

INFLUENCE OF HOME ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON ADOLESCENTS' SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT: *The study was on influence of Home Environmental Factors on Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Ex-post facto research design was adopted. The population of the study was 18,652. A sample size of 600 respondents was used for the study. The instruments for data collection were: Home Environmental Factor Inventory (HEFI) and Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour Inventory (ASBI). The reliability of the instruments were determined using Cronbach alpha reliability technique. For the Home Environment Factor Inventory (HEFI) the reliability was carried out section by section. For marital stability, the reliability was 0.62, for parental control, it was 0.77, for mass media, it was 0.65. For the adolescents sexual behaviour scale (ASBI) reliability coefficient of 0.70 was realized. The reliability coefficient for the entire instruments however was 0.70. The statistical tools used were mean, standard deviation and linear regression analysis to answer the research questions while t-test of independent sample, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Beta value were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The work revealed that parental marital stability and parental control showed significant influence on adolescents' sexual behaviour, among others. The implication of the study is that parents should significantly guide adolescents, and not jettison the essence of their involvement in the upkeep and sexual behaviour of the adolescents.*

KEYWORDS: Home Environment, Adolescent, Sexual Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The concern for adolescent welfare and development is on the increase in both developed and developing countries. There have been an increase in the number of researches worldwide that deal with adolescent issues. It has also been observed that most societies (including Nigeria) have paid maximum consideration to the needs and problems of this particular population. It could be that family and the home environment influence young people's decision to initiate sex during adolescence. Many stakeholders have remarked that family being the primary agent of socialization, is responsible for nurturing, caring and preparing the adolescent for the challenges of the outside world. "It is within its confines that the adolescent first develops his/her self-concepts, ideals, values, motivations and aspirations." (Theodore, 2009).

In Nigeria, opinion leaders and experts remarked that, sexual behaviour, like any other social behaviour, is always in a conflict. According to them, "it is the interface between structural characteristics of the prevailing socio-cultural situation and the psychological state of the individual" (Adeboyejo & Onyeonuru, 2002). They also noted that, "the adolescent years, the informal context of the home environment provides a framework (whether smoothening or constraining) which structures behaviour, perhaps in different ways from the formal context of the school and influence of groups and associations in the wider environment."

Notably, the clustering of people in the cities allows for differentiation of the home environment into living areas. Furthermore, “the existence of distinct and recognizable residential neighbourhoods or home environments is one of the overwhelming conclusions in the literature” (Abumere, 1992). These variations in the home environment may be arrayed along the lines of family stability, parental control and mass media. Many factors play important role when describing stages in the sexual behavioural dispositions like the identification of first sex partner or age of first sex with serious implications for sexual health and well-being.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that home environment whether rural or urban neighbourhood which an adolescent resides and work can cause and may even complicate, sexual behaviour like first sex, identity of sexual partner, and number of sexual partners among other sexual behavioural dispositions. The reason behind this is that some element of social interactions existing in the urban set up does not exclude sexual behaviour from both the big and small environmental processes which affect the cultural foundation of one’s behavioural character. In the other way round, the home environment is a compilation of small-environmental processes which affect other behaviours. For instance, in the urban home environment which is characterized by landlessness, dysfunctional housing types, high populated housing etc. these condition which is often characterized by poverty is likely to affect the sexual preference of adolescence there. As noted earlier, such include the age bracket at first sex, the nature, the condition and the process of first sex experience, as well as identity of first partner. On the other hand, if the adolescents live in reserved areas in cities with luxury homes occupying separate rooms, there may be a tendency for them to be out of parents watch and to have modern gadgets at their disposal. They may decide to experiment with sex in their home environment.

Many scholars have related the definition of adolescence to the beginning of puberty in most cultures, though they may be variations in the onset and end-time of adolescence. This relativity however is due to the fact that traditions and customs vary from one setting to another and that adolescence is difficult to define in universal terms but only relatively. However, Unachukwu and Ebenebe (2009) defined adolescence as the span of years between childhood and adulthood. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘adolescence’ will be conceptualized as “the post pubertal population younger than 20 years of age” (Caldwell, 1998).

This however makes it possible to be more specific in the classification of adolescence for the purpose of this research as “those youngsters between the ages of 12 and 24 years.” It is a common observation that this class of people possess psychological and biological lifestyles characterized by personality identity crises, need for freedom from parental control, delinquent behaviour, insatiable desire for exploitation and sophistication of modern life. The adolescence period has been identified as “a time of emotional, physical, social and biological development which contributes substantially to the well-being of the individual in adulthood” (Ondimu, 2007).

It should be noted that, the home environment is conceived in this work as “the characteristic features of the family including within-house and the immediate neighbourhood within which the adolescent lives.” This however is not only an expression of family identity, but an expression of physical translation of cultural beliefs, practices and behaviours. The environment in which the adolescents are bred play a vital role in their conformity with societal standards. Children usually learn behavioural pattern and moral standards set by the family and immediate home environment.

Although the family and home environment gives insight in understanding adolescent sexuality issues, such explanations are not enough and are just part of the gathering of factors that explains why certain group of adolescents choose to involve in premarital sex earlier than others. Previous effort in establishing the link between family, school and sexual behaviour has been anchored mainly on the characteristic situations and structures of those institutions to the best of the researchers' knowledge. A report from Niger Delta (2011) revealed that almost 50 percent of young men and nearly 40 percent of young women have sex by the age of fifteen years (Tete and Owei, 2012). Specifically, the report has it that, 60 percent of 14 years old boys and 35 percent of girls have reported that they are sexually active.

Furthermore, experts have remarked that, in developed as well as developing societies (including Nigeria), a number of obstacles abound which makes it difficult for young people to guide and monitor their sexual and reproductive health. Infact, it is obvious that young people have less access to information services and resources than those who are older (Friedman, 2003; Ama and Chika, 2009).

Also, "in recent studies, it has been shown that, in Africa, health services rarely meet the adolescents' needs, and health workers only occasionally receive specialist training in issues pertinent to adolescent sexual issues and health" (Persson, 1997). Hence, there are particularly, low levels of health seeking, and high sexual behaviours among young people.

In fact, the rate at which girls drop out of secondary schools as a result of sexual behaviours, teenage pregnancies and dismissals of both boys and girls from secondary schools because of sexually related moral problems is alarming and very disturbing.

Researchers have blamed this ugly trend on many factors ranging from the school, family, home environment, and peer-group influence. The efforts of various agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to intervene by way of counselling in secondary schools seem not to yield the desired results. It is for this reason that the researchers decided to investigate the influence of home environmental factors on sexual behaviours of adolescents with particular reference to Port Harcourt metropolis, in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of home environmental factors on sexual behaviours of adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis. In more specific terms, the study is poised to establish the following objectives:

- i. Determine the influence of parental marital stability on sexual behaviours of adolescents.
- ii. Find out the influence of parental control on sexual behaviours of adolescents.
- iii. Investigate the influence of home use of mass media on adolescents' sexual behaviours.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- i. To what extent does the parental marital stability influence sexual behaviours of adolescents?

- ii. To what extent does parental control influence sexual behaviours of adolescents?
- iii. To what extent does home use of mass media influence sexual behaviour of adolescents?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance are formulated to guide the study.

- i. Parents marital stability does not significantly influence sexual behaviours of adolescents.
- ii. Parental control does not significantly influence sexual behaviours of adolescents.
- iii. Use of mass media at home does not significantly influence sexual behaviours of adolescents.

METHODS

The ex-post facto design was adopted because the study involves gathering of data which are already in situ and which have not been created by the researchers (Nwankwo, 2011). The study investigated the influence of Home Environmental Factors on Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. As at the time of the study the population of the study consists of all the SS 2 students in public schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

There were 18,652 senior secondary two students in Port Harcourt metropolis (source: Rivers State Ministry of Education). A sample of 600 students was drawn from the population through multi-stage sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were titled Home Environmental Factor Inventory (HEFI) and Adolescent Sexual Behaviour Inventory (ASBI). The instruments were developed by the researchers. The HEFI measures data on home environmental factors that could influence sexual behaviour of adolescents in secondary schools. It contains 30 items eliciting data on some home factors. These are parental marital stability. Parental control and mass media, using 4 point scale. The ASBI is a 20-item instrument which measured adolescents' sexual behaviour on a modified 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instruments (HEFI and ASBI) were validated by three experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance & Counselling, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments (HEFI and ASBI) were determined through Crombach Alpha technique, for internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability co-efficients for the HEFI was carried out section by section. For parents' marital stability the reliability was 0.62, for parental control, it was 0.77, for mass media, it was 0.65. For adolescents' sexual behaviour scale (ASBI) the reliability co-efficient of 0.70 was realised. The reliability co-efficient of the entire instrument was 0.70. Mean, standard deviation and linear regression were used to answer the research questions while t-test of independent sample, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and beta value associated with the regression were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does parental marital stability influence sexual behaviours of adolescents?

Hypothesis 1: Parental marital stability does not significantly influence adolescents sexual behaviour.

Table 1: Showing mean, standard deviation, linear regression, analysis of variance as well as coefficient table analysis of influence of parental marital stability on adolescents sexual behaviour.

	N	\bar{X}	S.D	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	Std. Error
Adolescent sexual behaviour	600	54.50	11.380	0.108	0.012	0.010	11.323
Marital stability		20.97	7.665				
Analysis of variance							
	Sum of squares		d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Regression	898.473		1	989.473	7.008	0.008	
Residual	76670.485		598	128.212			
Total	34727.230		599				
Coefficients							
	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig		
	B	Std Error	Beta				
Constant	57.758	1.347	-0.108	42.874	0.000		
Marital stability	-0.160	0.060		-2.647	0.008		

(a) Dependent variable: Adolescent sexual behaviour (constant)

(b) Predictor variable(s) parental marital stability

The table above reveals that the mean and standard deviation values of adolescent sexual behaviour is 54.11 and 11.380 respectively. Marital stability had mean and standard deviation value of 20.97 and 7.665 respectively. The table also reveals a simple regression coefficient (R) of 0.108, the squared regression (R²) was 0.012 while the adjusted R² is 0.010. Based on the squared coefficient of 0.012, the research question could be answered that marital stability contributes only 1.0% towards sexual adjustment of adolescents. On the other hand, the coefficient reveals a beta value of -0.108. This also indicates and explains that for every one standard deviation increase in sexual behaviour, marital stability increases by -0.108.

To determine if marital stability has a significant relationship with sexual behaviour, analysis of variance associated with simple regression was used. The calculated F-value of 7.008 was insignificant at 0.008 level which was less than the chosen level of probability of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted implying that there is a significant influence of marital stability on adolescent sexual behaviour.

Research Question 2: To what extent do parental control influence sexual behaviours of adolescent?

Hypothesis 2: Parental control do not significantly influence sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Table 2: Showing mean, standard deviation, linear regression, analysis of variance and coefficients analysis of influence of parental control on sexual behaviour of adolescents

	N	\bar{X}	S.D	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	Std. Error
Adolescent sexual behaviour	600	54.50	11.168	0.110	0.012	0.010	11.110
Marital stability	600	17.29	7.665				
Analysis of variance							
	Sum of squares		d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Regression	903.639		1	903.639	7.32	0.007	
Residual	73810.361		598	123.429			
Total	74114.000		599				
Coefficients							
	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig		
	B	Std Error	Beta				
Constant	57.593	1.230	-0.110	46.828	0.000		
Marital stability	-0.179	0.066		-2.706	0.007		

(a) Dependent variable: Adolescent sexual behaviour (constant)

(b) Predictor variable(s) parental marital stability

The analysis in table 2 above reveals that a simple regression coefficient (R) value of 0.110 was realized. The R² value was 0.012 while the adjusted R² value stood at 0.010 with 11.110 as standard error. Based on the R² coefficient value of 0.012, it could be explained that parental control contributes about 1.0% towards adolescents sexual behaviour. From the coefficients, a beta value of -0.110 was realized. This value indicates that for every step increase in the standard deviation of sexual behaviour, there is a corresponding -0.11 decrease in parental control and vice versa. Also, the standardized coefficient reveals the regression equation model as $Y = 57.593 - 0.179X_1$ where Y_1 is the predictor variable and X is the dependent variable being adolescent sexual behaviour.

Furthermore, to determine if there is any significant influence of parental control on adolescent sexual behaviour, analysis of variance associated with simple regression was used. The calculated F-value was 7.32. This value was significant at 0.007 level which was less than the probability level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted meaning that there is a significant influence of parental control on adolescents sexual behaviour.

Research Question 3: To what extent does use of mass media influence sexual behaviours of adolescent?

Hypothesis 3: Use of mass media does not significantly influence sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Table 3: Showing mean, standard deviation, linear regression, analysis of variance and coefficients analysis of influence of parental control on sexual behaviour of adolescents

	N	\bar{X}	S.D	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	Std. Error
Adolescent sexual behaviour	600	54.50	11.168	0.065	0.004	0.002	11.154
Marital stability		17.82	8.190				
Analysis of variance							
	Sum of squares		d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Regression	311.137		1	311.137	2.501	0.114	
Residual	74402.863		598	124.420			
Total	74714.000		599				
Coefficients							
	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig		
	B	Std Error	Beta				
Constant	56.068	1.091	-0.065	51.391	0.000		
Marital stability	-0.088	0.066		-1.581	0.114		

(a) Dependent variable: Adolescent sexual behaviour (constant)

(b) Predictor variable(s) parental marital stability

The analysis in table 3 reveals that a simple regression coefficient (R) value of 0.065 was realized. The R² value was 0.004 while the adjusted R² was 0.002 with 11.157 representing the standard error value. From the R² value of 0.002, it could be seen that the use of mass media contribute nothing (0%) towards adolescents sexual behaviour. From the coefficient table, a beta value (B) of -0.065 was realized. This value indicates that for every step increase that may be associated with the standard deviation of adolescent sexual behaviour, there is a corresponding -0.065 decrease in the use of mass media among adolescents. Also, the standardized coefficient reveals a regression equation of model as $Y=56.068 - 0.088x_1$. Where Y is the predictor variable (use of mass media) and x represents the dependent variable being adolescent sexual behaviour.

Furthermore, to test the hypotheses for acceptability or rejection, the analysis of variance associated with simple regression was used. The calculated F-value of 2.501 was significant at 0.114 level which was greater than the chosen level of probability of 0.05. Therefore, since the realized was greater (F-2.501, $p = 0.114 > 0.05$) the null hypothesis was accepted and the alternate rejected implying that the use of mass media has no significant influence on adolescents sexual behaviour.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis in table 1, it was revealed that parental marital stability has a significant influence on adolescents sexual behaviour. This result means that the level of stability in the family influences the children's behaviour. It also indicates that children from unstable and broken homes may behave differently from those from stable and functional families. This result may come because people are quite aware of the danger of family instability on adolescents' or children's lives. This result is not surprise because the researchers are aware that family instability leads to vices like divorce, and separation which is scientifically proven to be dangerous for the all round development of the adolescents. Ikedi (2010) noted that children from broken or unstable homes are always exposed to criminal behaviours like shop lifting, prostitution etc. Hence he concluded in his report that marital instability has a relationship with adolescents' anti-social behaviour. On the contrary, the work of Alice (2002) revealed that family instability has no significant relationship with secondary school students activities.

The findings from research question two, table 2 revealed that parental control has a significant influence on adolescents sexual behaviour. This result means that the level of control parents have over their children determines their sexual behaviour. It also means that the various leadership styles parents adopt in training their children have impact on their sexual behaviour.

Many people have also realized that parents have a role to play in regulating their children's activities. The result of this study however is not surprising because it is a common fact that without control, one could go astray. It is also evidenced through various researches most significantly that of Baumrind (1991) who stated that parents who do not have some degree of control over their children's activities, allow them to always end up living their desired fantasy lives.

Other researchers like Aniele (2005), as well as Ikedi (2010) all reported findings in support of the present one when they noted that parenting styles which has to do with parental control and family background entirely has a significant influence and or relationship respectively with adolescents sexual behaviour.

From the analysis in table 3, it was revealed that mass media has no significant influence on adolescents sexual behaviour. This result means that television programs and adverts, radio programmes as well as the influence of adolescent by the media has no influence on their sexual behaviour. This result however is very surprising to the researchers because people generally believe that mass media exert great influence on adolescents' general life style. The finding of this study is contrary to that, reported by Clinton and Markle in Taylor and Abiola (2008) who reported that one of the factors influencing adolescents' sexual behaviour is the media.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there are strong and significant relative contribution of marital stability and parental control to adolescent sexual behaviour. Although the use of mass media do not significantly influence the sexual behaviour of adolescent, the present study established that some parental variables have significant effect on the sexual behaviour of the adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- 1) Married couples especially those with challenging relationships should endeavour to go for family counselling from time to time.
- 2) Parents should adopt democratic styles in the control of their children in order to avoid rebellion from their children.
- 3) Though found not to influence sexual behaviours, media houses should regulate their television and radio programmes. Also, parents should be alert on the type of things or programmes their children are exposed to.
- 4) Sexuality education should be introduced and made compulsory in secondary schools in order to keep the adolescents well informed towards making relevant and informed decisions about their lives.
- 5) Parents should be involved in guiding their children because they have great impact on sexual behaviour of their children.

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