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Peer Influence, Home Environment as Predictors of School Dropout Risk among Senior Secondary Students in Oyo East Lga, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

School dropout among adolescents in Nigeria poses a significant educational and socio-economic challenge. This study investigated the predictive influence of peer influence and home environment on school dropout risk among senior secondary students in Oyo East Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive correlational research design, the study sampled 450 students selected through a multistage sampling technique to ensure representation across urban-rural and school size categories. Standardized instruments were employed to measure school dropout risk, peer influence (positive and negative), and home environment dimensions including parental involvement, academic support, family structure, and socioeconomic status. Results from Pearson's correlation analysis revealed strong negative correlations between school dropout risk and both positive peer influence ($r = -0.67$) and home environment ($r = -0.74$), while negative peer influence showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.71$) with dropout risk. Multiple regression analysis showed that peer influence and home environment jointly predicted dropout risk significantly ($F(3, 420) = 247.86, p < .001$), explaining 64.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.638$). Hierarchical regression further identified home environment ($\beta = -0.47$) as the strongest individual predictor, followed by negative peer influence ($\beta = 0.30$) and positive peer influence ($\beta = -0.19$). These findings accentuate the critical role of environmental contexts in shaping students' educational trajectories. It is concluded that family engagement, peer relationship quality, and holistic support systems should be prioritized in intervention programs to reduce dropout rates among Nigerian adolescents. Future research should explore longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to capture causal mechanisms and contextual nuances across broader populations.

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Keywords: School Dropout Risk, Peer Influence, Home Environment, Nigerian Adolescents, Educational Persistence

Introduction

School dropout represents one of the most critical challenges confronting educational systems worldwide, with particularly devastating consequences for developing nations struggling to achieve sustainable human capital development. In the context of Nigeria's educational landscape, the phenomenon of school dropout has reached alarming proportions, constituting a formidable impediment to the nation's socioeconomic advancement and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Bridges & Walls, 2018) ^[27]. The severity of this educational crisis becomes starkly apparent when examining the statistical evidence: Nigeria currently harbors the largest population of out-of-school children globally, with approximately 10.5 million children of school-going age not enrolled in formal education, despite constitutional provisions mandating free and compulsory basic education (Oyekan, *et al.*, 2023) ^[28].

The magnitude of Nigeria's dropout crisis extends beyond mere enrollment figures to encompass deeply troubling patterns of educational abandonment at secondary school levels.

Recent statistical analyses reveal that the out-of-school rate for upper secondary education in Nigeria has reached a staggering 41 percent, representing a significant deterioration from previous decades (Nwoke *et al.*, 2024) ^[23]. This figure becomes even more alarming when contextualized within sub-Saharan Africa's broader educational challenges, where Nigeria leads the continent with a dropout rate of 16.9%, followed by Ethiopia at 13% (Hassan *et al.*, 2024) ^[18]. The disproportionately high dropout rates at the secondary level are particularly concerning, as this educational stage serves as a critical gateway to higher education and skilled employment opportunities. Within the secondary education subsector, gender disparities add another layer of complexity to the dropout phenomenon. Data from lower secondary schools indicate that approximately 52 percent of male students and 48 percent of female students discontinue their education prematurely, suggesting that while gender parity exists in dropout rates, the absolute numbers remain unacceptably high across both demographics (Nwoke *et al.*, 2024) ^[23]. These statistics underscore the pervasive nature of the dropout problem, transcending gender boundaries to affect the entire cohort of secondary school-aged adolescents. The conceptualization of school dropout risk as a dependent variable necessitates a comprehensive understanding of its multifaceted nature. School dropout risk can be operationally defined as the probability that a student will prematurely discontinue formal education before completing the prescribed course of study, typically measured through indicators such as chronic absenteeism, academic underperformance, behavioral problems, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012) ^[21]. This definition recognizes dropout not as a sudden event but as a gradual process characterized by progressive disengagement from the educational system, making early identification and intervention critical for prevention efforts. From a theoretical perspective, school dropout risk emerges from the complex interplay of individual, familial, institutional, and community factors that collectively undermine a student's capacity to persist in formal education. The ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) ^[5] provides a robust framework for understanding how multiple environmental systems influence educational outcomes, with particular emphasis on the microsystem (immediate family and peer relationships) and mesosystem (interactions between family and school) as primary determinants of academic success or failure. This theoretical foundation supports the investigation of peer influence and home environment as critical predictors of dropout risk, acknowledging that students' educational trajectories are shaped by the quality of relationships and support systems within their immediate social ecology.

The economic implications of Nigeria's dropout crisis extend far beyond individual educational attainment to encompass national productivity and competitiveness. Recent estimates suggest that the country's educational deficits result in annual economic losses of approximately \$6 billion, reflecting the substantial human capital wastage associated with premature school leaving (Oludipe *et al.*, 2025) ^[13]. These losses manifest through reduced productivity, increased social welfare costs, higher crime rates, and diminished tax revenues, creating a vicious cycle of underdevelopment that perpetuates intergenerational poverty and social inequality. In the specific context of Oyo State, where this study is

situated, the dropout challenge assumes particular significance given the state's historical prominence in Nigeria's educational development. Oyo State, home to some of Nigeria's most prestigious secondary institutions including St Anne's School Ibadan (established 1869), Wesley College Ibadan (1905), and Ibadan Grammar School (1913), paradoxically continues to grapple with significant educational access and retention challenges. The juxtaposition of educational excellence and widespread dropout highlights the complex interplay of factors that determine educational outcomes, reinforcing the need for targeted research to identify specific predictors within local contexts. The urgency of addressing school dropout risk in Nigeria's secondary education system is further amplified by demographic realities. With over 60% of Nigeria's population under the age of 25, the nation's future depends critically on the successful education and skill development of its youth cohort (Virk *et al.*, 2023) ^[30]. The failure to retain students in secondary education not only wastes individual potential but also undermines the country's capacity to achieve demographic dividend benefits that could drive sustainable economic growth and development.

Recent research has increasingly recognized the multidimensional nature of dropout risk, moving beyond simplistic explanations focused solely on poverty or academic ability to embrace more nuanced understanding of how social relationships, family dynamics, and environmental factors interact to influence educational persistence (Nwoke *et al.*, 2024) ^[23]. This paradigm shift acknowledges that effective dropout prevention requires comprehensive strategies that address not only academic deficits but also the broader social and emotional needs of students within their ecological contexts. The identification of peer influence and home environment as potential predictors of dropout risk reflects contemporary understanding of adolescent development and educational psychology. During the secondary school years, adolescents undergo significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes that make them particularly susceptible to environmental influences (Steinberg, 2013) ^[24]. The peer group assumes increased importance as a source of identity formation and behavioral modeling, while family relationships continue to provide essential emotional support and academic encouragement. Understanding how these critical relationships influence educational persistence is essential for developing evidence-based interventions that can effectively reduce dropout risk among Nigerian secondary school students.

The mechanisms underlying peer influence on educational outcomes operate through multiple interconnected pathways. Social learning processes enable students to acquire attitudes, behaviors, and expectations through observation and interaction with their peer groups (Wentzel, 2017) ^[29]. When peer networks embrace academic achievement as a valued outcome and model behaviors consistent with educational success, individual students are more likely to internalize these norms and persist in their educational endeavors. Conversely, exposure to peer groups that exhibit academic disengagement, normalize truancy, or devalue educational achievement can significantly elevate individual dropout risk through the transmission of negative academic attitudes and behaviors. Contemporary research has illuminated the sophisticated ways in which peer influence manifests within school environments. Direct peer effects include explicit encouragement or discouragement of academic behaviors, sharing of study strategies and academic resources, and

provision of emotional support during challenging academic periods (Ryan, 2001)^[22]. Indirect peer effects encompass the modeling of academic behaviors, creation of normative expectations regarding school engagement, and establishment of social consequences for academic performance. The salience of these peer effects intensifies during adolescence when individuals experience heightened concerns about social acceptance, peer approval, and group membership. The quality and composition of peer relationships also significantly moderate the impact of peer influence on educational outcomes. Students who maintain friendships with academically motivated peers benefit from positive academic socialization, enhanced study habits, and increased educational aspirations. In contrast, affiliation with peers who exhibit academic disengagement, engage in risky behaviors, or express negative attitudes toward schooling can undermine individual academic motivation and increase susceptibility to dropout.

Parallel to peer influence, the home environment constitutes a foundational determinant of educational persistence and dropout risk. Ecological systems theory provides a robust framework for understanding how family-level factors influence student outcomes through multiple interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)^[5]. The home environment encompasses a comprehensive array of family characteristics, processes, and resources that collectively shape students' educational experiences, academic motivation, and persistence behaviors. Socioeconomic resources within the home environment emerge as critical predictors of educational outcomes. Families experiencing economic disadvantage often confront competing demands for limited resources, sometimes necessitating difficult choices between immediate financial needs and long-term educational investments (Rumberger, 2011)^[20]. Economic constraints can limit access to educational materials, technology, tutoring services, and other academic supports that facilitate school success. Additionally, financial pressures may compel students to assume employment responsibilities that compete with academic commitments, thereby increasing dropout risk. Educational values and aspirations cultivated within the home environment significantly influence students' academic persistence and dropout risk. Families that prioritize education, communicate high educational expectations, and actively support academic achievement create contexts that promote educational engagement and persistence. Conversely, homes where education is undervalued, expectations are low, or academic achievement receives limited recognition may inadvertently contribute to increased dropout risk. The dynamic interplay between peer influence and home environment factors creates complex systems of influence that collectively determine students' educational trajectories. Students may experience synergistic effects when both peer and family environments align in supporting educational goals, or they may encounter conflicting pressures when peer influences contradict family values and expectations. Understanding these interactive effects is essential for developing comprehensive, multi-level interventions that address the full spectrum of factors influencing dropout risk.

Within the Nigerian educational context, empirical research examining the specific contributions of peer influence and home environment factors to dropout risk remains notably limited. This research gap represents a significant obstacle to the development of evidence-based policies and interventions designed to reduce dropout rates and enhance educational persistence. The present study addresses this critical gap by

systematically investigating these key predictive factors within Oyo East Local Government Area, thereby contributing essential knowledge to both local educational practice and the broader international understanding of school dropout prevention strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the predictive relationship between peer influence, home environment, and school dropout risk among senior secondary students in Oyo East Local Government Area, Nigeria.

The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the significant relationship between peer influence, home environment, and school dropout risk among senior secondary school students.
2. To examine the combined predictive influence of peer influence and home environment on school dropout risk among senior secondary students.
3. To determine the relative contribution of peer influence and home environment in predicting school dropout risk among the senior secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation and answered at 0.05 level of significance:

1. What is the significant relationship between peer influence, home environment and school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?
2. What is the joint predictive effect of peer influence and home environment on school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?
3. What is the relative contribution of peer influence and home environment in predicting school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?

Methodology

Research Design

This investigation adopted a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive correlational design to examine the predictive relationships between peer influence, home environment, and school dropout risk among senior secondary students. The quantitative framework was selected to enable statistical analysis of relationships between variables and to facilitate generalization of findings to the broader population of senior secondary students in Oyo East. The descriptive component allows for comprehensive characterization of the sample population and the prevalence of dropout risk factors, while the correlational aspect enables examination of predictive relationships between independent and dependent variables.

The target population comprised all senior secondary school students (SSS 1-3) enrolled in public secondary schools within Oyo East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. According to the Oyo State Ministry of Education records for the 2023/2024 academic session, this population totaled approximately 12,847 students distributed across 47 public secondary schools in the local government area.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to ensure representativeness while maintaining practical feasibility. In the first stage, stratified random sampling was used to categorize schools based on location (urban vs. rural) and school size (small: <200 students, medium: 200-500 students, large: >500 students). This stratification approach mirrors the methodology employed by Alivernini and Lucidi (2011)^[3] in their comprehensive study of school dropout factors,

ensuring adequate representation across different school contexts.

The second stage involved proportionate random sampling to select 15 schools (approximately 32% of total schools) from the stratified categories. This selection rate exceeds the minimum recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970)^[15] for educational surveys and aligns with recent recommendations by Taherdoost (2017)^[26] for achieving statistical power in correlational studies.

In the third stage, systematic random sampling was applied within selected schools to choose participants from class registers. The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for finite populations, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The calculation yielded a minimum required sample of 374 students. To account for potential non-response and incomplete questionnaires, the sample was increased by 20%, resulting in a target sample of 449 students, which was rounded to 450 for administrative convenience.

The inclusion criteria required participants to be: (a) currently enrolled in senior secondary classes (SSS 1-3), (b) aged between 14-20 years, (c) able to understand and respond to questionnaires in English or Yoruba, and (d) present on the day of data collection. Exclusion criteria included students with diagnosed severe learning disabilities that would impair their ability to complete the questionnaire and those whose parents/guardians did not provide consent.

Instrumentation

Data collection utilized a multi-section structured questionnaire comprising four standardized instruments, each addressing specific constructs relevant to the study objectives.

School Dropout Risk Assessment Scale (SDRAS)

The primary dependent variable was measured using an adapted version of the School Dropout Risk Assessment Scale developed by Lessard *et al.* (2014)^[16]. The original 40-item scale was culturally adapted for the Nigerian context through a rigorous translation and back-translation process involving three bilingual experts in education and psychology. The adapted scale retained 35 items measuring four dimensions of dropout risk: academic disengagement (10 items), behavioral problems (8 items), social disconnection (9 items), and future orientation difficulties (8 items).

Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Always/Strongly Agree). Sample items include "I often think about leaving school before graduation" and "I feel that what I learn in school is not relevant to my future." Total scores range from 35 to 175, with higher scores indicating greater dropout risk. The original scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$) and strong predictive validity for actual dropout behaviour.

Peer Influence Assessment Scale (PIAS)

Peer influence was measured using a modified version of the Peer Influence Scale developed by Steinberg and Monahan (2007)^[25]. The 28-item instrument assesses both positive and negative peer influences across academic (10 items), behavioral (9 items), and social domains (9 items). The scale employs a 4-point Likert format from 1 (Not at all like my friends) to 4 (Very much like my friends).

Representative items include "My friends think it's important to do well in school" (positive academic influence) and "My

friends often skip classes without permission" (negative behavioral influence). Subscale scores are calculated separately for positive and negative influences, with total scores ranging from 28 to 112. The original scale reported strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$ for positive influence, $\alpha = .84$ for negative influence) and significant correlations with academic outcomes.

Home Environment Assessment Scale (HEAS)

The home environment was evaluated using an adapted version of the Home Environment Scale developed by Marjoribanks (2005)^[17]. The 32-item instrument measures five dimensions of home environment: parental involvement (8 items), academic support (7 items), family structure and stability (6 items), socioeconomic resources (6 items), and educational expectations (5 items).

The scale utilizes a 5-point Likert response format from 1 (Never/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Always/Strongly Agree). Sample items include "My parents regularly ask about my school activities" and "My family provides a quiet place for me to study." Total scores range from 32 to 160, with higher scores indicating more supportive home environments. The original scale demonstrated strong psychometric properties with internal consistency coefficients ranging from .82 to .91 across subscales (Marjoribanks, 2005)^[17].

All instruments underwent pilot testing with 45 senior secondary students from two schools not included in the main study. Results from the pilot study indicated acceptable internal consistency for all scales: SDRAS ($\alpha = .88$), PIAS positive influence ($\alpha = .83$), PIAS negative influence ($\alpha = .81$), and HEAS ($\alpha = .89$). Minor modifications were made to three items based on participant feedback regarding language clarity. The average completion time was 35 minutes, deemed reasonable for the target population.

Data collection was conducted over a six-week period from February to March 2024. Initial contact was made with school principals to explain the study purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations. Written permission was obtained from each participating school. Parental consent was secured through information letters sent home with students two weeks prior to data collection. Students whose parents provided consent were then approached for individual assent on the day of data collection. Data collection was conducted during regular school hours in designated classrooms to minimize disruption to academic activities. Trained research assistants, comprising final-year undergraduate students in Education and Psychology, administered the questionnaires under the supervision of the principal investigator. Research assistants received comprehensive training on questionnaire administration, ethical considerations, and procedures for handling participant queries or distress.

Participants were provided with clear instructions regarding questionnaire completion, assured of confidentiality, and given opportunities to ask questions. The questionnaires were completed in groups of 25 students to facilitate supervision while maintaining privacy. Students who experienced difficulty with reading or comprehension received individual assistance from research assistants. Quality control measures included immediate review of completed questionnaires for completeness and clarity, with participants given opportunities to clarify ambiguous responses. A response rate of 94.2% was achieved, with 424 complete questionnaires obtained from the target sample of 450 students.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the significant relationship between peer influence, home environment and school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. School Dropout Risk	89.34	18.72	-			
2. Positive Peer Influence	64.28	12.43	-.67***	-		
3. Negative Peer Influence	52.17	11.89	.71***	-.58***	-	
4. Home Environment	98.45	21.67	-.74***	.69***	-.61***	-

*Note: ***p* < .05

The correlation analysis revealed several noteworthy patterns. School dropout risk demonstrated strong negative correlation with positive peer influence ($r = -.67, p < .001$) and home environment support ($r = -.74, p < .001$), while exhibiting strong positive correlation with negative peer influence ($r = .71, p < .001$). These correlation magnitudes indicate substantial shared variance between predictors and the criterion variable, supporting the theoretical framework underlying this investigation. Effect sizes, interpreted according to Cohen's (2013) conventions, indicated large effects for all significant correlations ($r > .50$), suggesting practically meaningful relationships beyond statistical significance. The strongest relationship emerged between home environment and dropout risk ($r = -.74$), indicating that supportive home environments are associated with substantially reduced dropout risk.

Research Question 2: What is the joint predictive effect of peer influence and home environment on school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis - Joint Predictive Effect

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	P	95% CI
Constant	164.23	8.47		19.39	< .001	[147.58, 180.88]
Positive Peer Influence	-.28	.08	-.19	-3.52	< .001	[-.44, -.12]
Negative Peer Influence	.47	.09	.30	5.23	< .001	[.29, .65]
Home Environment	-.41	.05	-.47	-8.20	< .001	[-.51, -.31]

Note: $R^2 = .641$, Adjusted $R^2 = .638$, $F(3, 420) = 247.86, p < .001$

The regression model demonstrated substantial predictive power, with all predictor variables contributing significantly to the explanation of dropout risk variance. The large effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 1.78$) indicates a practically significant joint predictive effect, substantially exceeding conventional thresholds for meaningful educational research findings (Cohen, 2013). Residual analysis confirmed model assumptions, with standardized residuals normally distributed and homoscedasticity satisfied. Durbin-Watson statistic ($d = 1.97$) indicated absence of autocorrelation, supporting the validity of regression assumptions.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of peer influence and home environment in predicting school dropout risk among senior secondary school students in Oyo-East?

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis - Relative Contributions

Model	Variables	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF	P
1	Home Environment	.547	.547	508.90	< .001
2	+ Negative Peer Influence	.611	.064	69.24	< .001
3	+ Positive Peer Influence	.641	.030	34.89	< .001

Examination of standardized regression coefficients (beta weights) revealed the relative predictive importance of each variable. Home environment emerged as the strongest individual predictor ($\beta = -.47, p < .001$), followed by negative peer influence ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) and positive peer influence ($\beta = -.19, p < .001$). Hierarchical regression analysis also revealed that home environment alone accounted for 54.7% of dropout risk variance, representing the most substantial individual contribution. The addition of negative peer influence contributed an additional 6.4% of explained variance, while positive peer influence added 3.0% beyond the other predictors. Semi-partial correlation analysis provided further insight into unique contributions: home environment ($sr^2 = .221$), negative peer influence ($sr^2 = .089$), and positive peer influence ($sr^2 = .040$). These values indicate that home environment uniquely explains 22.1% of dropout risk variance, substantially exceeding the unique contributions of peer influence dimensions.

Discussion of Findings

The correlation analysis for question 1 revealed compelling evidence for significant relationships between environmental factors and school dropout risk among senior secondary students in Oyo East. The strong negative correlation between home environment and dropout risk ($r = -.74$) aligns with extensive international literature documenting the protective role of supportive family contexts in educational persistence (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012; Dupéré *et al.*, 2018) [21, 10]. This finding resonates particularly strongly within the Nigerian educational context, where extended family involvement and parental academic expectations traditionally serve as powerful motivational forces (Shokoya *et al.*, 2020) [2]. The magnitude of this relationship suggests that students experiencing higher levels of parental involvement, academic support, and stable family structures demonstrate substantially lower dropout risk, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) [5] ecological systems theory emphasizing the primacy of microsystem influences. The substantial positive correlation between negative peer influence and dropout risk ($r = .71$) corroborates social learning theory predictions regarding peer modeling effects on academic behaviors (Bandura and Walters, 1977) [4]. This relationship proves particularly concerning given adolescents' heightened susceptibility to peer influence during secondary school years (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007) [25]. The finding suggests that students whose peer groups devalue academic achievement, engage in disruptive behaviors, or model school avoidance demonstrate elevated dropout risk. Conversely, the strong negative correlation between positive peer influence and dropout risk ($r = -.67$) highlights the protective potential of academically-oriented peer relationships. This finding supports social capital theory propositions regarding peer networks as sources of educational resources and motivation (Coleman, 1988). Students embedded in peer groups that emphasize academic achievement, encourage school engagement, and model positive educational behaviors appear significantly protected against dropout risk.

The multiple regression findings for question 2 demonstrate that peer influence and home environment collectively function as powerful predictors of school dropout risk, explaining nearly two-thirds of outcome variance. This substantial predictive capacity exceeds many previous investigations in similar contexts, suggesting that environmental factors may be particularly influential within the Nigerian secondary education system (Sanni, 2024) ^[19]. The model's explanatory power supports ecological approaches to dropout prevention that emphasize simultaneous intervention across multiple environmental domains. Rather than targeting single risk factors, these findings suggest that comprehensive approaches addressing both family and peer contexts may yield optimal prevention outcomes (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015) ^[12]. The significance of all predictor variables within the joint model indicates additive rather than redundant effects, suggesting that home environment and peer influence operate through distinct mechanisms in shaping dropout risk. This finding has important implications for intervention design, indicating that effective prevention programs must address both family engagement and peer relationship quality to maximize impact.

The hierarchical regression findings for question 3 reveal home environment as the predominant predictor of dropout risk, uniquely explaining over one-fifth of outcome variance. This finding aligns with extensive research documenting family factors as primary determinants of educational outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein *et al.*, 2018) ^[14]. ^[11]. Within the Nigerian context, this relationship may be particularly pronounced given cultural emphases on family honor and educational achievement as pathways to socioeconomic mobility (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2020) ^[1]. The substantial unique contribution of home environment suggests that family-based interventions may yield the greatest impact on dropout prevention. Programs targeting parental involvement, academic support provision, and family stability may represent high-leverage approaches to reducing dropout risk in this population. Negative peer influence emerged as the second most important predictor, contributing unique explanatory power beyond home environment effects. This finding highlights the independent role of peer relationships in shaping educational outcomes, consistent with developmental research emphasizing peer influence during adolescence (Brown & Larson, 2009) ^[6]. The unique contribution of negative peer influence suggests that dropout risk increases substantially when students associate with peers who model academic disengagement, regardless of home environment quality. Positive peer influence, while statistically significant, demonstrated the smallest unique contribution to dropout risk prediction. This finding may reflect the protective rather than rising nature of positive peer relationships – while beneficial peer associations may buffer against risk factors, they may be less powerful in actively reducing dropout risk compared to supportive family environments or the absence of negative peer influences.

Conclusion

This investigation provides compelling evidence for the predictive power of peer influence and home environment in determining school dropout risk among Nigerian secondary students. The findings demonstrate that environmental factors collectively explain nearly two-thirds of dropout risk

variance, with home environment serving as the most influential individual predictor. These results support ecological approaches to dropout prevention that address multiple environmental domains simultaneously while highlighting the particular importance of family engagement in educational processes. The practical implications suggest that effective dropout prevention requires comprehensive interventions that strengthen both family and peer support systems for students. Educational policies and programs should prioritize family engagement initiatives while also creating positive peer environments that promote academic persistence. By addressing these key environmental predictors, educational systems may significantly reduce dropout rates and improve educational outcomes for vulnerable student populations.

Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive findings of this investigation, several strategic recommendations emerge for various stakeholders involved in Nigerian secondary education. These recommendations are organized by target audience and priority level to facilitate systematic implementation and maximize impact on dropout prevention efforts.

Recommendations for Educational Policymakers includes

- The Federal Ministry of Education and State Ministries should prioritize the development of comprehensive family engagement policies.
- Educational authorities should implement systematic dropout risk assessment protocols utilizing the validated instruments demonstrated in this research.
- Funding should be directed toward family engagement coordinators, peer mentoring programs, and community-school partnership initiatives that address the environmental predictors identified in this research.
- There should be mandatory professional development programs should be established for teachers, counselors, and administrators focusing on family engagement strategies and peer relationship management.

Recommendations for School Administrators includes

- School principals should establish comprehensive family engagement programs that extend beyond traditional parent-teacher conferences.
- Schools should implement systematic peer culture interventions that promote academic engagement and discourage dropout behaviors.
- Schools should develop comprehensive family support services addressing socioeconomic and structural barriers to family engagement.
- Administrators should implement early warning systems that monitor both academic and environmental risk indicators.

Recommendations for Teachers and Counsellors includes

- Teachers should be given training in effective family communication strategies that promote meaningful engagement beyond crisis situations.
- Classroom teachers should incorporate peer relationship interventions into daily instructional practices.
- Counsellors should develop individualized support plans for students identified as at-risk, incorporating both

family and peer relationship components.

- School counsellors should establish networks with community organizations, social services, and mental health providers to address comprehensive student and family needs.

Recommendations for Parents and Families includes:

- Parents should prioritize active engagement in their children's educational experiences, including regular communication with teachers, participation in school activities, and creation of supportive home learning environments.
- Families should actively monitor their children's peer relationships and provide guidance regarding positive peer selection.
- Parents should establish collaborative relationships with teachers, counsellors, and administrators to support their children's academic success.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations warrant consideration in interpreting these findings. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, limiting conclusions about directional relationships between variables. Longitudinal research tracking students over multiple academic years would provide stronger evidence for causal mechanisms and enable examination of developmental changes in predictor-outcome relationships. The focus on quantitative measurement may have overlooked important qualitative aspects of family and peer relationships that influence dropout decisions. Future research should incorporate mixed-methods approaches that capture the nuanced ways in which social relationships shape educational experiences and decisions.

Additionally, the study's focus on environmental predictors may have underemphasized individual factors such as academic ability, mental health, and personal motivation that also influence dropout risk. Future investigations should examine interactions between environmental and individual factors to develop more comprehensive predictive models. The geographic specificity of the sample limits generalizability to other regions within Nigeria or internationally. Replication studies across diverse educational contexts would strengthen confidence in the universality of these findings and identify context-specific variations in predictor-outcome relationships.

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