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Psycho-Social Factors That Influence Juvenile Delinquency Among Secondary School Students In Enugu Education Zone Of Enugu State

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the psycho-social factors influencing juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Specifically, the study examined personal-related and family-related factors as determinants of juvenile delinquent behaviour, and also tested differences in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school teachers on these factors. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 173 teachers (94 males and 79 females) from 31 public secondary schools in the zone, and the entire population was used without sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Juvenile Delinquency Questionnaire (JDQ)" and validated by experts in Educational Foundations and Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding an overall coefficient of 0.645. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, while independent sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that personal factors such as impulsivity and emotional instability and family factors such as poor supervision significantly influence juvenile delinquency. The study further found no significant gender difference in teachers' ratings on two factors. The study concluded that juvenile delinquency is a product of interacting psycho-social influences. The researcher recommended that schools, parents, and government should collaborate to strengthen counselling services, improve parenting practices, and enhance positive social environments for adolescents.
Keywords: Psycho-social, Family, Personal, Juvenile Delinquency, Secondary, School, Students

INTRODUCTION

The issue of juvenile delinquency among students of secondary schools seems to be on the increase for the past two decades as a result of increased urbanization and emergence of improved technologies which ushered new ways of thinking, association and learning into the society (UNODC, 2023; UNICEF, 2021). This issue is not only affecting the behaviour of young students but has direct influence on their achievements in schools. Juvenile delinquency refers to criminal behaviors or unlawful acts committed by minors, typically defined as individuals under 18 years old (Aazami, Valek, Ponce & Zare 2023). Delinquent acts can range from minor offenses, like truancy, to more serious crimes, including property damage, theft, and violence. Juvenile delinquency is a term which denotes an illegal or antisocial behaviours by minors, it is a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of social, economic, and psychological factors.

Traditionally, delinquency includes behaviours like theft, vandalism, and substance abuse, which bring minors into contact with the criminal justice system (Akume, 2015). Scholars emphasize that juvenile delinquency is not solely a matter of legal concern but also relates deeply to welfare and family dynamics. For instance, issues like family conflict, economic hardship, and educational difficulties are prominent risk factors, while strong family support and positive school environments often act as protective factors (Rena, Paula & Frank, 2019). In the context of this study, juvenile delinquency is the illegal behaviour of students such as stealing, rape, cultism, vandalism and killings among others in schools as a result of personal, family, cultural and school–related factors.

The juvenile justice system historically vacillates between two models: welfare-oriented and justice-oriented approaches. Welfare models, like those in Belgium and France, focus on rehabilitation through education and therapeutic measures. In contrast, justice-oriented models, like those seen in parts of the U.S. and the U.K., emphasize punishment and accountability. Recently, there has been a shift toward integrating these approaches globally, with the United Nations advocating for specialized juvenile systems that blend justice with rehabilitation and community-based support to better serve youth (Cambridge Core, 2023; Oxford Research Encyclopedia, 2020). In Nigeria, the juvenile delinquency legislative framework is rooted in several laws designed to protect the rights and welfare of young children in conflict with the law. Key among these laws is the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003**,** which serves as Nigeria's primary legislation for children's rights, inspired by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The CRA defines a child as anyone under 18 and emphasizes a child-focused approach to justice, aiming to rehabilitate rather than punish.

Since Nigeria's states must individually adopt the CRA, only 25 out of 36 states seem to have done so, due to cultural or religious reasons, limiting its nationwide application. Complementing the CRA, the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA), initially introduced during the colonial era, provides guidelines on the treatment of young offenders. The CYPA stipulates that minors should be treated separately from adult offenders, and it outlines the establishment of juvenile courts and reform homes. In addition, the Criminal Code Act and Penal Code Act contain provisions for juvenile sentencing, generally exempting children under seven from criminal responsibility and limiting punitive actions for those between seven and 12 unless criminal intent is proven. The juvenile justice system also emphasizes that detention is a last resort, favoring alternative measures such as probation, community service, or family supervision. Despite these progressive laws, challenges remain in enforcement. Due to inadequate facilities and systemic neglect, many juveniles end up in regular prisons, often with adults, undermining the rehabilitative intent of these laws. For example, Nigeria has only three operational borstal institutions for juvenile rehabilitation, contrary to mandates in the Correctional Services Act of 2019 that calls for one institution in each state to take care of juvenile delinquency. This situation requires corrective measures within the institutions of the society like schools.

Most secondary schools in Nigeria seems to be helpless with regards to students' delinquent behaviours; and the educational authority does not have effective measures in place in dealing with these problems. Some students attribute the cause of students' delinquent behaviours to students lacking the right to use physical punishment, as it is forbidden in the current educational regulations. In addition, physical punishment violates students' human rights and only temporarily curbs students' delinquent behaviours. Students who display aggressive behaviour usually exhibit deviant behaviour, such as sexual harassment"date violence" which is the physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse within a dating relationship among adolescents, gang attacks, child abuse and related conditions. Delinquent behaviour can also lead to injury, destruction of school property rape and loss of lives (Akume, 2015). The manifestations of delinquency among secondary school adolescents in Nigeria include: cruelty, bullying, fighting, vandalism, stealing, lying, sexual immorality, mob action, carrying of weapons among others. It is important to note that there are two main categories of delinquent behaviours which Nigerian adolescents engage in; these are: criminal and status offences. The criminal offences are violations which apply to adults and they include: stealing, arson, rape, drug offences, murder, burglary, pickpocket, and armed robbery. The other type is the status offence which does not apply to adults and they are: truancy, not adhering to parent's demands among others (Animasahun & Aremu, 2015).This situation requires

proper review to create awareness on the psycho-social factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Nigeria.

Psycho-social factors are those psychological and social variables that could account for juvenile delinquency in any society. According to the American Psychological Association (2024), there aresocial, cultural, and environmental phenomena and influences that affect mental health and behavior. These influences include social situations, relationships, and pressures, such as competition for education, health care, and other social resources, rapid technological change, work deadlines, and changes in social roles and status (example of women and minority groups).Jeon and Noh (2023) note that psycho-social factors refer to the interaction between psychological and social elements that shape an individual's behavior, health, and well-being. These factors consider personal mental states (emotions, beliefs, and attitudes) and social environments (relationships, socioeconomic status, and cultural expectations). This interplay impacts how individuals handle life situations, affecting mental health, stress, and coping strategies. According to Folorunsho, Ajayi and Abdulrazaq (2024), these factors play a crucial role in health psychology, helping in the understanding on how people manage illness, follow medical advice, and maintain their overall well-being. In the context of this study, these factors include personal-related factors, family-related factors, school-related factors and social-cultural-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students.

Personal factors are individual characteristics and internal traits that influence how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. According to Rena, Paula and Frank (2019), personal factors fall into several categories including general and domain-specific potential and abilities, temperament, personality, psychosocial skills, and mental health. Kendra (2023) noted that these factors include wired-in aspects of the individual that are biological in origin which are unique to each person and often include personality traits, mental health conditions, self-esteem, self-control, attitudes, beliefs, values, and coping skills. In the context of juvenile delinquency, personal factors are those intrinsic characteristics that might predispose a young person to engage in criminal or antisocial behaviour. In this study, personal factors refer to students' traits, values, and internal characteristics that shape how they interpret and react to their environmental issues. These include aspects like personality, cognitive abilities, emotional regulation, and self-efficacy. These personal factors can influence a wide range of behaviours and life outcomes, including career success, academic achievement, and social relationships (Kendra, 2023). For instance, students struggling with anxiety, a lack of self-worth, or a desire for belonging are more likely to engage in risk behaviours to cope with or escape their feelings. This often includes joining peer groups that encourage delinquent behaviors, which can give these adolescents a sense of identity and acceptance (Adebowale, 2020). The personal factors can also be shaped by family where the child received the first training. Okafor and Yakubu (2020), reported that poor interpersonal relationships and lack of moral guidance contribute significantly to delinquency among students. In the same direction, Sumithra and Komalavalli (2022) established that traits such as impulsivity, aggressiveness, and low conscientiousness are strongly associated with juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, Enenta, Iwuala and Osuocha (2024) found that personality traits significantly predict delinquent behaviour, with measurable contributions to behavioural outcomes among adolescents

Family-related factors refer to the various ways in which family dynamics, structure, and environment influence an individual's development, behavior, and overall well-being. According to Aremu (2020), these factors are crucial, especially in shaping children's and adolescents' social skills, emotional resilience, academic success, and even tendencies toward delinquency. The related family factors of juvenile delinquency include parenting style and discipline, family structure and stability, parental involvement and communication, and exposure to domestic conflict and violence (Cashwell & Nicholas, 2019). As noted by Folorunsho, Ajayi and Abdulrazaq (2024), authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and structure, is often linked with positive outcomes, such as higher self-esteem and social competence, but permissive or neglectful parenting can lead to behavioral issues, lack of self-discipline, and susceptibility to peer pressure. In addition, single-parent or divorced families often face increased risks of emotional and behavioral issues, partly due to economic stress and reduced parental attention (Aremu, 2020). It is crucial to note that family economic stability affects a child's access to resources and

opportunities, influencing educational outcomes and social development. In contrast, economic hardship could increase stress within the home, which may affect parental involvement and warmth, sometimes leading to negative outcomes for adolescent. Ugwuoke and Duruji (2015) found that children from unstable homes engage more in delinquent behaviour due to inadequate supervision. Similarly, Imbur, Iroegbu and Iloma (2020) reported a significant relationship between family background and delinquency, particularly among adolescents from broken or low-income homes. Bakari (2021) emphasized that family conflict and poor socialization processes increase adolescents' vulnerability to criminal behaviour. Furthermore, Agbongiasede (2021) stressed that effective parenting, characterized by emotional support, supervision, and moral guidance, is crucial in shaping positive behaviour. Sota (2023) found that different family structures significantly influence students' behavioural outcomes. These studies collectively reinforce the idea that the quality of family life plays a decisive role in either preventing or promoting delinquency. More so, Odebunmi (2017) added that the active supervision and involvement in a child's life can prevent engagement in risky behaviours, while adolescents with parents who are aware of their activities and peer groups are less likely to engage in delinquency and substance abuse. Another factor related to family is the school factor where the students are raised as the second home.

Gender is the roles and expectations that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender differences often play a role in how juvenile delinquency manifests, perceived and addressed in secondary schools. Scholars in the field of psychology and education haveconsistently shown that patterns, influences, and awareness of delinquency can differ between male and female students, often due to social, psychological, and environmental factors. For instance, Chesney-Lind and Shelden, (2014) submitted that males are more likely to engage in overt or aggressive forms of delinquency, such as physical fights and vandalism, while females may engage in more relational forms of delinquency, such as bullying or truancy. These differences are often attributed to gender socialization, where societal expectations may influence the types of behaviours that each gender exhibits. Male students for instance, may feel more pressure to display toughness, while female students might channel conflicts into social manipulation rather than physical aggression. Aida Valek, Andrea and Hossein (2023) hold that males are more likely to participate in delinquent acts within mixed-gender groups, whereas females are more likely to commit delinquent acts in same-gender groups. Puzzanchera (2022) added that family structure and economic status can also impact male and female differently, with boys more likely to be affected by peer-related factors and girls more likely to be influenced by family-related factors. More so, Aida Valek, Andrea and Hossein (2023) noted that males may be more likely to acknowledge delinquent behaviour, possibly due to socialization that promotes risk-taking, while females may underreport or be less likely to recognize certain behaviors as delinquent due to differing societal standards for male and female behaviours This disparity can affect data on delinquency among secondary school students. It is against this background that this study will determine the psycho-social factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State using gender as moderating variable.

Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency has continued to pose a serious challenge to the effective functioning of secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State despite the presence of school disciplinary measures, counselling services, parental guidance programmes, and government policies aimed at promoting acceptable behaviour among adolescents. Reports of truancy, bullying, examination malpractice, substance abuse, theft, violence, cult-related activities, disobedience to school rules, and other forms of antisocial behaviour among secondary school students appear to be increasing, thereby disrupting the teaching-learning process, threatening school safety, lowering academic performance, and exposing students to school dropout and criminal tendencies. The persistence of these behaviours suggests that punitive measures alone may not adequately address the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency. Increasingly, attention has shifted to psychosocial factors such as poor parental support, family conflict, negative peer influence, low self-esteem, emotional instability, poor social adjustment, and inadequate teacher-student relationships, which may predispose adolescents to delinquent behaviour. However, the

extent to which these psychosocial factors contribute to juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone remains unclear.

Although previous studies have examined juvenile delinquency from social, economic, or environmental perspectives, limited empirical evidence exists on the combined influence of psychosocial factors on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. This lack of context-specific evidence has made it difficult for school administrators, counsellors, parents, and policymakers to develop targeted psychosocial interventions capable of reducing delinquent behaviour among students. In addition, studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding whether gender influences adolescents' susceptibility to psychosocial risk factors and involvement in delinquent behaviour. Unless these issues are empirically investigated, juvenile delinquency may continue to undermine students' educational attainment, emotional well-being, and social development. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the psychosocial factors associated with juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the psycho-social factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Specifically, the study ascertained the:

1. personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.
2. family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study the study

1. What are the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State?
2. What are the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was cross-sectional survey design. The study was carried out in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The populations for this study nine thousand eight hundred and two (9802) SSI and SSII students from thirty-one (31) public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State (PPSMB Enugu School Directory, 2025). The sample of this study was 384 SSI and SSII students from 31 public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Taro Yamane formula for finite population was used to determine the sample size of the population for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three (3) experts. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the researcher administered forty (40) copies of the instrument to forty students from Udi Education Zone which share the same characteristics but will not be used for the actual study. The researcher, with three briefed research assistants personally administered the instrument directly to the respondents in the various sampled schools. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the t-test of independent sample was used to test the hypotheses developed for the study. In interpreting the mean scores, responses with mean values ranging from 3.50 to 4.00 were regarded as Strongly Agree (SA), mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 3.49 were

interpreted as Agree (A), while mean scores between 1.50 and 2.49 were interpreted as Disagree (D). In addition, mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.49 were interpreted as Strongly Disagree (SD). The null hypotheses would be upheld when the probability value is greater than 0.05 level of significance (P>.05), and would not be upheld when the probability value is less than 0.05 level of significance (P<.05).

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What are the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State?*

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the personal-related factors that influence juvenile Delinquency among Secondary School Students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State

S/N	Items Statements	N	SUM	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Unresolved trauma can push students toward delinquent acts as a coping mechanism in school	384	1019	2.65	0.85	A
2	Conditions such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) can influence juvenile delinquency	384	1082	2.82	0.78	A
3	Personal use of alcohol can impair judgment to criminal behavior	384	1107	2.88	0.85	A
4	Students acting on impulse without considering the consequences are more prone to delinquent behavior	384	1048	2.73	0.79	A
5	High levels of aggression by students can lead to bullying in school.	384	1137	2.96	0.82	A
6	Lack of self-discipline may result in vandalism among students in secondary schools	384	1091	2.84	0.79	A
	Overall Mean & Standard Deviation Scores			**2.81**	**0.81**	**A**

Key: Agree (A), Disagree (D)

The Data in Table I shows that the respondents have mean scores ranging from 2.65-2.88 which indicates positive responses except in item 3 which has low response. It also showed that the grand mean score of 2.81 with the standard deviation score of 0.81. The standard deviation of 0.81 indicates that the respondents' responses were relatively close to the grand mean, suggesting a moderate level of variability and a reasonable degree of consensus among the respondents regarding the influence of personal-related factors on juvenile delinquency. Therefore, this is an indication that personal-related factors highly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

Research Question 2: *What are the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State?*

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State

S/N	Items Statements	N	SUM	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
7	Absence of one parent may lead to inadequate supervision which increases the likelihood of delinquent behavior	384	1080	2.81	0.72	A
8	Divorce can create instability in children which predispose them to delinquency	384	1061	2.76	0.79	A
9	Limited parental attention due to large family size may push children toward deviant behaviours	384	1024	2.67	0.81	A
10	Excessively harsh discipline can lead to antisocial behaviour among secondary school students	384	976	2.54	0.73	A
11	Frequent arguments between parents can create a stressful environment for children which negatively affect their behavior	384	1028	2.68	0.83	A
12	Experiencing violence at home can lead to aggressive behaviour like fighting.	384	1089	2.83	0.85	A
	Overall Mean & Standard Deviation Scores			**2.72**	**2.79**	**A**

Key: Agree (A)

The Data in Table 2 shows that the respondents have mean scores ranging from 2.54-2.83 on the influence of family related factors on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students. The data also showed the grand mean score of 2.72 with the standard deviation score of 0.79. The standard deviation of 0.79 indicates that the respondents' responses were relatively close to the grand mean, suggesting a moderate level of variability and a reasonable degree of consensus among the respondents regarding the influence of family-related factors on juvenile delinquency. This is an indication that family related factors highly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

Table 3: t-test Summary of male and female Students on the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State

S/N	Variables	NO	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Df	T	P-Value	Decision
1	Male Students	189	2.66	0.79				
	Female Students	195	2.65	0.91	382	-055	.856	NS
2	Male Students	189	2.95	0.69				
	Female Students	195	2.69	0.83	382	3.39	.001	S
3	Male Students	189	2.95	0.79				
	Female Students	195	2.82	0.89	382	1.46	.144	NS
4	Male Students	189	2.78	0.79				
	Female Students	195	2.68	0.79	382	1.32	.189	NS
5	Male Students	189	2.89	0.76				
	Female Students	195	3.02	0.88	382	-1.44	.151	NS
6	Male Students	189	2.83	0.78				
	Female Students	195	2.85	0.81	382	-.253	.801	NS
	Overall		**2.81**	**0.81**		**0.90**	**0.275**	**NS**

Key: Significant (S), Not Significant (NS)

Data in Table 3 shows that the responses of male and female students have significant difference in item 2, and no significant difference in items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively. It also showed overall t-calculated value of 0.90 and P-value of 0.275which is greater than the chosen level of significance, 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the personal-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State is upheld.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

Table 4: t-test Summary of male and female students on the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State

S/N	Variables	NO	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Df	t	P-Value	Decision
7	Male Students	189	2.75	0.69				
	Female Students	195	2.88	0.74		-1.79	.075	NS
					382			
8	Male Students	189	2.78	0.78				
	Female Students	195	2.74	0.81	382	.613	.540	NS
9	Male Students	189	2.73	0.73				
	Female Students	195	2.61	0.88	382	1.52	.131	NS
10	Male Students	189	2.47	0.72				
	Female Students	195	2.61	0.74	382	-1.87	.062	NS
11	Male Students	189	2.59	0.67				
	Female Students	195	2.76	0.95	382	-2.10	.036	S
12	Male Students	189	2.68	0.76				
	Female Students	195	2.99	0.91	382	-3.65	.000	S
	Overall		**2.72**	**0.78**		**-2.21**	**0.141**	**NS**

Key: Not Significant (NS)

Data in Table 4 shows that the responses of male and female students have significant difference in item 11 and 12, and no significant difference in items 7-10 respectively. It also showed overall t-calculated value of -2.21 and P-value of 0.141which is greater than the chosen level of significance, 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on the family-related factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State is upheld.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that personal-related factors greatly influence juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. This indicates that variables inherent within the individual such as low self-esteem, impulsiveness, emotional instability, aggression, poor judgment, weak self-control, and inadequate moral upbringing play a significant role in predisposing adolescents to delinquent behaviour. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional turbulence, and increased desire for independence. When these developmental challenges are not properly guided, they may lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as truancy, substance abuse, theft, and other antisocial behaviours. The prominence of personal-related factors in this study suggests that delinquency cannot be adequately understood without examining the internal psychological structure of the adolescent. Students who lack emotional regulation and self-discipline are more likely to respond to challenges with deviant behaviour. This finding strongly aligns with Okafor and Yakubu (2020), who reported that poor interpersonal relationships and lack of moral guidance contribute significantly to delinquency among students. In the same direction, Sumithra and Komalavalli (2022) established that traits such as impulsivity, aggressiveness, and low conscientiousness

are strongly associated with juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, Enenta, Iwuala and Osuocha (2024) found that personality traits significantly predict delinquent behaviour, with measurable contributions to behavioural outcomes among adolescents.

Beyond empirical agreement, this finding is also supported by theoretical perspectives such as the self-control theory, which posits that individuals with low self-control are more prone to engaging in deviant acts. Similarly, cognitive-behavioural perspectives emphasize that distorted thinking patterns and poor emotional regulation can lead to antisocial conduct. Therefore, the finding underscores the need for early psychological intervention, character education, and value re-orientation programmes in schools to address these internal deficiencies. This finding implies that interventions targeting juvenile delinquency must go beyond punitive measures and focus on personality development, emotional intelligence, and behavioural modification strategies. Guidance counsellors, psychologists, and students have critical roles to play in helping students develop positive self-concepts and coping mechanisms.

The result of null hypothesis I revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students on personal-related factors influencing juvenile delinquency. This finding indicates a strong consensus among students irrespective of gender regarding the importance of personal variables in shaping delinquent behaviour. The lack of significant difference suggests that both male and female students observe similar behavioural patterns among students and interpret them in comparable ways. This enhances the objectivity and credibility of the findings, as it minimizes the likelihood of gender bias in responses. This result is consistent with Sumithra and Komalavalli (2022), who found no significant gender difference in the perception of personality traits associated with juvenile delinquency. It also implies that personal-related factors are universally acknowledged as central determinants of delinquent behaviour. The agreement among students further suggests that school-based interventions focusing on personality development would receive broad support from educators regardless of gender.

The finding of the study revealed that family-related factors have a high influence on juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone. This highlights the central role of the family as the primary agent of socialization, where foundational values, norms, and behaviours are first learned. The findings identified key family-related factors such as broken homes, parental neglect, inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision, family conflict, economic hardship, and poor parent-child relationships as major contributors to delinquent behaviour. This finding is not surprising, given that the family environment serves as the first point of contact for social learning. When the home environment is unstable or lacks proper guidance, children are more likely to develop behavioural problems. The finding agrees with Ugwuoke and Duruji (2015), who found that children from unstable homes engage more in delinquent behaviour due to inadequate supervision. Similarly, Imbur, Iroegbu and Iloma (2020) reported a significant relationship between family background and delinquency, particularly among adolescents from broken or low-income homes. Bakari (2021) also emphasized that family conflict and poor socialization processes increase adolescents' vulnerability to criminal behaviour. Furthermore, Agbongiasede (2021) stressed that effective parenting, characterized by emotional support, supervision, and moral guidance, is crucial in shaping positive behaviour. Sota (2023) also found that different family structures significantly influence students' behavioural outcomes. These studies collectively reinforce the idea that the quality of family life plays a decisive role in either preventing or promoting delinquency.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with social control theory, which posits that strong family bonds reduce the likelihood of deviant behaviour, while weak or broken bonds increase it. It also aligns with attachment theory, which emphasizes that secure emotional bonds between parents and children lead to healthier behavioural outcomes. The finding thereforw suggests that addressing juvenile delinquency requires strengthening family systems through parenting education, economic support, and community-based interventions. Parents must be sensitized to their roles in providing not just material needs but also emotional and moral guidance.

The result of null hypothesis II indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on family-related factors influencing juvenile delinquency. This finding suggests a shared understanding among students regarding the importance of family influence on student

behaviour. The absence of gender difference implies that both male and female students observe similar patterns of family-related challenges among students and interpret them consistently. This result supports the findings of Imbur, Iroegbu and Iloma (2020) and Sota (2023), which emphasize the universally recognized role of family variables in shaping adolescent behaviour. The consensus among students strengthens the validity of the finding and indicates that interventions targeting family factors would likely be supported across the teaching profession without gender-based disagreement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone is a multidimensional problem influenced by personal, family, school, and social factors. The family environment emerged as a critical foundation for behavioural development, while school and social environments also play significant reinforcing roles. Personal characteristics of students further determine their susceptibility to delinquent behaviour. Therefore, juvenile delinquency is not caused by a single factor but by an interaction of multiple psychosocial influences that require coordinated intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. As pertaining to Personal-related factors, school authorities should strengthen guidance and counselling programmes to help students develop self-control, emotional intelligence, and positive self-concept in order to reduce tendencies toward delinquent behaviour.
2. As regards to family-related factors, parents should be encouraged through community and school-based sensitization programmes to provide proper supervision, emotional support, and stable home environments for their children.
3. On school-related factors, school administrators should improve the school environment by enforcing effective discipline, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and ensuring functional counselling services to reduce delinquent behaviour among students.

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