
Influence of Family-Based Factors on Antisocial Behaviors among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Antisocial behaviour among teenagers and adolescents has become a growing concern globally and in northern Nigeria. School-going adolescents increasingly engage in behaviours that violate social norms and disrupt educational environments. Previous studies have extensively examined individual and dispositional predictors of antisocial behaviour, but limited attention has been given to family-based factors within conflict-affected contexts. This study examined the influence of parenting styles, parenting monitoring and supervision, and family cohesion on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Biu, Borno State. An ex-post factor cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and 150 students were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Standardised instruments were used to assess the study variables. Data were analysed using simple linear and multiple regression analyses at the .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that parenting styles and parenting monitoring did not significantly predict antisocial behaviour. However, family cohesion emerged as a significant predictor, such that higher levels of family cohesion were associated with lower levels of antisocial behaviour. The study concludes that emotional bonding and unity within the family play a more critical role than parenting style or monitoring in shaping adolescent behaviour in this context. Family-based interventions aimed at strengthening cohesion are therefore recommended.

Keywords: parenting styles, parental monitoring, family cohesion, antisocial behaviour

Introduction

Antisocial behaviour is a widespread problem among teenagers and adolescents. It refers to actions that violate societal norms and infringe upon the rights and well-being of others (Calkins & Keane, 2009), which often results in significant distress to affected individuals and communities (Ncheghariamaka, 2022). Previous research evidence indicates that antisocial behaviours commonly manifest during adolescence and include aggression, vandalism, substance use, bullying, and theft (Saleh et al., 2020). Adolescence represents a critical developmental stage characterised by heightened emotional reactivity, identity

exploration, and increased susceptibility to environmental influences. As a result, antisocial behaviour during this period poses serious developmental, educational, and public health challenges. This justifies the rationale for examining associated risks, so that appropriate interventions can be instituted, towards ameliorating the problem.

Globally, antisocial behaviour among adolescents has been identified as a major public health concern due to its increasing prevalence and long-term consequences. Empirical evidence indicates that adolescents who engage in antisocial behaviours often experience poor academic performance, strained interpersonal relationships, and heightened risk of criminal involvement in adulthood (Ciarrochi et al., 2011; Hammerton et al., 2017; Shoenmacker et al., 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, antisocial behaviours among school-going adolescents have attracted growing concern due to their disruptive effects on educational systems and community stability. Research evidence reveal historical rise in antisocial behaviour among adolescents (Okorodudu 2010), with corresponding increase in school drop-out rates and criminality, particularly in adolescent population (Oladunmoye et al., 2023).

In northern Nigeria, studies have reported a noticeable increase in antisocial behaviours among secondary school students, including bullying, theft, drug use, and school vandalism (Saleh et al., 2020; Audu et al., 2020). The situation is further compounded in conflict-affected areas such as Biu in Borno State, where prolonged insecurity, displacement, and socio-economic instability may heighten adolescents' vulnerability to behavioural problems. These contextual stressors may weaken traditional family structures and reduce protective mechanisms that ordinarily regulate adolescent behaviour, thereby increasing their vulnerability and susceptibility to antisocial behaviour. It is therefore expedient to examine how these factors influence antisocial behaviours in the unique northern context.

Parenting styles describe consistent patterns of parental behaviour used in child – rearing and have been widely examined in relation to adolescent outcomes. Initial control theories propose that essential child training begins within the home environment, where parents model appropriate behaviour for their children using specific parenting techniques (Kapetanovic, et al., 2019). This underscores the importance of parenting styles in

regulating adolescents' behaviour. Baumrind's typology classifies parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful patterns, each differing in levels of responsiveness and control. Previous research suggest that authoritative parenting is associated with positive behavioural outcomes (Oladunmoye et al., 2023), implying that adolescents nurtured by parents who combine discipline with empathy are less likely to indulge in behavioural problems. On the contrary, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles have been linked to higher levels of antisocial behaviour (Audu et al., 2020; de Andres-Sanchez & Belzunegui-Eraso, 2022). However, findings across cultural contexts remain inconsistent, suggesting the need for context- specific investigation. In northern Nigeria and Biu in particular, the complexities of socio-economic and security problems create distinct challenges for family dynamics, making it crucial to examine parenting practices and their influence on antisocial behaviours amongst school-going adolescents.

The family constitutes the primary socialisation context through which children acquire behavioural norms, values, and emotional regulation skills. Developmental and social control theories emphasise the role of family processes in shaping adolescent behaviour, particularly through parenting practices supervision, and emotional bonding. Disruptions within the family system may therefore increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour, especially in environments already characterised by social instability. Parenting monitoring refers to parents' awareness of their children's activities, peer associations, and whereabouts. Effective monitoring has been shown to reduce adolescents' involvement in risky and antisocial behaviours by limiting exposure to deviant peers and enabling timely corrective intervention (Lippold et al., 2019). Conversely, poor supervision has been associated with increased delinquency and substance use (Fosco et al., 2012). In conflict-prone regions such as Biu, however, economic hardship and security challenges may limit parents' capacity to effectively monitor their children, thereby altering its influence on adolescent behaviour.

Family cohesion reflects the emotional bonding, connectedness, and sense of unity among family members (Fosco et al., 2029). Cohesive families are characterised by warmth, open communication, and mutual support, which serve as protective factors against behavioural problems. Empirical evidence consistently links low family cohesion to externalising

behaviours such as aggression and delinquency (Sadeghi et al., 2014; Warnick et al., 2019), whereas strong cohesion promotes emotional stability and adherence to social norms (Coohy et al., 2001). In contexts of prolonged insecurity, the presence or absence of family cohesion may be particularly consequential for adolescent adjustment. Thus, in Biu, where insecurity may affect family communication and unity, adolescents are more likely to be exposed to external influence that may rather elevate antisocial tendencies. However, despite extensive research on antisocial behaviour, limited empirical attention has been given to the combined influence of parenting styles, parental monitoring, and family cohesion within conflict-affected regions of north-eastern Nigeria. Moreover, existing studies have produced mixed findings regarding the relative importance of these family-based factors. This study therefore examined the independent and joint influence of parenting styles, parental monitoring and supervision, and family cohesion on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Biu, Borno State.

Method

Participants

The population of the study comprised all secondary school students enrolled in four public secondary schools in Biu, with an estimated population of 3,410 students. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of students from boarding, day, and mixed school systems. Each stratum, participants were selected using a simple random sampling method. The final sample consisted of 159 students aged between 12 and 19 years ($M = 16.73$, $SD = 1.89$). Of this number, 99 (65.5%) were males and 51 (34.5%) were females. Concerning school type, 76(50.3%) were sampled from boarding schools, 38(25.2%) were from day schools, while others were from mixed schools. Students who participated in the study were majorly from the senior secondary (SS) classes, with majority 58(38.4%) recruited in SS3, 45(29.8%) from SS2 and 20(13.2%) from SS1, respectively. The remaining students were sampled from junior classes. Concerning religion, 88(58.3%) of the students endorsed Islam, while 62(41.7%) were Christians.

Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant school authorities prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their response. Informed consent was obtained from participants, while parental consent was secured for minors. Questionnaires were administered during school hours and completed under the supervision of the researchers. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately and screened for completeness before analysis.

Instrument

Data were collected using a structure questionnaire comprising five sections: demographic information, parenting styles, parenting monitoring and supervision, family cohesion, and antisocial behaviour. Standardised instruments with established psychometric properties were employed to ensure reliability and validity.

Parenting styles were assessed using the Parenting Style Scale developed by Darling and Toyokawa (1997). The scale measures authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and indulgent parenting styles using a five-point Likert scale ranging strongly disagree to strongly agree. Parental monitoring was measured using the Parental Monitoring Scale adapted from Gillette (2006), which assesses parents' awareness of their children's activities and peer associations. Family cohesion was assessed using the Brief Family Relationship Scale developed by Barber and Buehler (1996). Antisocial behaviour was measured using the Antisocial Behaviour Scale by Burt and Donnellan (2009). All instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability coefficients in the present study.

Parental monitoring: Parental monitoring was assessed using the Parental Monitoring Scale contained in the study of Gillette (2006). This scale consists of five items-all of which are scored on a 3-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (doesn't know) to 3 (knows a lot). Participants were requested to report how much their mother/father (two parents-regardless of their biological relationship) "really know" about (a) "who your friends are," (b) "where you go at night," (c) "what you do with your free time," (d) "how you spend your money" (e) "where you are most afternoons after school". Responses were calculated to

arrive at overall scores, and higher scores were indicative of higher the perceived levels of functional parental monitoring and vice versa. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .75 to .91 in several multinational studies (Bradford et al., 2004) and its validity among secondary schools in Nigeria is well documented (Ogwuche et al., 2018).

Family cohesion: This was assessed using the Brief Family Relationship Scale (Barber & Bluehler 1996). This is an eight-item scale that measures the degree of family cohesiveness. Participants are needed to rate how much they agree with each of the statements on a scale using a 5-point Likert scale. A high score on the scale indicates greater interactions and bonds among family members and vice versa. "There is a feeling of oneness in our family," is an example item on the scale. High internal consistency Cronbach alpha ($=0.92$) was reported with reference to the scale's internal consistency (Barber & Bluehler 1996).

Antisocial behaviours: We assessed antisocial behaviours using a 32-item version of Antisocial Behaviour Scale (Burt & Donella, 2009). Respondents rated the degree to which they had indulged in various antisocial behaviours in the past 12 months, and their responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Always (5). The scale has good internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha reliability index 0.77 (Burt & Donella, 2009). Interestingly, previous studies among school-going adolescents in Nigeria have reported acceptable reliability and validity scores (Eze et al., 2024; Tafida et al., 2023), and our pilot study found overall reliability of 0.72, making it a valid and reliable measure of antisocial behaviours among secondary school students.

Design

This study used cross-sectional survey design. Data were analysed using multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of parenting styles on antisocial behaviour, while simple linear regression analyses were conducted to assess the influence of parental monitoring and family cohesion. Statistical significance was determined at $p \leq .05$ level on version 23 of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarise demographic characteristics.

Result

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis showing influence of Parenting Styles on Antisocial Behaviours among Participants

Variable	β	t	R	R ²	df	F	P
Authoritative	-.059	-.101					
Authoritarian	.092	.119	.072	.005	4/144	.245	>.05
Permissive	-.059	-.056					
Indulgent	-.052	-.270					

*p<.05; **p<.005.

Multiple regression analysis indicated that parenting styles did not significantly predict antisocial behaviour among the participants. The joint contribution of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and indulgent parenting styles was not statistically significant, $F(4, 144) = 0.25$, $p > .05$. None of the individual parenting styles made a significant independent contribution to antisocial behaviour.

Table 2: Linear Regression Showing Influence of Parental Monitoring on Antisocial Behaviours among Participants

Variable	β	t	R	R ²	df	F	P
Parental monitoring	-.049	-.591	.049	.002	1/146	.349	>.05

*p<.05; **p<.005.

Simple linear regression analysis revealed that parental monitoring did not significantly predict antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Biu, $\beta = -0.05$, $t(146) = -0.59$, $p > .05$.

This indicates that variation in perceived parental monitoring were not associated with changes in antisocial behaviour scores.

Table 3: Linear Regression Showing Influence of Family cohesion on Antisocial Behaviours among Participants

Variable	β	t	R	R ²	df	F	P
Family cohesion significantly predicted antisocial behaviour, $\beta = -.23$, $t(146) = -2.86$, $P < .05$, explaining 5.3% of the variance.							

Results from simple linear regression analysis showed that family cohesion significantly predicted antisocial behaviour, $\beta = -.23$, $t(146) = -2.86$, $p < .05$. Family cohesion accounted for approximately 5.3% of the variance in antisocial behaviour, indicating that higher levels of cohesion were associated with lower levels of antisocial behaviour.

Discussion

The present study examined the influence of parenting styles, parental monitoring, and family cohesion on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Biu. The findings revealed that parenting styles and parental monitoring did not significantly predict antisocial behaviour, whereas family cohesion emerged as a significant protective factor. This is not in consonance with the research findings of Audu et al., (2020) and Young et al., (2020) who noted the significant influence of parenting on antisocial behaviour, particularly stressing that when parents are authoritarian in their approach, they create rigidity and hostility within the child's environment, leading to rebellious, disruptive and delinquent behaviours. In a similar vein, the finding contradicts Oladunmoye et al., (2023) who noted the attenuating impact of authoritative parenting on antisocial behaviour. According to them, parents who provide support and freedom, yet instil discipline in their children; instil morals and social rules that prevent manifestation of various antisocial behaviours, including but not limited to stealing, fighting, drug use and vandalism. In addition, the finding does not align with previous research indicating significant influence of permissive and neglectful parenting styles on antisocial behaviour exhibited among teenagers and adolescents (de Andres-Sanchez & Belzunegui-Eraso, 2022).

Similarly, parental monitoring did not significantly predict antisocial behaviour. While existing literature suggests that effective monitoring reduces adolescent risk behaviours, the current finding may reflect structural constraints faced by families in conflict-affected environments. Adolescents' increasing independence and peer influence may further limit the effectiveness of parental supervision during this developmental stage.

This finding contradicts what is documented in studies of Lippold et al., (2019) and Fosco et al., (2012), who have reported strong positive impact of parental monitoring on antisocial behaviours. For instance, it has been noted that parents who actively monitor and engage in overseeing their children's lives help to regulate possibility of delinquent behaviours (Lippold et al., 2019); whereas lack of parental monitoring and control promotes antisocial behaviours, such a drinking, substance abuse and theft (Lippold et al., 2019). The result is therefore unexpected, considering that, due to the high insecurity in the region-which has negatively impacted parental supervision and monitoring- most antisocial behaviours from adolescents would be influenced by deficiency in supervision that may create opportunity of social imitation and indoctrination. The disparity in results between the current research and previous studies linking parental monitoring with antisocial behaviour may be due to methodological or cultural barriers that affect sincere and valid responses. Considering the conservative nature of the area and teenagers' apprehension about the consequences of admitting to perpetrating deviant acts, most of them may have responded dishonestly to the instrument. Another possible reason is the limited sample size and design which may have allowed dishonest responses and eventual findings.

In contrast, family cohesion was found to significantly predict antisocial behaviour, with higher cohesion associated with lower levels of antisocial conduct. This finding supports family systems theory, which emphasizes the protective role of emotional bonding and supportive family relationships. Cohesive families may provide adolescents with emotional security, moral guidance, and effective communication, thereby reducing their susceptibility to antisocial behaviour even in challenging environments. Linear regression analysis demonstrates a significant influence of family cohesion on antisocial behaviour ($\beta = .230$, $t=2.857$, $P<.05$), explaining 5.3% of the variance in antisocial behaviours that the students reported. This percentage, while modest, underscores the significance of family cohesion as an influential factor within the context of broader societal and environmental variables. The results support the assertions made by Hammerton et al. (2017), and Warnick et al. (2019) indicating that antisocial

behaviours, typically expressed through disruptive actions or defiance, are significantly shaped by family dynamics.

Specifically, the result implies that adolescents from more cohesive families are less likely to perpetrate antisocial behaviours (Coohey, 2001). In other words, this result means that having a family system that prioritize emotional bonding, open communication system and support would help diminish antisocial tendencies amongst adolescents. Thus, despite the fragile security situation in Biu and the possibility of social learning, teenagers and adolescents who are product of cohesive, united and supportive families would less likely indulge on antisocial behaviour. This is due to inherent capacity of such families to constantly communicate moral values and norms, provide support and direction and offer emotional and material assistance to their children, thereby promoting discipline, obedience to lawful order and courage to resist crime.

Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of parenting styles, parenting monitoring, and family cohesion on antisocial behaviour among secondary students in BIU, Borno State. The findings suggest that while parenting styles and parental monitoring were not significant predictors, family cohesion was significantly associated with lower levels of antisocial behaviour. This underscores the importance of emotional bonding, unity, and supportive family relationships in adolescent behavioural regulation. The study highlights the need for family focused interventions that strengthen cohesion and communication as part of broader strategies to address antisocial behaviour among adolescents in conflict –affected regions

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the implementation of family-based interventions aimed at strengthening cohesion and communication among family members. Educational stakeholders and mental health professionals should design programmes that promote family unity and emotional supports as preventive strategies against antisocial behaviour. Future studies are encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs and incorporate additional contextual variables to further clarify the dynamics of adolescent antisocial behaviour.

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