



## **Perceived Parental Behaviour as Predictor of In-school Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviour in Ibadan, Nigeria**

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### **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sexual risk behavior among youth, defined as early sexual initiation, unprotected intercourse, or sex with multiple partners, is a major area of concern to parents or caregivers and the health professionals given the many associated negative consequences. There is dearth of literature on the influence of perceived parental behavior on adolescent sexual risk behavior in the country-Nigeria. This study therefore investigated the prediction of sexual risky behavior of the youth by their perception of their parental behaviors. A cross sectional survey involving 1,589 participants, male (n=753), female (n=836) aged 13 to 19 years drawn from 10 private and 19 public secondary schools in three of the five Local Government Areas (LGA) in Ibadan Metropolis was carried out. Regression analysis revealed significant prediction by parental psychological control ( $\beta=.10$ ,  $t=3.99$ ,  $p<.01$ ) while the other parental behavioural dimensions were not significant. Implication is an overuse of psychological control. Efforts should be geared towards eliciting healthy parental behavior through teaching parenting skills and also giving the adolescents cognitive therapy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual risk behaviour is an important contemporary concern especially for the self-destruction and societal ills it causes. Research has been on-going on adolescent sexual risk behaviour in the country and recent studies still report high rates of pre-marital sexual activities among Nigerian adolescents. Adejumo, [1] in her study of adolescents sexual risk behaviour, reported that 186 of her 368 participants have had sexual intercourse while 92 had multiple sexual partners. Also Dibua [2] in his study of prevalence of HIV/AIDS and associated socio cultural risk behaviours, reported also that 21% of those involved in sexual risk behaviour were youth. Hitherto, concerted efforts of researchers in the country have been on contribution of peer pressure to adolescent risky sexual behaviour, however not much has been done on how perception of parental behavior influences this risky sexual behavior of the youth. Understanding ecological factors that influence risky sexual behavior of adolescents is vital in designing and implementing sexual risk reduction interventions in specific contexts. Interventions undertaken without understanding the critical factors may not produce the desired results [3]. Previous studies have identified that adolescent risky sexual behavior was significantly and strongly associated with perception of peers' involvement in sexual intercourse. In most cases, studies have identified that parenting factors may indeed reduce or mitigate the adolescent decision to engage in risky sexual behavior. Considering the inconsistency in the adolescents' outcome, identifying the most important variables in strategic intervention for adolescents in urban centers is of central focus in extant literature, hence this study takes a look at the perception of the adolescents of their parental behavior such as psychological control, behavioural control, support and parental risk-taking, and how these influence their risky sexual behavior.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Diana Baumrind's Theory of Parenting Style is employed as the framework for this study. The different styles encompass the various parental behaviours under investigation. The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children [4,5]. Two points are

critical in understanding this definition. First, parenting style is meant to describe normal variations in parenting. In other words, the parenting style typology Baumrind developed should not be understood to include deviant parenting, such as might be observed in abusive or neglectful homes. Second, Baumrind assumes that normal parenting revolves around issues of control. Although, parents may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children and the extent to which they do so, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children.

Parenting style captures two important elements of parenting, parental responsiveness and parental demand [6]. Parental responsiveness (also referred to as parental warmth or supportiveness) refers to "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands". Parental demand (also referred to as behavioural control) refers to "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys". Categorizing parents according to whether they are high or low on parental demandingness and responsiveness creates a typology of four parenting styles: indulgent, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved. Each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices, and behaviour.

Indulgent parents (also referred to as "permissive" or "nondirective") are more responsive than they are demanding. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive, but not responsive. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive while uninvolved parents are low in both responsiveness and demand. In addition to differing on responsiveness and demand, the parenting styles also differ in the extent to which they are characterized by a third dimension - psychological control. Psychological control refers to control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child [7,8] through use of parenting practices such as guilt induction, withdrawal of love or shaming with consequential effect on the child.

One key difference between authoritarian and authoritative parenting is in the dimension of psychological control. Both authoritarian and authoritative parents place high demands on their children and expect their children to behave appropriately and obey parental rules. Authoritarian parents, however, also expect their children to accept their judgments, values and goals without questioning. In contrast, authoritative parents are more open to give and take with their children and make greater use of explanations. Thus, although authoritative and authoritarian parents are equally high in behavioural control, authoritative parents tend to be low in psychological control while authoritarian parents tend to be high. In general, parental responsiveness predicts social competence and psychosocial functioning while parental demand is associated with instrumental competence and behavioural control (i.e. academic performance and deviance). The four parental behaviours under study- psychological control, support, risk-taking and behavioural control are thus subsumed under the different styles since.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of empirical research shows that certain parenting behaviors are associated with specific adolescent internalizing such as social withdrawal or depression and externalizing - violence, aggression outcomes. Research has indicated that parenting behaviors influence the development and maintenance of problem behaviors among adolescent. Parental behavioral control involves managing adolescent activities in an attempt to regulate their conduct and provides them with guidance for appropriate social behavior [5,9]. Research suggests that behavioral control can protect against problem behaviors. For example, higher levels of parental behavioral control is directly associated with less drinking problems in young adulthood among males [10], less adolescent truancy, less marijuana use, an increase in the age of an adolescent's first sexual intercourse, as well as decreased sexual risk behavior [11–13] and less frequent engagement in early sexual intercourse [14]. In addition, parental control appeared to prevent escalation in externalizing problems among adolescents who reported affiliating with deviant peers. For example, among adolescents who reported deviant peer associations, only those whose parents used low behavioral control increased in their externalizing problems [15].

Parental psychological control such as threatening, guilt induction, withdrawal of love or shaming, yelling, or screaming in response to misbehavior, is thought to contribute to more frequent externalizing behaviors that trivialize violence or aggression [16]. Studies demonstrate psychological control is linked to behavior problems ranging from conduct disorder to depression and low self-esteem and sexual risk behaviour. For instance, researchers found that the use of psychological control by either parent in a two-parent household was related to greater adolescent depression and externalizing behavior [17]. These studies show that psychological control predicted higher levels of both internalizing and externalizing problems over time for adolescents reporting high antisocial peer affiliations, but not for those with few antisocial peers [18]. In other words, adolescents interactions with deviant peers tend to exacerbate rather than attenuate problems associated with negative family relation.

Parental warmth and support (inductive reasoning, and parent-child communication) can facilitate positive adolescent adjustment. Researchers have consistently found them to be associated with enhanced behavioral outcomes. Moreover, parental support during adolescence appears to protect adolescents from the negative consequences of adversities in their lives [10]. Support behaviors include parental warmth, the use of inductive reasoning, and communication. Parental support and warmth is the extent to which the adolescent is loved and accepted, usually measured by items such as how often the mother or father listened carefully to their child's point of view, and helped them with something important [6]. Higher levels of parental support are associated with significantly reduced sexual risk behavior, alcohol use and substance use [19–21]. Further, researchers found parental support was associated with decreases in externalizing behaviors and increases in self-esteem over time [22]. Overall, findings suggest that higher levels of parental support are positively associated with adolescent outcomes. Research has consistently shown that higher levels of perceived parental support are associated with lower levels of adolescent delinquency, sexual risk behavior, aggression, or other adjustment problems [19,20,23]. Researchers have also found that parental support during adolescence predicted lower levels of depressive symptoms and irritability among young adults (Barber & Olsen; Skopp, McDonald, Jouriles & Rosenfield) [11,24].

Researchers have examined how supportive parental behavior influences adolescent outcomes in high-risk community contexts. For example, one research study suggests that supportive parental behaviors buffer adolescents from the negative effects of high-risk community contexts (Brody, Dorsey, Forehand & Armistead) [25]. Carneiro, Cunha, Galasso and Garda [26] reported the protective influence that parent connectedness has in preventing the adolescent from engaging in risk behaviour including sexual risk taking. Overall, these studies underscore the importance of parental support on the well-being of adolescents, since it functions as a protective factor when examining various adolescent behavioural outcomes.

The fourth dimension of parental behavior developed by the researcher in line with cultural factor and prevalence is parental risk-taking. Parental risk-taking among Nigerians include behaviours such as neglectful parenting (low control and low acceptance) and daring acts like asking under aged children to peddle food items, make them beg on the streets for money, send them on long distance errands, make them travel long distances alone (could put them under the care of unknown drivers) all acts which encourage risky sexual behavior or expose the children to rape. Researchers have found an association between such parenting style and delinquent acts ranging from vandalism and petty theft to assault and rape [27]. Positive perceptions towards the relationship with the parents, especially the mother, influence the delay of onset of sexual relations among adolescents [28].

### 3.1 Hypothesis

Perceived Parental behavior will significantly predict adolescent sexual risk behavior.

## 4. METHODS

### 4.1 Design and Participants

The design adopted for the study is Cross Sectional Survey Research Design. The sample was selected adolescents from ages 13 – 19 years ( $15.4 \pm 1.71$ ), drawn from 10 private and 19 public secondary schools from three of the five local governments within Ibadan metropolis. About 1,700 students of Junior Secondary School 3 to Senior Secondary School 3 participated in the study. Simple Random, Stratified and Systematic Sampling Techniques

were used. [29] Sampling Table was used as a guide to determine the exact size needed to represent the population. Schools already exist as two strata (public and private) in each local government. Selection from each stratum by Simple Random Technique reflected the ratio at which both strata (public and private schools) exist in each local government. About 1,590 questionnaires were eventually analyzed for the study-male ( $n=753$ ), female ( $n=836$ ).

### 4.2 Measures

- ◆ Perceived Parental Behaviour: This was measured with Perceived Parental Behaviour Scale [30–32]. It is a 13-item scale based on parent behaviour measure. It is rated on a 4-point response pattern ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). The scale originally measures parental support, parental behavioral control/monitoring and psychological control as factor components of parental behaviour. The items in the scale are averaged into subscale scores that represent each dimension of parental behaviour in reference to each parent. However, five culturally (local) relevant items generated from Focal Group Discussion with the adolescents were added to make the items 20.

An item analysis was conducted to determine the psychometric properties of the scale and also confirm construct validity. The whole perceived parental behaviour scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .73, equal length Spearman-Brown of .65 and Guttman Split-half of .65. Factor Analysis, using principal component analysis followed by Varimax Rotation procedure yielded 5 factors with Eigen values greater  $>1$ . Items that had a loading of at least .40 and above were retained. All the five items added had loadings over .40. Item number 12 loaded on both factors 1 and 3 but appropriate for factor 3. The total Variance explained by the five factors (Parental Support, Parental Monitoring, Parental Risk Taking, Guilt Induction and Punitiveness) was 69.5%. A theme that recurs among the items constituting a factor was used to name each factor and also phrase the new factor or dimension (Parental risk taking) that emerged with the introduction of the new items. Factors 4 and 5 which are Parental Guilt Induction and Punitiveness respectively were grouped together as Psychological Control [30] while Factor 1 was

Support, 2-Behavioural control/Monitoring and 3-Parental Risk-Taking which is the new factor that emerged; hence the scale now has four dimensions as against the original three dimensions. Composite score on each dimension of the perceived parental behaviour was obtained for both parents of an adolescent to determine their dominant dimension (highest score) which they were labeled with.

- ◆ Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviour: A similar procedure was used by the researcher to develop the instrument that was used to measure Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviour. This consists of 12 items to assess adolescents' involvement in sexual risk-taking, that is, if they have ever engaged in the sexual risk behaviours and how often they do so. The 12-item scale is in Likert format with a five-point response option ranging from never (0) once (1), 2-4 times (2), 5-7 times (3) to very often (4). Scores above the mean value of 4 at standard deviation of 4.5 was regarded as being high on sexual risk behaviour while lower scores than the mean were regarded as being low.

#### 4.3 Procedure

The researcher obtained a letter from the office of the Commissioner for Education which was addressed to the local inspectors of education in the five local government in Oyo state from whom the lists of all secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis were collected. Simple random sampling technique by balloting was used to select three of the five local government, schools were selected by systematic random sampling from the existing two strata of (public and private) and the participants (students) were also systematically randomly selected. Permission was obtained from school authorities, consent forms were given to parents and assent forms to the adolescents before data were collected with the use of self-reported questionnaires.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Multiple Regression analysis was used for the only hypothesis generated.

#### 5. RESULTS

Table 1 reveals significant prediction of adolescent sexual risk behavior by parental psychological control ( $F(4,1585) = 33.33, p < .01$ ) ( $\beta = .10, t = 3.99, p < .01$ ) while the influence of parental behavioural control ( $\beta = 0.01, t = .23, p > .05$ ), parental risk taking ( $\beta = -0.03, t = -.92, p > .05$ ) and parental support ( $\beta = -0.05, t = -1.85, p > .05$ ) were not significant. The joint prediction of the perceived parental behaviour account for 1% of the variations in adolescent sexual risk behavior.  $R^2 = 0.01$ . In view of the above, the hypothesis is partially accepted.

#### 6. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the prediction of sexual risky behavior by the adolescents' perception of their parental behavior. Contrary to expectation and trends of research findings on the variable – parental behaviour, it was found not to predict sexual risk behaviour except for parental psychological control. The significance of psychological control is in line with literature. Three studies have examined the link between psychological control and sexual risk behavior [33–36] relative to the major literature that has examined behavioral control as a predictor of sexual risk behavior. In all three studies, results suggested that psychological control is a predictor of increased sexual risk behavior especially for girls. Indeed, adolescents whose parents use psychologically controlling techniques are at increased risk for making decisions that are developmentally immature and ill-founded [37,38]. In contrast, healthy adolescent parent relationship qualities are likely to facilitate the development of healthy autonomy and communication, protecting against maladaptive peer influences [39,40].

**Table 1. Summary of multiple regression table showing the prediction of sexual risk behaviour by perceived parental behavior among adolescents within Ibadan metropolis**

Parental variables	$\beta$	T	P	R	$R^2$	F	P
Psychological control	.10	3.99	<.01	.20	.01	33.33	<.01
Behavioral control	.01	.23	Ns				
Risk-taking	-.03	-.92	Ns				
Support	-.05	-1.85	Ns				

## 7. CONCLUSION

The implication of the findings is an indication of high employment of psychological control by Nigerian parents in Ibadan and this should be discouraged as this parental behaviour undermines adolescent's healthy emotional and psychological autonomy from parents or caregivers, a task which is critical to adolescent development and their resistance to external pressures especially from peers.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

The author hereby declares that the study has been examined and approved by the University of Ibadan/University College Hospital, Ibadan Nigeria Ethics Committee and have therefore been performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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