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# **SEX EDUCATION BY PARENTS AND PEERS AS CORRELATES OF ADOLESCENTS SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOR IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

### **Abstract:**

Adolescence is a period where young persons achieve the highest stage of cognitive and physical development and strive to define their identity. Parents' roles in the family environment have primarily been to prepare children for adulthood through rules and discipline. During adolescence, peers play very important roles in their lives and typically replace family as the centre of social and leisure activities. These results into many risk taking activities such as smoking, aggressive behavior or indulging into sexual activities due to peer pressure. This study examined sex education given by parents and peers as correlates of adolescents sexual risk behavior in Oyo State, Nigeria. A correlation research design was adopted for the study. Two hundred and forty Senior Secondary School Students participated in the study. Three research instruments: Sex Education by Parents Scale ( $\alpha = 74$ ); Sex Education by Peers Scale ( $\alpha = 86$ ); and Sexual Risk Behavior Scale ( $\alpha = 78$ ) were used for data generation. Multiple Regression Statistics were employed for data analysis. The results of the study revealed that personal variables such as gender, family type and age significantly influenced adolescents sexual behavior  $\{F(3,239) = 7.14\}$ . Also, sex education given by parents and peers combined significantly influenced adolescents sexual risk behavior  $\{F(2,239) = 9.23\}$ . On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that Counselors and Educational Psychologists should direct their attention to positive Youth development strategies that will promote general development skills for the successful implementation of sexuality education in Nigeria. These strategies will promote adolescents health by focusing solely on risk factors.

### **Keywords:**

Adolescents; Parents; Peers; Sex education; Sexual risk behavior

## Introduction

Adolescence, with its many changes, has long been considered a turbulent life stage. Also the adolescent is confronted with psychological challenges associated with peer relationships, their self identity and exploration of possible sexual relationships with the opposite sex. However, not all adolescents are affected by this turmoil. Most relate well with their families and peers and are comfortable with their social and cultural values (Adegoke, 2003). As a stage of turmoil, striking a balance between healthy adolescent sexual experimentation and emotionally and physically safe sexual practices is a major challenge for society.

Adolescence is also a time when risks of sexual and other forms of abuse, exploitation and violence are high, and when the drive for autonomy and self definition often means a reduced reliance on parents and other adults as trusted sources of guidance and support. Adolescence is the biological changes from childhood into mature adulthood capable of reproduction. In the psychological point of view, adolescence is regarded as the period of transition between childhood and adulthood. Moreover, adolescence is a period of storm and stress. It is a period of moratorium when the individual is in a state of abeyance and so requires proper handling to avoid creating conflict, as he/she is no longer regarded as a child yet he/she is not accepted into full adult life (Adesina, 2009).

Adolescence is a time of transformation in many areas of an individual's life. In the midst of these rapid physical, emotional, and social changes, youth begin to question adult standards and the need for parental guidance. It is also a time for individuals to make important decisions about their commitment to academics, family, and perhaps religion. Young adults begin to ask questions such as, "Is school important to me?" and "How do I want to spend my time?" The choices that adolescents make regarding their motivation, engagement, and achievement in school (and in life) and the satisfaction they obtain from their choices depend, in part, on the context in which they make such choices (Ochonogor, 2014).

The influence of parenting during adolescence continues to affect behaviors into adulthood. Parenting practices comprise a constellation of dynamically interrelated factors including but not limited to parental supervision affect communication and involvement (Bersamin et al 2008). Statin & Kerr (2008) explained that childrearing practices encompass the provision of children needs, religious training and sound education by parents or guardians. Other characteristics of child rearing practices include the children's right to healthy, intellectual and physical developments; the right to love, understand and care. Yahaya(2006) explained that love, negative behaviors such as delinquency, maladjusted behavior, poor mental health and drug abuse are caused by bad or poor parental models, and prolonged separation of the couples. Parent-child relationship helps

the children to grow in a healthy environment especially if parent attitude to their children include love, warmth and affection (Huebner & Howell 2003).

Family environments constitute the basic ecology where children's behavior is manifested, learned, encouraged and suppressed (Dishion & Patterson, 2006). Parent's roles in the family environment have primarily been to prepare children for adulthood through rules and discipline. During adolescence, however the influence of peers also serves as an important socialization agent. Despite this new spheres of influence research has clearly demonstrated that parenting accounts for more variance in externalizing behaviors in adolescence than any other one factor (Ochonogor, 2014). The period of adolescence can be difficult for both parents and offspring. Therefore, understanding the importance of maintaining high quality parenting is particularly essential.

Peers also have an important affect in the child's self concepts giving him feedback about the kind of person he/she is and the kind of behavior which he or she will be accepting or rejecting. The peer group provides model for adolescents' behavior. There is no controversy about the fact that peer group has greater influence on the adolescents whether they do good or evil. This has been because of the fact that they ignore adult's guidance but dance to the tune of their peers. This is supported by Adegoke (2001) who said that these youths are exposed to variety of influence and denied the stability of adult's guidance and emotional security of the home. In their efforts to discover themselves, they succumb to emotional problems and peer pressure. They demonstrate deviant and socially unacceptable behaviors.

Adolescents are embedded within social contexts (e.g. school) where peer relationships are prominent, highlighting the importance of being involved and participating in a peer group (Arnett, 2007). Youths become involved with groups whose values and norms are perceived as attractive or similar and, in turn, enact these norms into their behaviors (Unger, 2014). Accordingly, peers have been identified as an important influence on the sexual behavior of adolescents in a wide range of populations. The salience of these peer relationships on youths' behaviors, however, changes across adolescence and assumes greater importance as the youth begin to individuate and achieve independence from caregivers (Rivers & Aggleton, 2017). Perceptions of peer sexual activity and condom use among older youth, for example, may be more prominent in sexual decision-making than among younger youth.. The influence of peer norms on adolescent sexual behavior has been reviewed extensively in the scientific literature (Breunner, 2016; More & Rosenthal, 2015).

Youth peer pressure is rampant because most youths are forced to spend large amounts of time in fixed groups (schools and subgroups within them) regardless of their opinion of those groups (Ungar, 2014). In addition, they may lack the maturity to handle the peer pressure. Young people are also more willing to behave negatively towards those

who are not members of their own peer groups. However, youth peer pressure can also have positive effects. For example, if one is involved with a group of people who are ambitious and working to succeed, one might feel pressured to follow suit to avoid feeling excluded from the group.

Risk taking behavior is common and expected in adolescence. Across the lifespan, adolescence is the time of greatest risk taking (Tanton et al 2015; Chick & Reyna, 2012). While understanding or even over-estimating the likelihood that an action will result in harm, adolescents may place higher value on the benefits that might come from taking a particular risk. Adolescents who are responsive to the rewards of risk (such as peer approval), may be less sensitive to feeling the ill effects of substance use. Context matters in decision making. A teen who drives recklessly with a group of joyriding friends may decide to be more careful when with friends who disapprove of unsafe driving, in part because youth are highly sensitive to their image among peers. Our sense of danger is also dependent on contextual cues, and can vary based on associations and memories that are triggered by a given situation.

In Nigeria the factors responsible for adolescent risk behavior include watching of pornographic films on the television sets, theatres and their mobile phones. Accessibility to pornographic books, poor economic background of parents, lack of adequate information on sex education and so on (Yahaya, 2006). All these lead to immoral sex practice. The relative influence of parents and peers on adolescent behavior changes during adolescent development. In addition, peers increase in importance and become more influential than parents. Peer influence increases during early adolescence and peaks when adolescents enter their high school years (Leepson, 2017; Arnett, 2007; Olatunji, 2000).

Generally speaking, risky sexual behaviors are caused by a number of factors which may be either external or internal or a combination of both factors (Breunner; 2016; Adesina, 2009). It has also been observed by Rivers & Aggleton (2017) that the influence of environment is so strong and it should be pretence if we neglect the fact that these adolescents are being affected by what is happening in the environment. Therefore, researchers should be mindful of what goes around. The consequence of risky sexual behavior is that it increases the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted infection (STI), teen pregnancy and, low self esteem. Besides, the risk of unplanned pregnancy increases with frequency of unprotected sexual intercourse and in rare cases even death. It has been observed by More & Rosenthal (2015) that male adolescents were more likely than female adolescents to have had sex, to have initiated sex before age 13, and to have had 4 or more sexual partners. Ogunmusire (2007) presented that high school adolescents aged between 12 and 16 are already involved in sexual relationship in their efforts to express sexual feelings. Their main source of information is the peer group. The

author maintained that there was extensive sexual consciousness among adolescents and found no difference between urban and rural adolescents. The measures of enhancing healthy sexual behavior among secondary school adolescents includes passing relevant information on sexual issues during morning assembly, discouraging them from watching pornographic and bad films and pasting photographs on the bulletin board to show the damaging effects of risky sexual behavior.

Sexual activities are so rampant and devastating such that adolescents engage in risky sexual behaviors either as a result of what they see around them, things they read from papers, movies they watch from their peers and even what they copy from adults. It is in view of the importance of family unit to the healthy growth and development that this study seeks to investigate how sex education given by parents and peers correlate with adolescent sexual risk behavior in Oyo State.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were generated for this study:

1. Personal variables such as sex, family type, and age will not significantly influence adolescents sexual risk behavior
2. Sex education by parents and peers will not significantly influence adolescents sexual risk behavior

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The research design employed by the study is the correlation research design. This was used to find the relationship between the independent variables of parents and peers and the dependent variable of sexual risk behavior. This research design is suitable for this study because it is capable of gathering data without necessarily manipulating the independent variables.

#### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample of 240 adolescents from Senior Secondary Schools in the three Senatorial zones of Oyo State was used for the study. The sample was made up as follows: Oyo North- 80, Oyo Central-80 and OyoSouth-80. The three Senatorial zones formed the strata for selection of participants. Four schools were purposively selected from each zone, whereas, 20 senior secondary school students were selected from each school using simple random sampling method. These gave rise to 240 respondents. A rundown of the participants bio-data information showed that 138(57.5%) were male while 102(42.5%) were female. In addition, 94(39.2%) of the respondents were from monogamous family, 128(53.3%) from polygamous family, and 18(7.5%) were from single parents family. Further more, 64(26.7%) of the respondents age was between 11-13 years, 94(39.2%) were between the age bracket of 14-16, while 82(34.2%) of the respondents

age were between 17-19. Among the respondents, 116(48.3%) were Muslims, 88(36.7%) were Christians while 36(15%) practice traditional religion.

### **Instrumentation**

The three main instruments used to elicit response from the participants are:

**Sex Education by Parents Scale:** This was a 20-item scale developed by the researcher. The items were based on sex education given by parents to their adolescents. A typical item is "Parents do not listen to their children on issues relating to sex education". The response format is a 4-point scale of strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). The internal consistency of the scale using Cronbach alpha read  $\alpha = .74$ .

**Sex Education by Peers Scale:** The measure of sex education by peers was also developed by the researcher. It is a 20-item scale designed to measure issues discussed by peer group concerning sex education. A typical item includes "I like to discuss sex education with my friends". The response system varies from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). The higher the score, the higher the level of peer influence on the issue of sex education. The internal consistency of the scale using Cronbach alpha read  $\alpha = .86$ .

**Sexual Risk Behavior Scale:** Sexual risk behavior of the participants was measured through a 20-item scale developed by the researcher. The items were based on the sexual risk behavior of adolescents. A typical item is "I have had an unexpected and unanticipated sexual experience in my life before". The respondents reacted to each of the items on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). High scores indicate high involvement in sexual risk behavior. The internal consistency of the scale using Cronbach alpha read  $\alpha = .78$ . The three developed items were validated by a team of experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Psychology. The items were selected after necessary modifications were made.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Data were collected by the researcher with two research assistants who were duly oriented on how to administer and collect the data from the respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

The two hypotheses were tested and analyzed through the use of multiple regression statistics at 0.01 level of significance.

### **Results**

The results of the data analyzed are hereby presented in the table below:

#### **Hypothesis 1:**

Personal variables such as sex, family type and age will not significantly influence adolescents' sexual risk behavior in Oyo State.

**Table 1:** Summary Table of Multiple Regression of Personal Variables such as Sex, Family Type and Age.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Regression	8862.84	3	2954.28	7.14	0.01
Residual	97640.26	236	413.72		
<b>Total</b>	<b>106503.10</b>	<b>239</b>			

Table 1 showed that the personal variables such as sex, family type and age significantly influenced adolescents sexual risk behavior. This is because the multiple regression yielded  $\{F_{(3,239)} = 7.14\}$  while the critical F-ratio is 2.60 which was significant at 0.01. Since the calculated F-ratio of 7.14 is more than the critical F-ratio, the hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** Sex Education by Parents and Peers will not significantly influence adolescents sexual risk behavior in Oyo State.

**Table 2:** Summary Table of Multiple Regression of Sex Education by Parents and Peers.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Regression	10887.15	2	5438.57	9.23	0.01
Residual	139692.54	237	589.42		
<b>Total</b>	<b>150569.69</b>	<b>239</b>			

Table 2 revealed that sex education by parents and peers significantly influenced adolescents' sexual behavior. This is because the multiple regression yielded  $\{F_{(2,239)} = 9.23\}$  while the critical F-ratio is 3.00 which was significant at 0.01. Since the calculated F-ratio of 9.23 is more than the critical F-ratio of 3.00, the hypothesis is therefore rejected.

### Discussions

The result of this study showed that personal variables such as sex, family type and age significantly influenced adolescents sexual risk behavior. This suggests that family type (polygamy, monogamy or single parent), sex and age combined influenced adolescents sexual risk behavior in Oyo State. The significant result could not have been due to chance. It could therefore be said that these three variables are good predictors of adolescents sexual risk behavior. This finding lends credence to earlier studies of More & Rosenthal, 2015; Esere (2008), and Kapungu, Holmbeck & Painkoff (2006) who found significant association among parenting practices, quality of family relationship and sexual

risk behavior of adolescents in Oyo State. This may not be unconnected to the fact that children from monogamous homes are given more attention than those from polygamous homes. Furthermore, Breunner (2016) corroborated earlier findings that gender, cultural background and family attitude influenced adolescents' sexual behavior.

Parents and peers were found to significantly influence adolescents sexual risk behavior. This outcome is in consonance with the studies of Breunner (2016) and Adesina (2009) that peers were an important influence on the sexual behavior of adolescents. Ochonogor (2014); Kapungu, Holmbeck & Painkoff (2006), found that low levels and high levels of parental control were associated with adolescents' antisocial problem behaviors which include sexual risk behavior.

### **Conclusion**

The main thrust of this study was to investigate the relationship among parents, peers and sexual risk behavior of adolescents. Therefore the study may be replicated in a cross cultural investigation using the same set of variables. This may provide a cultural variation of the present result. Further research may be carried out to understand the extent of the relationship of sex education with adolescents sexual risk behaviours. A larger sample would be better for enhancing the representativeness of the sample. As a correlational study, the samples were drawn among adolescents in Oyo state for this study. The investigation is therefore likely to suffer from the limitation of its results not being generalisable. Therefore, it will only be limited to the population where the study was carried out. The study revealed the combined influence of the two independent variables on adolescents sexual risk behavior. Also personal variables of sex, family type and age were found to influence significantly adolescents sexual risk taking behavior. Adolescents have been labeled as a special needs group in the field of sexual and reproductive health not only because of their engagement in risk taking behaviors but also pointed to frequent lack of information and access to services as other contributing factors to their susceptibility. It is therefore recommended that Counselors and Educational Psychologists should direct their attention to positive youth development strategies that will promote general developmental skills. These strategies will promote adolescents health by focusing solely on risk factors. Intervention efforts targeting early adolescents should also include discussions of non-intercourse behaviors such as foreplay and non penetrative sex as a means of delaying coitus, given that adolescents typically engage in a series of sexual behaviors with partners of the opposite sex prior to sexual intercourse.



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