place to rescue deviant students within the school system as they are more prone to such behaviours. The school authority should direct the attention of any intervention strategy for curbing deviance in the schools to all students with a tendency to exhibit such behaviour irrespective of the family structure of the students.

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