

Influence of Family Variables on Sexual Molestation of Secondary School Students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of family variables on sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State. Two research questions were answered using descriptive statistics. Two null hypotheses were tested with inferential statistics at .05 level of significance. The population of the study comprised all senior secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 272 students for the study. A researcher made instrument tagged: family variables and sexual molestation questionnaire (FVSMQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by an expert in measurement and evaluation while Cronbach alpha analysis was used for internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of .80. The two hypothesis were tested using one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and F-value obtained were significant at .05 level. It was therefore concluded that family structure and parents' level of education influenced senior secondary school students' experience on sexual molestation in Aba Education Zone, Abia State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should ensure that lines of communication are kept open at home and closed family ties maintained so that children will never shy away from discussing sexual concerns with their parents.

Keywords: Family, Sexual Molestation, public health problem, psychological harm.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual molestation of children is a prevalent social public health problem that has been frequently reported in many parts of the world. It occurs in different forms and settings. Sexual molestation is any willful or lascivious act on any person with the intent of arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust, passion or sexual desires of the perpetrator (Law, 2021). Sexual molestation according to Merriam dictionary is to make unwanted or improper sexual advances towards someone especially to force physically and usually sexual contact on someone.

Most of this wicked act is mostly carried out by people who are part of the victims' life, most time they are people you trust so much, it could be parent like in the case of father and daughter, siblings like in the case of blood brother and sister, caregivers, teachers or peer among others. In this case, most victims are afraid to report the incident of molestation as a result of fear from the perpetrators, shame and possible stigma (Nwankwo, 2021). Thomas in Inemesit (2021) maintains that sexual

molestation is a physical or psychological harm done to a child or a result of neglect by the person who supposed to protect the child. Such action can come about as a result of threat, aggression, intimidation, abandonment, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

In Nigeria, Oludayo and Udechukwu (2020) analyzed that 90% of sexual molestation is perpetrated against female and 99% of the perpetrators were male. In Nigeria, laws and legislators have been put in place to directly address sexual offences against minors. This is in conformity with united Nations charters which recommends special considerations for children including adolescent boys and girls; it asserts that, they are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and molestation because of their age, gender, size and dependency on others. Employers and school official are legally responsible to guarantee a safe environment which is free from sexual molestation and discrimination among teachers and students. The family is the most influential agent of socialization and may influence students experience of sexual molestation to a great extent. This study therefore, investigate family variables

like family structure and parents' level of education on student experience of sexual molestation.

The family is the smallest unit of the society and forms the foundation of every society, for nothing goes down into the society that has no link with the family. The family is the first point of the socialization and integration of one into the society starts at the family level. The family is a place of development and inculcation of the right values and standards of behaviour in children. The family molds children to become respectable citizens with skills and behaviour for surviving in the larger society. Families encourage moral development of student's affective relationship and integration. Baker *et al.*, in Obot *et al.*, (2020) observes that the family sets the moral tone of subsequent actions or behaviour displayed by young ones in their daily lives.

Family variables such as family structure, and parents' level of education plays a crucial role in the training of children to be morally upright. These variables if not properly handled may contribute to sexual molestation in school. Family structure is the state of been married or not been married by a man or a woman (Anyanwu, 2013). Family structure can either be intact (both parents married and living together), or not intact (parents who are married but divorced or separated). Family structure is a reliable predictor of sexual molestation. Inemesit (2021) observed that children and adolescents with sexual molestation problems will be open to family dysfunction that may impact on their development of sexual inappropriate behaviour.

Intact families have so many benefits for children. For instance, children have direct access to their biological parents, parental involvement, enjoys parent/child relationship and less cases of disagreement between parents and children among intact families (Akanbi *et al.*, 2015). Akanbi *et al.*, (2005) is of the view that in intact family, there is check and balances, parents can join forces in spending quality time with their children. With good relationship they can monitor and discipline their children and get involve in the affairs of their children. They (Akanbi *et al.*, 2015) also asserted that adolescent do not recover after parental divorce and the chaos of the family can have long-term emotional effects on them. Studies have shown that divorce is a life-altering experience for offspring who must bear the actions of their parents (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). The immediate effects of single parents have been found in adolescent's wellbeing, especially when measured up to adolescents from intact families (Amato cited in Inemesit, 2021). No doubt, adolescent who have experienced parents separations are more prone to a variety of problems ranging from emotional to academics. This emotional problem from single parents may present themselves in a form of sexual activity at an early stage.

Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) posited that girls who came from single parent families entered into sexual relationship at an early age than girls who came from intact families. Gender differences between children from a divorced family plays a very vital role on how they adjust. Several studies have buttressed that boys react more differently than girls in a divorced families. This implies that boys seem to face serious difficulties when their parents are not together as a result of divorce, separation, desertion, and widowhood. This challenge may lead to peer-fight, withdrawal of adolescent from school and social interactions.

Another study by Amato in Inemesit (2021) indicated that adolescent in single parent families are more likely to experience increased difficulties academically, emotionally and psychologically and in their behaviour as well as experience sexual molestation. However, it has been observed that some of the effects of changes in marital status may be negative or positive (Akanbi *et al.*, 2017). Nlewem and Amodu (2017) in their study concluded that respondents living with both parents were two times less likely to experience sexual abuse than respondents whose parents were not living together.

According to Douglas-Hall and Chau (2007) parental education is the educational level of the most highly educated parent who lives with their children. Higher education is one of the most effective ways that parents can raise their families' incomes. There is clear evidence that higher educational attainment is associated with higher earnings. Over the past two decades, parents with less education have low economic ground. Higher education leads to higher earnings. They found out that up to 52% of children whose parents have less than a school diploma, lives in low-income families, 57% of children whose parents have a high school diploma but no college education lives in low-income families; only 24% of children whose parents have some college education or more lives in high-income families.

Guryan *et al.*, (2008) commenting on parental education and parental time with children, stated that parents with different education levels spend substantial different amount of time in child care. These differences do not appear to be driven by difference in employment rates. The author further opined that higher educated parents spend more time with their children. For instance, mothers with high college education or greater, spend more time in child care than mothers with higher school degree or less. This observation is for non-working, working mothers and working fathers, is surprising given that the opportunity cost of time is higher for higher educated high-wage parents. Supporting this assertion, Ramey and Ramey (2007) show that the increase in time spent with children was larger for more educated individuals relative to less educated individuals. If children of higher educated parents have greater opportunities, the marginal return on

time increased in such children could be higher. Put differently, parents' education and income level have an influence on where the family can live and type of job a parent is likely to have. Together, parents' educational level, family income, and residence will influence the type of school and the neighborhood opportunities and risks to which their children will be exposed (Eccles and Davis-Kean, 2005).

The present study is interested on parental educational level as one of the factors that predisposes students to sexual molestation. From the report of Douglass-Hall and Chau (2007); Guryan *et al.*, (2008); Eccles and Davis-Kean (2005) it is evident that students of higher educated parents are less predisposed to commercial sex as they are in high income families where their needs are responded to, their parents spend more time, and the risk they are exposed to are minimized.

Statement of the Problem

Though sexuality is natural in all human but the society has a level of control over individuals' involvement in sexuality. Restrictions are placed through social norms over children and juveniles until they get matured, this will guard against infections as well as juvenile pregnancy which is not acceptable before marriage.

Sexual molestation in Aba Educational Zone has become a social vice that has affected the zone in particular and Aba school system in general, eroding the confidence in our schools. In secondary schools there are standard of behaviour which are expected of a student. Students are expected to obey school rules and regulation and remain chaste all through their days in secondary school. Students are expected to exhibit some level of discipline and self control as to make them acceptable members of the society, but the reverse is the case as most students are engage in drug abuse, indecent dressing, exam mal-practice, and even cultism all these constitute anti-social behaviour.

It is sad to observe that in some part of Aba education zone, the rate of sexual molestation among secondary school students are on the increase since mal-adaptive behaviour is well noticed among some secondary school students such as forgetfulness, poor academic performance, lack of concentration to mention but few.

This issue of sexual molestation if not eradicated may lead to problem like unwanted pregnancy, emotional trauma, depression, disruption of school life, physical wounds, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and untimely death. Sexual molestation of secondary school students is capable of ruining the future and personality of students involved. It is on this premise that this research was undertaken to determine the influence of family variables on sexual

molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of family variables on the sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of family structure on the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.
2. Determine the influence of parents' level of education on the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guard the study:

1. What is the influence of family structure on the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.
2. What is the influence of parents' level of education on the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Hypotheses

1. Family structure does not significantly influence the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.
2. Parents' level of education does not significantly influence the experience of sexual molestation of secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

METHODOLOGY

The area of study was Aba Educational Zone, Abia State which was carved out of the former Imo State in 1991 with its capital at Umuahia and the major commercial city is Aba. There are three Educational zones in the State namely: umuahai, Aba, and Ohafia Education Zone. Aba Education zone been the largest has 9 L.G.A out of 17 local government in Abia State. Most of the secondary schools are situated in the commercial city Aba where there is most likely to be sexual molestation of students

The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of all the secondary school students in nine L.G.A of Aba Education Zone during 2021/2022 academic session. The sample of the study was drawn using a multi-stage sampling approach. The first stage was the clustering of schools into 9 local government areas (LGAs). Secondly one L.G.A Aba-North was selected using sample random sampling technique. This L.G.A. has 18 secondary

schools. The schools were randomly selected and all the senior secondary school students were used as sample which gave a total of 272 students.

A research developed instrument tagged “family variables and sexual molestation Questionnaire (FVSMQ) was used to gather data for the study. The FVSMQ was divided into session A and session B. Session A elicited demographic information; information on the independent sub-variables such as family structure and parents’ level of education. Session A comprised fifteen items used to elicit information on sexual molestation. The FVSMQ was rated using a five-point Likert rating scale and scored as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3; points; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly disagree (D) = 1 point; Neutral (N) = 0. Reverse scoring was done for negatively worded items. FVSMQ instrument was administered on the subjects by the researcher with the help of an assistant researcher. The respondents were properly guided to avoid misunderstanding of the purpose of the study. out of 334 instruments that were distributed, 272 copies were properly filled, completed and used for the study.

The validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts to assess its face and content validity. An expert in measurement and evaluation vetted the items. Based on the input some items were reframed, some cancelled and arranged in most suitable way before the final copies of the FVSMQ were produced for administration. In order to estimate the reliability for external consistency of the instrument, it was administered on 30 neutral subjects who were not part of

the study sample but were part of the study area. The scores obtained were computed and analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80 for sexual molestation experience scale. The instruments were considered reliable for the study.

Data collected were scored and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Mean and standard deviation scores were used in answering two research questions. All hypotheses were tested with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels. Decision rule for research questions were based on the mean scores. The variable with the highest mean score in each case is regarded as showing high indication of the issue being considered. For hypotheses, the retention or rejection was determined by comparing the level of significance if the output is less than the alpha level, otherwise the hypothesis was retained.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: what is the influence of family structure on sexual molestation experience of secondary school students?

Research question 1 was answered by categorizing family structure into “married”, “Divorced or Separated/ Deceased”. The mean scores and standard deviation for the three categories of family structure are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation of influence of family structure on sexual molestation

Family Structure	N	X	SD
Married	218	36.80	6.28
Divorce	10	29.60	.52
Separated/deceased	44	34.80	9.14

The result in table 1 shows that the highest mean score and standard deviation for sexual molestation ($X = 36.80$, $SD = 6.28$) was observe among students whose parents are married and are living together followed by those whose parents are divorced ($X = 29.60$, $SD = 0.52$). This result implies that students whose parents are married and are living together experience sexual molestation most.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of parents’ level of education on experience of sexual molestation by secondary school students in Aba Education Zone?

Research question two examines the extent to which parents’ education influence the academic achievement of students. parents’ education was considered in three levels of Primary/Basic education, Secondary education and Tertiary education. The sexual molestation mean scores at the different levels of parental education were computed and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of influence of parents’ level of education on sexual molestation

Level of education	N	X	SD
Basic/Primary	17	37.76	6.17
Secondary	63	38.76	6.49
Tertiary	192	35.23	6.83

Table 2 reveals the mean scores and standard deviation of parents' level of education as reported by students. Students whose parents' highest level of education was basic/ primary education obtained a mean score and standard deviation of ($X = 37.76$, $SD = 6.17$), those for secondary education mean score and standard deviation ($X = 38.76$, $SD=6.49$), while those for tertiary education had a mean score and standard deviation of ($X = 35.23$, $SD = 6.83$). Based on this result, parents' level of education influences secondary school students'

experience of sexual molestation, as students whose parents' highest educational level was secondary education had more experience of sexual molestation than others.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Family structure does not significantly influence the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA influence of family structure on sexual molestation

Source of variance	sum of square	df	mean square	f	significance
B/W group	600.377	2	300.188	6.646	.002
Within groups	12150.678	269	45.170		
Total	12751.055	271			

Table 3 indicates that f-ratio ($2.267 = 6.646$ and level is less than the alpha level (.05). based on this, the hypothesis that stated family structure does not significantly influence the experience sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone was rejected. This can be explain to mean that, the f-ratio

is significant, that is, family structure significantly influences sexual molestation among senior secondary school students. further analysis to establish the groups where there is difference was done using Scheff's multiple comparism statistics. The result of the test for family structure is shown in the Table 4.

Table 4: Scheff's Analysis of the difference in family structure influence on sexual molestation

Multiple comparisons						
Dependent variable: experience of sexual molestation						
I family Structure	(J) family Structure	mean difference (I-J)	Student error	sign	95% confidence interest	
					Lower B	Upper B
Married	Divorced	-2.14571	3.85696	.857	-11.6684	7.3770
Divorced	Separated	-6.68351	3.70936	.200	-15.8418	2.4748
Divorced	Married	2.14571	3.85696	.857	-7.3770	11.6684
Separated		-4.53780	1.84149	.051	-9.0844	.0088
Separated	Married	6.68351	3.70936	.200	-2.4748	15.8418
Divorced		4.53780	1.84149	.051	-0088	9.0844

The scheff's test analysis as presented in table 4 shows three possible pair wise comparison of mean difference in family structure 1(married). Family structure 2 (Divorce) and family structure 3 (Separated/Deceased). There is significant mean difference between only between groups of divorced and

separated/deceased family structures (4.53) with level of significance (.05) equal to alpha level (.05).

Hypothesis 2: Parents' level of education does not significantly influence the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA of influence of parent-child Relationship on sexual molestation

Source of variance	sum of square	df	mean square	f	significance
B/W group	634.115	2	317.057	7.039	-.001
Within groups	12116.946	269	45.044		
Total	12751.055	271			

Table 5 shows that f-ratio ($2.269 = 7.039$ and level of significance (.001 is less than the alpha level (.05). Based on this, the hypothesis that stated that parents' level of education does not significantly influence the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone was

rejected. Therefore, the f-test of significance of variance in the parental educational level influence on sexual molestation was significant. Further analysis to establish the groups where there is difference was done using scheff's multiple comparison statistics. The result of the test for parents' level of education is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Scheff's test Analysis of the mean difference in influence of parents' education level on sexual molestation

Multiple comparisons						
Dependent variable: predisposition to commercial sex						
I parents Edu level	(J) parents Edu level	mean difference (I-J)	Student error	sign	95% confidence interest	
					Lower B	Upper B
Basic	2.00	-.99720	1.83430	.863	-5.5222	3.5178
	3.00	2.53033	1.69832	.331	-1.6500	6.7106
Secondary	1.00	.99720	1.83430	.863	-3.5178	5.5122
	3.00	3.52753	.97447	-.002	1.1289	5.9261
Tertiary	1.00	-2.53033	1.69832	-.331	-6.7106	1.6500
	2.00	-3.52753	.97447	.002	-5.9261	-1.1289

Scheff's test analysis as presented in table 6 reveals three possible pair wise comparison of mean difference in the parental education level 1 (Basic/primary), parental education level 2 (secondary) and parental education level 3 (Tertiary) significant mean difference was observed only between groups of secondary education and tertiary education (3.53). For other groups no significant mean difference was observed.

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the influence of family variables (family structure and parents' level of education) on the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. Two null hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA. Findings were summarized as follows:

1. Family structure significantly influences the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone.
2. Parents' level of education not significantly influences the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis tested the significant influence of family structure on secondary school students' experience on sexual molestation in Aba Education Zone. A one-way ANOVA on experience of sexual molestation from these categories of family structure (married, Divorced, and Separated/Deceased) indicated that the observed differences were significant. Further post Hoc test for multiple comparison of mean differences showed significant mean difference between the experience of sexual molestation among secondary school student from families where parents are divorced and families where parents are separated/deceased. This finding is similar to the results obtained by Ekott (2016), who found that disorganized families and broken homes affected the personality and character development of adolescents which result in permissive sexual behaviour which could invariably tend to sexual molestation. Early study have shown that children from broken homes or children raised by single parents due to separation or deceased of one parent develop more vulnerable and are

open to sexual molestation (Nlewem & Amodu, 2017; Robinson, 2010), Agreeing with the findings. Johnson (2005) cited in Ekott (2016) asserted that family structure where parents are married and are living together is not an indicator of delinquency but rather parenting process within the family structure are predictors of delinquency in African American adolescent females. When parents are living together, they can jointly monitor the activities of the children. Okagua and Aler-Hart (2020) found that students who experienced sexual molestation were those exposed to pornographic pictures and movies.

The second hypothesis tested showed significant influence of parents' level of education and students' experience of sexual molestation. Three level of education were analyzed (primary, secondary and tertiary education). The analysis revealed a significant variation between n parents' level of education and students' experience of sexual molestation. Further, multiple comparison revealed that female students whose parents have secondary education had less experience of sexual molestation more. The result of the present study is in line with those of Guryan *et al.*, (2008) that found that highly educated parents spend more time with their children than parents with high school degree or less. Their finding is striking given that opportunity cost of time is higher for higher educated parents. The findings also collaborated with Eccles and Devis-Rean (2005) who found that parents' education significantly influence the educational attainment of the children as parents with higher education earn high wage and make sure their children are exposed to more educational opportunities and better service needs, in most cases with all these supports and interaction with parents, students, arguable, may not find reasons to give in to sexual molestation.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion was based on the findings of the study on students' experience of sexual molestation due to family structure and parents' level of education. From the result the following conclusions were drawn:

Secondary school student in Aba Education Zone, whose parents are divorced, separated or deceased experience sexual molestation more and parents' level of education significantly influenced secondary school students' experience of sexual molestation. Those whose

parents had secondary education are less being more influenced than those with tertiary education. Based on the above observation, it was concluded that family variables like family structure and parents' level of education significantly influence students' experience of sexual molestation in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Parents should ensure that lines of communication are kept open at home and closed family ties maintained so that children will never shy away from discussing their sexual concerns with their parents.
2. The society should encourage the practice intact parenting family system where two parents live together and share the responsibilities of bringing up the child morally to internalize and appreciate the acceptable norms and values of the society which self-respect is one of them.

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