

The Role of Stakeholders in Addressing the Challenges of Antisocial Behaviour among Students: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

The paper reviews and explores the role of stakeholders in addressing the challenges of antisocial behaviour among students. Antisocial behavioural problems that take place during adolescence years is the most significant of human life. Adolescence is a crucial period for developing behaviours that will improve or negate one's psychological well-being and future. The issues of antisocial behavioural problems have been a major challenge to students on university campuses and the society in general. As a contribution to this discourse, this paper outlines the conceptual definition of antisocial behaviour, theoretical basis, mental and physical health, causes and consequences. The paper also highlights the major challenges of students as regards the elements that constitute antisocial behavioural problems. The article recommends that government and stakeholders of education should strengthen the existing guidance and counselling centres on campuses to assist in shaping students' behaviours in campuses.

Keywords: stakeholders, students, antisocial behaviour, adolescence, guidance and counselling

Introduction

The problems of unstable home, poor academic performance, drug abuse, high risk sexual exploitation, cultism, kidnapping and emotional disturbances, seem to be the latest concern of government and stakeholders of education. This trend calls for proper implementation of guidance services in Nigerian universities to remedy the sorry situation (Sambo, 2018). Antisocial behaviours are often exhibited by students because majority of them are adolescents, which is a critical period of development marked by heightened vulnerability that has profound implications on their health, academic performance, and overall well-being.

These behaviours are inimical to students and those in their environments (Isaiah, 2015). More so, Kimberly and Jacob (2020) describe antisocial behaviour as any act that imposes physical or psychological harm on other people or their property. Also, such behaviours may sometimes constitute a violation of legal codes, and it is often seen as disturbances of thoughts and emotions.

On the other hand, Clare (2024) describes antisocial behaviours as destructive acts characterized by covert and overt hostility and intentional aggression towards others. According to him, high risk factors in the family setting can cause antisocial behaviours in the child. These factors include parental history of antisocial behaviours, parental alcohol and drug abuse, chaotic and unstable home life, absence of good parenting skills, use of coercive and corporal punishment, parental disruption due to divorce, death or other factors, parental psychiatric disorders, especially maternal depression and economic distress due to poverty and unemployment. Other causes of antisocial behaviours are heavy exposure to media violence through television, movies, internet, video games and cartoons (Clare, 2024). He posited that engaging in antisocial behaviours poses great risk to an individual's mental and physical health and puts one at increased risk of alcoholism, smoking, illegal drug use, high risk of sexual behaviour, depression and engaging in violent acts towards others and self.

Oboh (2017) states that high risks of interpersonal and intrapersonal implications of antisocial behaviours are readily apparent. Thus, the helping relationship demands that the counsellor, who is the help giver, should understand and conceptualize the clients' problems. Also, theories of counselling provide a framework that can help counsellors to understand their client's behaviour and to describe and explain what they are doing in a helping relationship and why they are doing it. To be effective as help givers, therefore, it is necessary for counsellors to have extensive background of the theoretical base of counselling in order to be able to make good and effective counselling decisions. Counselling is a person-to-person relationship designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of life and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of problem (Burks & Steffle, 1979). It is interaction in which the counsellor offers another person the time, attention, and respect necessary to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully, and to his or her greater well-being. This research therefore seeks to review existing literature based on the role of stakeholders in addressing the challenges of antisocial behaviour among students with respect to the concept of drug abuse, family, cultism and sexual abuse.

Concept of drug abuse

Drug use is as old as man. Since the early times, herbs, leaves and plants have been used to heal and control diseases. The use of drugs, in itself, does not constitute any danger, because drugs correctly administered have been a blessing to mankind. The use of drugs could be beneficial or harmful depending on the mode of use (Black, 2022). A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological functioning through its chemical actions (Oduh et al., 2020). It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions (Balogun, 2024). This could, thus, be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about psychological and behavioural changes (Nnachi, 2020).

When people use drugs without doctor's prescription, it becomes drug abuse. Thus, the alarming evidence in the prevalence of drug abuse, the effects and consequences of drug abuse among students have called for concern and challenge all helping professions to mount strategies for equipping the youths with skills for living a life devoid of substance abuse. In Nigeria today, the consequences of drug abuse are diverse, including acute and chronic health, social as well as psychological problems. There is disruption of interpersonal relationships particularly within the family, marginalization, criminal behaviour, school failure, vocational problems and failure to achieve normal adolescent milestones. Several studies carried out among the secondary school students in Benin City by Omega and Oshiokoya (2023), Nwagwu (2021), Fayombo and Aremu (2020), and Obianwu (2025) found that students and youth of easy virtue in the community are involved in cannabis abuse and stimulants such as amphetamines. Eyo et al. (2025) reported that personal variables (sex, age and school year grouping) had significant relationships with the use of non-orthodox substances amongst secondary school students. The consensus of opinions, therefore, seems to be that youths are seriously involved in drug abuse. Drug abuse has become such a problem of great concern to all well-meaning Nigerians, and particularly, the Federal Government to the extent that an agency has been established to combat the social disease with a view to reducing the spread of drug abuse to the barest minimum or in the long run, eradicate it completely.

Concept of family

Studies have shown that antisocial behaviour is influenced by the kind of model the parents provide; some parents are inept as role models for children. This may provoke children's conduct by being harsh and punitive more than necessary. According to Verkey (2021), delinquent children in different parts of the world have confirmed the fact that they are the product of broken or drunken families. Lack of guidance and counselling to the students may lead to bad peerage. This, in turn, may lead to indiscipline in schools. It is evident in some studies that a student can exhibit antisocial behaviours due to poor family background.

Meyer (2019) reported that specific parenting practices are highly correlated with antisocial behaviours in early childhood and are prognostic of more serious forms of antisocial behaviours in adolescence. According to him, coercive or punitive interactive cycle can occur in the home as the child makes demands on the parents who lack certain parenting skills. Further, South Holland District Council (2004) listed the following family related causes of antisocial behaviours: poor parental discipline and supervision; family conflict between parents or between parents and children; family history of problem behaviour; and parental involvement/attitude concerning problem behaviour. Social and home environments can contribute to the development of antisocial behaviour. For instance, parents of troubled children frequently show a high level of antisocial behaviour themselves. In one study, the parents of delinquent boys were more often alcoholic or criminals and their homes were frequently disrupted by divorce, separation or the absence of a parent.

Erratic or inappropriate discipline and inadequate supervision have been linked to antisocial behaviours in students. Involved parents tend to monitor their child's behaviour, setting rules and seeing that they are obeyed; checking on the child's whereabouts and steering them away from troubled playmates.

Concept of cultism

Studies have shown that cultism among students in Nigerian universities is so alarming and it has led to killings, unrest, kidnaping, truancy, intimidation, and destruction of school properties, rape, violence, unruly behaviour, and other antisocial activities on campus. The university is expected to be a community of peace, which emphasizes the supremacy of the intellect. It is, therefore, an adult world with many decisions, anxieties and pressures (Egbochuku, 2025a). There are times when students may be homesick, feel unloved or overwhelmed, or believe that their lives will never be straightened out. Learning to cope with such feelings and keeping them in proper perspective is an opportunity the university environment provides.

At any given point in time, on the campus, there are several organized and informal social, religious, or political groups that are recruiting students. Choosing to belong to various groups is an important decision in a student's life on campus. How to differentiate a psychologically manipulative group from a group that is not harmful is also an important decision a student must make (Egbochuku, 2025b). Nigeria, as a nation, has expressed genuine concern about the spate of cult killings in her institutions of higher learning. The government has initiated laws and strategies aimed at reaching a final solution to the problem of cultism. In the pursuit of cultism from tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Obasanjo (2000) ordered that all tertiary

institutions in Nigeria must eradicate cultism or risk being closed down. School authorities have, therefore, been organizing lectures, seminars, dramas, religious services and rallies all aimed at enlightening the university community on the evils associated with cult activities and their unacceptability to the university (Adolescents Health Information Project, 2021). Parents themselves, have been most alarmed.

Non-governmental groups have been most relentless in their campaigns against the evils of cultism. Authorities at the various institutions now devote greater time to the issue of cultism than any other issue in the day to day running of the schools (Bodunrin, 2020). Also, Cultism and cult-related issues have become a hydra-headed monster which seeks to destroy the very fabric of peace and tranquillity that characterizes teaching and learning in any institution. Amaele (2016) described cultism as a social crime which has become a common practice in Nigerian schools including primary, secondary and tertiary schools. This is why Mbongo et al. (2016) reiterated that cultism is a fraternity established by a conjunction of purposeful intention to achieving narrow ends. The intentions of the cultists are usually to cause harm, maim and to destroy lives and property on campuses. Egbeozor (2020) observed that cultists have become notorious because they have become associated or identified with unwholesome behaviour such as drug abuse, clashes among themselves and others and nocturnal meetings and activities.

Concept of sexual abuse

Research has shown that sexual abuse among students in tertiary institutions is on the increase in Nigeria. This may come in the form of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is an act that: (1) is of sexual nature, (2) is not acceptable (3) denies or limits the ability of students to participate or benefit from a school education programme (US Department of Education, 2010). Cantrell (2018) explains that what is meant by the behaviour that is not accepted is certainly a behaviour that has a negative impact on students' self-esteem.

a) Verbal sexual harassment

The form of verbal sexual harassment by the students includes making comments, jokes, movements or gases on the victim's body; and spreading sexual rumours about the victim (American Association of University Women, 2000). When students neutralize or accept the verbal sexual harassment by their friends, it would be difficult to interpret or understand sexually harassed victims verbally, because sexual harassment is unacceptable behaviour (Rolfe & Schroeder, 2017).

b) Physical sexual harassment

Not all physical contacts are described as sexual harassment (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The physical form of students' sexual harassment includes: touching, holding, pinning the victim sexually; deliberately stroking the victim's body sexually; drawing the victim's

clothes with sexual intent; pulling the bottom or dropping the victim's clothes; urging the victim to kiss the perpetrator; urging the victim to do something other than sex and kissing (American Association of University Women, 2011).

c) Other forms of sexual harassment (Non-Verbal)

The other forms of sexual harassment include showing illustrations, messages, or sexual notes to the victims; writing messages or sexual strokes about the victim in school equipment; pecking at the victim without her consent (American Association of University Women, 2011). The forms of sexual harassment mentioned above are not only experienced by female students as males are also victims. There is no correlation between the social background of students with sexual harassment occurrence in both male and female students (Lee et al., 1996).

Concept of peer influence

Scholars are of the view that there are antisocial behaviours in peers and could be covert or overt. For instance, Hallahan (2016) stated that antisocial behaviours are disruptive acts characterized by covert and overt hostility and intentional aggression towards others and self. The influence of peers on students' behaviour cannot be underestimated. It could be positive or negative. Okah (2013) reported that involvement of a child with deviant peers appears to accelerate the growth of antisocial behaviours. Further, students with antisocial behaviour tend to choose similar playmates. This association pattern usually develops during the school or universities years when peer group acceptance and the need to belong first become important. These relationships can encourage and reward aggression and other antisocial behaviour. These associations may later lead to gang membership (Black, 2016).

A person's peer group strongly influences a decision to commit crime and aggressive behaviour. For example, young boys and girls who do not fit into expected standards of academic achievement can sometimes become lost in the competition. Children of families who cannot afford adequate clothing or school supplies can also fall into the same trap. Researchers believe that these youths may abandon school mates in favour of criminal gangs, since membership in a gang earns respect and status in a different manner. In gangs, antisocial behaviour and criminal activity earn respect and street credibility. Like society in general, criminal gangs are usually focused on material gain. Gangs, however, resort to extortion, fraud, and theft as a means of achieving material gain.

Often and initially, the problem is not associated with antisocial peers, but with being a 'loner' rejected by peers. Where shyness or social withdrawal co-occurs with aggression in childhood, this predicts more serious antisocial behaviour than aggression on its own. Even

when they are not shy, highly aggressive children are rejected by their peers, partly as a function of poor social skills that accompany their aggression. Also, studies have shown that peer pressure comprises a set of group dynamics whereby a group in which one feels comfortable may override personal habits, individual moral inhibitions or idiosyncratic desires to impose a group norm of attitudes or behaviour.

Peer pressure is emotional or mental force from people belonging to the same social group (such as same age grade or status) to act or behave in a manner similar to themselves. Peer pressure may be pressure in the work place, at school or within the general community. It can affect people of all ages and backgrounds. Peer pressure has a great influence on adolescents' behaviour and reflects young people's desire to fit in and be accepted by others. Peer pressure is also known as peer influence, and it involves changing one's behaviour to meet the perceived expectation of others. However, peer pressure may have a positive influence and help to or motivate people to do their best. Peer pressure may also result in people doing things that may not fit with their sense of what is right and wrong. Peer pressure may be influence in a number of ways: fashion choice, alcohol and smoking and other drugs use, decision to have a boyfriend/girlfriend, choice of friends, organizing and attending parties.

Research such as peer cluster theory has shown that peer pressure has a much greater impact on adolescents' behaviour than any other factor. A teenager spends more of his/her time with peers than with family members. The interaction of peer is direct, and more powerful than the influence of teachers and other authority figures. Peer pressure tends to have more of an effect on children with low self-esteem. If a child feels compelled to fit in, the teen may do things that go against his/her beliefs simply to be part of the group. Peer pressure can lead to experimentation with drugs and alcohol, sex, skipping school and various high-risk behaviours. If there is a sudden change in a child's appearance, clothing and attitude, especially if accompanied by secretive behaviour, he or she may be succumbing to the influences of peers (Kirk, 2020). Parents should be especially alert to sudden changes in the friends that make up their core peer group. An unexplained change in the type of friends a child associates with, would indicate that the child is vulnerable to new influence that may not be positive. As a result, parents need to stay alert to all kinds of peer pressure.

Concept of antisocial behaviour

Literature available shows the alarming evidence of antisocial behavioural problems which include killings, unrest, kidnaping, truancy, intimidation, and destruction of school properties, rape, violence, unruly behaviour and other antisocial activities on campus (Oliha, 2014). It is evident in some studies that a student can exhibit antisocial behaviours due to poor family background. Meyer (2019) reported that specific parenting practices are highly correlated with

antisocial behaviours in early childhood and are prognostic of more serious forms of antisocial behaviours in adolescence. The notion of coping with antisocial behavioural problems refers to individuals' differences in response to happening events and circumstances. Many of these behaviours are heavily tied to the peer culture, as children learn from and imitate the peers they like and admire. Wanting to be attractive to others becomes very important in adolescence, and this factor is significant in the development of eating disorders, alcohol consumption, tobacco and drug use, tanning, not practising safe sex, and vulnerability to injury, among other behaviours. The adolescents who get involved in such risky behaviour often have high levels of conflict with their parents and poor self-control. Adolescents who abuse drugs typically do more poorly in school. On the other hand, parental deprivation due to deaths, divorce, separation or discord has also been strongly associated with drug abuse (Odejide, 2017). Lastly, studies have shown that cultism among students in Nigerian universities is so alarming. Research such as peer cluster theory has shown that peer pressure has a much greater impact on adolescent behaviour than any other factor.

Antisocial behavioural problems and health

Engaging in antisocial behaviours poses great risk to an individual's mental and physical well-being including risk of alcoholism, cigarette smoking, illegal drug use, high risk of sexual behaviour, depression, suicide and engaging in violent acts towards others and self.

The causes of antisocial behavioural problems include heavy exposure to media violence through television, movies, internet, video games and cartoons. According to Clare (2024), some of the consequences of antisocial behaviour problems may include aggressive actions against siblings, peers, parents, teachers, verbal abuse, bullying and hitting.

Empirical studies

Isaiah (2015) conducted a study on the causes and prevalence of antisocial behaviour among students with hearing impairment in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study used 60 students with hearing impairment from Methodist Grammar School (Deaf Unit), Bodija, Ibadan and Ijokodo High school, Ibadan. The common causes of antisocial behaviour as revealed by the study were media influence, lack of counsellors in schools, ineffective school administration, peer influence, broken home and lack of parental care. The findings of the study revealed that the most common antisocial behaviour exhibited by the participants are: examination malpractice, lateness to school, abortion, stealing, rape, cultism and rudeness. There should be home/school partnership in curbing antisocial behaviour among students with hearing impairment in Nigeria.

In another study conducted by Asiyai (2019) on antisocial behaviour in secondary school and its impact on students' interest in guidance services, sample was drawn from a population of public secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. The sample comprised 500 counsellors selected through simple random sampling techniques from twenty secondary schools in the state. The findings revealed that antisocial behaviour was prevalent in urban and rural schools but was more prevalent in urban schools than in rural schools. The findings further revealed that the extent of prevalence of antisocial behaviour in large schools was more than in small schools. Antisocial behaviour severely impacted on students' interest in guidance services. The study concluded by recommending the adoption of appointing guidance counsellors to head the guidance unit. Principals of large schools should employ collaboration with school management team to effectively combat antisocial behaviours through guidance services. The researcher recommended a well-documented policy, provision of adequate materials and facilities, recruitment of guidance counsellors, and training and sensitization of all stakeholders on the importance of guidance services.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on the following theoretical framework:

i. Social Learning Theory

This research is guided by Bandura (1992) Social Cognitive Learning Theory. According to this theory, behaviour is determined by the person's thought processes, the environment and attitude. This means that individuals determine their own behaviour while being influenced by the environmental factors and their own behaviour. Bandura's social cognitive learning theory tends to focus more on cognitive expectancies, vicarious learning and self-regulations as explanatory mechanism of drugs and substance abuse. For example, individuals who believe that alcohol will make them more attractive, less inhibited, better lovers and more fun to be around, will be more prone to use alcohol.

Bandura (1992) contended that behaviour is largely regulated by cognitive factors such as perception of an issue and the pattern within the environment. Thus, this theory is relevant to this research as it emphasizes the role of observational learning with regard to the presence and influence of models. The theory claims that role modelling does not only affect behaviours but that it also leads to the development of thoughts and emotions that shape behaviour. Students who get engaged in the antisocial behaviour, have most likely learnt the behaviour from their environment. These students have decided to get into the antisocial behaviour more often than not out of choice. According to Omulema (2011), this theory aimed at explaining the factors that may influence students' antisocial behaviour in schools which include learning through observation, vicariously, imitating and identifying with wrong people whom they consider as models.

Franzoi (2010) further described social models as students who others are most likely to pay attention to and model or imitate their behaviour because they have social control over them. This theory can be applied in guidance and counselling where the counsellors and peer counsellors model actual behaviour of honesty, compassion and respect to counter the wrong behaviours that these young people may have acquired. Such models are aware of their power of being worthy to be emulated. Guidance and counselling can further use symbolic models by inviting successful models to the school to talk about their experiences while at the same time the mass media can be used to disseminate useful information from models who cannot be physically reached. School administrators can also enhance behaviour change through modelling of good behaviour. Visible and supportive administrators interact with their students even in school social activities thereby serving as a platform to know the students personally.

ii. Person Centred Theory

This theory focuses on the interaction between the counsellor and the client. Rogers (1986) called it the person-centred theory in order to suggest that the principles extended beyond the client therapist relationship to encompass all human interactions. The current person-centred theory is understood as a process of helping clients discover new and more satisfying personal meanings about themselves and the world they inhabit. The model assumes that human interaction is only possible when certain conditions prevail. In the case of guidance and counselling, these conditions should prevail in the counsellor client orientation.

According to Omulema (2011), these conditions include counsellors' demonstration of empathy, unconditional positive regard and warmth to the client. He notes that growth occurs in an acceptance, warm, empathetic, non-judgmental environment that allows students the freedom to explore their thoughts and feelings and to solve their own problems. Counselling programme that lacks these characteristics culminates in poor performance of students in school. When a counsellor communicates the above conditions, those being helped will become less defensive and more open to themselves and their world and they will behave in more social and constructive ways. Many students harbour feelings of failure in academics and thus have low self-esteem. But counsellors are able to counter the feelings by working towards fostering the students' capacity to hope and believe that they are capable of overcoming academic failure they are experiencing and even end up performing their best potentialities. This theory relates to the present research in terms of the adolescents' belief that guidance services is a protective factor against antisocial behaviours whereas time spent with peers is a risk factor for problem behaviours.

Counselling approach to followed

The goal of counselling is promotion of positive feelings, mental health and wellbeing. Thus, based on the approach that is followed in counselling, the goal of counselling is organized as follows:

1. **Developmental:** This type of counselling engages with the individual throughout the entire life span. It helps to deal with the various developmental stage related issues and concerns so that the individual is able to cope with these challenges, function effectively and progress optimally. Developmental counselling deals with an individual's strength and aims at fully utilizing one's capacities. It encourages personalized learning and equips the clients to be responsible for the decisions and choices made by them.

2. **Facilitative:** This kind of counselling involves facilitating or helping a client clarify the concerns and problems, promotes self-understanding and acceptance, and suggests ways to overcome undesirable behaviour or situations. Dilemmas related to jobs, marital adjustment, poor academic performance may benefit from facilitative counselling process. This is "remedial" or "adjustive" type of counselling that aids people in progressing from a deficit stage to a functional one thereby facilitating growth.

3. **Crisis:** Crisis counselling, as the name indicates, requires an immediate support from a counsellor. Profound disruption of an individual's life cycles brings frustration which then requires professional understanding and appropriate help. Inability to cope with life's stresses, interpersonal dissonance, and perceived inadequacies in self may lead to suicidal attempts and, therefore, necessitate hospitalization as a therapeutic intervention. Irrespective of the nature of crisis, the counsellor must accept the situation and remain calm, poised and be self-assured. This helps reduce the level of anxiety in the client.

4. **Preventive:** Preventive approach to counselling focuses on self-awareness related to career preparations and decisions, drug awareness, retirement options, enhancing communicative skills, and so on. Thus, it emphasizes on prevention of the problem before it appears by equipping the person to deal with the situation. The preventive counsellor interacts with the clients in groups or individually and presents a road map. In preventive counselling, the counsellor gives the information to the client and the process of counselling is complemented by the involvement of the client in the progress in the interaction.

Educational and counselling Implications

The issues of behavioural problems that take place during adolescence years require counselling, hence, the following implications for counselling:

1. Counsellors and educational psychologists have a significant role to play in giving awareness to the public, especially youths, on the causes of antisocial behaviour through education, skill acquisition as well as identify health caution that will shape and enhance their well-being and emotional stability. Frustration in life are signs and symptoms of poor mental

health which may be situational, but which may also be resolved through counsellor's regular advocacy awareness, sensitization, mental health programmes, and follow-up programmes.

2. Counselling programmes should aim to reshape permissive behaviour by highlighting the negative consequences of drug use and promoting healthy, substance-free lifestyles. Educational campaigns should focus on altering students' perceptions and beliefs about drug abuse through workshops, seminars, and peer education programmes that provide real-life testimonials and evidence-based information on the risks associated with substance use.

3. Counselling and educational initiatives should address not only these factors but also other potential influences such as family dynamics, peer relationships, and socio-economic conditions. Schools can implement comprehensive health education programmes that include components on mental health, social skills, and drug abuse prevention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, counselling at all levels of school, work and family settings will mitigate the level of stress students are experiencing in the face of the current seemingly ceaseless behavioural problems. Availability of guidance services in schools will reduce the mental strain experienced by students. Positive affective development of the students is necessary for cognitive development vis-à-vis good academic performance. It becomes imperative, therefore, that government, at all levels should make provisions for professionally trained counsellors in schools in order to stem the tide of the growing wave of immorality, cultism, drug abuse/addiction and other vices that currently plague the school system. Family and workplace counselling in industry, hospitals, just to mention a few, will help to breed a peaceful and crime-free society.

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