



## *RESEARCH ARTICLE*

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGH RATES OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG YOUTHS IN LAFIA METROPOLIS, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA: A CRIMINOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the factors contributing to high levels of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria, adopting a survey research design. Taro Yamane's formula was applied to determine the sample size from the population of study, where a sample of 204 was drawn from a population of 375,000. The study employed a structured questionnaire as an instrument of data collection, which was validated by doyens in the field of criminological studies. The reliability of the instrument was determined through internal consistency. Descriptive statistics with simple frequencies and percentages were utilized to scrutinize and analyze the research questions; meanwhile, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to perform inferential statistical analysis, testing the study hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The study identified substantial precursors to antisocial behaviors, including excessive and anonymous usage of social media. Additionally, the findings revealed that the family environment plays a crucial role in shaping deviant behaviors among youths, with factors such as family instability, single-parent households, poor parenting, and disadvantaged backgrounds. It was concluded that social media usage, family structure and peer influence are key factors contributing to the high prevalence of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis. The study, therefore, recommended implementing comprehensive educational programs to raise awareness among youths about the potential risks and negative consequences of immoderate and unregulated usage of social media. It was also suggested that counseling institutions provide supportive guidance to couples during times of family disruption, including pre- and post-separation counseling, to promote healthier family dynamics.

**Keywords:** Antisocial behaviors, youths, family structure, social media, peer influence.

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## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

Antisocial behaviors among youths, defined as actions that violate social norms and infringe on the rights of others, have grown to be a major worldwide problem. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) estimates that 10–20% of children and adolescents globally suffer from mental health issues, many of which manifest as behavioral problems that result in antisocial behaviors, including aggressiveness, stealing, and vandalism. With an estimated 4,500 deaths per year, juvenile violence is the third most common cause of mortality for youths between the ages of 10 and 24 in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020). Furthermore, according to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019), a sizable percentage of crime rates globally are committed by young people, underscoring the need to address the causes of antisocial behavior in young people everywhere.

Youth antisocial conduct in Nigeria has increased recently, endangering both the country's prosperity and security. In the second quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate among Nigerian youths aged 15 to 34 was 34.9%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020). This high unemployment rate is linked to increased participation in criminal activity, cults, and drug misuse. According to a 2019 research study by Olawole and Ademu, youths between the ages of 18 and 35 were implicated in 65% of recorded crimes in Lagos State. Peer pressure, unstable families, and a lack of suitable educational and career options are some of the factors contributing to this trend. Furthermore, the Nigerian Police Force (2020) reported a 15% increase in criminal cases involving young people over the previous year, underscoring the urgent need for initiatives that address the underlying reasons for antisocial conduct among young Nigerians.

There is a need to address these complex difficulties and reduce the variables driving antisocial behavior among Nigerian youths. Hence, this study intends to examine the factors influencing high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.



Recent youth tend to exhibit heightened responsiveness to incentives during their adolescent developmental era. This heightened reward response may result in individuals engaging in greater levels of antisocial behavior during adolescence. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2008) reported that annually, 250,000 killings occur among those aged 10 to 29, constituting 41% of the global total of homicides each year. For every young individual who dies, 20 to 40 more individuals suffer injuries requiring medical care. In 2018, 23.9% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 had experimented with illicit drugs: 4% were female, and 24.5% were male. Each day, 3,700 adolescents in this age group initiated marijuana use for the first time. Furthermore, reports have shown that 6% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 suffered from alcohol use disorder, characterized by health complications, increased consumption, and failure to fulfill responsibilities at home, work, or school (National Centre for Drug Abuse Statistics, 2018). Moreover, a juvenile was arrested for a violent crime every five minutes, and a child was harmed with a weapon every two hours. The issue of antisocial conduct is extremely serious. Statistical data on the incidence, severity, and diversity of antisocial behavior indicate that several factors affect such behavior among juveniles. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

1. How does social media influence high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis?
2. How does family structure affect high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis?
3. How does peer influence contribute to high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis?



## **1.2. Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks:

1. To investigate how social media influence high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis
2. To find out how family structure affect high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis.
3. To probe how peer influence contribute to high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis.

## **1.3. Research Hypotheses**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between social influence and high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between family structure and high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between peer influence and high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis

## **2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Conceptualizations**

#### **Antisocial Behavior**

According to Calkins and Keane (2009), antisocial behavior is commonly characterized as behavior that violates the fundamental rights of others. The 2011 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act also defines antisocial behavior as behavior that harasses, alarms, or distresses those who are not from the same family as the individual. Based on these definitions, antisocial behavior refers to any behavior that infringes upon another person's fundamental rights and is deemed disturbing to other members of the community. These behaviors are typically committed by young people under the age of eighteen.



As attested by Bartlett, Anderson, and Swing (2009), antisocial behavior is a typical response of young people navigating the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and perplexing world. Although antisocial behavior has long been a concern, it appears that the nature of antisocial behavior has changed over time. Examples of antisocial behavior frequently linked to teenagers include drug abuse, vandalism, carrying a weapon, alcohol abuse, rape, test malpractice, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, and school dropouts (Demuth and Brown, 2004). Adolescent antisocial behavior has a significant, often permanent, impact on a person's social and psychological functioning (Victor and Edim, 2015).

### **Youth**

According to the United Nations definition, youths are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. By this definition, youths represent almost 18 percent of the current global population. A vast majority of the 1.2 billion youths in the world today live in developing countries (84 percent in 1995, projected to increase to 89 percent by 2025).

### **Social Media and Antisocial Behavior among Youths**

The advent of technology and prevalent social media usage among youngsters continues to generate concern over the possible consequences on their conduct. Accordingly, Blumer and Kleinberg (2024) studied the amount of toxicity on Reddit and Wikipedia during a 14-year period and observed fluctuations in users' toxicity levels over time, showing large spikes at certain times. The study indicated that due to the anonymous nature and absence of direct consequences in online environments, users tend to exhibit antisocial behavior with barely any regard for the effects of such behavior.

Likewise, PLOS ONE (2023), in a published study, surveyed factors associated with antisocial behaviors among young adults on social media platforms. The report highlighted the significant role of online disinhibition and motivations for cyber-aggression. According to Setiawina (2019), the excessive and unregulated use of social media among children and teens encourages a hedonistic and consumerist lifestyle. Moreover, the unregulated usage of social media by kids and adolescents has negative implications, including apathy, disregard for assignments, and inability to perform educational duties.



Additionally, this phenomenon affects the mental health, mood, sexual behavior, and views of students. The encouragement of hedonism and materialism further develops individualism, adolescent delinquency, promiscuity, drug use, and other harmful impacts, such as social insecurity and moral deterioration. The interruption of children's education may lead to increasing dropout rates without assistance from parents, relatives, and the community.

According to Julian (2023), youths continue to be vulnerable to different external influences, particularly the pervasive usage of social media. There is excessive use of social media by youths, which can be associated with negative consequences, including mental health challenges, decreased social interactions, and possible academic impact. Furthermore, the study argued that the level of parental monitoring and communication concerning the use of social media significantly varies, and family struggles associated with media use were apparent to some extent.

### **Family Structure and Antisocial Behavior among Youths**

There exists a considerable association between family structure and the emergence of antisocial tendencies in adolescence. In his study, Aderanti (2015) explored how family structure influences juvenile delinquency among teenagers in Ikenne, Ogun State, Nigeria. He discovered that teenagers brought up in single-parent families displayed an increased tendency for delinquent activities compared to those reared in dual-parent homes. This suggests that youngsters brought up by one parent may have less supervision and emotional support, which can contribute to the development of such habits.

Similarly, Rodríguez and Cerezo (2019) emphasized the importance of a caring home environment, positing that adolescents who received higher levels of parental support would likely display lower rates of antisocial conduct. Neppl et al. (2016) reinforced this idea, stating that strict parenting styles in the early years of adolescence were significant predictors of antisocial behavior in later years.



Research has underscored the significance of stability and unity in a family as a vital element in promoting positive and desirable youth development. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1999) reported that situations like divorce or separation result in family disruptions, which can increase deviance among adolescents. This implies that family instability can lead to psychological and behavioral problems in youths.

Ogechi (2017) examined the relationship between family and antisocial behavior among adolescents in Nasarawa. The research found that family homes with healthy interactions and unity tend to display lower levels of antisocial behaviors among youths, whereas families characterized by disunity and poor parental relationships tend to have a higher prevalence of disruptive behaviors among youths.

Scholars have also reported that monitoring and discipline approaches utilized by parents can significantly impact youth behavior. A study by Dishion et al. (1996) established that insufficient parental supervision is related to higher levels of delinquent behavior among adolescents. Furthermore, Gardner and Steinberg (2005) stressed the impact of harsh or erratic corrective measures used on children, contributing to negative conduct. Adolescents who are constantly subjected to undue harsh disciplinary practices tend to become troubled, to the extent where they may seek solace in deviant conducts to relieve themselves from such physical or emotional experiences.

According to Otuadah (2006), boys who experience inadequate parental supervision, affection, and care are more likely to drop out of school, become stressed, and engage in deviant behaviors. Naturally, the possibility of a better, safer, and more prosperous society developing in Nigeria would remain elusive until steps are taken to curb the surge of antisocial behavior among students.

Teenagers are becoming increasingly involved in antisocial behaviors in senior secondary schools. Teenagers have been responsible for crimes ranging from small-time theft to large-scale





robberies and murders over the past 20 years (Okorodudu, 2010). Nwanneka, Ikediashi, and Joseph (2015) posited that the socio-economic status of parents plays a role in determining youth behaviors. The study revealed that youths from affluent settings tend to enjoy a better life and have no need to engage in risky behaviors. However, youths fostered in situations of abysmal poverty often have to strive for survival, which can lead to antisocial behaviors.

Nwankwo (2003) also noted that youngsters born into disadvantaged homes may adopt socially inappropriate activities as a survival strategy. Bacchini, Concetta, and Afusso (2011), and Nwankwo, Nwoke, Chukwuocha, Obbany, Nwoga, Iwuagwu, and Okereke (2010) discovered that gender, parenting style, exposure to community violence, and parents' socio-economic position were strongly linked to antisocial behaviors among students.

### **Peer Influence and Antisocial Behavior among Youths**

Peer group affiliation appears to exert a significant impact on the conduct of teenagers. An adolescent who belongs to a peer group whose members indulge in antisocial behaviors, such as underage smoking, drinking, pilfering, cultism, rape, prostitution, and violence, is most likely to adopt these views.

Developmental theories, according to Monahan, Steinberg, and Cauffman (2009), show that identification with deviant peers and sensitivity to peer influence are major factors contributing to adolescent delinquency. Monahan et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of 1,354 antisocial juveniles to evaluate how individual variation in exposure to deviant peers and resistance to peer influence affects antisocial behavior expression from middle adolescence into early adulthood (ages 14 to 22 years). They uncovered evidence that antisocial individuals sought to affiliate with deviant peers, and affiliating with deviant peers was associated with an individual's own criminality.

Duarte, Escario, and Molina (2011) revealed that there existed substantial peer group impacts on deviant behaviors, such as alcohol addiction and truancy. A longitudinal study by Dishion et al.





(1996) found that youths who interacted with deviant-prone peers were more susceptible to antisocial behaviors.

Similarly, according to Veenstra and Dijkstra (2011), peer rejection and interaction with antisocial peers are major causes of adolescent hostile behaviors, meaning that negative peer association fosters the likelihood of youngsters exhibiting antisocial tendencies. In the long-term impact of peer dynamics, the vulnerability of peers in their early youth can likely result in greater acts of delinquency in their later years (Allen et al., 2005).

Oni (2010) reiterated that the desire to obtain social acceptance among peers leads to conformity to peer group norms, even when they go against societal expectations. Hence, this may result in the acceptance of antisocial behaviors by youths, especially if group members dominantly adopt them. This closely aligns with the views of Aderanti (2015), who reported that having low self-control exposes adolescents to pressure from peers to commit antisocial activities.

The inevitability is very high where youth with a past history of rejection are concerned. From their findings, Adebimpe and Abodunrin (2009) believed that individuals, especially young adults, are significantly vulnerable to pressure from peers. This could lead them to engage in activities considered deviant and antisocial by society, including underage smoking, cultism, drinking alcohol, pilfering, prostitution, rape, violence by deviant peers, among others.

This implies that the characteristics of individuals coupled with peer interactions can play a vital role in developing antisocial behaviors among youths in Nigeria. A study conducted among senior secondary school students in Kano State, Rogo (2018) identified typical antisocial behaviors to include sexual immorality, examination malpractice/misconduct, lack of respect for teachers, substance abuse, gossip, theft, bullying, and possession of lethal weapons, all of which are directly or indirectly influenced through peer interactions. Gardner and Steinberg (2005) argued that social context increases the likelihood of peer pressure, believing that teenagers are more vulnerable to risky behaviors in the presence of peers than when they are alone.



## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977). According to the social learning theory (SLT), antisocial conduct can be acquired through vicarious experience, in which a person learns a behavior by observing or imitating the actions of another person and the results of that behavior (Bandura, 1977). This technique is called modeling, whereby a person learns by watching other people (models), which encourages imitation if the behavior is likely to have positive outcomes (rewards).

According to social learning theory, three components are crucial:

- i. The model must appear to be rewarded for engaging in antisocial activity for the behavior to be imitated. Individuals who are praised for their actions are more likely to be imitated than those who are penalized or whose actions are not followed up on.
- ii. The model needs to be relatable to the learner (for example, a person's parents, siblings, friends, or teachers might be such a model).
- iii. Learning can take place in real-world situations, through social media, or through conduct imitated in movies or television shows.

## **3.0. METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design to examine the factors influencing high rates of antisocial behaviors among youths in Lafia metropolis. The study employed the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size. The study used stratified random sampling methods to select 204 respondents across four representative wards in Lafia metropolis.

Quantitative data was collected using a primary instrument, a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was verified through expert reviews and a pre-test conducted among a similar group outside the study area. The data was collected through direct



administration of questionnaires, and the quantitative data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages). Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, were used to test and analyze the study hypotheses.

In terms of ethical considerations, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were confirmed during the study, and no harm was caused.

#### **4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

##### **4.1. Presentation of Results**

The distribution above highlights the demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as their perceptions of antisocial behaviors prevalent among youths. The data reveals a preponderance of male respondents (68.5%) over female (31.5%). That is, more men participated in the study than women, which could be attributed to the tendency of antisocial behaviors to be more associated with young males.

The data on age indicates a varied distribution, with the majority being from the age bracket 36–45 years (34.0%), followed by 16–25 years (26.0%), then those aged 46 and above (25.5%). However, the least responses came from the 26–35 years age group (14.5%). In terms of religiosity, the data shows that the majority identified as Islam (51.5%), followed by Christianity (40.5%), and the least were affiliated with traditional religion (8.0%).

Regarding the kinds of antisocial behaviors observed among youths, the highest response was stealing (18.0%), followed by sexual immorality (16.0%), drug abuse (15.5%), smoking (15.0%), drinking (10.5%), gossip (10.5%), disrespect toward parents or teachers (7.0%), cultism (4.5%), and bullying (3.0%) having the lowest rating. The most prevalent antisocial behaviors identified among youths were stealing, while deviant acts like cultism and bullying had the least frequencies. However, their presence is still a concern due to their potential effects on individuals and society at large.



**Table 1: Distribution showing demographic data of respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	137	68.5
Female	63	31.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		
16 – 25	52	26.0
26 – 35	29	14.5
36 – 45	68	34.0
46 – Above	51	25.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
Religion		
Islam	103	51.5
Christianity	81	40.5
Traditional	16	08.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
Antisocial behaviors among youths		16.0
Sexual immorality	32	15.0
Smoking	30	10.5
Drinking	21	15.5
Drug abuse	31	18.0
Stealing	36	7.0
Disrespect towards parents/ teachers	14	
Cultism	09	4.5
Gossip	21	10.5
Bullying	06	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2023).

Generally, the data highlights the demographic information of the respondents. It also shows that there is a high prevalence of antisocial behaviors, including stealing, sexual immorality, and drug abuse, among youths. This further emphasizes the urgent need for specific interventions to address the menace.



For the purpose of interpreting this study's data in Table 2, the mean score of **1.00–2.49** suggests **Disagreement**, **2.50–3.49** suggests **Agreement**, and **3.50–4.00** indicates **Strong Agreement**.

**Table 2: Social media and antisocial behavior among youths**

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	St.D
1	I think anonymous nature of online setting increases antisocial behavior.	119 (59.5%)	51 (25.5%)	17 (8.5%)	13 (6.5%)	3.15	0.95
2	I believe consumption of media contents leads to sexual immorality among youths.	101 (50.5%)	76 (38.0%)	11 (5.5%)	12 (6.0%)	3.12	0.98
3	I think youths observe and attempt to copy negative lifestyles of celebrities on social media.	93 (46.5%)	59 (29.5%)	39 (19.5%)	07 (3.5%)	3.05	1.01
4	I think excessive social media use leads to neglect of academic activities.	87 (43.5%)	63 (31.5%)	35 (17.5%)	15 (7.5%)	3.0	1.0
5	I feel like frequent social media usage decrease positive social interactions with other people.	95 (47.5%)	39 (19.5%)	43 (21.5%)	21 (10.5%)	2.95	1.03

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2024).

The table 2 indicates that respondents generally agreed ( $\bar{x}$  =3.15, St.D=0.95) that the anonymous nature of online settings contributes to antisocial behavior. This suggests that the benefit of not being accountable in the online space gives individuals the opportunity to act the way they want. Similarly, the respondent agrees ( $\bar{x}$  =3.12, St.D=0.98) that consumption of media contents leads to sexual immorality among youths. Also, respondents generally agreed ( $\bar{x}$  =3.05, St.D=1.01)



that youths observe and attempt to copy negative lifestyles of celebrities on social media. This suggests that while many respondents believe this to be true, a noticeable portion of them holds differing opinions. Furthermore, there is the agreement ( $\bar{x}=3.00$ ,  $St.D=1.00$ ) among respondents that the excessive use of social media leading to neglect of academic activities. Lastly, respondents have generally agreed ( $=2.95$ ,  $St.D=1.03$ ) that frequent social media usage decreases positive social interactions with other people. This suggests that respondents generally believe social media use diminishes face-to-face interactions.

The data analysis indicates that there is a general agreement among the study respondents on the negative influence of social media on youth behavior, especially in terms of encouraging antisocial behaviors. The low standard deviation across the statements indicates that the agreement with these views is widely shared among respondents, despite some variations in the degree of agreement for certain statements. Information in Table 3 reveals findings that respondents generally agreed ( $=3.15$ ,  $St.D=0.95$ ) that individuals from single-parent families engage in antisocial behaviors. Also, the findings show that respondents agreed ( $=3.10$ ,  $St.D=0.97$ ) that youths who lack adequate parental care are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors.

In addition, there is a clear agreement ( $=3.05$ ,  $St.D=0.99$ ) among respondents that family disruptions, such as divorce, leave children vulnerable to deviant behavior. Furthermore, the mean score of 3.08 and standard deviation of 0.96 suggest strong agreement with the statement that youths from poor family backgrounds are at risk of engaging in delinquent acts to achieve a better quality of life. The analysis also reveals that respondents generally agreed ( $=3.12$ ,  $St.D=0.94$ ) that a lack of parental supervision contributes to deviant behaviors in children.

The mean scores across all statements ranged from 3.05 to 3.15, indicating general agreement regarding the influence of family structure on antisocial behaviors among youths. The consistency of the responses was demonstrated by the relatively low standard deviations, ranging



from 0.94 to 0.99. This confirms a shared perception among respondents that family dynamics, such as single-parenting, lack of supervision, and economic hardship, contribute to shaping youths' tendencies toward antisocial behaviors.

**Table 3: Family structure and antisocial behavior among youths**

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	St.D
1	I think individuals from single-parent families engage in anti-social behaviors.	105 (52.5%)	37 (18.5%)	19 (9.5%)	09 (4.5%)	3.15	0.95
2	I believe youth who not receive good parental care are likely to engage in antisocial behaviors.	83 (41.5%)	65 (32.5%)	11 (5.5%)	11 (5.5%)	3.10	0.97
3	I believe family disruptions including divorce leaves children vulnerable to deviant conducts in their later years.	99 (49.5%)	43 (21.5%)	07 (3.5%)	13 (6.5%)	3.05	0.99
4	I feel that youths from poor family background are at risk of delinquent acts in order to live the good life.	94 (47.0%)	49 (24.5%)	15 (7.5%)	08 (4.0%)	3.08	0.96
5	I think children who lacked parental supervision tend to commit deviant behaviors.	104 (52.0%)	41 (20.5%)	10 (5.0%)	05 (2.5%)	3.12	0.94

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2024).

The data in Table 4 highlights that respondents overwhelmingly agreed ( $=3.15$ ,  $St.D=0.98$ ) that youths who identify with deviant peers are also susceptible to deviant behaviors themselves. The table also indicates that respondents believed that youths commit delinquent acts in hopes of gaining acceptance from peers ( $=3.10$ ,  $St.D=1.0$ ). Similarly, there was acceptance of the statement that youths with low self-control are easily pressured into antisocial activities by peers ( $=3.05$ ,  $St.D=1.02$ ).



**Table 4: Peer influence and antisocial behavior among youths**

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	St.D
1	I believe that youths who identify with deviant peers are also susceptible to deviant behaviors themselves.	112 (56.0%)	45 (22.5%)	25 (12.5%)	18 (9.0%)	3.15	0.98
2	I think that youths commit delinquent acts in hopes of gaining acceptance from peers.	108 (54.0%)	52 (26.0%)	20 (10.0%)	20 (10.0%)	3.1	1.0
3	I believe that youths with low self-control are easily pressured into antisocial activities by peers.	99 (49.5%)	60 (30.0%)	25 (12.5%)	16 (8.0%)	3.05	1.02
4	I feel that youths are more likely to commit deviant acts in presence of peers than when alone.	104 (52.0%)	58 (29.0%)	22 (11.0%)	16 (8.0%)	3.08	1.01
5	I think peer rejections contribute to youths hostile behaviors.	110 (55.0%)	49 (24.5%)	23 (11.5%)	18 (9.0%)	3.12	0.99

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2024).

The findings additionally show that respondents agreed ( $=3.08$ ,  $St.D=1.01$ ) that youths are more likely to commit deviant acts in the presence of peers than when alone. Lastly, as indicated by the mean score of 3.12 and standard deviation of 0.99, respondents generally agreed that peer rejection contributes to youths' hostile behaviors. The findings suggest a strong consensus among respondents regarding how peer influence impacts antisocial behaviors among youths. The analyzed data consistently demonstrates how associating with deviant peers, the need for peer acceptance, and the impact of rejection by peers elicit deviant or antisocial behaviors.



## Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between social media and high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia metropolis.

**Table 5: Correlation between social media and antisocial behavior among youths**

Variables	Mean	SD	DF	r-calculated	r-critical	P	Decision
Social media	3.054	0.994	198	0.92	0.148	<0.027	Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Antisocial behavior	22.2	10.79					

**\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2024).

Table 5 above shows that the calculated r-value of 0.92 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.148 for a two tailed test at 0.05 level of significance. Given the above, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate is retained. Therefore, social media usage significantly relates to antisocial behaviour among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between family structure and high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia metropolis.

**Table 6: Correlation between family structure and antisocial behavior among youths**

Variables	Mean	SD	DF	r-calculated	r-critical	P	Decision
Family structure	3.10	0.96	198	0.82	0.148	<0.000	Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Antisocial behavior	22.2	10.79					

**\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork (2024).

Table 6 above indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.82 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.148 for a two-tailed test at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, we can therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. Therefore, we can say that family structure is statistically



and significantly related to antisocial behaviour among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between peer influence and high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia metropolis.

**Table 7: Correlation between peer influence and antisocial behavior among youths**

Variables	Mean	SD	DF	r-calculated	r-critical	P	Decision
Peer influence	3.10	1.00	198	0.997	0.148	<0.000	Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Antisocial behavior	22.2	10.79					

**\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2024).

The table 7 above displays the calculated r-value of 0.997, which is also greater than the critical r-value of 0.148 for a two-tailed test at 0.05 level of significance. In which case we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Therefore, peer influence is statistically significantly related to antisocial behaviour among youths in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

## Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study sought to investigate how social media influences high rates of antisocial behavior among youths. The study found that the anonymous nature of online settings contributes to behavior. This finding is congruent with Blumer and Kleinberg (2024), who studied the amount of toxicity on Reddit and Wikipedia over a 14-year period. They observed fluctuations in users' toxicity levels over time and noted that due to the anonymous nature and absence of direct consequences in online environments, users tend to exhibit antisocial behavior with little regard for its effects.

In addition, the study found that the consumption of media content leads to sexual immorality among youths. This finding is in line with Setiawina (2019), who argued that the excessive and



unregulated use of social media among children and teens encourages negative sexual behavior among youths. The study also found that youths who observe and attempt to copy the negative lifestyles of celebrities on social media are influenced by them. Furthermore, the study revealed that excessive social media use leads to neglect of academic activities and decreased positive social interactions with others.

An earlier study by Julian (2023) stressed the continued vulnerability of youths to external influences, particularly the pervasive use of social media. He emphasized that the excessive use of social media by youths can be associated with negative consequences, including mental health challenges, decreased social interactions, and possible academic impacts.

The second objective of the study was to determine how family structure affects high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis. The study found that individuals from single-parent families engage in antisocial behaviors. This finding corroborates with those of Aderanti (2015), who explored how family structure influences juvenile delinquency among teenagers in Ikenne, Ogun State, Nigeria. He discovered that teenagers brought up in single-parent families displayed an increased tendency for delinquent activities compared to those reared in dual-parent homes. Furthermore, the study found that youths who lack adequate parental care are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors. This corresponds with the report by Rodríguez and Cerezo (2019), who underlined the importance of a caring home environment. They posited that adolescents who received higher levels of parental support would likely display lower rates of antisocial conduct.

The study also found that family disruptions, such as divorce, leave children vulnerable to deviant behavior. Ogechi (2017) emphasized that families characterized by disunity and poor parental relationships tend to have a prevalence of disruptive behaviors among youths. Additionally, the study found that youths from poor family backgrounds are at risk of engaging in delinquent acts to achieve a better quality of life. This finding aligns with Nwankwo (2003),



who noted that youngsters born into disadvantaged homes could adopt socially inappropriate activities as a survival strategy.

The third objective of the study sought to investigate how peer influence contributes to high rates of antisocial behavior among youths in Lafia Metropolis. The study found that youths who identify with deviant peers are also susceptible to deviant behaviors themselves. This finding supports Monahan, Steinberg, and Cauffman (2009), who emphasized that identification with deviant peers and sensitivity to peer influence are major factors in adolescent delinquency. The study also found that respondents believed youths commit delinquent acts in hopes of gaining acceptance from peers. This agrees with Oni (2010), who reiterated that the desire to obtain social acceptance among peers leads to conformity to peer group norms, even when they go against societal expectations. Hence, this may result in youths accepting antisocial behaviors, especially if group members dominantly adopt them.

In addition, the study found that youths with low self-control are easily pressured into antisocial activities by peers. Similarly, Aderanti (2015) posited that having low self-control exposes adolescents to pressure from peers to commit antisocial activities. The study further found that youths are more likely to commit deviant acts in the presence of peers than when alone. This finding lends credence to Dishion et al. (1996), who carried out a longitudinal study revealing that youths who interacted with deviant-prone peers are more susceptible to antisocial behaviors.

## **5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that youths, in their developmental stages, are vulnerable to factors that induce them into engaging in antisocial conduct. The study revealed that significant precursors to this include anonymous and excessive social media use. Additionally, the family environment in which youths grow up significantly conditions their deviant behaviors, especially in relation to



family instability, single-parenting, poor parenting, and impoverished backgrounds. The study further revealed that peer influence also contributes to antisocial behavior among youths, with factors such as interaction with deviant peers, the need for acceptance, and rejection by peers. In light of these findings, there is an urgent need to address these issues to foster sound and healthy youth development for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

## **5.2. RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. To mitigate the risks associated with excessive social media use, comprehensive educational programs should be implemented to raise awareness among youths about the potential consequences and negative effects of unregulated social media usage. These programs should emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking skills and online safety practices.
- ii. Establishing counseling institutions that offer guidance and support to couples before, during, and after family disruptions is crucial. Additionally, there should be a renewed focus on re-educating and reorienting parents on effective parenting practices that foster love, affection, and a nurturing environment for their children.
- iii. A collaborative effort is necessary among the government, its agencies, educational institutions, and parents to effectively promote, reorient, and resocialize societal values in children. This collective responsibility will help instill positive values and behaviors in young people. Furthermore, parents and guardians must take an active role in monitoring their children's activities at home, their interactions with others, and provide guidance and advice on the importance of positive relationships and behaviors.

## **Competing Interest**

The author have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this paper.



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