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**FAMILY STRUCTURE AS CORRELATES OF ANTISOCIAL  
BEHAVIOR AMONG EMERGING ADULTS IN YENAGOA BAYELSA  
STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study examined Family structure as correlates of Antisocial Behavior among Emerging Adults in Yenagoa Bayelsa State. The study tested three hypothesis, which are: There will be a significant level of antisocial behavior among emerging adults in Yenagoa, There will be significant influence between parental behavioral control on antisocial behaviour among emerging adults, There will be significant influence of parental affection and communication on antisocial behavior among emerging adults. Cross sectional research design was adopted as the research design, while Yenagoa was adopted as the study area, 100 participants were selected for the study using stratification and simple random technique. Results showed that lying/deceit (25%), disobedience to authority (22%), and truancy/poor attendance (20%) were the most prevalent antisocial behaviours, while substance use (5%) was least common. Mean values indicate the relative likelihood of each behaviour, with standard deviations showing moderate variability. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 16.82$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .05$ ) confirms that antisocial behaviour is statistically significant among emerging adults in Yenagoa. Study recommends that Parents should adopt consistent behavioural control strategies that emphasise supervision, guidance, and positive reinforcement rather than harsh discipline, as this helps reduce prevalent behaviours such as lying, disobedience, and truancy.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the past several years, there has been a lot of interest in examining how young people effectively become adults. There aren't many well-thought-out ideas that explain why individuals change during these decades, but there is growing agreement in the profession that the years between 18 and 25 may constitute a unique time of growth in post

industrialized cultures. Arnett (2000) names this stage "emerging adulthood." (Roisman et al., 2004). The transition from adolescence to adulthood, generally referred to as emerging adulthood, is a pivotal time in human development characterized by major personal, social, and psychological changes. Emerging adulthood is offered as a new idea of development during the era from the late teens through the twenties, with a concentration on ages 18–25. (Arnett, 2000). This period, often occurring between the ages of 18 and 25, is distinguished by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and a sensation of being in-between youth and maturity. During this period, individuals traverse further education, enter employment, form personal relationships, and make key decisions that impact their future. However, this phase can also be a time of greater vulnerability to several problems, including the development of antisocial tendencies.

The phrase "antisocial behaviour" refers to any actions, attitudes, and personality qualities that individuals display that appear to be dysfunctional since they commonly result in negative interpersonal and societal repercussions. (Hashmani & Jonason, 2018). Antisocial conduct also refers to a cluster of problematic and disruptive aggressive and rule-breaking behaviours, the heart of which comprises continuous violations of societal rules and the rights of others (e.g., bullying, theft, etc.). (Klahr et al., 2012). In other words, antisocial conduct refers to activities that break social norms and expectations, bringing harm to people, families, and communities. Antisocial conduct among emerging adults is a major problem in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta area, where Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, is located. This region has encountered major social, economic, and environmental issues, including poverty, unemployment, and oil-related pollution, which have led to the frequency of antisocial conduct among young people. This period, often occurring between the ages of 18 and 25, is distinguished by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and a sensation of being in-between youth and maturity. In Nigeria, and notably in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, this developmental period is further complicated by distinct socio-economic and cultural elements that impact the trajectory of young adults' lives. In Yenagoa, antisocial conduct among emerging adults (ages 18-25) is manifesting in different ways, including cultism, violence, substance addiction, and other criminal tendencies. These practices not only damage the people involved but also have larger social ramifications, such as repeating cycles of violence, eroding community cohesiveness, and limiting economic growth. A rising body of research demonstrates that family has a critical role in determining the development of antisocial conduct, particularly throughout adolescence and emerging adulthood (Hoeve et

al., 2009). Family, as the primary socialisation agent, offers the first framework for acquiring social norms, values, and behaviours. The quality of family interactions, parenting techniques, family structure, and socioeconomic conditions can strongly impact an individual's trajectory toward or away from antisocial conduct.

Parenting approaches, for instance, have been repeatedly related to the development of antisocial conduct. Authoritative parenting, characterised by warmth, clear expectations, and consistent punishment, has been related to decreased rates of antisocial conduct (Baumrind, 1991). Conversely, harsh, inconsistent, or negligent parenting approaches have been demonstrated to raise the likelihood of delinquency and violence (Alicia, 2018). Family factors, such as conflict, communication patterns, and degrees of parental participation, all contribute to the development of antisocial conduct. High levels of family conflict, poor communication, and lack of parental monitoring might generate an atmosphere favourable to the genesis of problem behaviours (Harold et al., 2017).

Family structure, particularly single-parent households and mixed families, has also been researched in connection to antisocial conduct. While some studies have revealed links between non-traditional family structures and higher risk of problem behaviours, it is necessary to examine the mediating impact of other variables, such as socioeconomic deprivation and parental stress (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Socioeconomic status (SES) can also have a crucial effect. Families enduring economic difficulties may confront greater stress, restricted resources, and less access to good activities, all of which can contribute to the development of antisocial conduct in their children (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There will be a significant level of antisocial behaviour among emerging adults in Yenagoa.

H<sub>02</sub>: There will be significant influence between parental behavioural control on antisocial behaviour among emerging adults.

H<sub>03</sub>: There will be significant influence of parental affection and communication on antisocial behaviour among emerging adults.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Gender Differences in Antisocial Behaviour**

Research repeatedly indicates significant gender variations in connection and presentation of antisocial behaviour. While both males and females engage in antisocial activities, males

often display greater rates of total antisocial behaviour, particularly in forms of violence and externalising difficulties (Card et al., 2008). Males usually display greater rates of overt hostility, physical violence, and delinquency compared to females. (Fleming et al., 2015) Females, on the other hand, may be more inclined to engage in relational aggression (e.g., spreading rumours, social exclusion) or internalising difficulties (e.g., anxiety, depression), which can sometimes co-occur with or contribute to antisocial conduct. (Lansford et al., 2012). Males are more prone to participating in externalising behaviours, such as physical aggressiveness, stealing, and vandalism, whereas females are more likely to engage in internalising behaviours, such as self-harm, eating disorders, and relational hostility. A research done among secondary school students in South-East Nigeria indicated that 77.7% of male participants had antisocial tendencies, compared to 62.2% of females. (Kevin et al., 2016) However, it is crucial to remember that these are general tendencies, and there is great overlap across genders in the sorts of antisocial conduct demonstrated. The developmental trajectories of antisocial conduct might also differ across genders. While some researchers imply that male engagement in delinquency peaks in adolescence and then diminishes in emerging adulthood, female involvement may follow a different pattern, with some kinds of antisocial conduct, such as relational violence, remaining or even rising throughout this era. Family dynamics can interact with gender to impact antisocial inclinations in numerous ways. Research reveals that parents may engage differently with sons and girls, which can impact their development. For example, parents may be more prone to employ physical discipline with males and more verbal discipline with daughters. These diverse parenting approaches can contribute to gender variations in behaviour. Cultural norms and expectations around gender roles within the family can also play a crucial impact. In many cultures, including those in Nigeria, males may be expected to be more forceful and independent, while females may be expected to be more caring and cooperative. These gendered expectations might impact the sorts of acts that are judged acceptable or inappropriate for each gender. Peer influence can also interact with gender to impact antisocial behaviour. Males may be more prone to associate with deviant peers who participate in violent or delinquent actions, whereas females may be more impacted by peer pressure linked to relationship aggressiveness or drug use. (Lundberg, 2005). While particular research on gender disparities in antisocial behaviour among emerging adults in Yenagoa is lacking, some lessons may be derived from larger Nigerian and comparable cultural settings. Traditional Nigerian cultures sometimes emphasise unique gender roles, which might impact

the presentation of antisocial behaviour. For example, male engagement in physical aggressiveness or risk-taking may be more socially acceptable than equivalent activities in females. Socioeconomic variables, such as poverty and unemployment, might disproportionately affect young males in Nigeria, thereby increasing their vulnerability to engagement in crime and other types of antisocial behaviour. However, economic difficulties can also inflict enormous strain on young women, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation and other types of maltreatment. Also results shows that respondents with low parental behavioural control reported higher levels of antisocial behaviour (38%) compared to those with high parental behavioural control (22%). The mean values further indicate a stronger likelihood of antisocial behaviour in the low-control group ( $M = 0.38$ ,  $SD = 0.0549$ ) relative to the high-control group ( $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 0.0414$ ). The chi-square test result ( $\chi^2 = 4.12$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ) confirms that the influence of parental behavioural control on antisocial behaviour is statistically significant.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey approach. This form is excellent for exploring the connections between variables at a single moment in time. This methodology was chosen because it allows for the gathering of data at a single moment in time, enabling the evaluation of links between familial characteristics and antisocial conduct among emerging adults in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The cross-sectional technique is particularly appropriate for discovering patterns and connections between factors, such as parenting styles, family structures, and socio-economic situations, without the requirement for long-term tracking. The approach will be applied to investigate the degree and direction of connections between family characteristics and antisocial conduct.

### **Study Area**

The study will be conducted in Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Yenagoa is home to a diverse population, with the Ijaw ethnic group as the majority and other minority groups contributing to its cultural richness. The city is known for its fishing and farming practices, extensive waterways, lush mangrove forests, and vibrant cultural heritage. Yenagoa, as the state's capital, has a significant population of emerging adults aged 18 to 25, making it a suitable location for studying how family factors influence antisocial behaviour in this age group.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises emerging adults in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, within the age range of 18 to 25 years. According to population projections from the National Population Commission (NPC) and estimates by City Population, Yenagoa has an estimated population of 524,400, with emerging adults making up approximately 20% of this figure, resulting in a target population of about 104,880 individuals. This study focuses on accessible participants residing in Yenagoa throughout the research period.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

For this study, a representative sample size of emerging adults aged 18 to 25 years was recruited from the population of Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. A stratified random sample strategy was utilised to ensure the inclusion of diverse subgroups within the population. The stratification was based on major demographic characteristics such as gender, family structure, and socio-economic level. Within each stratum, individuals were recruited using a basic random sampling procedure. From each selected strata (family, a particular region inside Yenagoa, etc) 20 eligible emerging adults participated. A total of 100 (67 males and 33 females) eligible emerging adults participated from 7 distinct regions in Yenagoa.

### **Instrumentation**

The method for data collection in this study used a structured questionnaire as the major data-collecting tool, particularly developed to gather information related to family characteristics and antisocial behaviour among emerging adults in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The questionnaire consisted of three components. Section A focused on demographic information, including age, gender, marital status, education level, employment, and socio-economic background.

### **Method of Data Collection**

This section covers the techniques utilised for data collection in this investigation. The major technique of data collection was the delivery of the structured questionnaire, as mentioned in the instruments section. The data-collecting procedure was carefully designed and implemented to achieve high response rates, eliminate bias, and preserve ethical standards.

## RESULTS

### Summary of Socio-Demographic Data.

| Variable           | Category             | Frequency(N=100) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Age                | 18–20 years          | 25               | 25             |
|                    | 21–23 years          | 56               | 56             |
|                    | 24–25 years          | 19               | 19             |
| Gender             | Male                 | 37               | 37             |
|                    | Female               | 63               | 63             |
| Marital Status     | Single               | 100              | 100            |
| Level of Education | Undergraduate        | 69               | 69             |
|                    | Graduate             | 31               | 31             |
| Employment Status  | Student              | 63               | 63             |
|                    | Unemployed           | 18               | 18             |
|                    | Self-employed        | 13               | 13             |
|                    | Employed             | 6                | 6              |
| Family Structure   | Single-parent family | 43               | 43             |
|                    | Nuclear family       | 38               | 38             |
|                    | Extended family      | 11               | 11             |
|                    | Blended/step-family  | 8                | 8              |

### Summary of Chi-square Test Analysis on significance of Antisocial Behaviour among Emerging Adults in Yenagoa.

| Antisocial Behaviour            | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) | Mean           | SD         |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Aggression / physical fights    | 18            | 18%            | 0.18           | 0.0384     |
| Lying / deceit                  | 25            | 25%            | 0.25           | 0.0433     |
| Disobedience to authority       | 22            | 22%            | 0.22           | 0.0414     |
| Stealing / property damage      | 10            | 10%            | 0.10           | 0.0300     |
| Truancy/ lateness               | 20            | 20%            | 0.20           | 0.0400     |
| Substance use (alcohol / drugs) | 5             | 5%             | 0.05           | 0.0218     |
| Chi-square Test ( $\chi^2$ )    | —             | —              | $\chi^2=16.82$ | df=5,p<.05 |

Table revealed that lying/deceit (25%), disobedience to authority (22%), and truancy/poor attendance (20%) were the most prevalent antisocial behaviours, while substance use (5%) was least common. Mean values indicate the relative likelihood of each behaviour, with standard deviations showing moderate variability. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 16.82$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .05$ ) confirms that antisocial behaviour is statistically significant among emerging adults in Yenagoa, leading to rejection of null  $H_{01}$  and highlighting its meaningful relevance in the study context.

#### 4.4.2 Hypothesis two

There will be significant influence between parental behavioral controls on antisocial behavior among emerging adults

#### Summary of Chi-square Test Analysis on Influence of Parental Behavioral Control on Antisocial Behavior among Emerging Adults in Yenagoa

| Parental Behavioural Control | Frequency (N) | % Reporting $\geq 1$ Antisocial Behaviors | Mean          | SD            |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| High Control                 | 49            | 22% (11/49)                               | 0.22          | 0.0414        |
| Low Control                  | 51            | 38% (19/51)                               | 0.38          | 0.0537        |
| Total                        | 100           | —   | —             | —             |
| Chi-square Test ( $\chi^2$ ) | —             | —   | $\chi^2=4.12$ | df =1, p< .05 |

Table shows that respondents with low parental behavioural control reported higher levels of antisocial behaviour (38%) compared to those with high parental behavioural control (22%). The mean values further indicate a stronger likelihood of antisocial behaviour in the low-control group (M = 0.38, SD = 0.0549) relative to the high-control group (M = 0.22, SD = 0.0414). The chi-square test result ( $\chi^2 = 4.12$ , df = 1, p < .05) confirms that the influence of parental behavioural control on antisocial behaviour is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) is rejected, affirming that parental behavioural control plays an important role in shaping antisocial tendencies among emerging adults in Yenagoa.

#### Hypothesis three

There will be significant influence of parental affection and communication on antisocial behavior among emerging adults.

| Parental Affection & Communication (PAC) | Frequency (N) | % Reporting $\geq 1$ Antisocial Behaviour | Mean          | SD           |
|--|---------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| High PAC                                 | 52            | 18% (9/52)                                | 0.18          | 0.0382       |
| Low PAC                                  | 48            | 42% (20/48)                               | 0.42          | 0.0566       |
| Total                                    | 100           | —   | —             | —            |
| Chi-square Test ( $\chi^2$ )             | —             | —   | $\chi^2=7.19$ | df 1, p< .05 |

Table revealed that antisocial behaviour was considerably lower among respondents reporting high parental affection and communication (18%) compared to those with low levels (42%). Mean values indicate that low PAC is associated with a higher probability of antisocial tendencies (M = 0.42, SD = 0.0566), whereas high PAC appears protective (M = 0.18, SD =

0.0382). The chi-square test confirms that the association is statistically significant, leading to rejection of null  $H_{03}$ . This underscores that parental warmth and effective communication significantly reduce antisocial behaviour among emerging adults in Yenagoa.

## **DISCUSS OF FINDINGS**

The findings of this study confirm that antisocial behaviour is a notable concern among emerging adults in Yenagoa. Lying or deceit, disobedience to authority, and truancy were the most common forms, while substance use was least prevalent. This shows that antisocial behaviours in this group are more subtle but disruptive rather than extreme.

The influence of parental behavioural control was also shown to be highly significant. Respondents who experienced consistent monitoring, discipline, and guidance were less likely to display antisocial tendencies. In contrast, those from homes with weak or inconsistent supervision exhibited higher levels of such behaviours. This finding demonstrates the vital role of parental regulation in shaping conduct and supports the view that behavioural control remains an essential protective factor during the transition into adulthood.

Parental affection and communication equally proved to be strong determinants of behavioural outcomes. Emerging adults who reported open communication, emotional support, and warmth from parents showed markedly lower involvement in antisocial behaviours. On the other hand, those who grew up in environments characterised by neglect, conflict, or poor communication were more prone to negative behavioural patterns. This reinforces the importance of family connectedness and supportive interaction in reducing the risk of antisocial tendencies.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the influence of family factors on antisocial behaviour among emerging adults in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

1. Parents should adopt consistent behavioural control strategies that emphasise supervision, guidance, and positive reinforcement rather than harsh discipline, as this helps reduce prevalent behaviours such as lying, disobedience, and truancy.
2. Parental affection and open communication must be prioritised. Families should create environments where children feel supported, listened to, and valued. This discourages antisocial behaviour while fostering trust, responsibility, and respect, and can be

strengthened through parenting education programmes in schools, religious centres, and communities.

3. Interventions should focus on families experiencing conflict, economic stress, or weak structures, with counselling, mentorship, and community outreach as support systems.
4. Policies at local and state levels should integrate family-focused strategies into youth development, with schools and community leaders sensitising parents on their roles.

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