

Parenting Styles and Peer Pressure Predicting Sexual Abstinence among In-school Adolescents

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Abstract

Sexual abstinence is generally interpreted as a health promotion practice that help to prevent HIV/AIDS, STDs, unwanted pregnancy and early parenthood among in-school adolescents. Studies have investigated some predictors of sexual abstinence with varied results. Therefore, this study examined parenting styles and peer pressure as predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA), Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design while simple random sampling technique was used to select seven secondary schools in the LGA. Data were collected from 601 participants using validated questionnaires. Zero-order correlation statistics and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze and test two hypotheses which were accepted at a $p < .05$ level of significance. The results revealed that parenting styles and peer pressure jointly predicted sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. Also, the result indicated that authoritative parenting style and uninvolved parenting style independently predicted sexual abstinence among study participants. However, peer pressure, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles did not independently predict sexual abstinence among study participants. The study concluded that parenting styles have strong predictive ability on sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. It is recommended that parents and guardians should be readily available to guide and direct their wards early in life to know the implications of indulging in early sexual experimentations.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Peer Pressure, Sexual Abstinence, In-School Adolescents, Ibadan/Nigeria

Introduction

Sexual abstinence is a choice to avoid participating in any intimate genital contact. It may be voluntary when an individual chooses not to engage in sexual activity due to moral, religious, philosophical reasons, etc., or involuntary such as the inability to find willing sexual partners, or legally mandated such as when sexual activity is illegal (e.g., among prisoners) [Society for Adolescent, Health and Medicine, 2017]. Sexual abstinence before marriage is encouraged in some societies by social norms or, in some countries by a law which is considered part of chastity (Alhassan & Doodoo, 2020). The problems of early sexual experimentations include being infected with Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Disease (STDs), unwanted pregnancy and early parenthood among in-school adolescents (Oladepo & Fayemi, 2011). Adolescence has been identified as the most significant milestone in the development of individuals if not properly handled would lead to many problems in adulthood. One behavior that should be promoted for an adolescent to grow into adulthood successfully is that of sexual abstinence.

One factor considered in this study as a likely predictor of sexual abstinence is parenting styles which refers to how adolescents see their parents relate to or treat them (Obungwah, 2022). Four types of parenting styles have been identified in the literature. First, an authoritative parenting style has to do with a high level of parental control (demandingness) and a high level of responsiveness. Demandingness describes how parents control their children's behavior or demand their maturity. Responsiveness implies the degree to which parents accept and are sensitive to their children's emotional and developmental needs (Baumrind, 1991). Second,

authoritarian (disciplinarian) parenting style is related to a high level of parental control (demandingness) with a low level of responsiveness (Baumrind, 1991). Third, permissive (indulgent) parenting style is characterized with low demandingness but high responsiveness which is a non-traditional and lenient parenting style that does not require mature behavior but allows considerable self-regulation and non-confrontation (Baumrind, 1991). Finally, neglectful (uninvolved) parenting style is associated with low demandingness and responsiveness. It is known by parents showing indifferent to their children's needs and being uninvolved in their lives.

Generally, studies have found parenting styles to have different influences on sexual behavior including that of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. For example, Mokuolu et al. (2019) found permissive and authoritarian parenting styles to predict teenagers; experiment with sex while authoritative parenting style did not. Also, Nyangoya et al. (2022) and Cherry (2015) studies on parenting styles has comprehensively confirmed that parents with different parenting styles significantly influenced their children's sexual behavior including sexual abstinence. Also, Zubaidah et al. (2020) found lack of adequate parenting styles to contribute to premarital sexual behavior among adolescents in Banjarbaru. Finally, Coste (2015) found less sexual abstinence to be prevalent among uninvolved parenting styles in their study population.

The second factor considered in this study is peer pressure which is the force of attraction to adolescents' peer group towards a behavior or action (Hartney, 2023). In-school adolescents' social and emotional behavior tends to be strongly affected by their peer pressure (Allen, 2005). Peer pressure is known to have both positive and negative effects. Positive peer pressure occurs when in-school adolescents are encouraged by their peer group to engage in behaviors such as participating in volunteering for charity or doing well academically (Kelly, 2013). Negative peer pressure is when in-school adolescents who are in the process of finding self-identity without guardians or significant others are attracted to their peer groups who engage in behavior injurious to self, family or to the society (Kelly, 2013). Studies have demonstrated that in-school adolescents who scored high on peer pressure scale tended to be involved in sexual experimentations compared to in-school adolescents who scored low on peer pressure scale (Mokwena & Morabe, 2016). Finally, James (2023) found that peer pressure did not predict deviant behavior which could include sexual experimentation (abstinence). The influence of peer pressure was also found to significantly influence in-school adolescent sexual experimentation and abstinence (Hoskins, 2014).

The ability to inculcate sexual abstinence behavior into an in-school adolescent has become an increasing concern to parents, teachers and educational researchers. Some studies that have been conducted in developed and some developing countries on the predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents yielded varied results. Also, some of these studies in developing countries such as Nigeria are sketches, thus, leaving a gap in knowledge that needs to be filled. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine parenting styles and peer pressure as predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) in Oyo State, Nigeria. The following research questions were raised to guide the study: Would there be significant relationships among parenting styles, peer pressure and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA? And, would parenting styles and peer pressure jointly and independently predict sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA?

Because of the few empirical studies on parenting styles and peer pressure on sexual abstinence, the result of this study would provide insight into these three constructs in a developing country such as Nigeria. Also, the findings of this study would guide/help educators, educational researchers and parents on how to educate in-school adolescents on sexual education behavior. Finally, the study would provide data for further studies on parenting styles and peer pressure beyond the population and sample of current study.

The study was anchored on social learning theory. The theory has often been associated with Bandura's seminal works on modeling and imitation as an overt way of learning new behaviors. It posits that adolescents learn by observing significant others and imitating or modeling after them the behavior in question which could be positive or negative (Bandura et al., 2001). When applied to sexual behavior including sexual abstinence, adolescents left to explore his/her body without parental condemnation, would learn what feelings are good to him/her and would tend to repeat such behavior. On the other hand, when such sexual behavior are connected to the feelings of guilt and shame by the parents, the child would be placed in conflict condition and would not be willing to engage in such behavior again. Thus, if in-school adolescents are severely punished for sexual exploration, they would come to associate sexual stimulation in general with feelings of guilt or anxiety and would tend to engage in sexual abstinence.

The following hypotheses were raised and tested in this study:

H1: There will be a significant relationship among parenting style, peer pressure and attitude towards sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in the study population.

H2: Parenting style and peer pressure would jointly and independently predict attitude towards sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in the study population.

Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design using validated questionnaires to gather data from the study participants. Two independent variables: parenting styles and peer pressure and one dependent variable: sexual abstinence was investigated in this study. The study was conducted in seven secondary schools located in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) in Oyo State, Nigeria. The schools selected were: Ikolaba High School, Methodist High School Ibadan, Emmanuel College Secondary School, Ibadan, Abadina College Ibadan, All Souls Anglican Secondary School and Citadel Secondary School. Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) was selected because it has the highest enrollment of students among other LGAs in Greater Ibadan Municipality

The participants for this study were 601 senior secondary students (SSS) who were selected through simple random sampling techniques from seven public secondary schools in Ibadan North, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The participants in this study were SSS adolescents in Ibadan North LGA and excludes students who were not in SSS and those not from Ibadan North LGA.

Data were collected using three instruments

Sexual Abstinence This was measured using the Sexual Abstinence Scale developed by Norris (2003). The scale consists of 4 items which are presented on a 4-point Likert's format ranging from (never) to 4 (more than once a week). Examples of items are: "Tell yourself you were making the right decision by waiting to have sex", "Say NO to sex", and "Tell her/him that you wanted to have sex". The original author reported Cronbach's alpha 0.76. The scale validity correlated with perceived negative consequences of peer pressure (0.83) and parenting style (0.89). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.71 was computed.

Peer Pressure This was assessed using Peer Pressure Questionnaire adapted by Steph Stephanie (2008). It is a 10- item scale presented on a 4-point Likert's format ranging from 1- (strongly disagree) to 4-(strongly agree). Sample items include: "I have pressure to come to school on time", "I have pressure to follow rule", "I have pressure to drink alcohol", and "I have pressure to lie to parents about where I am going". The adapted scale reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 and in this study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 was calculated.

Parenting Styles This was evaluated using the Parenting Style Four Factors Questionnaire (PSFFQ) by Shyny (2017). The scale consists of 32 items which covers the four parenting styles and is presented on a 5-point Likert's scale where 1-(all of the time) and 5-(never). Example of items are: "I want my child to follow my instructions because I am the authority to decide what to do or what not to do", "I do not have any demand or control on my child and I give total freedom", and "Whenever the child comes with low marks, I will not give any punishment rather I feel he/she will become better next time". Cronbach's alpha for the subscales for the 4-parenting styles are: Authoritarian (0.68), authoritative (0.62), permissive (0.65) and uninvolved (0.77) while Cronbach's alpha for the composite scale was 0.89.

A letter was collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria to identify and introduce the researchers to the relevant school authority for permission to distribute the research questionnaires. Visit to each school was handled by the Vice-Principals and sometimes by the School Counselors who vetted the research questionnaires. Teachers were assigned to the researchers to assist in taking them to the right classes of the potential participants. The researchers took time to explain the purpose of the study to the potential participants and they were asked for their consents by putting up their hands. Some students left the classrooms when they were told that participation in the study was voluntary. Students that agreed to participate in the study were given the questionnaires to fill which took less than 15 minutes. A total of 608 questionnaires were distributed and collected on the spot. After screening, seven questionnaires were not properly filled and were discarded thus left with 601 used for the analysis.

IBM SPSS version 23 was used for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were implemented. Zero-order correlation statistics was used to test hypothesis 1 while multiple regression analysis was used to test hypothesis 2. All hypotheses were accepted at a $p < .05$ level of significance.

Results

The socio-demographic data of the participants showed that 232 (39%) of the participants were males while 369 (61%) were females. In terms of their arms in the school, 201 (33%) were in SSS1, 203(34%) were in SSS2 while 197(33%) were in SSS3. A greater proportion of the participants 472(78%) were from the Yoruba ethnic group, 42(7%) were Igbo while 87 (15%) were Hausas. Finally, in terms of their religious faiths, 204(34%) were Christians, 269(45%) were Muslims while 128 (21%) were from other faiths.

H1: Significant positive relationships would exist among parenting styles, peer pressure and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State. The hypothesis was tested using zero-order correlation and the result is present in Table 1.

Table 1. Zero-order correlation showing relationship among peer pressure, parenting style and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Peer Pressure	21.81	6.61	-					
2 Authoritarian	26.67	7.07	.15*	-				
3 Authoritative	31.62	5.19	-.14*	.46*	-			
4 Permissive	27.78	6.04	-.10*	.65*	.59*	-		
5 Involved	22.61	8.93	-.17*	.70*	.31*	.64*	-	
6 Sexual Abstinence	3.77	4.51	.02	.15*	.14*	.10*	.17*	-

Correlation is significant at the 0.05

Table 1 presents zero-order correlation among parenting styles, peer pressure and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo State. The results revealed that authoritarian parenting style ($r = -.15, p < .05$), authoritative parenting style ($r = -.14, p < .05$), permissive parenting style ($r = -.10, p < .05$) and uninvolved parenting style ($r = -.17, p < .05$) all negatively correlated with sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. However, peer pressure did not correlate with sexual abstinence among study participants ($r = .02, p > .05$). Therefore, the hypothesis was partially supported.

H2: Parenting styles and peer pressure would jointly and independently predict sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State, Nigeria. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis showing joint and independent predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State, Nigeria

Predictors	β	t	p	R	R^2	F	p
Peer pressure	.09	1.73	.08				
Authoritarian parenting style	-.09	-1.15	.25				
Authoritative parenting style	-.16	-2.44	.02	.26	.06	4.67	<
Permissive parenting style	.13	1.56	.12				
Uninvolved parenting style	.15	-1.99	.04				

Table 2 shows joint and independent predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in the study population. The result showed that parenting styles and peer pressure jointly predicted sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents [$R^2 = .06, F(5,596) = 4.67, p < .05$]. This denotes that parenting styles and peer pressure jointly accounted for 6% of the variance observed in sexual abstinence. Furthermore, the result revealed that authoritative parenting style ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$) and uninvolved parenting style ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$) independently predicted sexual abstinence among study participants. However, peer pressure ($\beta = .09, p > .05$), authoritarian parenting style ($\beta = -.09, p > .05$) and permissive parenting style ($\beta = .13, p > .05$) did not independently predict sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in the study population. Therefore, the hypothesis was partially accepted.

The study aimed to examine parenting style and peer pressure as predictors of sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) in Oyo State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were raised, tested and accepted at a $p < .05$ level of significance.

The hypothesis that significant relationships would be found among parenting styles, peer pressure and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents was partially supported. The result shows that the four dimensions of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved correlated with sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. This implies that in-school adolescents who perceived their parents or guardians as highly authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved reported a lower level of sexual abstinence. However, peer pressure did not correlate with sexual abstinence among study participants. This finding supported the results obtained by Mokuolu et al. (2019) and Cherry (2015) that parenting styles check adolescents against immoral behavior including sexual adventures. Also the present study lent credence to Nyangoya et al. (2022) and Coste (2015) findings that early sexual education and having a good open conversation with ones' adolescents contributed to living a decent life devoid of early experimentation with sexual intercourse.

The hypothesis that parenting styles and peer pressure would jointly predict sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents was supported. The result showed that parenting styles and peer pressure jointly accounted for 6% of the variance observed in sexual abstinence among study participants. Also, authoritative and uninvolved parenting styles were independent predictors of sexual abstinence among study participants. This means that the combined effects of parenting styles significantly predicted sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in the study population. This finding lent credence to previous studies that parents or any significant others for that matter that would care enough to explain and educate their children would successfully lead them right including in their sexual behavior (Mokwena & Morabe, 2016). However, the finding of this study contradicted the results obtained by Shongwe et al. (2021) who suggested that no matter the parenting styles adopted by the parents or caregivers, adolescents who would take to early sexual experimentation would still do so citing the influence of peer pressure. In terms of peer pressure, this study supported James (2023) finding that peer pressure did not predict deviant behavior which could include sexual experimentation (abstinence).

Conclusion

The study has established the predictive ability of parenting styles and peer pressure on sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically, all the four dimensions of parenting styles correlated with sexual abstinence among study participants. However, peer pressure did not correlate with sexual abstinence and did not independently predict sexual abstinence among study participants.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

Since the finding of this study has affirmed the importance of parenting styles toward sexual abstinence, it is suggested that parents and other significant others should educate the children on the need to delay sexual experimentations to avoid contacting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy by the female adolescents.

Because teachers are *loco parentis*, they should intensify in modeling their students through self-talks, counseling and telling them stories and folktales that can help them build adequate self-esteem thereby enhancing their level of positive sexual behavior.

Furthermore, parents and guidance should show their children love, care and support to reduce peer group influence on them. This would make them to be free to share different sexual stories and obtain solutions from their parents instead of going to their peer groups for advice.

Finally, the ministry of education and the educational policy makers should introduce subjects that can combine sexual knowledge with factors promoting low peer pressure among adolescents into the school curriculum. This would prepare them to live in the school settings and in the larger society.

Some limitations of this study need to be mentioned. The study used self-reported questionnaires for data collection which was not free of response bias. Further studies should include focus group interviews and use of personal diary to triangulate self-reported data. The use of one local government area hindered the generalization of research findings. Further studies should include more local government areas and more states. The study investigated only two independent variables. Further studies should include learned helplessness, self-esteem and social support.

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