

Peer Influence and Single Parenting as Predictors of Sexual Abuse Among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined peer influence and single parenting as predictors of sexual abuse among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Two research questions raised and two hypotheses formulated. The correlational survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study is Eleven thousand nine hundred and eighty-five (11985) senior secondary school students in the public and private schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area. The multistage sampling procedure was employed to select 300 students from six (6) senior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area. The research instrument was a questionnaire titled " Single Parenting, Peer Influence, and Sexual Abuse Questionnaire Scale " was used for the study. The data was analysed using inferential statics (Linear Regression and t-test). It was shown from the findings that peer influence and single parenting both significantly predict sexual abuse amongst secondary school students ($p < 0.05$) and also established that there is a significant difference between public and private schools in their disposition to sexual abuse among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State ($T\text{-cal} > 1.96$ & $p < 0.05$). In view of the outcome of this study, it was recommended that seminars should be organized for students due to the dangers of indecent dressing and premarital sex, secondary schools should ensure that they have an operational counselling centre and specialised counsellors who can organise individual and group counselling sessions for victims of sexual abuse.

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Introduction

Globally it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect (WHO, 2018). Sexual abuse has been observed as one of the fastest-growing crimes in many countries all over the world, but the

actual prevalence of sexual violence is usually unknown as a result of gross underreporting (B Buga Donald H A Amoko et al., n.d.). Sexual abuse is sexual activity when consent is not obtained or not freely given. Sexual abuse includes; touching sexually without consent (that is, kissing, grabbing, fondling), forcing a person to perform sexual acts that may be degrading or painful; beating sexual parts of the body; making unwelcome sexual comments or jokes; denying a person's sexuality or privacy (watching); forced prostitution; unfounded allegations of promiscuity and/or infidelity; and purposefully exposing the person to HIV-AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections (Usman, 2013). Despite the high burden of sexual abuse and its adverse effects, child sexual abuse is one of the most underreported crimes (Mathews & Abrahams, 2017). There are concerns over the prevalence of premarital sexual activities among students given the catastrophic realities of HIV/AIDS, other STDs, unwanted pregnancies and badly executed abortions (Hagger, 2019); as sexual abuse is now a growing public health and human rights problem, which serves as an indicator of the most severe breach of human security in the world (Bajpa, 1999). The negative impact of sexual abuse on students includes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, psychological effects such as shock, fear, guilt, denial, confusion, nervousness, criminal behaviour, early sexual commencement, low self-esteem and eating disorders.

Studies have shown that one in four women may have experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner and up to a third of adolescent girls report their experience as being forced. Sexual abuse is perceived as any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by coercion (Iwuama & Ekwe, 2012). In Nigeria today, single-parenting is a challenge to the education of young students, and it is on the increase. Reasons for becoming a single parent include but are not limited to divorce, becoming widowed, break-up, abandonment, rape, childbirth by a single person or single-person adoption domestic violence, Growing up in a single-parent household is associated with exposure to adverse childhood experiences (Jackson et al., 2019; Rousou et al., 2019) Growing up in a single-parent home is often treated as an adverse childhood experience by psychologists and courts because of the strong correlation between single-parent households and child maltreatment (Kratky & Schröder-Abé, 2018; Palucka et al., 2011)

Children from single-parent in Nigeria are characterized by poverty, aggression, anxiety and abuse, which suggests why some are into drug and other social menaces (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010) and are exposed to unsafe or age-inappropriate situations due to poor supervision (Ben-David, 2016), and overtly harsh or withdrawn parenting behaviours by a burdened and poorly

coping single parent (Jackson et al., 2019; Mathews & Abrahams, 2017). Evidence abounds in research that has associated single-parenting with countless negative behavioural and psychological consequences. These range from psychological distress (Clements-Nolle & Waddington, 2019; Sinha & Ram, 2018) and interpersonal problems (Hinojosa et al., 2019). Students from broken families or single parents often have emotional, mental and financial challenges (Glenn Lanozo et al., 2021), affecting their learning. Loneliness and depression are common problems of students with single mother. Leizl et al. in 2020 research finding revealed no significant difference in the academic performance of single-parent students of a school in the Philippines (Abrantes & Casinillo, 2020).

Peer pressure can be perceived as an individual's influence on another, which has been observed to have an essential part in in-school adolescents indulging in dangerous sexual abuse. Peer pressure is the influence peers has on other peers, it could be direct or indirect, that is, social groups members with similar capabilities, interests, or social status. According to a study conducted on the sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria, peer group pressure contributed most ($P < 0.05$) to the sexual behaviour of secondary school students (Nwozichi et al., 2015). In another study conducted on risky sexual behaviours of adolescents, it was found that adolescents with strong bonds are more expected to report lifetime sex to their peers than those with weak ties. Youths who had peer pressure to have sexual intercourse and those who had friends already engaged in sexual intercourse were more likely to have sexual experience (AOR = 1.96) and (AOR = 1.41) respectively (Amoateng, et al, 2014).

Public schools are funded primarily by the government (federal or state) and regulated and supervised by relevant government institutions like ministries of education, while private schools are funded by individuals or organizations usually without government input and in private schools, profit-making has been the motivation at the expense of a child's welfare. The researchers are of the view that sexual abuse cases may not be reported to law enforcement agencies by private schools' owners when compared to public schools, this is because privately owned schools value their reputation and do their best to avoid legal liability above the security and happiness of their students. A study by Maranga, et al (2020) in Kenya accessed Risk Factors of Sexual Abuse among School-going Children in Primary Schools in Kisumu County (Maranga et al., 2020). The findings revealed that 26% of the pupils who responded that they had been involved in sexual abuse in public owned schools while 20% in privately owned schools but the dissimilarity was not significant statistically ($\chi^2 = 2.044$;

$p > 0.05$), with the pupils generally of the view that public school's students are exposed to sexual abuse compared to students in boarding or private schools. Therefore, could single parenting, peer influence and school ownership among other factors be responsible for the prevalence of sexual abuse?

Method

The research design used for the study is a survey research design adopting the correlational approach. The population of the study is made of all students in privately owned and public secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. There are eleven thousand nine hundred and eighty-five (11985) senior secondary school students in both the public and private owned schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area, with twenty-eighty (28) public and thirty-seven (37) senior secondary schools, with a total of six thousand sixty (6060) and five thousand nine hundred and twenty-five students (5925) in public and private schools respectively. The sampling was done by selecting three hundred (300) students from six (6) senior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique in selecting six schools in which the names of all the schools were in print on folded pieces of paper and put in a paper bag, out of which three private and three public secondary schools were selected without replacement. The researcher also randomly selected 50 students from each of the six (6) schools, 150 students were selected from public schools and another 150 students from private schools, both male and female students were selected.

Results

Peer influence and single parenting are not significant predictors of sexual abuse among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Findings may be presented in the form of tables, graphs, verbal descriptions, or a combination of the three. Tables, graphics, or images should not be too long, too large; please do not present too many figures in the manuscript. Authors are recommended to use a combination of presentation tables, graphs, or verbal descriptions. The tables and graphs presented must be referred to in the main text. The writing style for the tables and figures are presented in Table 1. The table should not contain vertical lines (upright), while horizontal (flat) lines are only on the head and tail of the table. Font sizes for table and picture entries may be reduced.

Table 1. Linear Regression of Peer Influence and Single Parenting on Sexual abuse among secondary school students

R = .519					
R ² = .269					
Adjusted R Square = .265					
Standard Error = 4.43918					
Model	Sum of squares	D.f	Mean square	F	Sig. (P-Value)
Regression	2159.158	2	1079.579	54.783	0.000
Residual	5852.788	297	19.706		
Total	8011.947	299			

Table 1. Shows the R-value of .519 and the R² value of the prediction is .269 (26.9%). It therefore means that the predicting variables of peer influence and single parenting account for 26.9% of the variance in sexual abuse of secondary school students. The table also reveals an F-Value of 54.783 and a P-Value of 0.000; testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the P-Value is less than the alpha level so the null hypothesis which states that "peer influence and single parenting are not significant predictors of sexual abuse among secondary school students" is rejected. Therefore, peer influence and single parenting do significantly predict substance abuse among senior secondary school students.

There is no significant difference between public and private schools in their disposition towards sexual abuse among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Table 3.

Independent Sample T-Test Showing the Difference between Public and Private Schools in their disposition to Sexual Abuse among Secondary School students

School Type	N	Mean	S.D.	D.f	t-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Public	150	24.3867	5.14591	298	2.475	0.000
Private	150	22.9200	5.11941			

Table 3, shows the difference between public and private schools in their disposition to sexual abuse among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. A total of 150 students in public schools and 150 students in private schools responded to the instrument and the mean obtained for public schools and private schools were 24.3867 and 22.9200 respectively. The standard deviation for this distribution is 5.14591 and 5.11941 for public and private schools respectively. The degree of freedom is 298 and the T-Value is 2.475. The presentation had a P-value of 0.000 while the alpha level was 0.05. The critical T-value for this distribution is 1.96. Since the T-value obtained is greater than the critical T-value and the P-value is less than the alpha value, it then implies that the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference between public and private schools in their disposition towards sexual abuse among secondary school students" is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between public and private schools in their disposition towards sexual abuse among secondary school students.

Discussion

It was revealed that peer influence and single parenting do significantly predict sexual abuse among senior secondary school students. Meaning both peer influence and single parenting serve as a contributing factor to sexual abuse. The researchers from their experiences as classroom teachers agree with this school of thought as observed by them in their immediate environment. Nwozichi et al., (2015) and Amoateng et al., (2014) also from their separate studies alluded to the aforementioned result stating that peer group pressure influenced most of the sexual behaviour of students. Youths who were more likely to have sexual experience were those who had peer pressure.

Finally, findings of the study show a significant difference between public and private schools in their disposition towards sexual abuse among secondary school students. The researchers are of the view that the aforementioned result might be due and not limited to the fact that private school pupils were perceived by strict rules, had no tolerance for sexual abuse and had an environment that had good security. Public school pupils on the other hand are perceived by the researchers to be more predisposed to sexual abuse because most teachers show little or no care about what happens to pupils. Public schools have big expanse of land hence, more rooms and chances for hiding, which may lead to sexual abuse among students. The aforementioned also lends credence to the results by Maranga et al., (2020) whose study

revealed that 26% of the pupils who had experienced sexual abuse were in public schools while 20% were in private schools.

Conclusion

Peer influence and single parenting are significant predictors of sexual abuse among senior secondary school students. There is a difference in the disposition towards sexual abuse among secondary school students as shown in their mean with public school students more prone to sexual abuse.

School Counsellors should organise seminars/workshops to create more awareness of sexual abuse among senior secondary school students. Parents, especially single parents are to be exposed to the danger inherent in sexual abuse while counsellors and psychologists procure therapeutic assistance to victims of sexual abuse. School Counsellors should give more attention to students in public schools especially victims of sexual and proffer ways for therapeutic assistance.

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