
**INVESTIGATING THE EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE
BEHAVIOUR OF PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS' STUDENTS IN RIVERS
STATE**

Wike Eberechi

Email: eberechi.wike@ust.edu.ng

Phone number: 08068276563

Institute of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

Abstract

The study investigated the external factors that influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of all 14,365 junior secondary school students in Rivers State. Taro Yemane formula and simple random sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the sample size of 400 students. A structured questionnaire titled Investigating the External Factors that Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools' Students Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument and Cronbach Alpha Method was used to obtain an average reliability coefficient of 0.80. 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, and all were retrieved and used for the study. The items were rated on a four (4) point rating scale; mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions while z-test was used in testing the formulated hypotheses. The findings reviewed that, the behaviour of junior secondary school students in Rivers State were influenced to a high extent by the family, peer pressure and the media. The researcher recommended that schools should organize workshops and seminars to educate parents on the importance of being actively involved in their children's academic, schools should establish peer counseling systems where students can support and guide each other in making positive decisions, and personal development, and introduce community-based programmes to teach students about the impact of media and social trends, enabling them to make informed choices.

Keywords: Investigating, External Factors, Influence, Behaviour

Introduction

Understanding the behaviour of secondary school students is a key concern for educators, parents, and policymakers, as it significantly impacts academic performance, social interactions, and emotional development. Students' behaviour does not develop in isolation; instead, it is shaped by a variety of external factors, including family dynamics, peer influence, school environment, community context, and societal norms. Investigating these external influences provides valuable insights into how to create supportive environments that foster positive behaviour and mitigate risks associated with negative behavioural patterns.

Family influence is one of the most significant factors affecting student behaviour. Parental involvement, socioeconomic status, parenting styles, and household stability all contribute to shaping a student's attitude and behaviour in school (Fan & Chen, 2010). For instance, research indicates that students from supportive and involved families are more likely to display positive behaviour, while those from homes with neglect or conflict may exhibit behavioural challenges. According to Oloyede and Adesina (2013) some characteristics of the family have an impact on the adolescent behaviour at school. In agreement Adigeb & Mbua, 2015; Magwa and Ngara (2014) stated that child neglect and abuse by family members, exposure of the child to parental criminal activities and behaviour and acts of violence, the availability and use of dangerous weapons and drugs at home, divorce, or remarriage of either parent are some of the family situations that negatively impact on the adolescent's behaviour.

Peer groups also play a critical role during adolescence. Secondary school students are at an age where peer approval becomes increasingly important, often influencing decisions and behaviours. Studies highlight that positive peer influence can encourage academic success and social cooperation, whereas negative peer pressure may lead to issues such as bullying, substance abuse, or delinquency (Ryan, 2013). Wentzel (2015) opined that adolescents are more likely to give in to peer pressure and manifest unacceptable behaviour that may have a negative impact on themselves or on others. Besides, Lukman and Kamadi (2014) argue that the peer group pressure influences what the adolescent values, knows, wears, eats and learns. In the same vein Bezuidenhout (2013) maintains that adolescents display disruptive behaviour in groups, not individually. This is based on the Social Learning Theory which posits that adolescents learn to display socially unacceptable behaviour when they interact with other people. Besides, growing adolescents take up their peers at school as their role models as their parents are no more considered as role models to them (Ndakwa, 2013).

The media also influence students' behaviour. Adolescents are millennials and therefore their daily life at home, at school and even in their peer group is technology driven. The new media dominate their lives (Council on Communications and Media, 2013). Miller, Berg, Cox, Carwile, Gerber, McGuire, Votteler and Williams (2011) are of the view that the adolescents are constantly involved in the “multi-tasking” process: they attend to the lesson, and they also send messages, chat on the social network and even view YouTube on their mobile phones at the same time. Moreover, adolescents overconsume the social media, and they may suffer from behaviour risks such as bullying, click-forming, sexting, Facebook depression, anxiety, sever isolation, and self-destructive behaviours (Leventhal & Brooks-Gun, 2015). Further, video games play is associated with increased aggressive behaviour from adolescents and an overconsumption of media violence through video games and TV causes adolescents to become more verbally and relationally aggressive with other adolescents and they develop less prosocial behaviour (Gentile, Coyne & Walsh, 2011). Beebeejaun-Muslum (2014) averred that the mass media easily inculcate deviant behaviour and practices among adolescent students who develop a wrong image of sex, love and affection and a glorified picture of violence in society. Adolescent behaviours are therefore negatively influenced by media in the current era of rapid technological changes.

This investigation into the external factors influencing secondary school students' behaviour aims to examine how these elements interact and contribute to shaping students' conduct. By understanding these dynamics, educators and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to address behavioural challenges, promote positive outcomes, and create environments conducive to holistic development.

Statement of the Problem

Behavioural issues among secondary school students have become a growing concern for educators, parents, and society at large. Students in this developmental stage often face a myriad of challenges that influence their conduct, including peer pressure, family dynamics, and the broader societal environment. Despite efforts to address these issues through school-based programmes and policies, a significant gap remains in understanding how external factors – such as family structure, socio-economic conditions, community influences, and school culture-interact to shape students' behaviour. These behavioural challenges can manifest in various forms, such as truancy, aggression, substance abuse, lack of discipline, and academic disengagement, which negatively impact both individual students and the school environment. For instance, peer pressure often drives adolescents toward risky behaviours, while family instability or low socio-economic

status can create emotional and psychological stress that affects school performance. Similarly, schools with inadequate resources or ineffective disciplinary policies may struggle to foster a positive learning environment, exacerbating behavioural problems.

The lack of a comprehensive understanding of these external factors has hindered the development of effective interventions. Existing research has largely focused on individual influences in isolation rather than examining their combined effects on students' behaviour. This fragmented approach fails to capture the complexity of the issue, limiting the ability of schools and policymakers to implement holistic solutions. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the external factors that influence secondary school students' behaviour, exploring their interplay, and identifying strategies for promoting positive behavioural outcomes. By doing so, it aims to provide actionable insights for educators, parents, and stakeholders to create environments that support students' academic, social, and emotional development.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the behaviour of public junior school students in Rivers State. The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.
2. To examine the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.
3. To assess the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This study was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised 14,365 junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. The population of the study is made up of 6,522 male students and 7,843 female students. The sample size of the study consisted of 400 students made up of 183 male students and 217 female students. In selecting the sample size, Taro Yemane formula and simple random sampling technique was adopted.

The instrument for data collection is titled; Investigating the External Factors that Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools' Students Questionnaire (IEFIBPJSSSQ). The instrument was designed by the researcher. The instrument had two sections, A and B. Section A had items designed to review personal information about the respondents. Section B had three clusters with 5 items each which focused on answering the research questions. The response format adopted was a four-point rating scale as follows: Very High Extent (VHE=4), High Extent (HE=3), LE (Low Extent=2) and Very Low Extent (VLE=1). The instrument was subjected to validation by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was also established using 20 junior secondary schools' students randomly sampled from junior secondary schools which were not sampled. Data gathered from their responses were computed and the scores yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, 0.78 and 0.80 respectively. The researcher through the help of her two trained research assistants administered 400 copies of the

questionnaire directly to the respondents. All the 400 copies were retrieved and use for data analysis. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. To test the significance of the two null hypotheses formulated for this study z-test was used. The formulated null hypotheses were rejected when the calculated z value is greater than or equals to the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and failed to reject null hypotheses when the z-calculated value is less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Responses of Male and Female on the Extent the Family Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools' Students in Rivers State

S/No	Items	Males No=183		Decision	Females No=217		Decision
		— X	SD		— X	SD	
1	Neglecting a child by family members influences the child's behaviour	2.86	1.02	HE	2.97	0.96	HE
2	Child abuse by family members impacts negatively on the child's behaviour	2.55	1.15	HE	2.56	1.01	HE
3	Having parents who engage in criminal activities influence their children's behaviour	2.91	1.00	HE	2.86	1.06	HE
4	Violent parents influence their children's behaviour negatively	2.93	0.90	HE	2.67	1.05	HE
5	Divorce by parents influences their children's behaviour negatively	3.22	0.87	HE	2.89	1.02	HE
Grand Mean/SD		2.89	0.99	HE	2.79	1.02	HE

Source: Researcher's Field Result, 2024.

Result on Table 1 above shows that the influence of the family on the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State is to a high extent with the following mean values for

items (1-5) for male students: 2.86, 2.55, 2.91, 2.93 and 3.22 and for female principals: 2.97, 2.56, 2.86, 2.67 and 2.89 respectively.

Research Question 2: To what extent does peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Male and Female on the Extent Peer Pressure Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools’ Students in Rivers State

S/No	Items	Males No=183		Decision	Females No=217		Decision
		— X	SD		— X	SD	
6	Negative peer pressure leads to bullying among students	3.12	0.95	HE	2.86	1.09	HE
7	Peer group influence often leads to substance abuse among students	2.74	1.08	HE	2.94	0.99	HE
8	Positive peer pressure contributes to academic success among students	2.71	1.15	HE	2.75	1.03	HE
9	Positive peer pressure enhances social cooperation	2.94	1.03	HE	2.78	0.92	HE
10	Peer pressure promotes delinquency among students	2.88	0.92	HE	2.72	1.00	HE
Grand Mean/SD		2.88	1.03	HE	2.81	1.01	HE

Source: Researcher’s Field Result, 2024.

Table 2 above shows that the influence of peer pressure on the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State is to a high extent with the following mean values for items (6-10) for male students: 3.12, 2.74, 2.71, 2.94 and 2.88 and for female students: 2.86, 2.94, 2.75, 2.78 and 2.72 respectively.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Responses of Male and Female on the Extent the Media Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools’ Students in Rivers State

S/No	Items	Males No=183		Decision	Females No=217		Decision
		X	SD		X	SD	
11	Overconsumption of social media can lead to depression among students	3.05	0.97	HE	2.86	1.09	HE
12	Much reliance on the media increases anxiety among students	2.95	1.02	HE	3.12	0.99	HE
13	Social media contributes to making some students bullies	3.14	0.96	HE	2.75	1.08	HE
14	Much media usage causes self-destruction by students	2.91	0.99	HE	2.78	0.97	HE
15	Much focus on phone causes isolation among students	3.23	1.86	HE	3.02	1.05	HE
Grand Mean/SD		3.06	1.16	HE	2.91	1.04	HE

Source: Researcher’s Field Result, 2024.

Result on Table 3 above shows that the influence of the family on the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State is to a high extent with the following mean values for items (11-10) for male students: 3.05, 2.95, 3.14, 2.91 and 3.23 and for female students: 2.86, 3.12, 2.75, 2.78 and 3.02 respectively.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-Test Analysis of the Responses on the Extent the Family Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools' Students in Rivers State

Respondents	N	— X	SD	DF	LS	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male Students	183	2.89	0.99	398	0.05	1.00	±1.96	Failed to reject no significant difference
Female Students	217	2.79	1.02					

Source: Researcher's Field Result, 2024.

Table 4 above shows no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. The z-calculated value of 1.00 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96 ($1.00 \leq \pm 1.96$) for degree of freedom of 398 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State.

Table 5: Z-Test Analysis of the Responses on the Extent Peer Pressure Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools' Students in Rivers State

Respondents	N	— X	SD	DF	LS	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male Students	183	2.88	1.03	398	.05	0.70	±1.96	Failed to reject no significant difference
Female Students	217	2.81	1.01					

Source: Researcher's Field Result, 2024.

Table 5 above shows no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State. The z-calculated value of 0.70 was less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 ($0.70 \leq \pm 1.96$) for degree of freedom of 398 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female students on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State.

Table 6: Z-Test Analysis of the Responses on the Extent the Media Influence the Behaviour of Public Junior Secondary Schools’ Students in Rivers State

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	LS	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male Students	183	3.06	1.16	398	.05	1.50	± 1.96	Failed to reject no significant difference
Female Students	217	2.91	1.04					

Source: Researcher’s Field Result, 2024.

Table 6 above shows no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State. The z-calculated value of 1.50 was less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 ($1.50 \leq \pm 1.96$) for degree of freedom of 398 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools’ students in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings to research question 1 which focused on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State with grand mean of 2.89 and 2.79 for male and female students respectively revealed that the respondents agreed to the statements that, negative peer pressure leads to bullying among students; peer group influence often leads to substance abuse among students; positive peer pressure contributes to academic success among students; positive peer pressure enhances social cooperation and peer pressure promotes delinquency among students. The finding agreed with (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015; Magwa & Ngara, 2014) that child neglect and abuse by family members, exposure of the child to parental criminal activities and behaviour and acts of violence, the availability and use of dangerous weapons and drugs at home, divorce, or remarriage of either parent are some of the family situations that negatively impact on the adolescent's behaviour. Result on hypothesis 1 with a z-calculated value of 1.00 which is less than z-critical of ± 1.96 proved that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. This indicated that both group of respondents; male and female students, agreed to the fact that the family influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students.

The findings to research question 2 which focused on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State with grand mean of 2.88 and 2.81 for male and female students respectively revealed that the respondents agreed to the statements that, negative peer pressure leads to bullying among students; peer group influence often leads to substance abuse among students; positive peer pressure contributes to academic success among students; positive peer pressure enhances social cooperation and peer pressure promotes delinquency among students. The finding agreed with Ryan (2013) who highlighted that positive peer influence can encourage academic success and social cooperation, whereas negative peer pressure may lead to issues such as bullying, substance abuse, or delinquency. Result on hypothesis 2 with a z-calculated value of 0.70 which is less than z-critical of ± 1.96 proved that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. This indicated that both group of respondents; male and female students, agreed to the fact that peer pressure influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students.

The findings to research question 3 which focused on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State with grand mean of 3.06 and 2.91 for male and female students respectively revealed that the respondents agreed to the statements that,

overconsumption of social media can lead to depression among students; much reliance on the media increases anxiety among students; social media contributes to making some students bullies; much media usage causes self-destruction by students and much focus on phone causes isolation among students. The finding agreed with Leventhal & Brooks-Gun (2015) who stated that adolescents overconsume the social media, and they may suffer from behaviour risks such as bullying, click-forming, sexting, Facebook depression, anxiety, sever isolation, and self-destructive behaviours. Result on hypothesis 3 with a z-calculated value of 1.50 which is less than z-critical of ± 1.96 proved that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the extent the media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students in Rivers State. This indicated that both group of respondents; male and female students, agreed to the fact that media influence the behaviour of public junior secondary schools' students.

Conclusion

The behaviour of secondary school students is shaped by a complex interplay of external factors, including family dynamics, peer relationships, school environment, community influences, and societal trends. These factors significantly impact students' academic performance, social development, and emotional well-being, highlighting the need for a holistic understanding of their influence. This investigation underscores the importance of fostering supportive environments at home, in schools, and within communities to promote positive behavioural outcomes. Recognizing the role of external factors enables educators, parents, and policymakers to address behavioural challenges more effectively by implementing targeted interventions, enhancing school resources, and strengthening collaboration between families, schools, and communities.

Ultimately, addressing the influences on students' behaviour is essential for nurturing well-rounded, resilient individuals who are equipped to navigate the challenges of adolescence and contribute positively to society. Through continued research and the application of evidence-based strategies, it is possible to create environments that not only mitigate negative behaviours but also empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Schools should organize workshops and seminars to educate parents on the importance of being actively involved in their children's academic and personal development.
2. Schools should establish peer counseling systems where students can support and guide each other in making positive decisions.
3. Introduce community-based programmes to teach students about the impact of media and social trends, enabling them to make informed choices.

References

- Adigeb, A. P., & Mbua, A. P. (2015). Child abuse and students' academic performance in Boki local government area of Cross River State. *British Journal of Education*, 3(3), 3442.
- Beebeejaun-Muslum, Z. N. (2014). Delinquent and antisocial behaviour in Mauritian secondary schools. *Research Journal of Social Science and Management*, 3(12), 124-135.
- Bezuidenhout, C. (2013). Child and youth misbehaviour in South Africa: A Holistic Approach. Pretoria: *Van Schaik Publishers*.
- Council of Communications and Media. (2013). Children, adolescents and the media. *Pediatrics*, 958-961. Available on <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/132/5/958>
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2010). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1-22.
- Gentile, D.A., Coyne, S., & Walsh, D. (2011). Media violence, physical aggression and relational aggression in school-age children: A short-term longitudinal study. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 37(2), 193-206.
- Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2015). The neighbourhoods they live in: The effects of neighbourhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(2), 309-337.

- Lukman, A. A & Hamadi, A. A. (2014). Disciplinary measures in Nigerian senior secondary schools: Issues and Prospects. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 4(3), 11-17.
- Magwa, S., & Ngara, R. (2014). Learner indiscipline in schools. *Review of Arts and Humanities*, 3(2),79-88.
- Miller, M., Berg, H., Cox, D., Carwile, D., Gerber, H., McGuire, M., et al. (2011). A Bird's eye view of an I-phone world: Differing perceptions of cell phone use in academic settings. *Eastern Educational Journal*, 40(1), 3-10.
- Ndakwa, D. (2013). *A simplified guide: The making of a new student*. Nairobi: Pavement Publishers.
- Ngwokabuenui, P. Y. (2015). Students' indiscipline: Types, causes and possible Solutions: The case of secondary schools in Cameroon. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(22), 64-72.
- Oloyede, E. O., & Adesina, A.D. (2013). Egalitarianism and classroom discipline: A Prerequisite to successful instructional processes in Mathematics. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Educational Research and Review*, 2(6), 139-143.
- Ryan, A. M. (2013). The peer group as a context for the development of young adolescent motivation and achievement. *Child Development*, 72(4), 1135-1150.
- Steinberg, L. (2010). We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 1-19.
- Wentzel, K. R. (2015). Social relationships and motivation in middle school: The role of parents, teachers, and peers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2), 202-209.