

Does bad behaviour run in the family?

January 5 2015, by Bernadette Condren



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

University of Queensland research aims to answer the age-old question of whether anti-social behaviour is passed down through families.

Professor Jake Najman, from UQ's School of Public Health and School of Social Science, said the project was Australia's first to examine anti-social behaviour across three [generations](#) to determine whether and to what extent poor behaviour of grandparents could be transmitted to

grandchildren.

"While there's a belief in society that [criminal behaviour](#) is transmitted across generations, in reality we have very little evidence to back up this stereotype and even less information about why this may occur," Professor Najman said.

"Anti-social behaviour includes a range of activities such as smoking, alcohol misuse and violence, all of which are damaging to [health](#) and well-being."

Professor Najman said he and his research colleagues would try to pinpoint whether exposure to certain factors might predict this.

"The long-term negative consequences of [antisocial behaviour](#) also included poor learning, unemployment, [poor health](#) and higher rates of imprisonment," he said.

"Antisocial behaviour is a major social problem and our efforts to understand and address this problem have been of limited effectiveness.

"In particular, marriage instability, poverty and poor parenting have been linked to the development of anti-social behaviour and, by looking at three generations, this study allows us to better examine the impact of these and other critical factors."

He said the researchers would also explore how patterns of anti-social behaviour had changed over time.

Professor Najman said the high economic and social cost of [anti-social behaviour](#) highlights the need to know more about how and why it develops.

"The findings of this study may see anti-social families, rather than individuals, targeted for early intervention programs that may help reduce the incidence and impact of this behaviour," he said.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Does bad behaviour run in the family? (2015, January 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-01-bad-behaviour-family.html>

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