

Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Adolescents' At-risk Sexual Behaviour in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study focused on parental styles as determinants of at-risk sexual behaviour among adolescents in Etche local government area of Rivers state. The study adopted the correlational research design. A sample of 350 SSI students was drawn using the simple random sampling technique. Two instruments which were the Parenting Style Questionnaire (PSQ) and the Adolescents' At-risk Sexual Behaviour Inventory (AASBI) were used. Validity of these instruments was determined by experts in educational measurements. The Cronbach alpha was used in determining reliability of the instruments which yielded indexes of 0.65, 0.74 and 0.89 respectively. Simple linear regression was used in carrying out data analysis. Findings revealed that parenting styles jointly taken ($P = 0.002 < 0.05$) had significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviour. Independently, authoritarian parenting styles ($P = 0.005 < 0.05$), had significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviour. On the contrary authoritative parenting style ($P = 0.164 > 0.05$) had no significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviour. Based on these findings, recommendations were made among which was that parents, guidance counsellors, caregivers, and teachers should adopt the best and suitable parenting styles that will enable the adolescents relate freely with them.*

KEY WORDS: parenting style, at-risk sexual behaviour, authoritarian, authoritative.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood during which many physical, cognitive and social changes take place (Feldman, 1994). It represents an intermediate stage of human development that is characterized by remarkable biological and psychological

changes. During this period of human development, an individual experiences sexuality, which is a basic need and cardinal experience of human beings. During adolescence, due to the production of hormones (androgens and oestrogens), there is increased sexual behaviour which may contribute not only to early initiation of sexual activity, but also risky sexual behaviour. The emerging sexuality that come along with adolescence therefore represents a fundamental challenge for young people. These include adjusting to the altered appearance and functioning of sexually maturing body, learning to deal with sexual behaviours, and integrating these feelings, attitudes, and experiences into a developing sense of self. This challenge is strengthened by the unfamiliar excitement of sexual arousal, the attention connected by being sexually attractive, and the new level of physical intimacy and psychological vulnerability created by sexual encounters. Every adolescent therefore needs adequate information to navigate this very sensitive period of their lives. Unfortunately, for many adolescents, their response is risky sexual behaviour (Chujor,2015). At-risk sexual behaviours, to the researchers are considered as those sexual behaviours that are capable of exposing an individual's health to risk of infections through sexually transmitted diseases. Some of these at- risk sexual behaviours among others include, forcible sex, multiple sex partners, having unprotected sex, kissing, romancing, masturbation etc. (Aras, Semin, Gunnay, Orcin & Ozan, 2007). And most of these practices are carried out in the secret. Knowing that some of these sexual practices involve risk and are capable of endangering an adolescent's health and life, it is important therefore that caregivers, parents, teachers etc. guide their adolescent away from risky sexual behaviour to avoid exposing themselves to risk of infections.

At risk sexual behaviour during adolescence like the ones cited above, especially, unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners and substance use during sexual encounters represents a major public health problem, including the increased risk for unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (Bobrova, Sergear, Grechukhina & Kapiga, 2005).This is particularly so as adolescent pregnancy and child birth carry gender risks of morbidity and mortality than for women in their 20s, especially when medical care is scarce. Girls that are younger than 18 face two to five times the risk of maternal mortality as women aged 18 - 25 years due to prolonged and obstructed labour, haemorrhage and other factors. When an adolescent becomes pregnant, she is exposed to more complications, as well as an increased risk for preterm delivery, low birth weight and severe neonatal conditions. At risk sexual behaviour has also been linked to a number of negative social consequences including lower school grades (Martin, Ruchkin, Caminis, 2016), and increased risk of sexual victimization in adolescent girls.

Before now, virginity and cultured life were highly esteemed and worth being proud of which seems to confirm Hostetler and McDowell (1996)'s opinion that "teens that are not sexually active often face overwhelming pressure from friends, the media and others, to join the crowd". The researchers too, have observed that the media, peer pressure and parental influence could be the reasons why a lot of adolescents go into risky sexual behaviour now than before. More so, these

factors may have also contributed to early sexual debut which could also lead to early risky sexual behaviour. Enakpene, Fabunwo, Obisesan and Ojengbede (2008) found that recent studies in Africa, including Nigeria have demonstrated increased rate of pre- marital sex and decline in age of sexual debut among adolescents contrary to our rural and cultural values. Enakpene, Fabunwo, Obisesan and Ojemgbede (2008) are of the view that many of the adolescents engage in risky sexual activity without protection. They further opined that most adolescents had their sexual debut through a subtle coercion by their partner,

According to Baumrind (1991), parenting styles are broad patterns of child rearing practices towards their young ones. As a psychological construct, a parenting style refers to the standard strategies used by parents in the rearing of their children. It represents how parents respond to or make demands on their children (Spera, 2005). The concept of parenting styles as used in psychology was popularized by the Developmental Psychologist, Diana Baumrind, at the University of California at Berkeley, in the 1960s. It was observed by Baumrind that pre-schoolers exhibited totally different types of behaviour, and each of these different types of behaviour was highly correlated to a particular kind of parenting. From extensive observation, interviews and analyses, Baumrind initially identified these three parenting styles; authoritarian authoritative and permissive parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991). However, it was later upgraded to four with the neglectful parenting style as the fourth one. There are therefore four famous parenting styles namely authoritarian, authoritative, permissive (indulgent) and neglectful parenting styles. To the researchers, parenting styles are those methods adopted by parents to train or raise their children or wards. The method adopted by one parent may differ from another parent due to individual differences and the method that is practiced in that home.

According to Santrock (2008), authoritarian parenting is a restrictive, punitive style in which the parent exhorts the adolescent to follow directions and to respect work and effort. It is characterized by high expectations of compliance and conformity to parental rules and directions. Authoritative parenting style is a style that encourages adolescents to be independent but still places a limit and control on their actions. It holds high expectations of a child's behaviour while allowing the child to talk about those expectations. Permissive (indulgent) parenting is a style in which parents are highly involved with their adolescents but place few demands or controls on them. Neglectful parenting style is a style in which the parents are much uninvolved in the adolescent's life both emotionally and other wise. However, for the purpose of this study only the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles will be studied as they relate to at-risk sexual behaviour among adolescents.

Authoritarian parents attempt to evaluate, shape and control the attitudes as well as behaviour of their children in line with set standards of conduct, known as absolute standard. On the basis of this standard, children are expected to follow very strict rules defined by their parents. If the

children fail to comply with such rules they are sanctioned. In authoritarian parenting, parents emphasize on conformity and obedience and thus expect that they are obeyed without explanation in a less warm environment. Open communication is discouraged and there is strict control of the child's behaviour. In other words, the parents are forceful, punitive and believe that the child should adhere to work in accordance to ethics and should be obedient. So they exercise high levels of parental control and low levels of parental responsiveness.

According to Santrock (2005), authoritative parenting style is a style which encourages adolescents to be independent but still places limits and control on their actions. It tells adolescents to be on their own although it still maintains boundaries and controls over what they do. Authoritative parents are responsive, warm towards their children. They allow their children to express themselves verbally; and even though they have high level of control and responsiveness, their discipline is not punitive. They try to support their young ones rather than punish them. They try as much as possible to inculcate cooperation, self-regulation, assertiveness and social responsibility in their children. Darling (1999), explained that authoritative parents make their children to know their status, class and what they should be asking for according to their individual differences. Authoritative parent is one who puts his hand around the child's shoulder and talks to him or her in this manner, 'you should not have done it that way, this is how you should do it in case of next time, ok!

Authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles are similar but not the same. Authoritative parents are characterized by high responsiveness and high demands. They are responsive to the child's emotional needs while having high standards. Authoritarian parents are characterized by high demands and low responsiveness. They have very high expectations but provide little feedback and nurturance. Authoritative parents are strict and warm, while authoritarian parents are strict and cold. Authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles are the most common parenting styles. This study focuses on determining the extent to which each of these two parenting styles is related to at-risk sexual behaviour among adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a period of exploration and experimentation. It is a period of overwhelming changes and challenges which expose the adolescent to high-risk behaviours. One of these behaviours that carry along with it physical risks and psychosocial harms is risky sexual relationship. At-risk sexual behaviours are common among adolescents these days. These risky sexual behaviours rampant among adolescents today include: engaging in unprotected intercourse without condom use, unprotected mouth –to- genital contact, starting sexual activity at a young age, having multiple sex partners, having a high risk partner (one who has multiple sex partners or other risk factors), and having unprotected anal sex or a partner who does.

The concern is that engaging in risky sexual behaviours can lead to HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy among adolescents. Adolescent pregnancy and child birth come along with gender risks of morbidity and mortality than for women in their twenties, especially when medical care is scarce. At risk sexual behaviour has also been linked to a number of social consequences including lower grades and sexual victimization, especially among adolescent girls. These risks are very important because they will limit the likelihood that affected adolescents will become productive adults.

With the rise in the incidence of risky sexual behaviours among adolescents not only in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State alone but in Nigeria as a whole there has been concern for a proper understanding of the predisposing factors for the observed rise in the incidence of these risky behaviours. While there are many factors that could be responsible for this, a very important suspect is the parental background of these adolescents. Since different parents adopt different styles of parenting as they raise their children, is it possible that these different parenting styles may relate to at-risk sexual behaviours among adolescents differently? This forms the crux of the problem of this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between parenting styles, and at-risk sexual behaviours of adolescents in Etche local government area. Specifically, the study intended to:

- 1 Determine the extent of relationship between authoritarian parenting style and at risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers state.
2. Determine the extent of relationship between authoritative parenting style and at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does authoritarian parenting style relate to at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?
- 2 To what extent does authoritative parenting style relate to at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 Alpha levels which were used to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of River State.
2. There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

METHOD

This study was carried out to investigate the extent to which parenting styles are related to at-risk sexual behaviours among adolescents in Etche Local Government of Rivers State. The study adopted the correlational research design. A sample of 350 SS1 students was drawn, using the simple random sampling technique and used for the study. Two instruments (the Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ); and the Adolescents 'At- Risk Sexual Behaviours Inventory) were used for the collection of data for the study. Validity of these instruments were determined by experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, while Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability which yielded indexes of 0.65 and 0.74 respectively. Simple linear regression was used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that while authoritarian parenting style had significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviours among the adolescents, authoritative parenting style did not show any significant relationship to at-risk sexual behaviours among them. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made among which was that parents, guidance counsellors, caregivers and teachers should adopt the best and suitable parenting style that will enable their adolescent children relate freely with them.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent does authoritarian parenting style relate to at-risk sexual behaviour among adolescents?

Table 1: Simple Regression of Relationship Between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Adolescent's at-risk Sexual Behaviour.

R	R ²	AdjR ²	Std Error				
0.149	0.022	0.019	10.94				
ANOVA							
	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	A	Sig	Result
Regression	946.917	1	946.917				Significant
Residual	41647.94	348	119.6	7.912	0.05	0.005	(Reject Ho)
Total	42594.860	349					

From the analysis in table one $R = 0.149$, $R^2 = 0.022$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.019$ while the standard error = 10.94. From the R^2 value, it is seen that authoritarian parenting style relates about 2.2% with adolescents' at-risk sexual behaviour. The analysis of variance associated with the regression

analysis also reveals calculated $F = 7.912$ while the sig value is 0.005. hence, since the sig ($P = 0.005 < 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, then the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted meaning that authoritarian parenting style has a significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviours of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does authoritative parenting style relate with at-risk sexual behaviours of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and at-risk sexual behaviours of adolescents in Etche Local Government Area?

Table 3: Simple Regression of the Relationship between Authoritative Parenting Style and

R	R^2	Adj R^2	Std Error 11.033				
0.075	0.006	0.003					
ANOVA							
	Sum of sq.	df	Mean				
	sq.		F	A	Sig	Result	
Regression	236.445	1	236.445			Insignificant	
Residual	42358.415	349	121.720	1.943	0.05	0.164	(Accept Ho)
Total	42594.860	348					

Adolescents’ at-risk Sexual Behaviour

From table 2 above, $R = 0.075$, $R^2 = 0.006$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.003$ while the standard error = 1 1.033. The R^2 value implies that authoritative parenting style relates only about 0.6% to adolescents’ at-risk sexual behaviours. Also, the associated ANOVA reveals a calculated F of 1.943 and a sig value of 0.164. Hence, since the sig ($P = 0.164 > 0,05$) is greater than 0.05 chosen alpha, the null hypothesis is accepted meaning that authoritative parenting style has no significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviours of adolescents in Etche local government area of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the analysis of research finding one, it is revealed that authoritarian parenting style has a significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents. This finding means that students who come from homes that the parents are strict, who punish them for every wrong doing and who require unquestionable adherence to rules are likely to be involved in at-risk sexual behaviours more. This finding is not surprising to the researchers. Authoritarian parents are less

involved in their children's lives. They set expectations and wait for obedience, which has the potential to backfire in many ways. Children raised under authoritarian parenting tend to be insecure, and self-deprecating. They are prone to bullying, disruptive behaviours in school and depression. The social and psychological environment of an authoritarian family therefore is not the one that enhances healthy and responsible sexual behaviour. Studies have shown that there is strong relationship between low self-esteem and irresponsible sexual behaviour (Chujor, 2015). That is fundamentally, why it is very important as a way of developing responsible sexual behaviour, to build self-esteem. The link is very clear as shown by the finding of Dobson (1974). Young people who don't have confidence in themselves, who feel that they are somehow less than their peers are the ones that are often vulnerable to sexual experimentation and exploitation with all the attendant risks. The finding here is in agreement with that reported earlier by Howell (2001), whose work showed a significant relationship between authoritarian parenting and risky sexual behaviours.

From research findings two, it is revealed that authoritative parenting style has no significant relationship with at-risk sexual behaviour of adolescents. This means that, adolescents who come from homes that the parents use dialogue are not likely to be engaged in at-risk sexual behaviour. The result also means that adolescents from such homes are well mentored. It means that such adolescents are free to communicate with their parents more freely which in turn may give them the best possible advice regarding sex education. The finding here is not quite surprising at all to the researchers. With regard to child rearing, unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents set their emotions aside. They perceive every situation as a learning opportunity. They encourage open discussion, which helps their children feel supported and included. Standards remain high but children are allowed to make their own choices and mistakes. To authoritative parents, control is not the ultimate goal. Parents focus on fostering independence, and the ability to self-regulate, just offering corrections when necessary. The social and psychological environment in the authoritative home therefore is one that builds confidence in the child which helps the child develop a mind of his own, and easily builds sexual negotiation skills in the child. Howell (2001) also noted that authoritative parenting style has been discovered to be linked positively to the decrease of areas of risky sexual behaviours.

CONCLUSION

The place of proper parenting in raising a sexually responsible young person cannot be overemphasized. As risky sexual behaviour is more on the increase and the attendant consequences there must be concerted efforts by all stakeholders especially parents to be more intentional in their approach. This begins with the adoption of a more scientifically proven parenting style that will build up the young person into a responsible adult with an enhancing personality.

Recommendations

1. Various studies have from their findings supported authoritative parenting style as the more effective, compared to others. Parents are therefore encouraged to adopt the authoritative parenting method.
2. Whichever method parents intend to adopt and whatever point they are as at now, it is important they take time to listen to their children and respond with appropriately.
3. Parents should unconditionally accept their children, help them recognize their feelings, talk about them, and understand how they are related to their behaviour.
4. In the exercise of control, parents should understand that they cannot always be with their children. They should be prepared them in such a way that they can function relatively independently.
5. Parents should allow their children to learn to make their own choices, take responsibility for them, and learn to self-regulate.

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