

## **Social Skills Needed by Adolescents for Curbing Conduct Disorders: A Case Study of Adolescents Dwelling along River Benue Banks in Benue State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the social skills needed by adolescents for curbing conduct disorders along River Benue banks in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified common factors that cause adolescent conduct disorders and social skills needed to curb adolescents conduct disorders. Study was guided by two research questions. Survey research design and focus group discussion was adopted. Population of the study was 570 adolescents. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used to select sample 368 adolescents for the study. Data were collected with Riverine Adolescents Behavior Questionnaire (RABQ) and focus group discussion. The data collected were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Find ings revealed that 10 common factors are responsible for adolescents conduct disorders such as bad friend, lack of formal education, lack of home training, poverty among others and 17 social skills or ways to curb adolescents conduct disorders such as Parental good mentorship, honesty, sincerity, knowing your right and respecting rights of others. Conclusively social skills are needed by adolescents with conduct disorders in order to help them to have a better behavior. It was recommended that Social skills trainings should be provided for these adolescents by the Ministry of Social Development to enable them establish businesses of their own or be gainfully employed in businesses in conducive environment, Social skills training programmes on communication, education (civic), social values, and health awareness skills should be provided by the Ministry of Social Development for the adolescents to enable them relate with colleagues, clients and the general public in a socially approved manner and Counseling services should also be made available by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to these adolescents to help them overcome harmful practices such as drug abuse, prostitution, aggressive behaviors and other conduct behavioral problems.

**Key words:** Social, Skills, Conduct, Disorders, Adolescents

Adolescent Conduct disorder is a blanket term used to cover a variety of maladaptive or anti-social or violent behaviours exhibited by individuals in inappropriate times (Legg, 2017). Conduct disorders may be a function of choice that is to say the individuals exhibiting the conduct disorder for example, defiance, may choose to exhibit that type of behaviour; therefore they have control over it. Conduct disorders differ from emotional disturbance. That is, adolescents with emotional disturbance generally do not have any control over the behaviour that they exhibit (Jan *et al*, 2012; Frick 2010 and Clare, 2006).

Adolescents with anti-social disorders have difficult time following rules and behaving in a socially acceptable way. They may be characterized by aggressive, destructive, deceitful violation of the rights of others, substance abuse, alcoholism, delinquency, prostitution, moral decadence, defiance, mistreatment of others and vulgarity, disobedience, physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse to minors and seniors, indecent dressing, lack of empathy, misperception of others' intent, lack of guilt or remorse, showing off, low self-esteem and suicidal ideas (Okonkwo, 2013). Legg (2017) went further to categorize conduct disorders into 4 groups namely: aggressive conduct, deceitful behavior, destructive behavior and violation of rules. Aggressive conduct includes; intimidating or bullying others, physically harming people or animals on purpose, committing rape and using a weapon. Deceitful behavior may

include; lying, lying, stealing and forgery. Destructive conduct may include arson, act of vandalism and intentional destruction of property. Violation of rules include; skipping school, running away from home, drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior at an early stage.

All these conduct disorders exhibited by the adolescent are caused by several factors. According to Hill and Maughan (2015) these factors may be genetic or from the environment. Hereditary disorders are those abnormal behaviors that are associated with learning difficulties which a child is born with for example autism which requires special educational programmes or services (Igbo, Ako & Remen, 2010). These genetic factors are characterized by lack of impulse control, reduced ability to plan future actions and decreased ability to learn from past negative experiences. The intentional conduct disorders are influenced from the environment in which the adolescents find themselves such as a dysfunctional family background, negative family characteristics, poor neighbourhood, high risk neighbourhood, enrolment in a poor school with inconsistent and clear discipline policies, unemployment and low socio-economic status pose as stressors from the environment (Igbo & Okpenge, 2003).

Globally, among the various racial and ethnic groups, prevalence of conduct disorders was found among non-Hispanic children in America (Hinshaw & Lee, 2010). As opined by Harden and Mendel (2011), Royes

(2008), Homes (2001) and Sylod (2002) conduct disorders among these adolescents include drug dealings, drug abuse, gang bang, sexual promiscuity, loss of respect for elders and constituted authority these constitute a big challenge to the healthy development of adolescents and the society. In Nigeria, the Nigerian adolescent's conduct problems have been estimated at about 75 % among college students (Gideon, 2009). It has been observed that many adolescents of school going age are engage in out of school business activities due to reasons that ranged from poverty, deviancy, run away from homes and those who live and survive on the street (Egger and Angold, 2006; Okonko, 2013).

In Benue State, People are worried and horrified at the sight of the number of adolescents at the river banks of river Benue, particularly at the time when they are supposed to be in school. These adolescents are exposed to being involved in harmful activities that are harmful to them and the society such as kidnapping, robbery and cultism. This situation makes adolescents more vulnerable to aggressive disorder behaviour toward their clients and exploitation of people that engage them for services. This indicates deficit of behaviors from values, norms and expectation of the family and the society (Tsang, 2003 and Lynch & Samson, 2010). Therefore there is need for re-orientation of the values system to the adolescents through social skills training programmes.

Social skill is the ability to interact with other people in a way that is both

appropriate and effective, to achieve this appropriateness and effectiveness, the adolescent's behaviour needs conform to social norms, values and expectations and not to be viewed negatively by others (Isawumi et al 2016 and Nmom, 2011)

The main purpose of introducing social skills programmes to the adolescents dwelling in River Bank is to correct or eliminate of maladaptive behaviors, to equip the individuals with the ability to function effectively in real life setting, to increase performance competence at workplace, to expand their behavioural repertoires to succeed in different situations (Isawumi, 2016). According to Lynch and Simpson, (2010) these social skills programmes include; communication skills, education (civic) skills, social value skills and health awareness skills.

Communication skills is an act of sending and receiving information between two or more people. It is subdivided into verbal and non-verbal skills. The verbal skills have to do with spoken and written information to convey ideas, views, concepts, attitude, opinions, instructions and emotion, while non-verbal communication have to do with conveying ideas, views through facial expression, gesture, body language and how one dresses (Turner & West, 2013). The social values skills are values that ensure the stability of social order in the society. These skills are set of behaviour that could be learnt and maintain through regular interaction with others. That is a treatment team such as social workers,

psychologist, councilors and family therapist (Coon, 2006).

Civic Education has been viewed by many academics as a course of study that is geared towards producing responsible and law abiding citizens (Ukegbu, Mezieobi, Ajileye, Abdulrahman and Anyaoha 2009 and Ogundare, 2011). For instance, Ukegbu et al (2009) outlined objectives of Civic Education to include; developing and transforming the Nigeria youths into effective and responsible citizens by making them law-abiding, creating awareness of one's rights, duties and obligations as citizens of this great nation and also to appreciate the rights of other citizens, and helping the adolescents to acquire a sense of loyalty, honesty, discipline, courage, dedication, respect, patriotism, hard work. It inculcates in them, the spirit of nationalism and desirable habits, values and attitudes. This education is a vital tool for peaceful co-existent of adolescents dwelling in the River Banks and the people they make with daily. Health awareness skills deals with preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use, it exposes the adolescents on its consequences such as mental health challenges, risky lifestyle health challenges that decreases people chances of living long, healthy and productive lives.

The persistent conduct behaviour of adolescent over a period of time may prevent them from participation in multiple societal useful events. This necessitated the researcher to investigate the social skills needed by the adolescents dwelling along River

Benue banks in order to curb conduct disorders among them.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study investigated social skills needed by adolescents for curbing conduct disorders: A case study of adolescents dwelling along River Benue banks in Benue state. Specifically the study;

1. identified common factors that causes conduct disorders among adolescents along River Benue Banks.
2. determined social skills adolescents need to curtail conduct disorders along River Benue Banks.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are common factors that causes conduct disorders among adolescents along River Benue Banks?
2. What social skills are needed by adolescents to curtail conduct disorders along River Benue Banks?

### **Methodology**

*Area of the study:* The study was carried out in specific settlement areas along River Benue banks in Benue state. These were North Bank in Makurdi, Tyulen (Kwantan Sule) in Guma, Buruku in Buruku and Katsina-Ala Local Government Areas. These settlement areas provide business activities for the youth/adolescents along the banks of River Benue in Benue State.

**Population of the study:** The population is 570 adolescents which comprised school going and non-school going. The school going adolescents age range from 10 to 17 years both males and females who dwell along the River Benue bank, after school they engage in economic activities fishing, brick laying, scooping of sand from the river, boat transportation and hawking of wares. They exhibit different forms of conduct behaviours such as, fighting, cheating, smoking Indian hemp, excessive alcohol use and indiscriminate sexual activities. The non-school going adolescents exhibit similar conduct problems with the school going adolescents

**Sample for the study:** The sample of the study was 368 adolescents drawn from the four settlement areas along the banks of River Benue in Benue state. The sample comprised 91 school going and 277 non-school going adolescents respectively. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The sample was selected in the four settlement areas and it was done among the school going and non-school going adolescents

**Instrument for data collection:** The Riverine Adolescents Behavior Questionnaire (RABQ) was used for data collection. The RABQ is a likert scale format instrument with four point response rating options namely; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively were assigned to SA, A, D and SD for positively worded items while scores 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively were assigned to

SA, A, D and SD for negatively worded items.

The instrument was validated by three Home Economist. The instrument initially comprised 30 items which were pruned down to 20 in the validation process. The face validation was done with regards to content, appropriateness of items and clarity of language used. After validation, 20 copies of the RABQ were administered on 20 adolescents who were not part of the target population but did not participate in the actual study. The scores obtained were analyzed to establish reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient method. A reliability of 0.77 was obtained. This was considered adequate for reliable data collection. Focus group discussion was also organized to collect verbal information from the adolescents.

**Data collection method:** A total of 368 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. However, 343 fully completed questionnaires were returned and 25 of the questionnaires were not returned. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents while they were carrying out their activities at the river banks of River Benue. Those who could not read, the researcher read out, interpreted and assisted them to select the option of their choice. Notes were taken on responses of adolescents during the focus group discussion.

**Data analysis techniques:** Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics namely, frequencies and percentages.

## Results

**Research question 1:** What are common factors that causes conduct disorders

among adolescents along River Benue Banks?

**Table 1: Percentage Responses on Common Factors Causing Conduct Disorder among Adolescents who dwell at River Benue Bank**

S/N	Factors/causes of Conduct Disorders	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Remark
1.	Bad friends	246(71.72)	97(28.28)	Agreed
2.	Lack of formal education	303(88.34)	40(11.66)	Agreed
3.	Lack of home training	294(85.71)	49(14.29)	Agreed
4.	Poverty	285(83.09)	58(16.91)	Agreed
5.	Lack of good mentorship	298(86.88)	45(13.12)	Agreed
6.	Drinking of alcohol	289(84.26)	54(15.74)	Agreed

Table 1 indicates that six factors were identified as major causes of conduct disorders among the adolescents along river banks of River Benue with the following frequency and percentage as follows; bad friends 246(71.72%), lack of formal education 303(88.34%), and lack of home training 294(85.71%), poverty 285(83.09%), Lack of good mentorship 298(86.88%), and drinking of alcohol 289(84.26%). Focus group discussion

also revealed some adolescents are into anti-social behaviors as a result of parent's negative attitudes such as hash child rearing practice by either or both parents, family dysfunction/stress, poor school and neighborhood influences.

**Research question 2:** What social skills are needed by adolescents to curtail conduct disorders along River Benue Banks?

**Table 2: Social Skills Needed by Adolescents for Curbing Conduct Disorders**

S/n	Ways of Curbing Conduct Disorders	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Remark
1	Talk less, listen more.	257(74.93)	86(25.07)	Needed
2	Understanding one's point of view and emotion clear.	245(71.43)	98(28.57)	Needed
3	Understand others view points and makes them feel happy.	254(74.05)	89(25.95)	Needed
4	Asks polite questions to clarify issues when not understand.	281(81.92)	62(18.08)	Needed
5	Parental good mentorship	334(97.38)	9(2.62)	Needed
6	Honesty and sincerity	198(57.73)	145(42.27)	Needed
7	Know you right and respect rights of others.	243(70.85)	100(29.15)	Needed

8	Give respect to human dignities	264(76.97)	79(23.03)	Needed
9	Acknowledge individuals' worth.	283(82.51)	60 (17.49)	Needed
10	Obey rules and laws of the society.	232(67.64)	111(32.36)	Needed
11	Obey constituted authorities.	219(63.85)	124(36.15)	Needed
12	Show respect to elder people in the society	199(58.02)	144(41.98)	Needed
13	Patient and calmness in all ideals.	311(90.67)	32(9.33)	Needed
14	Exhibiting good temperament	314(91.55)	29(8.45)	Needed

Table 2 shows that respondents accepted item 1-14 listed as social skills needed by adolescents to curtail conduct disorders with their respective frequency and percentage from item 1-14: Talk less, listen more 257(74.93); Understanding one's point of view and emotion clear 245(71.43); Understand others view points and makes them feel happy 254(74.05); ask polite questions to clarify issues when not understand 281(81.08); Parental good mentorship 267 (77.84); honesty and sincerity 198(57.73); know you right and respect rights of others 243(70.85); give respect to human dignities 264(76.97); acknowledge individuals' worth 283(82.51); obey rules and laws of the society 232 (67.64); obey constituted authorities 219(63.83); show respect to elder people in the society 199(58.02); patient and calmness in all ideals 311(90.67) and exhibiting good temperament 314(91.55). The focus group discussion also revealed that adolescents living in abusive homes may be placed into other homes/families that have positive rearing practices, the adolescents should also be taught on behavioral management skills and parental management training should be given to parents.

### Discussion

This study investigated the social skills needed by adolescents for curbing conduct disorder among adolescents who embark on business activities along the river banks at River Benue in Benue state, Nigeria. Two specific objectives were investigated; they were to identify common factors that causes conduct disorder among adolescents and the social skills needed by adolescents to curb conduct disorders.

The findings of research question one revealed that lack of formal education, lack of home training, poverty, Lack of good mentorship, drinking of alcohol, parent's attitudes, parental separation/divorce, poor school and neighborhood influences adolescents conduct problems. This in agreement with Kembe (2005) and Okonko (2013) who opined that lack formal education is a potent factor that causes conduct disorders among adolescents. This is because the school is view as an agent of socialization which serve as an extension of parental authority for continuation of guidance for societal acceptable norms for the child.

This implies that adolescents that do not attend school hence do not have access to the control functions of school

against conduct disorder behaviors in terms of lack of teacher's mentorship and home training. Mostly mentorship among adolescents takes place at home and school (Ekong, 2014 & Kathryn, 2012). The authors further stated that it is the duty of parents and teachers to mentor adolescents to become great future leaders. The implication is that when parents and teachers fail to provide good mentorship and guidance, adolescents tend to become wayward.

With regards to influence of bad friends and drinking of alcohol, the two are positively correlated. Bad friends can negatively influence their peers to engage in bad conduct disorders, while intake of alcohol can expose adolescents to bad friends at drinking joints. These factors have been recognized as gateways to conduct disorders among adolescents (Archibong & Akpan, 2012 and Gideon, 2009).

Poverty is also a predisposing factor for adolescents conduct disorders. This is in consonance with Okonkwo (2013) and Egger and Angold (2006) who opined that adolescents, who are from poor background and lack school related materials, often abandon school and engage in out of school activities. The study also finds out that parents attitudes, parental separation/divorce, poor school enrolment and neighborhood influences conduct problems in adolescents. This in agreement with Legg (2017) that unstable homes such separation of parents, drinking or smoking habits exposed children to anti-social behavior.

The second finding revealed the social skills needed by adolescents to

curb conduct disorders and these include; talking less, listening more, understanding one's point of view and emotion clearly, understanding others view points and making them feel happy, asking polite questions to clarify issues when not understood, adolescents should be taught behavioral management skills and parental management training should be given to parents.

This is in line with Orhungur (2003) and Fiyifolu (2011) who posited that good parental mentoring, respecting other people's opinion, asking polite questions can help to curb conduct disorder among adolescents. The study is also in agreement with Asogwa (2009) who stated that in everyday interactions emotional control, respect for others calms nerves. Adolescents who show respect to others through emotional control, even in intense provocation will minimize the exhibition of conduct behaviours problem.

The study in also line with Akpan and Archibong (2012) who opined that listening more, talking less, given respect to human dignities, understanding ones view point, enhances effective and cordial communication that promotes good interpersonal relationship.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that parental and school mentorship has potent social skills that is needed to curb conduct disorders among adolescents. This means that positive parental and teachers



mentoring will help in the training of children with great potentials, to achieve good social skills which lead to actualization of value recognition, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and adolescents becoming functional members of the society. Finally social skills in effective communication skills will improve better conversation in the adolescent's social life with family, boss, co-workers, clients. It will also help them become good citizens and participate in civic life especially in democratic society and these will determine the development and progress of the nation.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

- ❖ Social skills trainings should be provided for these adolescents by the Ministry of Social Development to enable them establish businesses of their own or be gainfully employed in businesses in conducive environment.
- ❖ Social skills training programmes on communication, education (civic), social values, and health skills should be provided by the Ministry of Social Development for the adolescents to enable them relate with colleagues, clients and the general public in a socially approved manner.
- ❖ Counseling services should be made available to by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development on behavioral management skills and parental management training to these

adolescent to help them overcome harmful practices such as drug abuse, prostitution, aggressive behavior among others.

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