

Assessing the Influence of Cognitive Distortion on Deviant Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Abiodun Tubosun Odusote¹, Adeyinka O. Tonade², Temidayo Iheanyichukwu³

^{1,3}Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-iwoye Ogun State, Nigeria

²Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counselling School of General Education
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria,

Abstract

This study explored the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods survey design, the research incorporated photographic data collection to capture the nuanced behaviour of students. A sample of 328 students was randomly selected from five secondary schools. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour ($r = 0.745$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting that students with higher cognitive distortion are likelier to exhibit deviant behaviour. Additionally, the analysis uncovered notable differences in deviant behaviour based on different schools $F(2,159) = 12.692$, $p < 0.01$), emphasising the role of school environments and culture in shaping student conduct.

These insights underscore the need for targeted interventions to mitigate deviant behaviour. Strategies such as cognitive restructuring and problem-solving training could effectively address cognitive distortion. Enhancing school climates and fostering positive teacher-student relationships may further curtail deviance. This research contributes to understanding the interplay between mental processes and behaviour, offering a foundation for policies and programmes to promote healthier student development.

Keywords: Assessing, Cognitive Distortion, Deviant Behaviour, Influence

Introduction

Education is the foundation upon which academic excellence is built, cultivating minds that innovate, create, and transform lives and communities. Education contributes significantly to the cognitive, emotional, and social advancement of individuals, both the present and future generations. In Nigeria, secondary school education plays a crucial role in helping people acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life and make their communities better. However, in Oyo State, a disturbing trend among secondary school students undermines this vision. This trend is marked by deviant behaviour, including truancy, substance abuse, cyber delinquency, and violence. These behaviours disrupt learning environments, compromise academic outcomes, and ultimately jeopardise the prospects of affected students. Deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State manifests in diverse forms, disrupting school

standards and businesses around the school premises. These actions often have far-reaching consequences, ranging from threats to life, sexual promiscuity, and social rejection to diminished educational and career prospects (Ogunyemi, 2011; Olowofela, 2017).

Research indicates that cognitive distortion – irrational or biased thought patterns – significantly influences the development of deviant behaviour (Beck, 2011; Seaman & Ikegwuonu, 2010). Cognitive distortion refers to the process by which individuals develop and maintain biased or irrational thought patterns, influencing their perceptions, beliefs, and actions (Adebayo, 2013; Beck, 2011). For instance, a student involved in deviant behaviour might justify their actions by believing, "Since everyone else is participating, then it is fine for me to do it too" (Oladeji, 2015; Seaman & Ikegwuonu, 2010). These distorted thought patterns can result in adverse outcomes, such as social exclusion and emotional distress.

Engaging in deviant behaviour as secondary school students can have serious repercussions on their mental well-being and future opportunities (Adebowale, 2017; Morhanson-Bello, 2008). This behaviour can lead to addiction, health problems, and lasting effects on educational and career ambitions (Ogunyemi, 2015). The destruction of environmental properties and engagement in harmful actions, including vandalism and arson (Musliudeen, 2018), pose serious dangers and greatly endanger the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and the community at large.

Assessing the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, particularly in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria, is a crucial issue. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, particularly in Ibadan Metropolis, have escalated into a pressing concern with far-reaching implications for education and society. These behaviours, including fighting, drug abuse, cyber delinquency, and nonchalant attitudes, disrupt academic environments, threaten students' mental health, and hinder their future prospects. Reports from schools in the region highlight an alarming increase in incidents of violence, substance abuse, and truancy, underscoring the need for urgent intervention. While various factors contribute to these behaviours, cognitive distortion-irrational or biased thought patterns-emerge as a critical yet under-examined determinant. Cognitive distortion shape how students perceive and respond to their environment, often justifying or perpetuating maladaptive behaviour. For instance, students may rationalise violence as self-defence or excuse truancy by normalising it as a common practice. These distorted thought patterns not only fuel deviant behaviour but also impede academic performance, leading to poor grades, social rejection, and psychological distress. Despite the acknowledgment of family dynamics, societal norms, and school environments as contributing factors, limited

attention has been given to understanding the direct and interactive roles of cognitive distortion in fostering deviant behaviour. Additionally, there is insufficient data on how these influences vary across demographic factors such as gender, age, and schools, leaving critical gaps in the literature and hindering the development of targeted interventions. The implications of this issue extend beyond individual students, affecting school safety, teacher-student relationships, and societal well-being. Addressing deviant behaviour rooted in cognitive distortion is vital to creating conducive learning environments and equipping students with the skills for healthier cognitive and behavioural patterns. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. It aims to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to design evidence-based interventions that mitigate this behaviour and promote academic and personal success.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to assess the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. investigate the relationship between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. examine the differences in deviant behaviour between male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.
3. determine the differences in deviant behaviour among secondary school students across different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between deviant behaviour and cognitive distortion among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in deviant behaviour of male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in deviant behaviour among secondary school

students across different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods survey research design, supplemented by photographic data collection, to investigate the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. This approach was selected as it allows for a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in a naturalistic setting, where the researcher cannot manipulate the variables being studied.

Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of students from five secondary schools in the Ibadan Metropolis: School A, School B, School C, School D, and School E. These included male and female students across Junior Secondary School (J.S.1) to Senior Secondary School (S.S.3) classes, with a total of 328 participants. The selection of these schools was informed by my personal observation of their prevalent acts of deviant behaviour, which was further corroborated by videos, pictures obtained from the neighbourhood as evidence. This evidence depicted the use of cutlasses, stones, and local charms to inflict harm on students from other schools. Online source, including reputable news platforms such as Metronaija <https://www.metronaija.com/2016/08/photos-secondary-school-students-fight.html> and <https://insideoyo.com/see-viral-video-of-secondary-school-students-fighting-in-ibadan-with-cutlass/> also substantiate the prevalence of deviant behaviour in these schools. Based on these cumulative sources of evidence, it is evident that these schools have experienced incidents of deviant behaviour, thereby justifying their selection as the target population for this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the schools, ensuring that those with higher occurrences of deviant behaviour were included. Within each of these schools, a random sampling method was used to select 70 students each from five different schools, totalling 350 students and eventually, only 328 students

completely filled the questionnaires that was used for the study. This study ensures a fair representation of the target population of male and female, totalling 328 students that was randomly selected from the five different schools.

Instrumentation

The data for this study was collected through two scales:

1. Cognitive Distortion Scale (CDS)
2. Deviant Behavioural Questionnaire (DBQ)

1. The Cognitive Distortion Scale (CDS) is a standardised self-report tool consisting of 40 items, created by Briere in 2000, designed to evaluate how frequently individuals encounter cognitive distortion or irrational thoughts paired with negative thinking patterns. This scale possesses a Cronbach alpha of 0.79. The scale has 5-point Likert scale, ranging from: 1 = Never; 2 = Once or Twice; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Very Often.

2. The Deviant Behavioural Questionnaire (DBQ) was developed by the researcher, with the help of experts in the field of test and measurement. The scale comprises 55 items, the questionnaire is divided into 6 dimensions: violent deviant behaviour, non-violent deviant behaviour, social deviant behaviour, sexual deviant behaviour, emotional deviant behaviour, and cyber deviant behaviour. It employs a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Almost Always. The psychometric properties of the questionnaire indicate a strong reliability coefficient alpha of 0.81. This scale is particularly effective in identifying deviant behaviour, especially those that are less visible. Additionally, the questionnaire assesses the frequency and variety of individual deviant behaviour, providing valuable insights into problematic and antisocial conducts and potential solutions to these issues.

Data Collection Procedure

Two instruments were administered to the participants in their schools during the school hours. The research was carried out in (5) five different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. The questionnaires were administered to 328

secondary school students from public secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed with correlation, t-test and Welch ANOVA.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the school authority. The participant was informed and allowed to participate without any form of force or any harm, in order to ensure freedom of participation, confidentiality and ethical standard.

Results

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

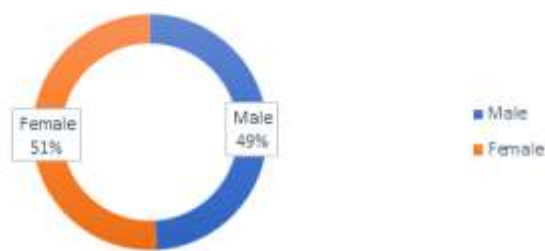


Fig. 1. Pie-chart showing percentage distribution of the respondents by gender

The chart indicates that female students constitute 51% of the respondents while male students were made up of 49%. This shows that majority of the respondents were female secondary schools' students.

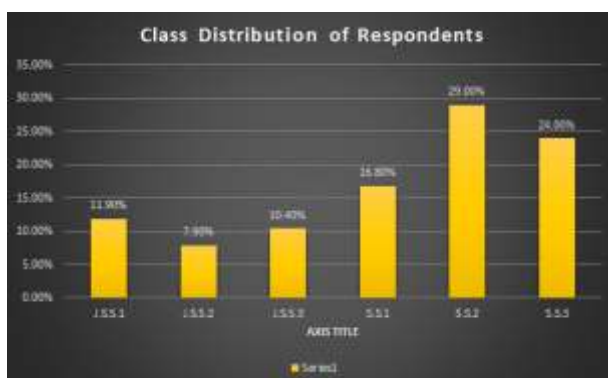


Fig. 2. Bar-chart showing percentage distribution of the respondents by class. The chart indicates that SS2 students constitute 29% of the respondents. This shows that majority of the respondents were senior secondary school two students.

Age Distribution of the Respondents



Fig.3. Pie-chart showing Age distribution of the respondents.

The chart shows that 10% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 10-12years, 20% were in the age range of 13-15years while 70% were in the age bracket of 16-18years. This implies that majority of the respondents were in the age group of 16-18 years.

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between deviant behaviour and cognitive distortion among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Summary of correlation matrix showing the relationship between deviant behaviour and cognitive distortion among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	STD	Deviant Behaviour	Cognitive Distortion
Deviant Behaviour	328	121.23	33.85	1.00	
Cognitive Distortion	328	88.95	24.35	0.745	1.00

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 1 above reveals the relationship between the independent variable (Cognitive Distortion) and the dependent variable (Deviant Behaviour). The result shows that deviant behaviour positively correlate with cognitive distortion ($r = 0.745$, $P < 0.01$). This implies that increase in cognitive distortion of the students heightens the deviant behaviour of secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in deviant behaviour of male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of T-test showing differences in deviant behaviour of male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Variable	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	STD	Df	T	Sig	P
Deviant behaviour	Male	161	118.56	30.016	326	-1.406	.161	>.05
	Female	167	123.81	37.094				

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference in the deviant behaviour of male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria; $t_{(326)} = -1.406$, $p > .05$. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Meaning that there is no significant difference in deviant behaviour of male and female secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Question 3

There is no significant difference in deviant behaviour among secondary school students across different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of Welch Anova showing the difference in deviant behaviour among secondary school students across different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	12.692	4	159.791	.000
Brown Forsythe	8.413	4	239.025	.000

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 3: reveals a significant difference in deviant behaviour among secondary school students across different schools in Oyo State, Nigeria; $F_{(4,159)} = 12.692$; $p < 0.01$. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. To further understand the area of differences among the schools, a Post Hoc analysis was conducted using Games Howel as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Games Howell comparison showing variance in participant's deviant behaviour across different schools.

(I) Different Schools	(J) Different Schools	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
School E $\bar{x} = 129.895$	School D	25.095	6.404	.002
	School C	16.818	6.882	.112
	School B	2.274	6.866	.997
	School A	-.535	6.779	1.000
School D $\bar{x} = 104.800$	School E	-25.095	6.404	.002
	School C	-8.276	4.486	.353
	School B	-22.821	4,461	.000
	School A	-25.630	4,325	.000

School C $\bar{x} = 113.076$	School E	-16.818	6.882	.112
	School D	8.276	4.486	.353
	School B	-14.544	5.125	.041
	School A	-17.353	5.007	.006
School B $\bar{x} = 127.621$	School E	-2.274	6.866	.997
	School D	22.821	4.461	.000
	School C	14.544	5.125	.041
	School A	-2.809	4.984	.980
School A $\bar{x} = 130.43$	School E	.535	6.779	1.000
	School D	25.630	4.325	.000
	School C	17.353	5.007	.006
	School B	2.809	4.984	.980

Table 3.1 above reveals that there are variances in participant's deviant behaviour going by the school attended for the study. Participants of School A ($\bar{x} = 130.43$, $p < .05$), recorded the highest mean score on deviant behaviour followed by participants of School E ($\bar{x} = 129.895$, $p < .05$); School B ($\bar{x} = 127.621$, $p < .05$); School C ($\bar{x} = 113.076$, $p < .05$); and School D ($\bar{x} = 104.80$, $p < .05$); respectively. By implication,

deviant behaviour is traceable to the different schools attended among the secondary school students.

Photograph 1: Some of the secondary school students of School A and School B, threatening themselves with cutlasses, stones and local charms in the neighbourhood, thereby demonstrating a deviant behaviour.



Sources:

1. <https://www.nairaland.com/3284862/secondary-students-fight-cutlass-ibadan>
2. <https://www.naijaloaded.com.ng/news-update/secondary-school-students-clash-ibadan-photos>

Photograph 2: Some of the secondary school students of School X and School Y, fighting with cutlasses and stones over girlfriends/relationships in Ibadan, thereby demonstrating a deviant behaviour.



Source: <https://insideoyo.com/see-viral-video-of-secondary-school-students-fighting-in-ibadan-with-cutlass/>

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The positive correlation ($r=0.745$, $p<0.01$) between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour suggests that as students' cognitive distortion increases, their likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviour also tends to increase. This correlation is consistent with the theoretical framework of cognitive-behavioural theory which posits that distorted or unhelpful thinking patterns can contribute to the development and maintenance of problem behaviours (Beck, 2011). One of the key findings of this study is that cognitive distortion is significantly associated with deviant behaviour among secondary school students, which is in line with the existing literature that cognitive distortion can lead to increased aggression, delinquency and other forms of deviant behaviour among secondary school students. This association highlights the importance of addressing cognitive distortion in prevention and intervention programmes aimed at reducing deviant behaviour among secondary school students.

However, the study found no significant

difference in deviant behaviour between male and female secondary school students. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has reported that gender is not a significant predictor of deviant behaviour among secondary school students (Egwu, 2015). This result suggests that deviant behaviour among secondary school students may be influenced by factors beyond gender, such as cognitive distortion, school environment and peer relationships. Interestingly, the study revealed significant differences in deviant behaviour among students from different schools. Specifically, students from School A and School E recorded the highest mean scores on deviant behaviour. This finding suggests that school environment and culture may play a significant role in shaping deviant behaviour among secondary school students. Research has shown that school factors, such as school climate, teacher-student relationships and peer relationships, can influence deviant behaviour among secondary school students (Okorodudu, 2012). The study's results highlight the importance of considering school-level factors in prevention and intervention programmes aimed at reducing deviant behaviour. Furthermore, addressing cognitive distortion and school environmental

factors may be critical in preventing and reducing deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the relationship between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour, indicating that students with higher levels of cognitive distortion are more likely to engage in deviant behaviour. Significant differences in deviant behaviour were also found among students from different secondary schools.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching and profound, emphasising the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing deviant behaviour among secondary school students. It is evident that cognitive distortion is a critical factor in the development and maintenance of deviant behaviour, and therefore, targeted interventions aimed at addressing this distortion are likely to be highly effective. Ultimately, this study's findings have significant implications for the development of evidence-based prevention and intervention programmes aimed at reducing deviant behaviour among secondary school students. Future research should continue to explore the complex interplay between cognitive, social, and environmental factors that contribute to deviant behaviour among secondary school students, to inform the development of increasingly effective interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to address the influence of cognitive distortion on deviant behaviour among secondary school students:

1. **Implement Cognitive-Behavioural Interventions:** Schools should incorporate cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques into their counselling programmes. These interventions can help students identify and challenge cognitive distortion, ultimately reducing the likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviour.

2. **Teacher and School Staff Training:** Educators and school staff should receive training to recognise the signs of cognitive distortion and deviant behaviour in students. By understanding the connection between distorted thinking patterns and misbehaviour, staff can implement early intervention strategies to guide students towards more positive behaviour.
3. **School Environment and Culture Adjustment:** Since the study found significant differences in deviant behaviour across different schools, it is recommended that schools should create a more inclusive, supportive, and structured environment. This can involve fostering positive peer interactions, promoting mental health awareness, and emphasising respect and discipline through clear guidelines and consistent enforcement.
4. **Peer Mediation Programmes:** Schools should establish peer mediation programmes where students are trained to mediate conflicts and encourage positive behaviour among their peers. These programmes can help address negative social influences and reduce the occurrence of deviant behaviour.
5. **Parental Involvement:** Schools should actively engage parents in the process by providing workshops or resources to help them understand cognitive distortion and their impact on behaviour. Encouraging open communication between school and home will help ensure that students receive consistent guidance.
6. **Promote Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:** Encourage students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through workshops or extracurricular activities. This will help students to analyse situations and make decisions that are less likely to be influenced by cognitive distortion.
7. **Psychological Support Services:** Schools should establish or enhance psychological support services to

provide students with individualised counselling and therapy, addressing both cognitive distortion and behavioural issues. These services can offer students a safe space to explore their thoughts and emotions while learning coping strategies.

References

- Adebayo, B. (2013). Family dynamics and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 35(2), 147-156.
- Adebowale, S. A. (2017). Sexual behaviour among adolescents in Nigeria: A review of the literature. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 61(4), 432-438.
- Adenugba, A., & Ijagbone, I. (2012). Substance abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria. *Journal of Substance Use*, 17(3), 251-262.
- Beck, A. T. (2011). Cognitive-behavioural therapy: Basics and beyond. Guilford Press.
- Egwu, E. (2015). Deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria: A study of the causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 13(1), 1-9.
- Insideoyo, (2018). Secondary school students fighting. Insideoyo. <https://insideoyo.com/see-viral-video-of-secondary-school-students-fighting-in-ibadan-with-cutlass/>
- Morhanson-Bello, I. O. (2008). Premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents in Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 42(3), 251-258.
- Musliudeen, A. (2018). Vandalism and arson in Nigerian secondary schools: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 16(1), 1-10.
- Naijaloaded, (2016). Secondary school students clash. Naijaloaded. <https://www.naijaloaded.com.ng/news-update/secondary-school-students-clash-ibadan-photos>
- Nairaland (n.d). Secondary school fight. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/3284862/secondary-students-fight-cutlass-ibadan>
- Ogunyemi, A. O. (2011). Rape and sexual abuse among adolescents in Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 49(4), 433-438.
- Ogunyemi, A. O. (2015). Emotional and behavioural problems among adolescents in Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56(4), 432-438.
- Okorodudu, R. (2012). Truancy among secondary school students in Nigeria: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 10(1), 1-8.
- Oladeji, O. (2015). Aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 12(1), 1-8.
- Olowofela, O. (2017). Deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria: A study of the causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 14(1), 1-9.
- Seaman, P., & Ikegwuonu, T. (2010). Substance abuse and mental health problems among adolescents in Nigeria. *Journal of Substance Use*, 15(3), 251-262.