

Parenting Styles, Peer Group Influence as Correlate of Sexual Behaviour among Undergraduate Adolescents

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Abstract: *The paper examined parenting styles, peer group influence as correlates of risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate adolescents. One research question and four null hypotheses guided the study. A validated instrument titled parenting styles and involvement in risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates was administered to a sample size of 297 respondents. Mean, standard deviation, regression analysis were the statistical tools adopted to analyze the data. The findings revealed that democratic parenting styles does not foster involvement in risky sexual behaviour while autocratic parenting styles, laissez-affair and peer group influence were significantly related to adolescent involvement in risky sexual behaviour. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that there should be implementation of a well planned sexual and reproductive health education at different levels of educational institution.*

Keywords: *Parenting Styles, Peer Group, Sexual Behaviour.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Parenting is being viewed as an occupation which needs a lot of skill that works in order to influence a child's behaviour. Parents are considered as the primary shapers of their children's behaviour including sexual behaviour. They have great influence over whether their wards abstain and when considering parenting styles in relation to behaviour, studies have shown relationship between parenting styles and adolescent behaviour. Weiss and Schwartz (1996) in their study revealed that parenting style can enhance or diminish acceptable behaviour outcomes. In previous studies, democratic parenting has been associated with positive behavioural outcomes such as autonomy, self esteem and better peer relations (Barnes 2002; Baumrund 1991b; Bystrit Sky 2008; Lunder, Hetherington & Reiss 1999; Lomeo 1999; Petito & Cummings 2000 and Steinberg, Darling & Fletcher 1995). While on the contrary autocratic style has been linked with negative behavioural outcomes (Barnes 2002; Beyers and Goossens 2003; Pychyl, Coplan and Reid 2002; Scales 2000). Laissez-faire parenting style was found to be related to delinquency as a result of poor supervision and neglect. Consequently adolescents from Laissez-faire homes tend to report higher frequency of involvement in socio public health problems.

Peers are assumed to exert a major social influence on adolescent sexual behaviour and peer effects may operate at several levels. Same sex peers are usually the source of information about sex (Davis & Harris 1982) and sexually experienced friends usually serve as role models (Rowe & Lunver 1995).

Studies have shown that associating with deviant peers has been linked to earlier initiation of intercourse (Rowe et al, 1989; Whitbeck et al, 1999). Furthermore, one of the strongest predictors of delinquent behaviour in adolescence is affiliation with delinquent peers, an association that has been attributed to peer socialization (Dishion, Bullock & Growe 2002). The implication is that poor parent-child relationships may therefore enhance susceptibility to peer influence or increase the propensity of associating with deviant friends (Whitbeck, Conger & Ilao 1993).

2. PARENTING A RENTING STYLE AND ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Parenting style is the control which parents exercise over their children. Baumrund (1991) identified types of parenting styles as autocratic, democratic and Laissez-faire styles.

In her view, parenting is a complicated occupation which requires variety of skills that work in concert to influence the behaviour of the child. No wonder it is used to capture normal variations in

parents' attempts to control and socialize their children as well as to influence, teach and control their children. It is therefore evident that parenting style could enhance or diminish acceptable behavioural outcomes in children (Weiss and Schwartz 1996). Although other studies found no clear relationship between parenting style and child psychopathology (Havill, 1996; Olafsson, 2001 Revie-Petterson, 1998) because of some moderator or moderating variables such as age, socio-economic status, temperament, gender, family structure and the child's perception of the parenting style (Beyers & Goossens, 2003; Paulson, 1994; Slicker, 1998; McCarthy, 1995 and Bystrotsky, 2000).

An autocratic parent tend to have the final decision in the home, usually they are demanding and directive. Though they ordered environment with rules clearly stated, they are strict and as a result adolescents from such homes are often afraid of their parents and this tends to influence their decisions.

Sternberg (1994) opined that boys from such homes tend to be violent while the girls cannot withstand pressure from the opposite sex and thus engage in antisocial behaviours such as alcohol, drug abuse and promiscuity. The reason being that, this parenting style adheres strictly to the use of authority, punishment and do not expect the children to express disagreements with their rules but to obey without explanation (Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

On the other hand, the democratic style gives the adolescent a free hand to regulate their behaviour. They succumb to the child, giving few rules and avoiding confrontation, as a result the adolescent lacks initiative and discipline and expects everything to be done for them. Although, the parent here expects maturity from the child, by maintaining their position and respecting the child's opinion which in turn gives the child freedom of speech (Martin and Colbert, 1997). Adolescents from such homes view sex as an expression of mature love.

The Laissez-faire parents tend not to interfere with the child's independence; thus demands little obedience and respect for authority. On the contrary the involved parent is much as the worst because there are no rules and no guidance towards the direction of the child's behaviour. The adolescent is entirely on his own and may depend on his peers for social and emotional development.

Parenting style no doubt has been found to predict child well being arising from the conclusion that adolescents of autocratic parents tend to lack social competence in dealing with other people and tend to withdraw from social contact, they hardly use their initiative rather they depend on authorities to decide what is correct because they are used to adhering strictly to rules without being allowed to express their own opinion.

Conversely, children of democratic parents have more self-control, while those from Laissez-faire parents exhibit immature behaviour and have difficulty accepting responsibility for their own actions. And of course adolescents from uninvolved parents are totally dependent and cannot determine right from wrong behaviour. Such adolescents no doubt will fall prey to their peers.

Parent's approval of sexuality appears to be related to adolescent's sexual behaviour. This was evident in a study by Dittus and Jaccard (2000) which revealed that out of 10,000 adolescents studied, adolescents who were most satisfied with the relationship they had with their mothers and who perceived their mothers attitude as disapproving of premarital sex were less likely to initiate early sexual activity, and that the more satisfied the adolescents were with their relationship with their parents the more likely it was that they had used birth control. Similarly, in another study, Maguen and Aronstead (2006) concluded among 568 adolescents where girls showed similar relationship between parents approval and adolescent sexual behaviour because the adolescents tend to delay the onset of sexual behaviour when they perceived their parents attitude about sex as restrictive.

Consequently adolescents of "good parents" have good home training and would grow up to abstain until marriage; on the contrary those of "bad parents" stand a higher chance of being pushed consciously or unconsciously into early sexual initiation.

Democratic style is more directly related to children's psychosocial and behavioural adjustment than the other parenting styles (Beyes and Goossens, 1999). Adolescents from autocratic homes do not usually present behavioural problems (Weiss and Schwarz, 1999), although when discipline becomes too rigid, the probability of the adolescent engaging in antisocial behaviours becomes higher (Gerard

and Buchler, 1999; Loeber et al. 2000). On the other hand, adolescents with uninvolved parents are less socially competent and present adjustment problems in all domains.

Some researchers point out that adolescents from Laissez-faire homes do not interiorize norms and social rules adequately therefore are likely involved in antisocial behaviour (Miller et al, 1993). Others are of the opinion that these adolescents show a social and behavioural adjustment as good as those from democratic homes (Musito and Garcia, 2004; Wolfradt, Hempel and Miles, 2003). It is therefore possible that the specific culture where the various researches were conducted could be responsible.

3. PEER INFLUENCE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

For years, peer influence has reigned as the most important contributor to adolescent behaviour as well as other social processes. In addition is the interpersonal peer group processes such as group expectations and the development of one's social identity (Jeffrey, 2007). Steinberg (2008) established that adolescents are more likely than children to take risks, as recognized by the elevated rates of experimentation with drugs, alcohol and unprotected sexual intercourse.

In a related study by Steinberg and Monshais (2007), peer influence was observed as a primary contextual factor contributing to adolescent's tendency to make risky decisions. Furthermore, one of the strongest predictor of delinquent behaviour in adolescents is affiliated with delinquent peers (Dishion, Bullock and Grasve, 2002). Similarly, in a National Survey of teens, adolescents cited pressure from their friends as the reason for their initial involvement in sex (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998). It is therefore a long established principle of social psychology that people feel compelled to conform to the norms and perceived expectations of the group to which they belong (Baumester, 1990) and according to Berndt (1996) there is evidence that this is true especially in early adolescence.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the extent of the relationship among parenting styles (democratic, autocratic, laissez-affaire), peer group influence and risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate adolescents?

Hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between democratic parenting styles and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between autocratic parenting styles and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between laissez-affaire parenting styles and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the study: This study is correlational because it examined the relationship between parenting styles, peer group influence on risky sexual behaviour. The population of the study comprised of all undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka 2013/2014 session.

6. SAMPLE

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 297 respondents. The characteristics of the respondents are; male were 121 and constitute 40.7% of the sample, while females were 176 which is 59.3% of the sample. By Faculty, 40 subjects from faculty of science which constitutes 13.5%, 11 subjects from social science which constitutes 3.7% and 247 subjects from faculty of education which constitutes 82.8%.

7. INSTRUMENT

The instrument for this study is a self generated question on sexual behaviour, peer group pressure and parenting styles. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A contains the demographic variables such as gender, age, level of study and faculty of study. Section B of the instrument has 40 items on 4-point scoring scale of strongly agrees (SA), Agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The options of the items were weighted in the Likert format with SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2 and SD = 1.

The second part of the section B is further subdivided into parenting style, peer group influence and sexual behaviour. The part of parenting style has 24 items with questions on Laissez-faire parenting styles which include; my parents do not care about who my friends are; I have no regard for people's opinion; I hardly control my behaviour; I am so close and relaxed with my parents that I do not respect their opinion at times; my parents so over-empowered me with confidence that they do not feel I can ever be wrong; my parents do not border whether I greet my neighbours or not; my friends have influence over the decisions I make; my parents do not care about my school materials. There are no rules guiding me at home and my parents feel it is my right to get all I request for at all times. For democratic parenting styles includes items: my parents encourage me to do better in my studies; my parents allow me to move with good friends; my parents do care about what I do at home; my parents answer my questions among other items. Autocratic parenting style includes; my parents do not show concern to my feeling, my parents are too strict; my parents punish me severely and my parents do not praise me whenever I do something right. For peer group; my peers influence my decision about sex; my friends are always there to answer my questions on sexuality; my peers encourage me to put into practice issues involving sex; I have mere confidence in discussing sex issues with my friends. For sexual behaviour, the items include; upbringing influence my attitude toward sex; family values are determinants of my sexual behaviour; my sexual behaviour is based on interaction and socialization with member of my family; pubertal development is a determinant of sexual behaviour; my parents attitude to sex influence my sexual behaviour; the quality of parents-child relationships; and communication with my parents on sexual activity influence my sexual behaviour; my parental monitoring and supervision restrict my involvement on sexual activity; the development of my secondary sex characteristics has influenced my sexual behaviour; finally, I want to experiment with myself since I have what it takes.

To group the respondents into various parenting style (democratic, autocratic and laissez-affaire), a cluster analysis was conducted using K-means. The clusters show that 156 students belong to the autocratic parenting style, 144 students to laissez-affaire and 229 respondents to democratic parenting style.

8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT

To establish the content and construct validity of the instrument principal component analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21. Prior to the analysis preliminary test was conducted to ascertain for factor ability of the matrix. The correlation matrix for peer group showed that most of the terms significantly correlated. Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy value was 0.86 which exceeded the 0.60 value recommended. The Bartlett's sphericity test was also significant at 0.05. Upon analysis, only one component was extracted and it explained 59.2%. The content validity of the instrument is 59.20 and the content validity ranges from 0.74-0.79. For parenting style, the KMO value was 0.85 and the Bartlett's sphericity test is also significant. The construct validity of the parenting style is 52.51 and the content validity ranged from 0.41-0.71. For sexual behaviour, the KMO value was 0.88 and the Bartlett's sphericity test was also significant. The construct validity is 50.73 and the content validity is 0.52-0.75. Cronbach alpha reliability procedure was used to assess the reliability index of the instrument. Sexual behaviour = 0.73, peer = 0.86 parenting style including laissez-affaire = 0.82, autocratic 0.74 and democratic 0.70.

9. PROCEDURE

The instruments were administered to the respondents with the help of research assistant. About 300 copies of the questionnaire was administered but only 297 were finally scored, analyzed and used for the study.

10. RESULTS

Parenting styles predictor of undergraduate's risky sexual behaviour.

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Table 1 show that laissez-affaire parenting style has significant relationship with risky sexual behaviour. The correlation matrix reveals that significant relationship exists between laissez-faire and undergraduate risky sexual behaviour yielding $r = .285$, $P > 0.05$ with the mean score of 15.40 and standard deviation of 5.97, while autocratic parenting style has a significant relationship with risky sexual behaviour and democratic parenting style has no relationship with risky sexual behaviour. From the table 1, the combination of autocratic parenting style and peer group yielded (.177 at $P > 0.05$) level of confidence, democratic parenting style and peer group $-.045$ is inverse and not significant. Peer group pressure is positively and significantly related to risky sexual behaviour among undergraduates with a value of .393.

Table1. Correlation matrix of relationship between parenting styles and undergraduates risky sexual behaviour

Variable	RSB	D	Auto	laissez	Peer	Mean	SD
Risky sexual behaviour	1					9.526	3.26
Democratic parenting styles	-.070	1				25.17	4.73
Autocratic parenting styles	.279	-.177	1			11.87	4.08
Laissez-faire parenting styles	.285	-.098	.473	1		15.40	5.97
Peer group	.393	-.045	.177	.183	1	13.34	5.25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table2. Presents the results of the Regression analyses with which the 4 null hypotheses were tested

Source	DF	SS	Ms	B	ANOVA		R ²	R ² (adj)	F	P
					SEB	R				
Regression	1	15.404	15.04	.048	.040	.070	.005	.002	1.45	.230
Residual	295	3138.58	10.64							
Democratic parenting	296	3153.98								
Regression	1	245.870	245.88	.223	.045	.279	.078	.075	24.94	.000
Residual	295	2908.12	9.858							
Autocratic parenting	296	3153.99								
Regression	1	256.32	256.32	.156	.031	.285	.081	.078	26.10	.000
Residual	295	2897.66	9.823							
Laissez-faire parenting	296	3153.99								
Peer	1	487.01	487.08	.244	.033	.393	.154	.152	53.88	.000
Regression	295	2666.91	9.040							
Residual	296	3153.99								

10.1. Hypothesis I: Table 2a Model 1

As shown in table 2 model 1, the regression analysis computed produced as $F = 1.45$, $df = 1/295$, $P < .05$ level of confidence. The result indicates that democratic parenting styles are not significant predictor of undergraduate risky sexual behaviour. Hence the hypothesis which stated that democratic parenting style cannot significantly predict undergraduate risky sexual behaviour is accepted. This is further confirmed by the R^2 value which is .005 (0% effect size) and R^2 adjusted which is .002 (0% effect size). These results were an indicator that democratic parenting style is not a predictor of risky sexual behaviour.

10.2. Hypothesis II: Table 2 Model 2

As shown in table 2, the regression analysis computed yielded $F = 24.94$, $df = 1/295$, $P > 0.05$ level of confidence. This is an indication that autocratic parenting style predicts involvement in risky sexual behaviour among undergraduates. The hypothesis that autocratic parenting style cannot predict involvement in risky sexual behaviour is rejected. The conclusion drawn therefore is that there was a significant relationship between autocratic parenting style and risky behaviour among undergraduates. In order to determine the predictive power of these variables, the R^2 and R^2 adjusted were computed and values of .078 (7.8% contribution) and .075 (7.5% contribution) were obtained respectively. The high proportion of amount of contribution suggests autocratic parenting style is a significant predictor of risky sexual behaviour; its effect size is statistically practically and clinically significant (Thompson, 2006).

10.3. Hypothesis III: Table 2 Model 3

As shown in table 2, the Regression analysis computed shows $F = 26.10$, $df = 1/295$, $P > 0.05$ level of confidence. The above show that laissez-faire parenting style is a significant predictor of risky sexual behaviour. The null hypothesis that says laissez-faire involvement in risky sexual behaviour is rejected. This was further confirmed by R^2 adjusted .78 (8%) contribution.

10.4. Hypothesis IV: Table 2 Model 4

As shown in table 2, the regression computed shows $F = 53.88$, $df = 1/295$, $P > 0.05$ level of confidence. The above shows that peer group pressure is a significant predictor of undergraduate involvement in risky sexual behaviour. This means the null hypothesis that states peer-group pressure cannot predict undergraduate involvement in risky sexual behaviour is rejected. The computed R^2 and R^2 adjusted which yielded values of .154 (15.4% effect size) and .152 (15.2 effect size) was an indication to this claim.

11. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the contributions of the parenting dimensions and peer influence on the risky sexual behaviour.

Model 1: This shows no significant relationship between democratic and risky sexual behaviour. There is an indication that democratic parenting style is not a predictor of risky sexual behaviour. In homes where there is open dialogue about rules and behaviour, and child centre approach is emphasized in upbringing, parents provide children's need, food, shelter, love, affections, education, control, the children are less likely to exhibit delinquent behaviours. The finding of this study corroborates with Okorodudu (2010) who opined that democratic parenting style is characterized by parental demandness and responsiveness though flexible, enforces reasonable standards of conduct. This is further buttressed in a study by (Utti, 2006) which revealed that adolescents whose parents are demanding and responsive are better in social competence than children from laissez-faire and autocratic backgrounds.

Model 2: The finding reveals that there is a significant relationship between autocratic parenting style and involvement in risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. Autocratic parenting style involves demandiness, without responsiveness, it features parental harshness, violence, aggression and punishment. This agrees with the findings of Colberts (1994) who opined that adolescents reared up through autocratic parenting style lack social competence because they expect the childrens strict compliance to parental rules and directives without explaining the rules to the children. This makes the children to be vulnerable to abusive or openly rebel by engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

Relationship between Laissez-faire parenting style and Risky sexual behaviours:

This finding shows that there is a significant relationship between laissez-faire and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates. The finding agrees with previous researches such as Okorodudu 2010; Utti, 2006; Folarin, 2013, who reported laissez-faire parenting dimension parent's are emotionally detached, without well defined goal, play passive role in the rearing of the children. This children grow up without self control, carefree, wild, delinquent, becomes maladjusted to himself, family and society at large. Research finding reveals that laissez-faire parenting enhances delinquency because of the loose nature of rearing children (Folarin, 2013).

Relationship between Peer group and Risky sexual behaviour

This study shows that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and risky sexual behaviour among adolescent undergraduates. Peer pressure is the most important contributor to adolescent behaviour arising from group expectations and development of social identity (Jeffrey, 2007). This agrees with Steinberg and Mondass (2007) who observed that peer influence is a primary contextual factor contributing to adolescents tendency to make risky decisions such as experimenting in risky sexual behaviour. Furthermore, Dishion, Bullock and Granic (2002) cited that pressure from friends is the reason for their initial involvement in sex.

12. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study shows that parental upbringing plays significant role in children's behaviour. Parents should therefore take this role with all seriousness. The study also revealed that

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sexual behaviours of adolescents is a source of worry considering the consequences of unplanned pregnancy, dropping out of school, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections that results from it. As a result of this comprehensive sex education program will encourage abstinence, the use of contraceptive method for the sexually active adolescents, and can delay first sexual intercourse which in turn will lead to more responsible sexual behaviour.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, the study therefore recommends that;

- Parents and guardians should be well informed to overcome the cultural barriers that discourage giving adolescents early sex education.
- Awareness should be created by incorporating sex education into the school curriculum.
- Implementation of a well planned sexual and reproductive health education at the various levels of government.

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