Influence of Family Heads on Outcomes of Youths Behaviour in Tertiary Institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study addresses the role of gender in the leadership of the family. The study generally sought to ascertain the influence of family heads on the behaviour outcomes of youths in selected tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A representative sample size of 396 was derived using the Taro Yamane Formula. A two-stage sampling technique was employed to select the 396 students within the study area. A structured questionnaire was employed to obtain information from the respondents. Data was analyzed by employing descriptive statistics, and the student's z-test. Upon analysis, it was found that 96% of the respondents had less than ?70,000 (minimum wage) as their monthly allowance. It was discovered that youths' behaviour outcomes can be both positive and negative (pro-social and antisocial). Gender had a strong association with both prosocial behavior ($x2 = 2.877$, $p < 0.10$) and antisocial behavior ($x2 = 1.740$, $p < 0.10$), as revealed by the Chi-square analysis results. According to the z-test scores of students, there is a significant difference in their antisocial behavior based on the gender of their household heads. The study recommended the provision of targeted measures to assist both male- and female-led households to promote healthy behavioral development of their children.

Keywords: Gender, household leadership, Prosocial and antisocial behavior, Child development, Social policy interventions.

Introduction

Many sociological and psychological studies have been conducted on how family structure and dynamics impact young people's behaviour. The gender of the family head is just one of several variables influencing a child's development (Nkan and Asa, 2023; Nkan and Nnubia, 2023). Especially in higher education, studies are being conducted to understand how it influences behaviour, since students at tertiary level of education are somewhat autonomous. Family heads, whether male or female, influence parenting strategies, emotional support, discipline, and monitoring (Nkan and Asa, 2023). All of these components influence young people's ideas, behaviours, and interactions with others (Lamb, 2012). The presence or absence of a male or female head in a family could particularly influence behaviour patterns such as academic involvement, social conduct, and risk-taking behaviour during the transitional phase in higher education (Amato, 2014).

Traditionally, men in patriarchal families have been viewed as leaders, their focus being on power and financial support. On the other hand, women are perceived as more sensitive and kind (Adongo et al., 2023). However one views it, young people's behaviour which in many aspects, include their wish to succeed in school, their reaction to peer pressure, and their drug use, may be influenced by the gender of the family leader (Akpan and Nkan, 2013; Akpan et al., 2012).

Several studies have connected greater academic success and lower crime rates to the conventional method of male leadership, often known as the "father-knows-best" approach (Doan and Schwarz, 2020; King, 2013), and some other research suggests that children raised in households where women are head may be more resilient and flexible given that mothers are known to be caring and chatty (Doucet, 2000; McLanahan and Sandefur, 2009). As more and more families have only one parent, women are typically in charge of these houses which could enable young people to be more self-sufficient and responsible, which would be good in the future (Dunifon et al., 2005). Conversely, socioeconomic concerns can also have an impact on families managed by women, which might indirectly influence young people's performance in life (McLoyd, 2013). On the other hand, male-headed households could have greater restrictions that would either harm or benefit young people's willingness to take chances (Warshak, 2015). A father's involvement, warmth, and communication style can influence the results of male leadership (Jang, 2015).

The effects of family headship are particularly relevant in higher education settings, when students have more autonomy and exposure to a broader range of social factors. Studies show that the early independence that mother leadership promotes in children from female-headed homes often leads to more social responsibility and self-control (McLanahan and Percheski, 2008). Under difficulty, these students might demonstrate greater intellectual drive and perseverance. Households with men in control can provide kids safety and power, which impacts their behaviour; on the other side, rigorous regulations could push youngsters to transgress them (Stewart and Menning, 2009).

Examining factors like academic achievement, social ties, and risk-taking behaviours, this study seeks to explain how the gender of family heads impacts the behaviour of young people in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This study intends to contribute to the discussion on family ties and juvenile development by examining present research and pragmatic evidence. The findings of the study could help to guide initiatives and services intended to assist young people's healthy development as well as to address the specific issues children from various household settings experience.

Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of this study are to;
I.   to investigate how the head of household affects the pro-social conduct of students in tertiary institutions; and
ii. to ascertain how male-headed and female-headed homes affect students' participation in anti-social activities

Hypothesis
H_0: There is no significant relationship between the behaviour outcomes of youths from male and female headed households

Methodology

Study Area
Akwa Ibom State is located in southern Nigeria. It is located between latitudes 4°32' and 5°53' North and longitudes 7°25' and 8°25' East. It is located in the tropical rainforest zone and has an area of 8,412 km2 (Nelson et al., 2020; 2018). Akwa Ibom State is considered an education advantaged state with several tertiary institutions of mission, private and public ownership located within.

Sampling Method of Data Collection
The study population included all students in 3 public tertiary institutions (40,062) in the state namely, the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden and the College of Education, Afaha Nsit. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the representative sample size of 396.

Data collection for this study utilized a questionnaire with a self-report measure seeking information on behaviour outcomes of the respondents. The Behaviour Outcomes Scale (BOS) was used with 17 statements ascertaining prosocial behaviour and 42 statements ascertaining anti-social behaviour. To ensure the instrument's validity, experts from the Departments of Home Economics and Agric Extension in the University of Uyo reviewed it for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.76, which indicated high internal consistency. For data collection, the researcher visited the selected tertiary institutions, obtained necessary permissions, and randomly administered the questionnaires directly to the 396 participants. Careful measures were taken to ensure all questionnaires were completed and

retrieved, minimizing the risk of missing responses and ensuring data integrity (Nkan et al., 2024).

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, mean. Inferential statistics like z-testwere also employed in data analysis.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Most (78.83%) of the 396 survey responses were between 16 and 25 years old, implying most of the respondents were young adults (Table 1). Only 1.77% of students fell between 36 and 45 years old; 19.4% were between 26 and 35 Women accounted for 53.3% of the sample compared to 44.7% for men, hence the gender split was somewhat skewed in their favour. Though their educational backgrounds varied between institutions, most of the respondents (41.7%) were in their second year (200 level). Following this came lower figures at higher levels, including 4.8% in their fourth year (400 level), 2.5% in their fifth year (500 level), 2.3% in postgraduate studies, 28.0% in their first year (100 level), and 20.7% in their third year (300 level). Also, the most prevalent family structure was one with five to six people, which accounted for 43.7% of all households. While slightly larger households with seven to eight people accounted for 20.7%, families with three to four people accounted for around 24.5% of all responses, while the least (11.1%) reported having nine or more family members. In addition, 88.6% of the respondents stated their family was headed by a male; just 11.4% claimed their family head was a woman. Of the educational level of the household head, 20.5% reported them to have completed secondary school; 65.4% had obtained university education, 11.9% had completed primary school, while 0.5% had no formal education. Furthermore, 1.8% of the respondents reported that the heads of their households received their education through adult literacy courses or computer training. In terms of income, most of the responses (69%) indicated they had a monthly income of ₦30,000 or less, 21.9% made between ₦30,000 and ₦50,000, while 5.1% made between ₦50,000 and ₦70,000. Only 4% of individuals surveyed claimed to have over ₦70,000 monthly.

Table 1:   Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
16- 25 years	312	78.83
26 -35 years	77	19.4
36 - 45 years	7	1.77
Sex		
Male	177	44.7
Female	219	53.3

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education level in school		
100	111	28.0
200	165	41.7
300	82	20.7
400	19	4.8
500	10	2.5
Post graduate	9	2.3
Family size		
3-4	97	24.5
5-6	173	43.7
7-8	82	20.7
9 and above	44	11.1
Sex of family head		
Male	351	88.6
Female	45	11.4
Education Status of Family Head		
No formal education	2	0.5
Primary education	47	11.9
Secondary education	8	20.5
Tertiary education	259	65.4
Others (adult literacy, computer training etc	7	1.8
Monthly Allowance (in naira)		
≥30,000	273	69
30001 50,000	87	21.9
50,001 70,000	20	5.1
>70,000	16	4.0

Behavioral Characteristics of Respondents

The results reveal several ways in which respondents acted depending on significant traits including caring, sharing, assisting, volunteering, honesty and fairness, responsibility, and calm demeanour (Table 2). Caring was found to be the most important behaviour ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36), implying a genuine desire to demonstrate care and comfort to others. Also, 54.3% of the respondents stated they like delivering presents to their parents; 46.5% said they find time to console upset or furious individuals. The second most frequent response was "helping," with 47.7% claiming they help someone who has been wounded and 48.7% indicating they help their buddies with lesson evaluations.

The respondents' calm demeanour ranked up third ($\bar{x}$ = 3.33) behind more than half who said they shun conflicts or confrontations. Coming in at number four ($\bar{x}$ = 3.20), sharing implied a desire to participate in social activities. For example, 44.9% of those polled said they invite

friends to play games; 48.5% claimed they enjoy doing housework. Among the 51.3% of respondents who indicated cooperative work, duties came in sixth ($\overline{x}$ = 3.17).   However, somewhat less often was observing school rules. Only 42.9% of those polled believed following the guidelines was easy; 11.1% disagreed. Coming in sixth were honesty and fairness ($\overline{x}$ = 3.05); 52.8% said less-able people should be acknowledged for their achievements; 38.1% claimed they would never violate the law. Volunteering scored the lowest ($\overline{x}$ =2.86) probably because less people reported spontaneous actions of help. Only 30.6% strongly agreed to help pick up items left behind by others; only 25.3% claimed they would clean up after another.

Table 2: Behavioral Characteristics of Respondents in the study area

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{x}$	Rank
1.　Caring						
I enjoy giving presents to my parent(s)	215 (54.3)	150 (37.9)	14 (3.5)	17 (4.3)		
I show sympathy to someone who has made a mistake.	69 (42.7)	194 (49.0)	19 (4.8)	14 (3.5)		
I take time to comfort people who are upset and heart broken	184 (46.5)	170 (42.9)	34 (8.6)	8 (2.0)	3.36	1
2　Sharing						
I invite others to join in a game	133 (33.6)	178 (44.9)	68 (17.2)	17 (4.3)		
I enjoy the company of others a lot	172 (43.4)	164 (41.4)	43 (10.9)	17 (4.3)		
I enjoy sharing in household work (e.g., cooking, cleaning dishes, sweeping the floor)	192 (48.5)	151 (38.1)	25 (6.3)	28 (7.1)	3.20	4
3　Helping						
Where I understand better, I help my course matesrevise their lessons	193 (48.7)	177 (44.7)	20 (5.1)	6 (1.5)		
I try to help someone who has been hurt	189 (47.7)	184 (46.5)	18 (4.5)	5 (1.3)		

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Rank
I offer to help other people who are having difficulty with a task in school	145 (36.6)	209 (52.8)	35 (8.8)	7 (1.8)		
I help other people who are feeling sick	162 (40.9	194 (49.0	28 (7.1)	12 (3.0)	3.34	2
4 **Volunteering** I spontaneously help to pick up objects which another has dropped	121 (30.6)	156 (39.4)	66 (16.7)	53 (13.4)		
I volunteer to clear up a mess someone else has made	100 (25.3)	162 (40.9)	110 (27.8)	24 (6.1)	2.86	7
5 **Honesty/fairness** I take the opportunity to praise the work of less able people	107 (27.0)	209 (52.8)	56 (14.1)	24 (6.1)		
I will not break the law no matter the circumstance	151 (38.1)	155 (39.1)	62 (15.7)	28 (7.1)	3.05	6
6 **Responsibility** I co-operate with others	203 (51.3)	144 (36.4)	33 (8.3)	16 (4.0)		
Complying with school rules does not take much effort	32 (33.3)	170 (42.9)	50 (12.6)	44 (11.1)	3.17	5
7 **Peaceful disposition** If there is a quarrel or dispute, I will try to stop it	169 (42.7)	201 (50.8)	14 (3.5)	12 (3.0)	3.33	3

Anti-Social Behavior Among Respondents

Unfriendly Actions of Respondents

The results, which fall into three groups—loud behaviour, drug and substance abuse and selling, and harassment and intimidation—show different degrees of antisocial behaviour. Harassment and intimidation got the highest scores ($\bar{x}$ = 3.37) suggesting that certain respondents might act negatively towards others. Unexpectedly, 8.1% of those polled said they carried a knife or other weapon for self-defence; 71.0% vehemently disagreed with this claim. Furthermore, 7.6% of those surveyed confessed to ganging up on a friend; 62.9% vehemently disagreed with this. With 8.1% confessing to using offensive language and 45.2% vehemently disagreeing with it, many others were also unkind to each other. The survey findings show that although most of the respondents are against harassment and bullying, a small percentage still participate in these behaviours. Rowdy behaviour came in second ($\bar{x}$ = 3.32), and opinions on disruptive behaviour differed somewhat. Of those who answered, for example, 61.6% strongly disagreed with deliberately beating or slapping someone; 63.6% strongly disagreed with saying that person acts badly because they have consumed too much alcohol. On the other hand, 14.4% confessed to using public transport without payment and 16.9% said they liked being in noisy crowds. Astonishingly, only 8.3% said they did not use trash cans; 38.9% vehemently disagreed that it was challenging to throw away waste. Most of those who answered said the third most common response was "drug/substance abuse and dealing." Of those who could avoid arrest, 66.7% were against selling illegal drugs; 68.9% were vehemently against using drugs or alcohol to enhance confidence. Still, 10.4% confessed to giving in to group pressure to fit in; 24.7% said they would go to any length to reach their objectives.

Table 2.2: Anti-social behaviour of respondents in the study area

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Rank
1. **Rowdy behaviour** I find it waste of time locating the waste bin	33 (8.3)	76 (19.2)	133 (33.6)	154 (38.9)		
I would urinate in a public place without giving much thought	17(4.3)	39(9.8)	113 (28.5)	227 (57.3)		
I act the way I am not supposed to because I drink too much	30 (7.6)	25 (6.3)	89 (22.5)	252 (63.6)		
I hit, or punch people on purpose with the intention of really hurting them	17 (4.3)	26.(6.6)	109 (27.5)	244 (61.6)		

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Rank
I make so much noise in a public place so that people complain	21 (5.3)	20 (5.5)	117 (29.5)	238 (60.1)		
I enjoy a rowdy group	28 (7.1)	67 (16.9)	118 (29.8)	183 (46.2)		
I use a public transportation without paying any or enough money	21(5.3)	57(14.4)	79(19.9)	239(40.4)	3.32	2
2. **Drug/substance misuse and dealing** I would do what I have to do to get things working for me	84(21.2)	98 (24.7)	102(25.8)	1129(28.3)		
For a good reason, I would commit a crime	28 (7.1)	78 (19.7)	104(47.0)	186(47.0)		
I hang around with people who get in trouble	27(6.8)	55(13.9)	77(19.4)	237(59.8)		
I do what my friends do in order to be accepted in a group	16(4.0)	41(10.4)	100(25.3)	239(60.4)		
While hanging out with peers I could take more substance than necessary	24(6.1)	36(9.1)	137(34.6)	199(50.3)		
I could sell illegal substance if I could get away with it	14(3.5)	36(9.1)	82(20.7)	264(66.7)		
I use alcohol or drug to boost myself confidence	17 (4.3)	15 (3.8)	91(23.0)	273(68.9)	3.26	3
3. **Intimidation/harassment** It does not really bother me if my actions hurt people's feelings	25 (6.3)	53 (13.4)	128(32.3)	190(48.0)		
I do say nasty things to someone I know or called them names	32 (8.1)	89(22.5)	96(24.2)	179(45.2)		

I have carried a knife or other weapon with me for protection or in case it was needed in a fight	32 (8.1)	21 (95.3)	62(15.7)	281(71.0)		
I get others to gang up on a peer I do not like	13(3.3)	30(7.6)	164(26.3)	249(62.9)		
I use physical force or threaten to use force in order to dominate others	17(4.3)	37(9.3)	88(22.2)	254(64.1)		
I send nasty/offensive words to opposite sex	22(5.6)	29(7.3)	81(20.5)	264(66.7)		
I take delight in pestering people	20(5.8)	37(9.3)	119(30.1)	217(54.8)	3.37	1

Difference between behaviours

The test results on whether there were significant differences in behavioural outcomes between students from male-headed and female-headed households (Table 4) revealed a computed z-score of pro-social behaviour of -1.85, which was below the critical z-value of 1.96 at a 0.05 significance level. This suggested the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This implies that children from households with male and female heads behave similarly in terms of helping others. However, the expected z-score (1.998), caused rejection of the null hypothesis for antisocial behaviour as it surpassed the critical z-value (1.96) implying that students from households with male heads are more likely to be antisocial than those with female heads.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Hypothesis testing of behaviour outcomes between students from male- headed households and female-headed households

	Pro-social behaviour				antisocial behaviour			
Groups	df	zcal	criticalz	decision	df	zcal	criticalz	decision
Male-headed households	394	-1.85	1.96	not significant	394	1.98	1.96	significant
Female-headed households								

Note: df = degree of freedom, zcal = calculated z, level of significance = 0.05

Discussions

The findings of the study reveal significant differences in youth behaviour between male- and female-headed households, especially in terms of pro-social and anti-social tendencies. In line with studies stressing the nurturing part of maternal figures in fostering empathy and emotional control, students from female-headed homes exhibited more pro-social behaviours including kindness and cooperation (Munarini and Kgadima, 2023). Often, female-headed homes foster unity and open communication, therefore encouraging positive social behaviours (Mabelane, 2016). Since maternal figures usually provide more emotional support, children in these homes may develop stronger interpersonal skills and a more inclination to engage in selfless acts.

On the other hand, children from male-headed households exhibited greater antisocial conduct, which corroborated research linking paternal absence or emotional distance to greater delinquency (Makoni., 2017). Men-led homes could promote traditional male values that discourage emotional expression and, in some cases, cause aggressive behaviour (De*Gue et al.*, 2024). This suggests that homes run by men may create less desirable atmosphere for internalizing social norms, therefore increasing the likelihood of rule-breaking and violent behaviour. Furthermore, research suggests that when fathers are authoritarian or distant, children may struggle with emotional control, which would result in behavioural issues (Pinquart, 2017).

Despite these differences, both household types scored similarly on fundamental pro-social behaviours like honesty and responsibility, implying that these traits are developed through broader social interactions rather than being influenced just by family headship (Arnett, 2018). Peer relationships and community involvement are key factors in creating good behaviours, sometimes offsetting the effects of family dynamics (Lily et al., 2024; Nkan and Nnubia, 2023).

The study also revealed that students from male-headed households were less likely to participate in voluntary acts of service, which corresponds with lower emotional modelling in these environments. Studies show that teenagers' wish to engage in pro-social activities is shaped by their level of social support and community involvement (Garrod and Dowell, 2020). Young people in male-led households may struggle to internalize and consistently act on social values. Furthermore, studies reported that young people in these homes are more likely to experience mental or behavioural issues, especially when father figures provide little emotional support (Cleary, 2022). These findings emphasize the complex relationship between household structure and behavioural outcomes, therefore reinforcing the notion that family headship does not entirely predict young behaviour. Larger social networks, peer pressures, and socioeconomic factors all have a major impact as well (Olanrewaju and Omoponle, 2017). Seeing behavioural development from an ecological perspective—defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the interaction of many environmental systems shaping an individual's development—underscores the importance of this.

Although there were no significant changes in prosocial behaviour, the hypothesis test revealed significant differences in antisocial behaviour between male and female-headed households. This suggests that while anti-social tendencies are influenced by household leadership, outside elements such as peer interactions and community engagement have a

greater impact on fostering pro-social behaviours (Hartup and Stevens, 1997). These findings back research underlining the significance of bigger social environments in shaping positive behaviours beyond parental influence. Higher levels of antisocial behaviour among students from male-headed homes, however, suggest family structure's possible influence on behavioural outcomes. Research indicate that children raised in emotionally distant paternal environments are more likely to exhibit violence and delinquency (Savage, 2014). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) backs up this explanation by implying that children in such homes could mimic their fathers' violent or controlling actions, so reinforcing negative behavioural patterns. On the other hand, female-headed households are occasionally connected to stronger social support networks, which might serve as a protective factor against antisocial tendencies (Cummings et al., 2004). Hajal and Paley (2020) observed that mothers in these households provide consistent emotional guidance, therefore regulating their children's behaviour and reducing aggressive tendencies. Although some research suggests family structure by itself is insufficient to predict behaviour, this one emphasizes the need of emotional support from the home head. Though environmental and socioeconomic factors influence antisocial behaviour (Amato and Keith, 1991), the findings reveal that the degree of parental involvement is also important. This backs the more general argument that structural household leadership as well as social involvement and emotional connection inside the family unit shape youth behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study sought to determine how family headship influenced the behaviour of young people in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions. The study looked at how gender influences family leadership and how it affects young people's moral, social, and academic behaviour. Family structure and head of household gender had a major impact on students' behaviour, academic performance, and peer fit. Although male-headed households are stricter, female-headed households are more caring, which fosters emotional resilience. On the other hand, financial challenges associated with single-parent households can sometimes lead to negative behaviour in teenagers. The study also emphasises the need of targeted projects to assist both male- and female-led families to promote the healthy development of their children. Future research should investigate how changing sociocultural factors influence family leadership and adolescent behaviour. This will help lawmakers to choose policies supporting teens' academic success and stability.

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