



The Perception of Intending Parents about the Common Antisocial Behaviors among Adolescent Students in Developing Countries

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Abstract

This cross-sectional survey conducted in southwestern Nigeria examined the common antisocial activities among adolescents and students in developing countries, using a structured questionnaire among 300 people preparing to get married. The study was conducted from September to October 2019 with an aim to the perception of people intending to marry on eradicating students and adolescents' antisocial behavior in developing countries. Data were analyzed with IBM-SPSS version-25. Promiscuity (41.7%) topped the list of antisocial activities mentioned, followed by indecent dressing and social nuisance (27.0%). Improper parental guidance ranked highest (41.3%) as the perceived cause of antisocial and high-risk behaviors, followed by peer pressure (29.3%). Around 48% of the respondents said the parents were to blame and 26.0% said adolescents, and 15.0% said the government was to blame. Antisocial behaviors can be reduced among students and adolescents by including parenting and moral training in the education curriculum. Also, there is a need to educate parents on the essential parenting tips and methods.

Keywords: Adolescent, antisocial, behaviors, parents, student.

Introduction

Adolescence is a time of human growth and development between childhood and maturity that is frequently defined by the teenager and family (Ogwuche, Vincent, and Chiahemba 2018). According to Defitrika & Mahmudah (2021), self-development is impacted by parent-child interactions and the broader environment, including family, friends, the parents' employment, home, school environment, and those they connect with via mass media. Adolescents may acquire positive or negative personalities (value system or virtues) due to



these influences (vices or antisocial behaviors). It is well recognized that parents lay the groundwork for their children's conduct. Effectively establishing a solid relationship with their children early in life helps children acquire the capacity to form strong, healthy, and prosocial bonds with others throughout adolescence and adulthood (Andrew Collins 1997; Hirschi 1969). In contrast to attachment's prosocial advantages, aggressive parenting has various negative consequences, including antisocial conduct. Thus, attachment and aggressive child-care are two different factors (support and coercive control) that demonstrate the strength of the parent-child social relationship and impact antisocial behavior independently.

Baumrind (1978) states that parenting stresses the parent's responsibilities and traits of exemplary conduct. Furthermore, it comprises the styles and practices that affect adolescents' behavior. According to research, positive parenting results in a favorable reaction from adolescent students (Baumrind 1978). However, this is not always the case because parenting is not 'set in stone and may not be a 'one size fits all situation. Human development is influenced by 50% genetics and 50% environments and parents; interestingly, supply not only 50% of the genes determines the environment for growth (Human-Hendricks and Roman 2014). Other family members, the conditions or settings in the house, the schools' children attend, church, classmates, parents' job, and any other individual in the community or society in which the adolescent lives and interacts are all part of the wider environment or social context (Cabrera et al. 2017; Sheldon 2015; Stevens 2018). Many additional variables influence people/parents/children in each of these sociocultural situations. School environments and peer groups also greatly impact students' behavior during the vulnerable adolescent stage.

Antisocial conduct is described as behavior directed against other people, their property, or violates social standards (Garaigordobil and Maganto 2016; Jalling et al. 2016; Garaigordobil 2014). Lying, reckless sexual practices, rule-breaking, illegal substance usage, and disruptive conduct such as theft, damage, fraud, participating in physical or verbal aggressiveness, and vandalism are examples of this sort of behavior (Pears, Kim, and Fisher 2016; Torry and Billick 2011). This broad spectrum of conduct makes it a subject of concern in terms of intensity and frequency. It is frequently maintained throughout adolescence and adulthood in those with behavioral issues as children (Alink and Egeland 2013; Çelik et al. 2016; Rhee et al. 2013). Various risk variables connected to the development of this sort of conduct, such as familial environment and engagement with antisocial peers, have been discovered (Rhee et al., 2013). Home and school environments, marital conflict, family stress, parental authoritarianism, parental crime, domestic violence, social marginalization, and forceful social contact between parents and children are all risk factors for developing antisocial behavior (Antolín Suárez, Oliva, and Arranz 2009; Çelik et al. 2016; Rhee et al. 2013). Several variables can contribute to the manifestation of antisocial behavior. The main predictors of antisocial and delinquent behavior among

teenagers are family factors (Jalling et al., 2016). Parental support and supervision are the primary family characteristics discovered as a consistent variable for early antisocial behavior among these family variables (Dogan et al. 2018; Waller et al. 2018). The responsibility of raising children is a significant one. Parents employ various strategies to properly carry out this job, such as supporting and monitoring their children's behavior.

The home and school environments, marital conflict, family stress, parental authoritarianism, parental crime, domestic violence, social marginalization, and forceful social contact between parents and children are all risk factors for developing antisocial behavior (Antolín Suárez et al., 2009; Çelik et al., 2016; Rhee et al., 2013). Several variables can contribute to the manifestation of antisocial behavior. The main predictors of antisocial and delinquent behavior among teenagers are family factors (Jalling et al., 2016). Parental support and supervision are the primary family characteristics discovered as a consistent variable for early antisocial behavior among these family variables (Dogan et al., 2018; Waller et al., 2018). The responsibility of raising children is a significant one, and parents employ various strategies to properly carry out this job, such as supporting and monitoring their children's behavior.

Parents and teachers are viewed as mentors that children can emulate to shape their behavior (Sen Akcay, & Senemoglu, 2021; Ogwuche et al., 2018). However, it appears as though the fundamental values of families in African societies, particularly in, Nigeria have increasingly changed away from a moral and prosocial perspective and toward a materialistic and antisocial one (Ogwuche et al. 2018; Waller et al. 2018). Parents, who are supposed to be agents of positive social behavior, have been proven to encourage and facilitate children's pursuit of financial riches (Ogwuche et al., 2018). Therefore, the study examines adolescent students' antisocial activities considering the perception of from those people intending to marry in southwestern Nigeria.

For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What are common antisocial behaviors among adolescent students counted by those considering marriage?
2. What are the perceived causes of antisocial behavior among adolescent students?
3. What and who are the persons to blame for adolescent students' antisocial and high-risk behaviors and reasons for parents failing their responsibilities?
4. How can antisocial behaviors be prevent/minimize among adolescent students?

Methodology

Study Design

The study was a cross-sectional descriptive survey that obtained data on the perception of antisocial and high-risk behaviors among adolescent students as initiatives towards adequate preparedness for parenthood among persons intending to marry. It was conducted in two local government areas (LGAs); namely, Ibadan North and Akinyele, from September

to October 2019. The LGAs are among the largest LGAs in Oyo State. The population of Ibadan North LGA was 432,900, and Akinyele was 297,600 with areas of 19.43 km² and 432.2 km², respectively. The majority of the population is in the private sector, mainly traders and artisans, while a good number of workers are civil servants.

Study Population and Sample Size Calculation

The study populations were persons intending to marry, and inclusion criteria were membership of pre-marriage groups in churches, mosques, and individuals processing/proposing marriage registrations at the LGA marriage registry.

The sample size was calculated using previous reports that just 26% of persons who intend to marry were prepared for parenting;

The sample size was calculated using the formula

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} \quad (\text{Leslie, 1995})$$

Where n = sample size; d = degree of accuracy = 5% or 0.05; z = confidence level; 1.96; p = reasonable estimate of key proportion which is 26% (Young, et al, 1996); q = 100-26 = 74% or 0.74.

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.26 \times 0.74}{0.05^2} = 296.$$

Sampling Procedure

A three-stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents from the religious groups (Churches and Mosques). In addition, purposive sampling was also used to recruit participants from the two marriage registries in the LGAs. The sampling frame of churches in each of the LGAs was developed through the list of churches registered with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Oyo state chapter. This was further stratified into orthodox churches and Pentecostal churches. By simple random sampling (Balloting) one Orthodox Church (Baptist church) and one Pentecostal church (Christ Life Church) were selected in Ibadan North LGA and in same way one Orthodox Church (Methodist church) and one Pentecostal church (Triumphant Assembly) were selected in Akinyele LGA. Members of the pre-marriage group in the selected churches who were willing to participate were enlisted as respondents. The sampling frame of mosques in each of the LGAs was developed with the help of the Moslem Society of Nigeria, Oyo state chapter through some Muslim associates, and by simple random sampling (Balloting), two mosques (Bodija and Agbowo mosque) were selected in Ibadan North LGA. In contrast, Ojoo and Orogun mosques were selected in Akinyele LGA. Members of the pre-marriage group in the selected mosques were all enlisted as respondents. The two local government areas have just one marriage registry each; therefore, all persons registered at the period of the research as persons intending to marry at the marriage registries in the two local government areas who agree/volunteer to

participate were recruited as respondents.

Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis

A quantitative method of data collection was employed using a structured questionnaire. A total of six research assistants were recruited and trained on the goal and objectives of the research. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants to take home and self-administered, then the research assistants collected the completed questionnaires back at a later date, knowing well that a number of questionnaires may not be returned. With proper supervision and monitoring by the researcher, a total of 390 questionnaires were distributed; 130 were at each LGA marriage registry, church, and mosque. At the end of the data collecting period, a total of 305 questionnaires were returned; 300 were fully completed while five were found to be incomplete. The 300 questionnaires were analyzed using IBM-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) version 25.0 for Windows and Microsoft excel.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Adolescents and young adults intending to marry were included in this study, while adults or already married people were excluded. Approval (FHREC/2019/01/55/16-05-19) to conduct the study was obtained from the National Research Ethics Committee.

Results

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The majority of the respondents (49.6%) were aged 23 to 27 years; the mean age was 25.3 ± 4.5 . Most (92%) of them had tertiary education. There were more respondents from the Yoruba ethnic group (64.7%) compared with other ethnic groups such as Igbo (16.7%), Hausa (1%), and others (17.6%). A majority (74.3%) of them were Christians, followed by Muslims (22.7%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Parameters	Number (%)
Sex	
Male	190 (63.2)
Female	110 (36.8)
Age category	
18-22	77(25.7)
23-27	149 (49.6)
28-32	53 (17.7)
33-37	9 (3.0)
38-42	9 (3.0)
43-47	3 1.0)
Educational Level	
No formal education	4 (1.3)
Primary	4 (1.3)
Secondary	16 (5.3)
Tertiary	276 (92.0)
Ethnic Group	
Yoruba	194 (64.7)
Hausa	3 (1.0)
Ibo	50 (16.7)

Others	53 (17.6)
Religion	
Christianity	223 (74.3)
Islam	68 (22.7)
Traditional	6 (2.0)
Others	3 (1.0)
Proposed type of marriage	
Christian	168 (56.0)
Islamic	49 (16.3)
Civic	83 (27.7)

Common antisocial behaviors among adolescent students enumerated by people intending to marry

As shown in Figure 1, the respondents stated 15 common antisocial and high-risk behaviors among adolescent students. Promiscuity (41.7%) tops the list, followed by indecent dressing & social nuisance (27.0%), drug abuse (18.7%), and 0.7 mentioned cheating.

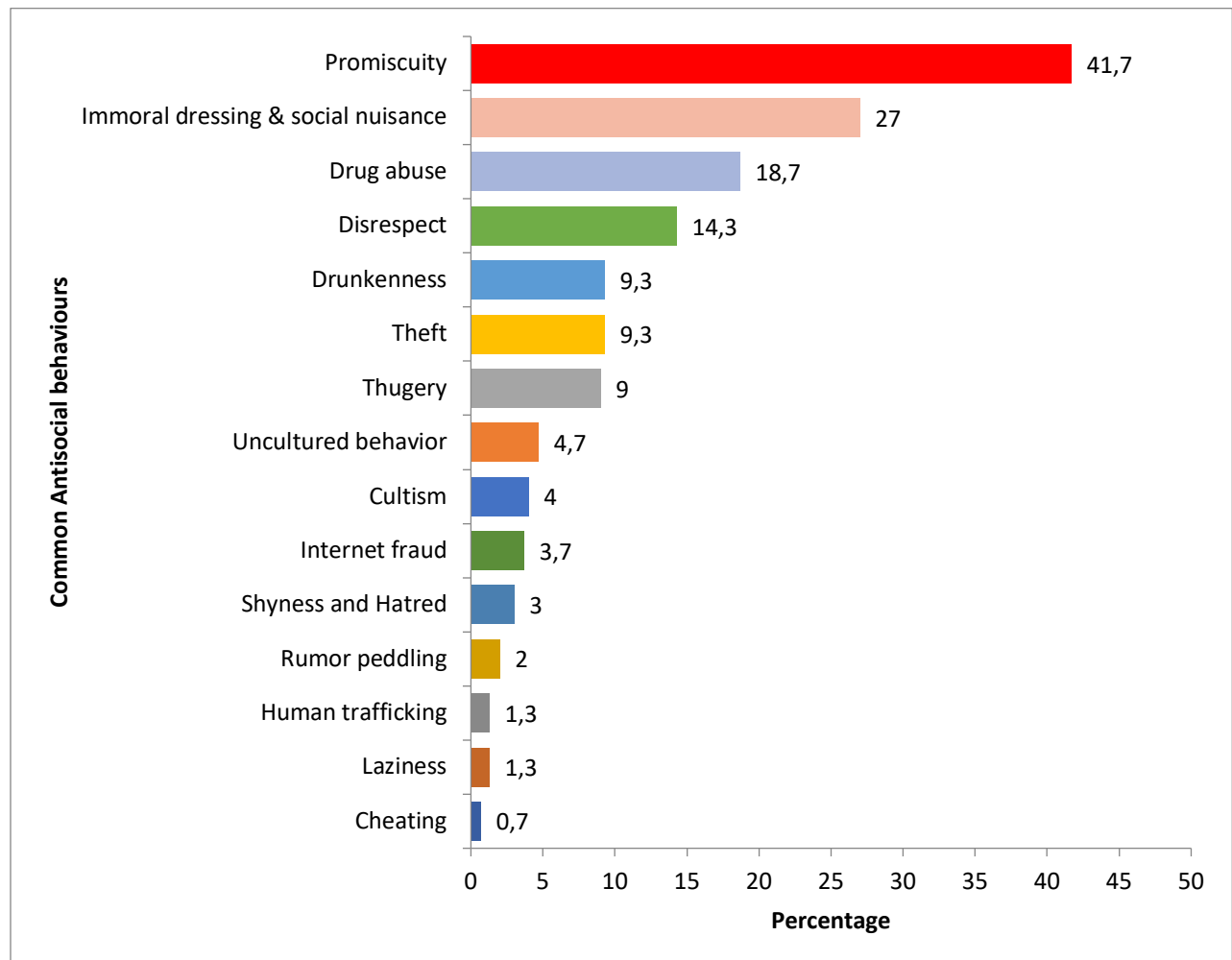


Figure 1. Common Antisocial and High-risk Behaviors among Adolescents.

The perceived causes of antisocial behavior among adolescent students

Figure 2 shows the causes of antisocial and high-risk behaviors among teenage students. Improper parental guidance ranked highest (41.3%), followed by peer pressure (29.3%).

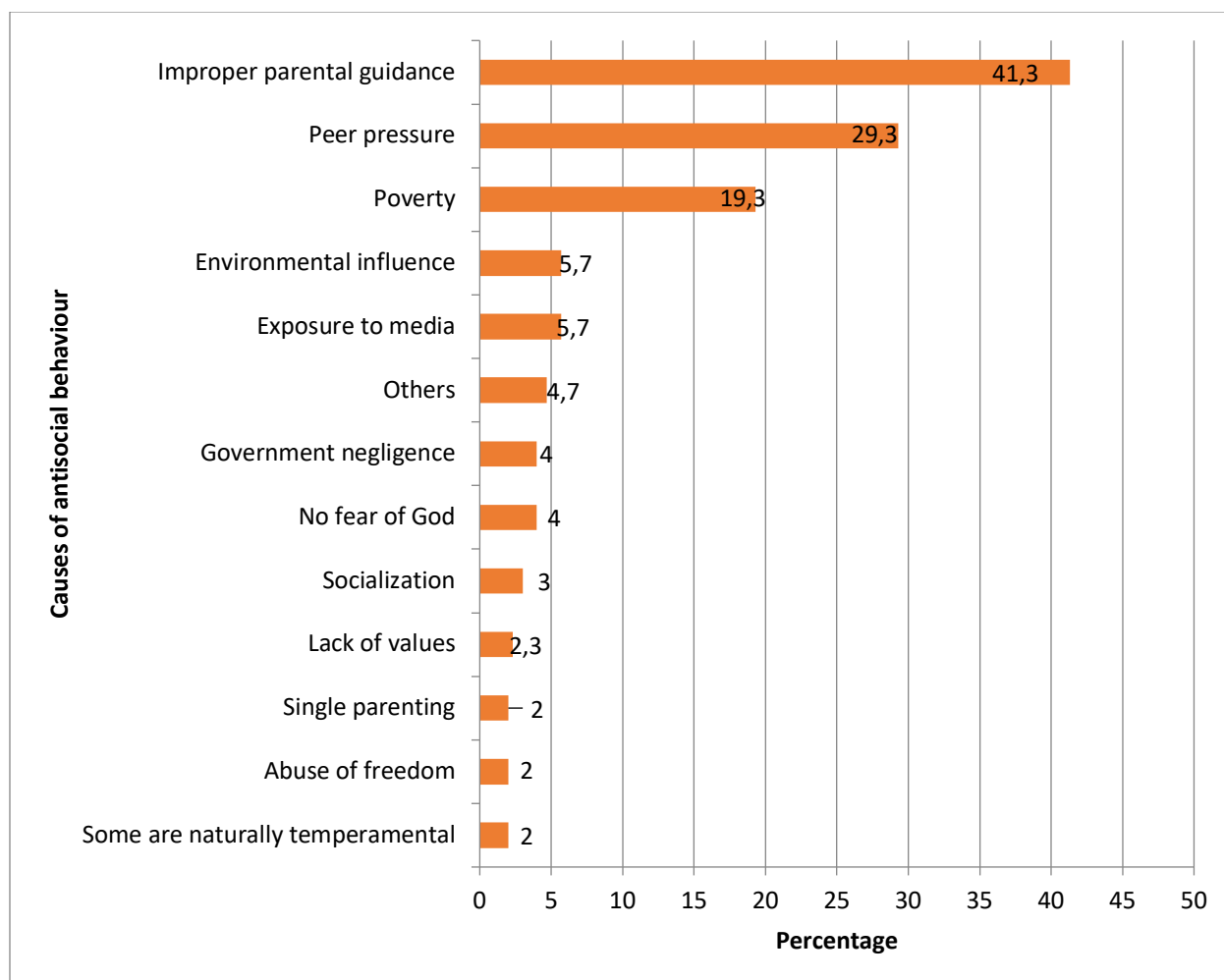


Figure 2. Perceived Causes of Adolescent Students' Antisocial Behavior

*Others; disobedience, inferiority complex, and indiscipline.

Persons to blame for adolescent students' antisocial and high-risk behaviors and reasons for parents failing their responsibilities

On the question of whom to blame for the antisocial and high-risk behaviors among adolescent students, 48% of the respondents said parents were to blame, 26.0% mentioned the students, whereas 15.0% of them would rather blame the government. The majority (61%) respondents said lack of proper information/education on parenting before marriage as the significant reason for why parents fail their responsibilities to their children, and 31.5% mentioned lack of adequate financial and material preparation before marriage (Table 2).

Table 2. Persons to Blame for Adolescent Antisocial Behaviors and Reasons While Some Parents Fail Their Responsibilities

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Who to blame for antisocial and high-risk behavior		
Parents	144	48.0
Adolescents themselves	78	26.0
Government	45	15.0
Others	33	11.0
Perceived reasons why some parents do not fulfil their responsibilities		
Lack of proper information/education on parenting before marriage	183	61.0
Lack of adequate financial and material preparation before marriage	94	31.3
Other factors	23	7.7
Total	300	100.0

Prevention of antisocial behavior of adolescent students

As shown in Table 3, the vast majority (85.0%) of respondents desired that information/education on parenthood for people intending to marry and adolescents to help them prepare for parenthood. The majority (82.0%) wanted parenting education to be part of the secondary school curriculum. A majority (75.3%) also reported that parenting education should be incorporated into tertiary education. In the same way, 74.3% advocated that government should incorporate parenting education into the one-year National Youth Service Corps Programme (this is a one-year mandatory national youth service for all graduates in Nigeria). Similarly, 82.7% said parenting education should be incorporated into religious teachings by religious associations and leaders.

Table 3. Respondents' Perceived Solutions to Antisocial Behaviors among Adolescent Students

Perceived solutions	Yes	No
Desire Education on Parenting	256 (85.0%)	44 (15.0%)
Parenting education should be made to be part of the school curriculum	246 (82.0%)	54 (18.0%)
Parenting education should be incorporated at the tertiary education	226 (75.3%)	74 (24.7%)
Parenting education should be incorporated into the national Youth Service Corp Programme	223 (74.3%)	77 (25.7%)
Parenting education should be incorporated into religious teachings	248 (82.7%)	52 (17.3%)

Discussion

Antisocial behavior can set in early in life, particularly among adolescent students, and if not addressed throughout the teenage years, it will possibly persist and worsen into adulthood. Antisocial behavior is perpetuated and formed through exchanges between adolescents, their parents, and peers or school environments. Yet, the molecular mechanism of these interactions is unclear. The study found that promiscuity was the most common antisocial behavior mentioned among adolescent students. This outcome may be because of unfaithfulness in marriage among parents and lack of parenting education in the educational settings of many developing countries, leading to the collapse of many family structures. Other top antisocial behaviors include immoral dressing and social nuisance, drug abuse, disrespect, and drunkenness. This study indicates that improper parental guidance takes the lion's share among these causes of antisocial and high-risk behaviors, followed by peer pressure, particularly in school environments. This result also agrees with previous studies that parents and teachers are responsible for children's behavioral development (Cabrera et al., 2017; Ogwuche et al., 2018).

Improper parental guidance, the highest cause of antisocial and high-risk behaviors, can be linked to promiscuity, indecency, social nuisance, drug abuse, and disrespect. These attitudes may derail the parental upbringing. Patterson (1982) and Bank et al. (1987) showed that antisocial conduct is more common among children whose parents employ harsh discipline, neglect to supervise their children's activities, fail to encourage prosocial behavior, and are not adept at resolving difficulties facing children. According to Smith *et al.* (2014), in interactions between parents and their children, coercion is caused by escape contingencies and positive reinforcement of unpleasant events. Braga et al. (2017) described how these antisocial behaviors are linked to domestic aggression, disengagement, neglect, and consequently school dropouts.

Studies in Nigeria have also shown that severe discipline is the most common parental disciplinary approach in families and schools; many children continue to be subjected to high levels of harsh discipline and neglect regularly (Alemika *et al.*, 2010). Centro-America discovered that parental supervision, conflictive family relationships, and low emotional connection were linked to alcohol and drug use (Obando, Trujillo, and Trujillo 2014). Previous studies have also shown that a lack of parental emotional expression and invasive parenting practices, coupled with inadequate training, can cause social exclusion in adolescent students (Rovis et al., 2015; Aguilera *et al.*, 2013). This increases the likelihood of becoming a victim of bullying (Aguilera et al., 2013) and engaging in rule-breaking behaviors like theft, promiscuity, vandalism, and using alcohol (Ettetal and Ladd 2015).

The study found that peer pressure also significantly influenced antisocial behaviors among adolescent students in Nigeria. Initially, peer pressure was proposed by Newman & Newman who argued that it was the most significant factor affecting young individuals' social

interactions. They hypothesized that adolescents were more inclined to adopt behaviors that were in line with group norms to establish a sense of solidarity with their peers and avoid alienation (Newman, 1976). This result may also be associated with adolescents that suffer neglect from their parents; they may result to fellow students or peers for advice and begin to emulate their antisocial behaviors. Li *et al.* (2015) supported this explanation by showing how adolescent students whose parents use harsh discipline are more likely to associate with antisocial friends in schools and environments. A study conducted in African communities also found how children receive cruel punishment from other older community members and teachers, not just their parents, which may foster peer pressure antisocial relationships among the adolescent students (Amos 2013).

Poverty was also a factor in adolescents' antisocial behavior found in this study. This is logical given that poverty provokes and drive people to engage in reckless activities. This factor also revolves around parents because children from low-income households are more likely to attend non-standard schools with non-qualified teachers and thus, feel neglected and be affected by antisocial behaviors. Eddy & Reid (2003) reported how poor parental engagement in teenagers' interactions is highly associated with affiliation with antisocial mates and is caused by such factors as parental antisocial conduct, parental transitions, and poverty. Ward *et al.* (2014) also associated poor parenting with poor housing, unemployment, and poverty, which may cause antisocial behavior among adolescent students.

The research also identified reasons why parents failed to fulfill their responsibilities, the majority of which were due to a lack of adequate parenting information and education before marriage. This finding suggests that this process might become a vicious loop if adolescent students are not appropriately informed before getting to the stage of marriage. Several studies have reported that parents of antisocial adolescents often lack the required skills to respond appropriately to their children's behaviour, using aggressive techniques to modify undesirable behaviour and model and reinforce these behaviours over prosocial ones (Torry and Billick 2011), thereby establishing patterns of coercive interaction that are replicated in other settings (Bowker *et al.*, 2016; Del Valle *et al.*, 2007). Lack of adequate financial and material preparation before marriage was another reason for parents not fulfilling their responsibilities, which may also correlate with poverty, as explained earlier in this study.

Conclusion

The study found that poor parenting had a substantial impact on adolescent student's antisocial behavior. Negligence from parents may also allow them to depend on peers and indulge in risky and unethical behaviors in the community and school, and they may influence others. Poverty was also one of the causes of antisocial behaviors among adolescents, as lack of finances can expose children to violence, theft, prostitution, and

other antisocial behaviors. Our study found that promiscuity was the most common antisocial behavior mentioned among adolescent students, and almost half of the respondents' blamed parents for this act. This finding is a wake-up call for all parents and intends parents to take adolescents' activity and support seriously to avoid bad influences from peer groups and environments. Harsh disciplines should also be replaced with love and concern for the needs of the young ones.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that government include parenting education in secondary and tertiary education curriculum as well as the one-year National Youth Service Corps Programme. It should also be incorporated into religious teachings. In addition, there is need for education and enlightenment of parents to reduce the cycle of unethical parenting and improve the knowledge of the future generation. People intending to marry must also take it upon themselves to be morally and financially ready to properly raise their future children and guide them through the delicate formative years of their adolescence to adulthood.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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