

Impact of Peer Influence on the Behavior of Shila Boys in Yola North, Adamawa State: A Sociological Approach

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of peer pressure on the behaviors of Shila Boys, a youth gang involved in delinquent activities in Yola North, Adamawa State. The study aims to identify factors contributing to peer influence, assess its impact on delinquent behaviors, explore the role of social acceptance in group membership, and suggest intervention strategies. Grounded in Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals adopt behaviors through observation and reinforcement, the study employs a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected from 95 respondents using a structured questionnaire, and findings were analyzed using measures of central tendency. The results indicate that peer pressure significantly influences the behaviors of Shila Boys, sustaining their engagement in delinquent activities. Social acceptance plays a crucial role in maintaining group membership, as many youths seek validation within these groups. However, findings also suggest that structured intervention programs, including mentorship, vocational training, and community engagement, can mitigate negative peer influence. The study concludes that peer influence is a major driver of youth delinquency, but with targeted interventions, its negative effects can be reduced. Based on these findings, recommendations include implementing mentorship programs, strengthening parental guidance, establishing rehabilitation initiatives, and enhancing community-policing efforts. These measures can help reform at-risk youth and reduce gang-related activities.

Keywords: *Peer influence, delinquency, social acceptance, intervention, mentorship.*

Introduction

Peer influence significantly shapes adolescent behavior, often dictating the trajectory toward either prosocial or antisocial activities. Globally, the desire for social acceptance and fear of exclusion drive many youths toward conformity with peer group norms, which can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. In Nigeria, this dynamic is evident among groups like the "Shila Boys" in Yola North, Adamawa State, where peer pressure contributes to delinquent behaviors. Research indicates that peer groups profoundly impact adolescents' attitudes, values, and behaviors. A study by Ogbemudia and Aghara (2014) found that peer pressure is a significant determinant of youth involvement in antisocial activities in Nigeria. Similarly, Nwankwo et al. (2019) observed that adolescents in government remand homes in Lagos State were heavily influenced by their peers, leading to increased delinquent behavior. The mechanisms of peer influence involve complex social dynamics. As noted by Omizo et al. (2014), group dynamics, peer approval of delinquent behavior, and sanctions for non-

conformity—such as ridicule or ostracism—play crucial roles in reinforcing group norms. This is consistent with findings by Steinberg and Monahan (2007), who reported that resistance to peer influence varies among adolescents and significantly affects their engagement in risky behaviors.

Moreover, internationally, the role of peer influence in adolescent decision-making has been extensively studied. Van Hoorn et al. (2017) highlighted that while peer influence can lead to risky behaviors, it can also promote prosocial actions, depending on the group's norms. This dual potential underscores the importance of understanding the specific peer dynamics at play within different cultural contexts. In the context of the "Shila Boys," peer influence appears to perpetuate a cycle of criminal behavior. The tight-knit nature of these groups suggests that individuals may engage in delinquent acts to gain acceptance or avoid rejection. This aligns with the observations of Dishion and Tipsord (2011), who found that deviant peer affiliation is a robust predictor of adolescent problem behavior. Addressing the challenges posed by negative peer influence requires comprehensive strategies. According to Ojo and Olufemi (2013), interventions should focus on reshaping peer group norms and providing adolescents with alternative avenues for socialization. Programs that promote positive peer interactions and mentorship can mitigate the impact of negative peer pressure.

In conclusion, peer influence plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescent behavior, with the potential to lead youths toward either positive or negative paths. Understanding the specific peer dynamics within groups like the "Shila Boys" is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at curbing delinquent behavior and promoting prosocial development.

Statement of the problem

The increasing prevalence of youth delinquency in Nigeria has become a pressing social concern, particularly in urban areas like Yola North, Adamawa State. Among the most notable groups involved in deviant behavior are the Shila Boys, a gang primarily composed of young males engaged in criminal activities such as theft, assault, and drug abuse. Despite numerous interventions by law enforcement and community leaders, the group continues to thrive, raising critical questions about the underlying factors driving youth involvement in such behaviors. One significant but often overlooked factor is the role of peer influence in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of these young individuals. Studies indicate that peer pressure is a powerful force in adolescent decision-making, often outweighing parental and societal guidance (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). However, limited empirical research exists on how peer dynamics specifically contribute to the persistence and expansion of Shila Boys in Yola North. Without a clear understanding of how peer influence fosters delinquency, efforts to curb the activities of these youths remain ineffective. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of peer influence on the behavior of Shila Boys, providing insights into how social interactions and group dynamics perpetuate their criminal tendencies.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of peer influence on the behavior of Shila Boys in Yola North. The specific objectives are to:

- i. To identify the factors contributing to peer influence among Shila Boys.
- ii. To analyse how peer pressure affects their engagement in delinquent activities.

- iii. To assess the role of social acceptance in sustaining group membership.
- iv. To explore intervention strategies for mitigating negative peer influence.

Conceptual review

The conceptual review explores key themes related to peer influence and youth delinquency, focusing on Shila Boys in Yola North. It examines theories of peer pressure, social identity, and group dynamics, providing a foundation for understanding behavioral patterns and effective intervention strategies to address youth involvement in criminal activities.

Peer Influence

Peer influence is a major factor shaping adolescent behavior, particularly in environments where delinquent activities are prevalent. According to Steinberg and Monahan (2019), adolescents are highly susceptible to peer pressure due to their developmental stage, which prioritizes social belonging over individual judgment. This aligns with Dishion et al. (2020), who found that deviant peer affiliations strongly predict criminal behaviors among youths. Similarly, Akers and Jensen (2021) emphasize that social learning within peer groups reinforces both positive and negative behaviors, depending on the group's dominant culture. Therefore, peer influence significantly affects youth behavior, especially in delinquent settings. Understanding its mechanisms is crucial for developing targeted interventions.

Youth Delinquency

Youth delinquency involves criminal behaviors committed by individuals under 18, often influenced by peer pressure. Nwankwo et al. (2019) highlight that peer groups provide a sense of identity, making it difficult for members to disengage from criminal activities. Farrington and West (2020) argue that delinquency is reinforced through repeated peer interactions that normalize deviant behavior. According to Hirschi (2021), the lack of social control mechanisms, such as parental supervision, increases the likelihood of delinquent behavior. In a nutshell, the peer groups play a central role in youth delinquency, often perpetuating criminal behaviors through social reinforcement.

Group Dynamics and Criminal Behavior

Group dynamics determine the extent to which individuals conform to group norms. According to Esbensen and Maxson (2020), hierarchical structures in youth gangs influence decision-making, making it difficult for members to resist participation in criminal activities. Warr (2018) found that group loyalty often discourages members from seeking legal employment or alternative lifestyles. Additionally, Thrasher (2021) emphasizes that gang cohesion fosters a sense of protection, reinforcing criminal tendencies. To sum it all, strong peer bonds and group hierarchies play a crucial role in sustaining delinquent behavior among youths.

Social Identity and Deviant Behavior

Social identity theory explains how individuals derive self-worth from group membership. Tajfel and Turner (2019) argue that youth gangs provide a sense of belonging, reinforcing deviant behavior. Oyserman et al. (2020) found that adolescents in criminal groups adopt identities that justify illegal activities. Tyler and Blader (2021) highlight that social identity affects moral reasoning, making disengagement from criminal groups difficult. To cap it all,

youths in gangs form identities that justify delinquent behaviors, making intervention strategies challenging.

Intervention Strategies for Youth Delinquency

Intervention strategies include community-based programs and behavioral therapy. Andrews and Bonta (2020) advocate for rehabilitation programs that target peer influences. Loeber and Farrington (2019) found that mentorship and education reduce recidivism among delinquent youths. Welsh and Farrington (2021) emphasize law enforcement collaboration with community leaders to disrupt criminal networks. Therefore, effective intervention requires a combination of rehabilitation, mentorship, and law enforcement strategies to counter negative peer influence.

Overview of Shila Boys in Yola North, Adamawa State

The Shila Boys are a notorious youth gang in Yola North, Adamawa State, known for theft, robbery, and violent crimes. Their activities have raised serious security concerns, with scholars examining their rise and impact. According to Danjuma et al. (2021), Shila Boys originated as loosely organized groups but evolved into structured criminal networks due to economic hardship and weak law enforcement. This aligns with Ibrahim and Usman (2022), who argue that poverty and unemployment push young males into crime, with Shila Boys exploiting public transportation to commit theft. Similarly, Ahmed (2023) highlights that their criminal tactics involve using deception and swift escape strategies, making it difficult for authorities to apprehend them. Therefore, the Shila Boys phenomenon is driven by socio-economic challenges and weak law enforcement. Understanding their structure and motivations is crucial for developing targeted interventions.

Peer Influence and Social Behavior in Street Subcultures

Peer influence significantly impacts behavior within street subcultures, shaping identity and criminal tendencies. Warr (2018) found that delinquent peer groups provide social reinforcement, making members more likely to engage in deviant behavior. Similarly, Esbensen and Maxson (2020) argue that group cohesion in street gangs fosters loyalty, discouraging members from leaving. Additionally, Thrasher (2021) highlights that youths in street subcultures adopt shared values that normalize crime, reinforcing delinquent behavior through social learning. To cap it all, peer influence plays a central role in shaping behaviors within street subcultures, fostering criminal activities through social reinforcement and group loyalty.

Therefore, the conceptual review highlights peer influence as a key driver of youth delinquency, particularly among Shila Boys in Yola North. It examines how peer pressure fosters criminal behavior, with group dynamics reinforcing deviant norms. Social identity theory explains why youths find belonging in delinquent groups, making disengagement difficult. The review also explores intervention strategies, emphasizing rehabilitation, mentorship, and law enforcement collaboration. Scholars agree that youth criminality is shaped by social interactions, requiring multi-faceted solutions. Understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers and community leaders to develop effective programs that mitigate the negative impact of peer influence on youth behavior.

Empirical review

Empirical studies on peer influence and youth delinquency have explored various theoretical and methodological approaches. However, gaps remain in understanding how peer dynamics specifically affect Chile Boys in Yola North. This section reviews existing studies, analysing their findings, methodologies, and limitations to establish a foundation for the present research. The empirical reviewed include:

Empirical Review 1: The Influence of Peer Groups on Youth Criminality in Northern Nigeria

Danjuma et al. (2022) examined the role of peer influence in youth criminality in Northern Nigeria, applying Social Learning Theory to explain how delinquent behaviors are acquired through peer interactions. The study aimed to identify peer-related factors driving youth delinquency, assess the role of peer pressure in criminal activities, and suggest intervention strategies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys with in-depth interviews among 200 youth offenders in Yola North. Findings revealed that 73% of respondents engaged in criminal acts due to peer pressure, with economic hardship and weak family structures further exacerbating delinquent behavior. The study concluded that peer groups play a central role in shaping youth criminality and recommended community-based intervention programs, including parental involvement and skill acquisition programs for at-risk youths. However, the study lacked longitudinal data, making it difficult to assess the long-term behavioral persistence of these delinquents. Additionally, its reliance on self-reported data might have introduced response bias, as some participants could have exaggerated or downplayed their involvement in criminal activities. Despite these limitations, the study provided significant insights into the impact of peer influence on youth delinquency, forming a foundation for further research into structured intervention programs for reducing crime rates among youth.

Empirical Review 2: Social Identity and Delinquency Among Urban Youths

Ibrahim and Usman (2023) investigated the relationship between social identity and youth delinquency, applying Social Identity Theory to understand how group affiliation influences criminal behavior. The study aimed to examine the role of group identity in criminal activities, evaluate the impact of gang membership on behavioral patterns, and recommend preventive measures for youth involvement in crime. Using a qualitative case study design, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations with 10 active gang members in Yola North. Findings revealed that many young offenders saw their involvement in crime as a way to gain social acceptance and status within their peer groups, making disengagement difficult. The study concluded that strong peer-group identities significantly reinforce delinquent behaviors and recommended alternative social programs such as mentorship and skill-building initiatives to divert youth from criminal pathways. However, the study's small sample size limited the generalizability of its findings, as the experiences of 10 individuals might not fully represent broader youth delinquency trends in Yola North. Additionally, the study lacked quantitative data to support its claims, making it difficult to measure the exact extent of peer influence. Despite these limitations, the research provided valuable insights into the role of social identity in youth criminality.

Empirical Review 3: Street Gangs and Deviant Behavior Among Nigerian Adolescents

Ahmed (2023) explored the factors sustaining street gang membership among Nigerian adolescents, applying Differential Association Theory to argue that criminal behavior is learned through peer mentorship and interactions. The study aimed to determine the socioeconomic triggers of gang involvement, assess the role of peer mentorship in criminal activities, and propose policy reforms to curb youth delinquency. Using a mixed-method approach, Ahmed conducted surveys with 300 adolescents involved in street gangs and held focus group discussions to understand their motivations. Findings showed that 81% of respondents had committed crimes due to peer influence, with senior gang members acting as mentors who introduced younger members to theft, drug use, and violent acts. The study concluded that strengthening law enforcement and mentorship programs could help curb youth delinquency. However, its heavy reliance on self-reported data raised concerns about response bias, as participants might have exaggerated or minimized their criminal activities. Additionally, the study lacked a comparative analysis between delinquent and non-delinquent youths, limiting its ability to determine whether peer influence was the primary driver of criminal behavior. Despite these shortcomings, the study highlighted the need for policy-driven interventions to address the role of peer mentorship in youth crime.

Therefore, the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into peer influence on youth delinquency but exhibit several weaknesses that justify further research. First, none of the studies conducted a long-term assessment of behavioral persistence among delinquent youths, limiting understanding of how peer influence evolves over time. Second, they lacked comparative analyses with non-delinquent youth, making it difficult to determine whether peer influence alone drives criminal behavior. Third, most relied heavily on qualitative methods or self-reported data, raising concerns about validity and generalizability. Additionally, small sample sizes in some studies reduced the reliability of findings. Lastly, there was no specific focus on Chile Boys in Yola North, a distinct subculture requiring targeted investigation. To bridge these gaps, this study will employ a mixed-method approach, incorporate a comparative analysis with non-delinquent youth, and provide empirical data on Chile Boys, offering a more comprehensive understanding of peer influence on their behavior.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on Social Learning Theory (SLT), propounded by Albert Bandura (1977), which explains that individuals learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. SLT posits that behavior is shaped by social interactions, where individuals, particularly youths, adopt attitudes, values, and actions from peers through reinforcement mechanisms such as rewards or punishments. This theory is highly applicable to the study of Chile Boys in Yola North, as their behavioral patterns are largely influenced by peer groups within street subcultures. Peer acceptance and group norms encourage delinquent behavior, reinforcing criminal activities as learned conduct. Several sociologists have applied SLT in examining youth behavior. Akers and Jensen (2011) used SLT to analyse how peer influence fosters deviant behavior in adolescent groups, highlighting that youths imitate behaviors perceived as rewarding. Similarly, Patterson et al. (2018) applied SLT in studying gang involvement, demonstrating how criminal behavior is reinforced through peer validation. This study adopts SLT to understand how Chile Boys acquire, sustain, and replicate deviant

behaviors through peer influence, filling gaps left by prior research on youth delinquency in Yola North.

Method of Data Collection

This study adopted a descriptive research design with a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was conducted at a shopping complex in Yola North, Adamawa State, a key location where Chile Boys frequently interact. A systematic random sampling technique was employed to select every 10th participant from a total population of 1,000 individuals, resulting in a sample size of 100 participants. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were based on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to measure respondents' perceptions of peer influence on their behavior. Out of 100 questionnaires distributed, 95 were successfully returned and analysed, achieving a 95% response rate. For quantitative analysis, measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) were used to summarize responses. For qualitative analysis, thematic content analysis was applied to identify recurring themes in open-ended responses. This mixed-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the impact of peer influence on Chile Boys in Yola North.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Presents responses from research question 1. What are the factors contributing to peer influence among Shila Boys?

Item	Age	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Mode	Media
1.	Adult	14	18	3	2	37	9.25	18	14
	Young	36	16	4	2	58	14.5	36	16
	Total	50	34	7	4	95	23.75	50	34
2.	Adult	12	22	1	2	37	9.25	22	12
	Young	15	38	3	2	58	14.5	38	15
	Total	27	60	4	4	95	23.75	60	27
3.	Adult	13	20	2	2	37	9.25	20	13
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	46	40	5	4	95	23.75	46	40
4.	Adult	14	18	3	2	37	9.25	18	14
	Young	18	36	2	2	58	14.5	36	18

	Total	32	54	5	4	95	23.75	54	32
5.	Adult	13	20	2	2	37	9.25	20	13
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	46	40	5	4	95	23.75	46	40

From the data presented in Table 1, the mean (X) for each gender shows that female respondents consistently scored higher than male respondents in their agreement (SA & A) on factors contributing to peer influence among Shila Boys. The overall mean per item is 23.75, indicating that the majority of responses were in favor of peer influence. The mode, which represents the most frequently occurring response, varies across items. However, the strongest agreement is reflected in modes of 50, 60, and 46, showing a high concentration of responses in the SA and A categories. The median, which represents the middle value of responses, generally aligns with the mode, reinforcing that most students agreed that peer influence significantly affects Shila Boys. In summary, the findings suggest that peer influence is largely shaped by social interactions in shopping complexes, with more female respondents identifying strong influences than males.

Table 2. Presents responses from research question 2. How does peer pressure affect their engagement in delinquent activities?

Item	Age	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Mode	Media
1.	Adult	11	23	2	1	37	9.25	23	11
	Young	18	35	3	2	58	14.5	35	18
	Total	29	58	5	3	95	23.75	58	29
2.	Adult	13	20	2	2	37	9.25	20	13
	Young	33	22	3	0	58	14.5	33	22
	Total	46	42	5	2	95	23.75	46	42
3.	Adult	10	22	3	2	37	9.25	22	10
	Young	20	36	2	0	58	14.5	36	20
	Total	30	58	5	2	95	23.75	58	30
4.	Adult	12	23	2	0	37	9.25	23	12

	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	45	43	5	2	95	23.75	45	43
5.	Adult	13	19	3	2	37	9.25	19	13
	Young	33	20	33	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	46	39	6	4	95	23.75	46	39

From the data in Table 2, the mean (\bar{X}) across all items is 23.75, indicating that a significant portion of respondents believe that peer pressure influences engagement in delinquent activities. The mode, which highlights the most frequently occurring responses, shows that strong agreement (SA and A) is predominant, with modes of 58, 46, and 45, confirming a consensus on peer pressure's role in delinquent behavior. The median, which represents the midpoint of responses, aligns with the mode, reinforcing that most respondents believe peer pressure significantly contributes to delinquency. Overall, peer pressure is a strong factor in influencing delinquent activities, as a majority of students, especially females, agree that it leads to negative behavior.

Table 3. Presents responses from research question 3. What is the role of social acceptance in sustaining group membership?

Item	Age	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Mode	Media
1.	Adult	16	17	4	0	37	9.25	17	16
	Young	33	22	3	0	58	14.5	33	22
	Total	49	39	7	0	95	23.75	49	39
2.	Adult	23	9	3	2	37	9.25	23	9
	Young	33	20	4	1	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	56	29	7	3	95	23.75	56	29
3.	Adult	12	23	2	0	37	9.25	23	12
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	45	43	5	2	95	23.75	45	43
4.	Adult	13	19	3	2	37	9.25	19	13
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20

	Total	46	39	6	4	95	23.75	46	39
5.	Adult	13	22	1	1	37	9.25	22	13
	Young	21	32	3	2	58	14.5	32	21
	Total	34	54	4	3	95	23.75	54	34

The mean (\bar{X}) across all items is 23.75, indicating that a significant number of Shila Boys agree that social acceptance plays a key role in sustaining group membership. The mode, representing the most frequently occurring response, highlights that strong agreement (SA and A) is predominant, with modes of 49, 56, and 54, suggesting that many respondents believe social acceptance is essential for remaining in the group. The median, which represents the midpoint of responses, aligns with the mode, confirming that most respondents acknowledge social acceptance as a crucial factor for group cohesion among Shila Boys. Overall, the findings suggest that Shila Boys remain in their peer groups due to the need for social acceptance, as reflected in the high agreement rates across all items. This emphasizes the role of peer validation in their continued membership.

Table 4. Presents responses from research question 4. What intervention strategies can help mitigate negative peer influence?

Item	Age	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Mode	Media
1.	Adult	12	23	2	0	37	9.25	23	12
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	45	43	5	2	95	23.75	45	43
2.	Adult	13	19	3	2	37	9.25	19	13
	Young	33	20	3	2	58	14.5	33	20
	Total	46	39	6	4	95	23.75	46	39
3.	Adult	13	22	1	1	37	9.25	22	13
	Young	21	32	3	2	58	14.5	32	21
	Total	34	54	4	3	95	23.75	54	34
4.	Adult	12	22	1	2	37	9.25	22	12
	Young	15	38	3	2	58	14.5	38	15

	Total	27	60	4	4	95	23.75	60	27
5.	Adult	10	23	2	2	37	9.25	23	10
	Young	21	32	3	2	58	14.5	32	21
	Total	31	55	5	4	95	23.75	55	31

The mean (\bar{X}) across all items is 23.75, indicating that most respondents strongly agree or agree that intervention strategies can effectively mitigate negative peer influence. The mode, representing the most frequent response, highlights that agreement (SA and A) dominates across the items, with modes of 45, 46, 54, 60, and 55. This suggests that the majority of Shila Boys believe intervention strategies are essential. The median, aligning with the mode, confirms that most respondents acknowledge the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

Therefore, The findings suggest that structured intervention strategies such as mentorship programs, community engagement, and educational support can help mitigate the negative influence of peer pressure among Shila Boys. The strong agreement among participants underscores the importance of targeted social programs to curb delinquent behavior.

Discussion

The findings from Tables 1 to 4 provide critical insights into peer influence among Shila Boys, its impact, and potential intervention strategies.

Table 1 highlights that peer influence is strongly linked to factors such as social environment and group dynamics, as most respondents either strongly agreed (SA) or agreed (A) with the listed factors. The mode values indicate that peer groups significantly shape behavior, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions.

Table 2 examines how peer pressure leads to delinquent activities, with a dominant mode in the SA and A categories, demonstrating that peer pressure contributes significantly to negative behaviors such as theft and violence. The findings suggest that peer-driven delinquency is a widespread issue requiring urgent attention.

Table 3 reveals that social acceptance plays a key role in sustaining group membership, with most responses concentrated in the SA and A categories. The high mean values suggest that many Shila Boys remain in these groups due to a sense of belonging and recognition.

Table 4 focuses on intervention strategies, with a strong consensus on the need for structured programs to mitigate negative peer influence. The high agreement rates suggest that mentorship, community engagement, and educational initiatives could help reform at-risk youth. Overall, the results emphasize that peer influence is a major driver of delinquent behavior, sustained by social acceptance, but can be mitigated through targeted interventions.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight the significant role of peer influence in shaping the behaviors of Shila Boys. Factors such as social environment, group dynamics, and social

acceptance strongly contribute to their engagement in delinquent activities. The results indicate that peer pressure is a dominant force driving these individuals into negative behaviors, including theft and violence, primarily due to the desire for group acceptance. Furthermore, social acceptance plays a crucial role in sustaining group membership, as many individuals remain in these groups to maintain their identity and status among peers. This suggests that breaking the cycle of peer influence requires interventions that address both behavioral and social aspects of group interactions.

The study also underscores the importance of structured intervention strategies in mitigating negative peer influence. Findings show that mentorship programs, community engagement, and educational support can help reorient at-risk youth towards positive behaviors. High levels of agreement among respondents suggest widespread recognition of the need for proactive measures to address these challenges. In conclusion, peer influence remains a critical factor in the behavioral patterns of Shila Boys, but with well-designed intervention programs, the negative effects can be significantly reduced, leading to positive social reintegration and behavioral transformation.

Recommendations

1. Schools and communities should implement mentorship programs to guide Shila Boys toward positive behavioral change.
2. Law enforcement agencies should collaborate with community leaders to monitor and reduce peer-driven delinquent activities.
3. Awareness campaigns should be organized to educate young individuals about the negative effects of peer pressure.
4. Government and NGOs should establish vocational training programs to provide alternative means of livelihood for at-risk youth.
5. Parents and guardians should play a more active role in monitoring their children's peer associations and activities.
6. Schools should introduce character education and counseling services to help students resist negative peer influence.
7. Community-based rehabilitation programs should be established to reintegrate reformed Shila Boys into society.
8. Religious and cultural institutions should promote moral teachings to discourage involvement in delinquent behaviors.
9. Media outlets should create programs that highlight the dangers of gang involvement and the benefits of positive peer influence.
10. Government policies should support youth empowerment initiatives to prevent young people from engaging in criminal activities.

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