

**PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AS DETERMINANTS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR  
AMONG EMERGING ADULTS DURING COVID-19 IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

Antisocial behaviours distort the normal activities within the school, work and societal settings by reducing the level of students' attention and concentration, makes organizational goals unattainable by reducing other workers' commitment to duty, increases the tendency for grooming youths that become thugs, armed robbers and bully of gullible others in the society. This study adopted descriptive survey design and data was collected using Google forms questionnaire. Four research hypotheses were tested at  $p < .05$ . It was found that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence had negative relationship with antisocial behavior; self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence did not have significant relative influence on antisocial behavior; self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence did not have joint influence on antisocial behavior and there was no significant difference of male and female emerging adults on antisocial behavior during COVID-19 in Nigeria. Therefore, there is need to improve on the self-esteem and emotional intelligence of the emerging adults; parents should be more interested in the kinds of lifestyle their children adopt, by

discouraging them from partaking in activities that could affect them negatively. This study has implication for students in high school and tertiary institutions.

**Keywords:** Antisocial Behaviour; Self-Esteem; Emotional Intelligence; Parental Support; Peer Influence

## **Introduction**

Emerging adults are those young adults that are about leaving secondary school and those in the university (Bada, Salaudeen, Alli and Oyekola, 2020). It is the age between fifteen and thirty years. These people have distinct ways of displaying anti-social behaviour during covid-19. The covid-19 pandemic has made several emerging adults globally to resort to learning things through digital and online medium. The pandemic has disrupted the ways of lives of the people all over the world and until urgent step is taken, it could further degenerate into negative impacts on the emerging adults, resulting in anti-social behaviour (International Labour Organization, 2020). Emerging adults who lacked computer literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic were less able to learn effectively, which may have contributed to increased engagement in anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is the kind of behaviour that is not in tandem with the acceptable standard of behaviour within a given society and which violates the rights, freedom and wellbeing of others (Pena and Gena cited in Álvarez-García, et al, 2019). This kind of behaviour is displayed by some people at the various aspects of their lives, though seldom and based on some circumstances. Emerging adults are more susceptible to anti-social behaviour, as it is typical of their age, as they are often within the period of life that they have to engage in social identity and experimentation. At this stage, emerging adults want to gain the acceptance of their peers, improve their social status in their respective groups. Based on the typical nature of emerging adults, who are mostly adolescents, anti-social behaviour becomes a stable characteristic in them that continues till the stage of an adult (Moffitt cited in Álvarez-García, et al, 2019).

Anti-social behaviour results in significant social, personal and psychological harm to oneself and others. Someone who indulges in anti-social behaviour that persists for quite a long period of time, has the likelihood for reduced work and educational privileges, resulting in maladjusted behaviours both now and when he becomes an adult resulting in activities such as criminal acts, bullying, workplace/academic incivilities, substance abuse and the like (Álvarez-García, et al, 2019). The

victims of anti-social behaviours may suffer economic, physical and emotional traumas, with the social trauma of anti-social behaviour gulping huge resources in juvenile justice system, education and mental health (Cook et al., 2015).

Increasing anti-social behaviour among emerging adults in schools, workplaces and other facets of life is a cause for concern. Incessant displacement of unacceptable behaviours by the youths is on increasing trend on a daily basis. These unsuitable behaviours have negative implications on significant others in the society. It distorts the normal activities within the school settings by reducing the level of attention and concentration of other students, makes organizational goals unattainable by reducing other workers' commitment to duty, it increases the tendency for grooming youths that become thugs, armed robbers and bully gullible others in the society. Parents have significant role to play at making sure that they groom the best children with the most suitable behaviour within acceptable norm of the society. This could be achieved by ensuring that any perceived negative behaviour that the emerging adults display is corrected forthwith. Parents should consistently reinforce good behaviours in their children and ensure the encouragement of attitude that promotes pro-social behaviours in the emerging adults. It is also the duty of the parents and the school management to monitor that emerging adults do not keep friends that would destroy their future.

The self-esteem of the emerging adults can also be an indicator of anti-social behaviour. An emerging adult with high self-esteem is deemed to be in charge of his life and tends to control his attitude and behaviour without being influenced by external factors. However, those with low self-esteem are most often twisted by circumstances and others around them. Therefore, emerging adults with low self-esteem have higher tendency of indulging in anti-social activities if circumstances around him promote antisocial behavior. Emotional intelligence is another factor that could responsible for anti-social behaviour. Inability to recognize one's emotional and that of others could trigger irrational behavioural response at certain points. Hence, once an emerging adult has adequate knowledge of his emotion and that of others, he would be able to regulate different emotional responses and avoid antisocial behaviour. During covid-19, emerging adults hardly use their talents and energy culminating in reduced intellectual growth and development, with the consequential effect on the society (Lodding, 2019). Antisocial behaviour has been observed to be prevalent among emerging adults in the secondary schools, higher institutions,

religious gatherings and workplaces due to the influence of peers. This study would do justice to the level of relationship and influence of peers towards breeding antisocial behaviour in emerging adults in Nigeria.

The consequential effects of anti-social behaviour fall on the society. The society is at the receiving end because the property, progress, growth and development of the society will be hampered due to the negative impact of anti-social behaviour. However, these impacts will continue to be felt until factors that are responsible for anti-social behaviour are addressed. Hence, the study seeks to investigate psychosocial factors as determinants of anti-social behaviour among emerging adults during covid-19. Addressing this issue will contribute to a broader societal understanding of emerging adults and the factors that influence their vulnerability, particularly when they are not guided in ways that encourage pro-social behaviour.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

### **Study population**

The study was conducted among emerging adults in Nigeria with the focus on emerging adults across different ethnic groups, religious organizations and institutions of learning. The determination of emerging adults in this study is predicated on earlier study conducted by Bada et al, (2020) that emerging adults are those between 15 and 30 years old. They were drawn from both secondary schools and higher institutions in different states of Nigeria. The variable scope is self-esteem, emotional intelligence, peer influence and parental influence as the independent variables, while anti-social behaviour is the dependent variable of the study.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

The instruments of data collection were Rosenberg self-esteem scale; Schutte, Marlouf, Hall, Harggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dohheim emotional intelligence scale; Ronald and Osnat peer influence scale; Werner-Wilson and Arbel parental support scale and Elliott, Ageton, and Huizinga antisocial behaviour scale. Antisocial behavior scale had five items; self-esteem scale had 5 items, with 2, 4 and 5 reversed; emotional intelligence scale had five items with items 3 and 4 reversed; parental support scale had 4 items, with item 3 reversed and peer influence had 4 items. These

scales were revalidated for their reliability and validity in order to ascertain their suitability as measures in this study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The study employed the use of online Google forms questionnaire for data collection subject to the lockdown occasioned by the corona virus pandemic which has restricted movement of persons from one place to the other. The prospective participants were contacted using online method of administering questionnaire to ensure the safety of the researcher. Participants were randomly selected across the emerging adults on different social media networks in order to ensure that every member of the population has equal chance of participating in the study. The Google forms questionnaire link was sent to different groups where emerging adults are found and they will be advised to click the link and fill their responses accordingly.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The study formulated four research hypotheses which were subjected to test. These hypotheses are:

1. There is significant relationship between self-esteem, emotional intelligence, peer influence, parental influence and anti-social behaviour among emerging adults during covid-19 in Nigeria.
2. There is significant independent influence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, peer influence and parental influence on anti-social behaviour among emerging adults during covid-19 in Nigeria.
3. There is significant joint influence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, peer influence and parental influence on anti-social behaviour among emerging adults during covid-19 in Nigeria.
4. There is significant gender difference on antisocial behaviour of emerging adults during covid-19 in Nigeria.

To test the research hypotheses, different statistical techniques were applied. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for hypothesis one. Hypotheses two and three were tested using regression analysis, while hypothesis four was analysed using the t-test for independent samples. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis. The downloaded data on the excel spreadsheet was recoded on SPSS. The coded data was analyzed

with descriptive statistics, multiple regression, independent samples *t-test* and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

### **Ethical Consideration**

The consent of the participants was obtained by the researcher for intention to participate in the study. There will be no coercion of participants to get involved in the study, participation was strictly voluntary. All information provided by the participants was strictly for the purpose of research and was not divulged to the third party. In essence, confidentiality of the information provided by the participants was given utmost consideration.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics of the Scale**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Scale Name</b>	<b>No of Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
1.	Antisocial Behaviour	5	12.1571	2.36297	2.008	1.476	.741
2.	Self-Esteem	5	15.3478	2.95469	-.906	-.228	.752
3.	Emotional Intelligence	5	20.8000	1.98983	-.393	-.226	.871
4.	Parental Support	4	16.2464	2.28425	-.479	-.282	.811
5.	Peer Influence	4	11.6857	2.09584	.457	.363	.781

**Source:** Author's computation

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of antisocial behaviour, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence. Emotional intelligence (mean = 201.80, SD = 1.99), parental support (mean = 16.25, SD = 2.28), self-esteem (mean = 15.35, SD = 2.95), antisocial behaviour (mean = 12.16, S.D = 2.36), and peer influence (mean = 11.69, S.D. = 2.10) indicates a spread of the score across the variables. The Cronbach's Alpha of all the scales was more than 0.70, indicating that they are all suitable for use in this study. Skeweness and kurtosis of the distribution was between +/-3, indicating the fulfillment of requirement of distribution.

## Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is significant relationship between self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support, peer influence and antisocial behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Zero Order Correlation Matrix**

	<b>Antisocial Behaviour</b>	<b>Self Esteem</b>	<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Parental Support</b>	<b>Peer Influence</b>
Antisocial Behaviour	1				
Self Esteem	-.066	1			
Emotional Intelligence	-.120	.491**	1		
Parental Support	-.137	.337**	.390**	1	
Peer Influence	.104	-.265*	-.384**	-.339**	1

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 2 shows relationship between self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support, peer influence and antisocial behaviour among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria. It was found that there was negative and no significant relationship between antisocial behavior and self-esteem ( $r = -.066, p > .01$ ), there was negative and no significant relationship between anti-social behavior and emotional intelligence ( $r = -.120, p > .01$ ), there was negative and no significant relationship between antisocial behavior and parental support ( $r = -.137, p > .01$ ), there was positive and no significant relationship between peer influence and anti-social behaviour ( $r = .104, p > .01$ ). This shows that the self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence had no significant relationship with anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria. The hypothesis is hereby refuted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is significant relative influence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Table 3: Independent Influence of Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, Parental Support and Peer Influence on Anti-Social Behavior among Emerging Adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	14.606	4.700		3.107	.003	5.213	23.999
Self Esteem	.015	.118	.018	.125	.901	-.221	.250
Emotional Intelligence	-.085	.182	-.071	-.467	.642	-.448	.278
Parental Support	-.101	.146	-.097	-.691	.492	-.393	.191
Peer Influence	.062	.161	.053	.385	.701	-.260	.385

a. Dependent Variable: Antisocial\_Behaviour

Table 3 shows the result of the independent influence self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria; arrangement of the influence is as follows: parental support ( $\beta = -.097$ ,  $t = -.691$ ,  $p > .05$ ), emotional intelligence ( $\beta = -.071$ ,  $t = -.467$ ,  $p > .05$ ), peer influence ( $\beta = .053$ ,  $t = .385$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and lastly self-esteem ( $\beta = .018$ ,  $t = .125$ ,  $p > .05$ ) in that order. In view of these results, all the independent factors had no significant influence on antisocial behavior of emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.



**Hypotheses 3:** There is significant joint influence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Joint Influence of Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, Parental Support and Peer Influence on Anti-Social Behavior among Emerging Adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria**

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.163 <sup>a</sup>	.026	-.035	2.43763	.026	.428	4	63	.788	1.930

a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer\_Influence, Self\_Esteem, Parental\_Support, Emotional\_Intelligence

b. Dependent Variable: Antisocial\_Behaviour

Table 4 shows that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence did not have significant joint influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria ( $R = .163$ ,  $R^2 = .026$  and adjusted  $R^2 = -.035$ ,  $F\text{-ratio} = .428$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The implication of this result is that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence jointly contributed -3.5% to antisocial behavior of emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is significant gender difference on antisocial behavior of emerging adult adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Summary of independent t-test table on gender Difference on Anti-Social Behavior among Emerging Adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P

Male	36	12.39	2.13			
				68	.843	>.05
Female	34	11.91	2.60			

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Table 5 results indicate that gender had no significant difference on antisocial behavior of emerging adults [ $t(68) = .843$ ;  $p > .05$ ]. The result indicates further that male (mean = 12.39) is higher than female (mean = 11.91) emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION

The study found that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence had no significant relationship with anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria. This was supported by Piquero (2002) cited in Williams et al., (2015) that self-esteem had no relationship with offending or antisocial behavior. Nowak et al., (2020) found that peers have significant influence on the tendency of children to indulge in antisocial behaviour. However, Ojo (2015) refuted the claim of this study and found that children with antisocial parents have higher tendency of being antisocial in their behaviours later in life. In essence, antisocial behavior will be promoted by emerging adults with low self-esteem, poor parental care, low emotional intelligence and those with peers having antisocial personalities.

In order to ensure that emerging adults are free from all forms of antisocial activities and to uphold good conduct in the society, the kind of friends they keep must be taken into consideration (Blakemore, 2018), parents have also been found to be useful vessel in enhancing or reducing antisocial behavior in emerging adults (Aniemeka et. al, 2020). Emerging adults that have low self-esteem can be easily influenced by their peers into indulging in antisocial behavior (Darjan et al., 2020). High emotional intelligence in emerging adults will enable them to checkmate their activities in relation with observing rules that are acceptable in the society (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

The study found that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence had negative relative influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in

Nigeria. This finding was supported by Aniemeka et al., (2020) who found that emotional intelligence had negative impact on antisocial behavior. In essence, emerging adults with high emotional intelligence will not indulge in antisocial behavior, as he is self-motivated and able to manage relationship with others effectively (Oguntayo, 2020). The finding was refuted by Darjan et al., (2020) as it was found in their study that individuals with low self-esteem would indulge more in antisocial behavior. This is because emerging adults with low self-esteem will ascribe the cause of their actions to others and see themselves as worthless and not in charge of their lives; thereby resulting in the demonstration of behaviours that are not in line with acceptable standard (Pazzaglia et al., 2020).

The finding was also supported by Andrews et al, (2020) who found that rejection by peers would result in antisocial behavior. In essence, emerging adults whose friends have abandoned would indulge more in antisocial behavior, while those who still enjoy the company of their friends through social identity will not partake in antisocial behavior. However, Aniemeka et. al, (2020) refuted the finding of this study by asserting that authoritarian parenting had influence on their children indulging in antisocial behavior.

Finding showed that that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support and peer influence did not have significant joint influence on anti-social behavior among emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria. In essence, the four factors had negative influence on antisocial behavior of emerging adults. This was supported by the previous studies (Blakemore, 2018; Darjan et al., 2020; Oguntayo, 2016; O'Connell, 2021) that these indicators would have negative influence on antisocial behavior. The study also was found that gender had no significant difference on antisocial behavior of emerging adults during COVID-19 in Nigeria. This was refuted by Mobarake (2015) who found that there was gender a significant gender difference on antisocial behavior among adolescents.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study tested four hypotheses and hypothesis one found that there was negative relationship between self-esteem, emotional intelligence, parental support, peer influence on antisocial behavior of emerging adults. This implies that the higher the impact of these factors in the lives of emerging adults the lower the tendency of indulging in antisocial behaviour. It was found that the

independent variables did not have significant relative influence on antisocial behavior. This shows that each of these factors independently did not make a significant contribution to the antisocial behavior of emerging adults. It was further found that these factors did not have joint influence on antisocial behavior of emerging adults. The implication is that the combination of these factors did not produce any positive increase the tendency of emerging adults to indulge in antisocial behavior. Finally, it was found that gender did not have significant difference on antisocial behavior.

Based on the findings of the study, the study raised a need to improve the self-esteem of the emerging adults, as this would reduce the tendency for them to indulge in antisocial behavior. This is brought done by making sure that all necessary factors that could promote the self-worth of emerging adults such as eating good food, looking good, having access to a good and quality education and more are made available to them. These will prevent emerging adults from taking parts in antisocial activities. The emotional intelligence of emerging adults must be optimized. This is through the introduction of a lifestyle and ways of stabilizing their emotions. This is by giving them consistent positive orientations that they should remain positive at all times and avoid negative thought. Parents should be more interested in the kinds of lifestyle their children adopt, by discouraging them from partaking in activities that could affect them negatively. Such activities as indulging in drugs, tipsy drinking and carousing should be discouraged by parents. The emerging adults should also be monitored on the kinds of friends they keep. Steps must be taken by the schools authorities, parents, governments and other relevant stakeholders to address the issue of antisocial behavior among emerging adults across gender divides. This is due to the fact that both male and female emerging adults have the tendency to indulge in antisocial behavior; hence, preference should not be given to a particular gender ahead of the other in addressing the menace. Lastly, several psychosocial content variables showed moderate internal reliability. Future research should improve construct reliability to better support these results.

Nevertheless, the study design presents several limitations. First, the distribution of participants across gender categories was unequal. Second, the sample size was relatively small because data collection relied on online methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the study faced time constraints, which further limited the scope of data collection. Although this study helps to bridge the gap in the literature on antisocial behaviour among emerging adults during COVID-19

in Nigeria, future research should explore strategies for improving the psychosocial well-being of emerging adults.

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