

Correlates of Risky Sexual Behaviours of Adolescents in Rivers State: A Study of Peer Pressure and Social Media Influences

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Abstract

Background: This study investigated the correlates of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State. Six objectives with corresponding research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. **Materials and Methods:** The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of all 93,076 in-School Senior Secondary School adolescents in Rivers State. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 880 from six LGAs in the three senatorial zones of the State. The instrument for data collection was a validated self-structured questionnaire with reliability coefficients of 0.852 for peer pressure and 0.733 for media using Cronbach alpha. Data collected was analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 25), percentages were used to answer research questions, and binary logistic regression was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels. **Results and Discussions:** The result of the study showed 14.6% prevalence of sexual behaviours. Also, the findings revealed that 73.2% did not use condoms at sexual debut, 7.3% had sexual intercourse with more than one person, 2.6% had paid sexual intercourse, 2.2% have had sexual intercourse with sex worker and 11.3% have had oral sex. **Conclusions:** The result of the study established a significant relationship between peer pressure and sexual behaviours ($p < 0.05$) and result revealed a significant association between social media influence and sexual behaviours ($p < 0.05$). The study recommended that sexual health education be taught early right from the home by parents/ guardians and in school by teachers and school health officers with emphasis on the identified correlates peer pressure and media influence. Parents should not purchase high tech android phones for their children and should monitor what they do with phones provided.

Keywords: Peer pressure, Adolescents, Risky Sexual behaviours, Social media influence, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents' sexual behaviours are a cause for concern and had received global public health attention and among researchers. Sexual behaviours deal with all things relating to sex, conception and satisfaction and also maintain social relationships and bonds for life [1].

Sexual behaviours are described as including all responses directly associated with genital stimulation and copulation, whether homosexual or heterosexual [2]. Similarly, the Handbook of Neuroendocrinology by [3] described sexual behaviours as a broad term encompassing solicitation and seeking behaviour involved in attracting and finding a mate, copulation for

the exchange of gametes, and the care and nurturing of offspring after they are born. However, this may not be the case with the adolescents who indulge in sexual behaviours out of curiosity, imitation, and experimentation, and are not prepared psychologically and financially of shouldering the challenges emanating from these behaviours such as; unintended pregnancies and catering for the offspring while still undergoing education, STIs, and abortion.

No country is completely free from adolescents' risky sexual behaviours and its challenges. As a 2018 report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States indicated that 41% of adolescents are having sexual intercourse and considerable evidence suggests that adolescents sexting (sexting is the sending of sexually explicit messages or images by cell phone) is related to risky sexual behaviours [4]. Also, the study from Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that on the most recent adolescents' risky sexual behaviours survey of United States high school students showed that 41% had sexual intercourse, 30% had sexual intercourse during the previous 3 months, and of these; 43% did not use a condom the last time they had sex, 14% did not use any method to prevent pregnancy, 21% had drunk alcohol or use drugs before their last sexual intercourse [5].

The study conducted by [6] identified peer pressure as a prime driver of sexual behaviours among school adolescents in Addis Ababa with 377 out of 723 sexually active students demonstrated that peer pressure is the most important correlate of risky sexual behaviours among school adolescents. Similarly, the study conducted by [7] also identified that peer influence in adolescence could lead to pro-social as well as antisocial behaviour.

The study by [8] on peer pressure influence on the premarital sexual behaviour of senior secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria, showed that peer pressure was a major correlate of premarital risky sexual behaviours among students in senior secondary schools. It was observed that there is great vulnerability in adolescents, as they are in a phase of social, emotional and cognitive development, and their behaviours are geared to satisfying their sexual partners, sacrificing their wants in order to keep their partners interested [9]. A study reiterated that adolescents are influenced by their peers in decision making to romantic/ sexual relationships and peers act as the major source of information about sexual health which calls for sexual education intervention programmes [9].

A study showed that peer influence positively predicted risk taking behaviour in adolescents [10]. In another study by [11] reported that what is seen as peer influence for the in- school adolescents was making

friends on facebook and doing homework with friends of opposite sex, and that the in - school sexual behaviour are attraction to the opposite sex and enjoying sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol hence the need for urgent sexual education and counseling. A study conducted by [12] observed that boys were significantly more susceptible to peer influence than girls, and that not all adolescents are susceptible to peer influence. Similarly, [13] study reported that young people sexual behaviour is greatly influenced by their peers through drinking and clubbing, intimate relationship and use of sexual language, and that young people tend to engage in the activities and behaviours which their peers practice.

Social Media influence as correlates is the most powerful influence on adolescents' risky sexual behaviours in our contemporary society. Adolescents are very much interested in social media use which consists of sexual magazines, music, television, and video, Youtube, WhatsApp, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, games, films and the internet. The adolescents immerse themselves in social media with social networking sites, cell phones, sexual text messages and are exposed to all forms of sexual materials which arouse them and influence their tendency to experiment or practice whatever they see in real life.

A study on media influence as predictors of adolescents' sexual risky behaviours in Nigeria findings showed there was significant correlates between dating, oral sex, sexual intercourse, sexual lyrics, cohabitation, nude pictures, condom use, multiple sexual partners, night parties, sensation feeling behaviour, abortion, sexual scripts and adolescent's risky sexual behaviours [14]. The study conducted by [15] opine that Sexually explicit media exposure predicted early sexual debut, unsafe sex, and multiple sexual partners and that exposure to more media modalities increased the likelihood of risky sexual behaviours hence the need for early education on media literacy and counseling.

A study conducted by [16] on social media use identified that adolescent changes are further influenced by the ease of access to information via social media channels such as the internet, mobile phones, and computer and satellite televisions. Study on the influence of social media use on sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in Ilorin showed that there is significant association between exposure to sexual contents in social media and risky sexual behaviours among undergraduate students [17]. A study showed that social media influences the risky sexual behaviour via the use of WhatsApp, Instagram to mention a few [18]. Also [19] reported that social media shape the sexual health attitudes and behaviours of young undergraduates, which showed that out of 226 respondents who had ever had sex, 226 (100%), 37 (16.4%), 31 (13.7%), and 10 (4.4%) practiced coitus,

oral sex, masturbation, and anal sex, respectively; 33 (14.6%) had had sex with commercial sex workers.

Observations from clinical experiences in the communities showed increase in the number of social mothers and fathers making adolescents risky sexual behaviours an issue of public health concern. Also, observations showed that adolescent parents whose sick babies were admitted, lacked resources for medical bills thereby putting additional financial burden on their parents and significant others. Most disturbing was the number of pregnant adolescents found in the Port Harcourt correctional centre during medical outreach visits brought in from baby factory homes. In view of these, this work sought to investigate the correlates of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to investigate the correlates of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State. The following objectives were set for the study:

1. To assess the extent of peer pressure as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State.
2. To assess the extent of social media as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

This study was carried out in Rivers State, southern Nigeria, Rivers State is blessed with quantity of crude oil manned by expatriates and indigenes. It is one of the richest states in Nigeria with multimillion Naira companies and industries that deal on oil and gas activities. Huge sum of financial activities go on in the state including unwholesome sex-related activities.

Research Design

The study adopted a co relational research design.

Population for the Study

The population for this study comprised of all in-school, Senior Secondary Schools with a total population of 93,076 (Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2019).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total sample size of 880 was used and multi stage sampling procedure which involved 4 steps; cluster sampling, simple random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified proportionate sampling, was adopted for the study.

Instrument for Data collection

The instrument for data collection was a validated-researcher's structured questionnaire of 49 items titled, "Correlates of Risky Sexual Behaviours

Questionnaire (CRSBQ), which was validated by experts, and tested for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha with reliability index 0.94.

Procedure for Data collection

Data collection was accomplished through face to face, on the spot administration method. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained in an explicit manner to the respondents before they gave their consent and responses. Their fears were allayed and reassured of any anxiety expressed and assured that their response will be treated with strict confidentiality. The administration and retrieval of the instrument lasted four (4) weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

The data generated from the study were analyzed using IBM Statistical Product and service solutions (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Specifically Binary logistic regression was applied to test the hypotheses set for the study at 0.05 alpha levels.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Rivers State Secondary Schools Board and administrative permission from the Principals of schools used. Consent was obtained from the participants and only those that were willing participated in the study. Also offensive, discriminatory or other unacceptable languages were avoided in the structuring of the questionnaire. Information from the respondents were treated with utmost confidentiality and used only for the study.

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing the demographic variables of respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC		N=823
Gender	Female %	Male %
Total	600 (72.9%)	223 (27.1%)
Age		
11 -15	200 (24.3%)	100 (12.2%)
16- 20	400 (48.6%)	123 (14.9%)
Total	600 (72.9%)	223 (27.1%)
Class		
SS1	50 (6.1%)	20 (2.43 %)
SS2	150 (18.2%)	80 (9.72%)
SS3	400 (48.6%)	123 (14.95%)
Total	600 (72.9%)	223 (27.1%)
Religion		
Christian	600 (72.9%)	223 (27.1%)
Islam	Nil	Nil

Table 1 Showed demographic variables of respondents out of 823 respondents 600 (72.9%) were females while 223 (27.1%) were males, 300 (36.5%) within the age bracket of 11- 15 years while 523

(63.5%) were within the ages of 16-20. A total of 70 (8.53%) were in SS1, 230 (27, 92%) were in SS2 and 523 (63.6%) were in SS3. All the 823 participants were Christians.

Risky Sexual Behaviours of Respondents

Table 2: Percentages of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents N=823

Behaviours	Frequency/Percentage	
	YES (%)	NO (%)
I have had sexual intercourse	120(14.6)	703(85.4)
The first time I had sexual intercourse I used condom	56(46.7)	64(53.3)
I have had sexual intercourse with more than one person	60(50.0)	60(50.0)
I have been paid to have sexual intercourse	21(17.5)	99(82.5)
I have had sexual intercourse with a sex worker	18(15.0)	102(75.0)
I have had oral sex using my mouth	93(77.5)	37(22.5)

Table shows the frequency and percentage rating of the responses of subjects on risky sexual behaviours. The result of the study showed that 120 (14.6%) have had sexual intercourse. Out of the 120 respondents who had sexual intercourse, 64(53.3%) did not use condoms at sexual debut, 60(50 %) have had

sexual intercourse with more than one person, 21 (17.5%) had paid sexual intercourse, 18 (15.0%) have had sexual intercourse with sex worker and 93(77.5%) have had oral sex. This implies that adolescents' risky sexual behaviours still prevails.

Table 3: Cross tabulation on the extent of peer pressure as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours

Peer pressure	Sexual Behaviours		Total F (%)	DECISION
	Yes, F (%)	No F (%)		
Low peer pressure	100(13.3%)	654(86.7%)	754(100.0%)	Low
High Peer pressure	20(29.0%)	49(71.0%)	69(100.0%)	High
Total	120(14.6%)	703(85.4%)	823(100.0%)	

Table shows cross-tabulation on the extent of peer pressure as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours. 100 (13.3%) of the subjects with low peer pressure influence have had sexual intercourse, while 20(29.0%)

of the subjects with high peer pressure had sexual intercourse. Peer pressure of 29.0% is high; this showed that most adolescents indulge in risky sexual behaviours as a result of peer influence.

Table 4: Cross tabulation on the extent of social media as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours

Media influence	Sexual Behaviours		Total F (%)	Decision
	Yes, F (%)	No, F (%)		
Low Media influence	467(90.7%)	48(9.3%)	515(100.0%)	High
High Media influence	236(76.6%)	72(23.4%)	308(100.0%)	Low
Total	703(85.4%)	120(14.6%)	823(100.0%)	

Table shows the result of cross-tabulation on the extent of media influence as a correlate of risky sexual behaviours. Out of a total of 515 (100%) subjects who reported low media influence, 467 (90.7%) have had sexual intercourse, while 48 (9.3%) had not sexual intercourse. However, out of 308 (100%) of the subjects

who reported exposure high media influence, 236 (76.6%) have had sexual intercourse, while 72 (23.4%) have not had sexual intercourse. Thus, social media influence is a correlate of risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 5: Binary logistic regression on association between peer pressure and risky sexual behaviour of adolescents

		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp (OR)	95% C.I. for EXP(OR)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1^a	Peer Pressure	.95	.16	34.46	1	.00	2.59	1.89	3.57
	Constant	-3.38	.31	120.52	1	.00	.03		

Table shows the result of binary logistic regression analysis on the association between peer pressure and risky sexual behaviours. The independent variable was peer pressure while the outcome

(dependent variable) was risky sexual behaviours. The full model as a whole showing the chi-square analysis result revealed a significant association between peer pressure and risky sexual behaviours (χ^2 (1, N=823)

=3465, $P < 0.001$. The result of the study further demonstrated that those who indicated having had pressure from a peer were 2.59 times more likely to

have sexual intercourse compared to those without peer pressure (OR=2.59, 95% CI: 1.89-3.57).

Table 6: Binary logistic regression on association between social media influence and risky sexual behaviours of adolescents

Step 1 ^a		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp (OR)	95% C.I. for EXP(OR)	
								Lower	Upper
	Media	.81	.15	30.33	1	.00	2.25	1.68	3.01
	Constant	-3.66	.38	95.02	1	.00	.03		

Table shows result of binary logistic regression analysis on association between media influence and sexual behaviour. The independent variable was media influence while the outcome (dependent variable) was sexual behaviour. The full model as a whole showing the chi-square analysis result revealed a significant association between social media influence and sexual behaviour (χ^2 (1, N=823) =34.65, $P < 0.001$). The result of the study further demonstrated that those who indicated having had high media influence were 2.25 times more likely to have sexual intercourse compared to those less media influence (OR=2.25, 95% CI: 1.68-3.01).

DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed that peer pressure was a significant correlates of risky sexual behaviours as more (29.0%) of the respondents with high peer pressure engaged in risky sexual behaviours. Thus, the result of the study further demonstrated that those who indicated having had pressure from peer were 2.59 times more likely to have sexual intercourse. This study finding conformed to a study conducted by [9] which observed that there is great vulnerability in adolescents, as they are in a phase of social, emotional and cognitive development, and their behaviours are geared to satisfying their sexual partners, sacrificing their wants in order to keep their partners interested. It also agreed with [10] study which showed that peer influence positively predicted risk taking behaviour in adolescents. The study was also in consonance with [11] research which reported that what was seen as peer influence for the in- school adolescents was making friends on facebook and doing homework with friends of opposite sex, among others. The study finding supported the assumptions of the social contagion theory.

Also, in accordance with this study finding was that conducted by [6] on peer pressure as a prime driver of risky sexual behaviours among school adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia which revealed sexually active students were involved in sexual practices and that risky sexual behaviours was significantly and very strongly associated with perception of peers' involvement in sexual intercourse. Also, in consonance with this present study finding was the study conducted by [12] on adolescent susceptibility

to peer influence in sexual situations; which revealed that participants demonstrated conformity to peer influence.

This study finding was also in line with [13] study which reported that young people sexual behaviour is greatly influenced by their peers and tends to engage in the activities and behaviours which their peers practice. Also consistent with this study was that conducted by [8] on peer pressure influence on premarital sexual behaviour of senior secondary school students in Kaduna State, which reported that peer pressure was a major correlate of premarital sexual behaviours among students in senior secondary schools.

On the contrary, [7] also identified that peer influence in adolescence could lead to pro-social as well as antisocial behaviour. Also the study carried out by [20] on peer pressure and home environment as predictors of disruptive and risky sexual behaviour of secondary school adolescents, showed that adolescents who show a heightened sensitivity to positive peer pressure demonstrated lowered risky sexual behaviours while, those with negative peer pressure strongly exhibit disruptive and risky sexual behaviours. This study implied that other factors may compel adolescents to indulge in sexual intercourse or not. The disparity in this study and that of [20] could be attributed to multivariate analysis as the present study adopted a univariate analysis.

The result of the study demonstrated that those who indicated having had high media influence were 2.25 times more likely to have sexual intercourse compared to those less media influence. A similar study conducted by [21] on social media and risky sexual behaviours among adolescent, was in accordance with the finding of this present study. This result revealed that students who dated the opposite sex and those who watched pornographic movies were 2 times more likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse than those who did not.

The findings of this study agreed with that conducted by [14], which reported a significant relationship existed between the Internet, Facebook, Videos, Cell phones, Television, Twitters,

Magazines/Newspapers, Computers, Pornography, and Music and adolescents' sexual risky behaviours.

Also in conformity with the study was that carried out by [15] on sexually explicit media exposure predicted early sexual debut, unsafe sex, and multiple sexual partners and that exposure to more media modalities increased the likelihood of risky sexual behaviours. A study conducted by [16] on social media use identified that adolescent changes are influenced by the ease of access to information via social media channels such as the internet, mobile phones, and computer and satellite televisions. Also, in consonance with this study was that conducted by [18] which showed that social media influences the risky sexual behaviour via the use of WhatsApp, Instagram to mention a few, and that conducted by [19] which reported that social media shaped the sexual health attitudes and behaviours of young undergraduates. Also, in line with this study finding was that carried out by [17] on the influence of social media use on risky sexual behaviours of undergraduate Students in Ilorin, which showed that there is significant association between exposure to sexual contents in social media and risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students.

Media is also a correlate of risky sexual behaviours among adolescents, though some respondents commented that they have the fear of God, they would wait till they are married, some of the students were very excited with the topic of the research but were not truthful in their responses, it showed that whether no media influence or media influence adolescents that were sexually active and may still engaged in sexual intercourse. The government, media owners, and parents should regulate the media content to suit the adolescent.

CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that adolescents in the State still engage in risky sexual behaviours not minding they might contact HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. That risky sexual behaviours of the adolescents was propelled by correlates such as peer pressure and media influence.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researchers declared that the study was conducted without conflict of interest and financial benefit of any kind.

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