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INFLUENCE OF MOTHER-DAUGHTER INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEENAGE GIRLS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In order to curtail a female child's early sexual engagement and the attendant repercussions, research gap must be filled in the field of mother-daughter interpersonal communication. Hence, this study specifically examined the influence of the quality of mother-daughter communication on sexual behaviour of teenage girl; the influence of mother's parenting style on a girl's sexual behaviour; and also investigated the joint influence of the mother-daughter communication and parenting style on sexual behaviour of a teenage girl. This study employed the survey research method. Five public secondary schools were randomly selected in Ijebu-Ode. 40 teenage girls and their mothers were purposively selected in each of the schools, totaling 200 sample size. Three instruments were adopted to gather the data: Adolescent Sexual Activities Index (ASAI), Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PCS) and Parenting Style Scale (PSC). *The study was anchored on Bowen Family Systems Theory; Attachment theory and The Rommetveit and Blakar communication model. Quality communication among mothers and daughters were found influencing a positive sexual behaviour in teenage girls while the mothers' parenting styles did not show significant influence on their daughters' sexual behaviour. However, there was a significant positive joint influence of mothers-daughters communication and mothers' parenting styles on teens' sexual behaviour. Among others, the study recommended that mothers should endeavour to create intimacy with their daughters to enhance quality communication and should learn to adopt appropriate parenting styles as it relates to their daughters' sexual education and monitoring according to the behavioural pattern exhibited by such child.*

Keywords: Interpersonal communication, Parenting style, Sexual behaviour, Mother, Daughter, Teenager,

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual behaviour is the manner in which humans experience and express their sexu-

ality. It also means any activity between two solitary persons or a group of persons that induces sexual arousal and subsequent indul-

gence in sexual activities (Brian *et. al*, 2016). This does not necessarily imply sexual intercourse, but rather a variety of sexual acts which people engage in from time to time, and for different reasons. The teens age is a transitional stage that starts during the period of puberty to adulthood and characterized by physical and psychological development appearing later after the adolescence age (Mohammed *et. al.*, 2017). It is one of the important periods in a life cycle that is characterized by a rapid growth and change (World Health Organization, 2016). However, teenager sexual behaviour is a complex idea that involves physical make-up, self-image and their feelings towards others and the society he or she lives in (Steinberg, 2014).

In sexuality matter, a teenage girl in particular, is generally perceived to be vulnerable and could easily be persuaded into early sex by the male counterpart. A study by Amoo *et. al.* (2017) showed that females typically regulate sexual encounters by either disallowing it or controlling the pace at which sex occurs. It is however unfortunate that most girls do not have correct and adequate information regarding puberty and healthy behaviour related to it (Kotecha *et. al.*, 2009). The afore-going translates to the fact that if a teenage girl can be exposed to discussion on sexual matters or be provided sexuality education or contraceptive information early, they are more likely to postpone sexual activity and therefore are at reduced risk for pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (Blake *et. al*, 2001). Moreso, there would be a high likelihood of sustainable healthy sexual relationship between male and female teenagers as the female child is considered central in sexuality decision making.

The family, being the first social unit is expected to play the most important role in educating adolescents and transferring information and hygienic behaviours to them (Mohammed *et. al*, 2017). This is corroborated by Valizadeh *et. al.*, (2017) that although each family member may have a role in teaching puberty health to teenagers, the mother plays the most prominent role in this issue and most teenagers learn hygienic behaviours from their mothers. In performing this responsibility, mother and daughter typically faced role clashes as daughter goes into puberty and is growing up from the “little baby girl” to a youth who is struggling to find herself (Mohammed *et. al.*, 2017). Daughters and mothers have the nearest tie, and it is typically because they communicate on constant basis and sometimes share personal experience about themselves (Mohammed *et. al.*, 2017). Therefore, if mothers fail to create conducive environment to broach the subject of sex with their teens, the children are most likely not going to abstain from sex, and many of them will engage in risky sexual practices (Schear, 2006).

There are three crucial factors that could bring about a positive change in the teenage girl’s sexual behaviour, identifiable as the quality of the parent-child relationship; the parenting style in general; and the constant communications about sex and sexuality (Blake *et. al*, 2001). Among these factors, communications about sex and sexuality appear more to be strong determinants of adolescent sexual behaviour (Blake *et. al.*, 2001). The pattern of communication, which forms the basis for a specific parenting style, determines the effectiveness of reproductive knowledge transfer to safeguard girls’ reproductive health at a time of social change (Obono, 2012).

Baheiraei, *et. al* (2016) have examined trends and outcomes of sexual behaviour in teenagers but have overlooked the patterns of interpersonal communication between mothers and daughters that have implications on girls' reproductive wellbeing. Studies about this (Amoo, *et. al.*, 2017; Yinusa, *et al.*, 2017) in Nigeria have been focusing attention on the importance of relationship that exists between a mother and child, but ignoring the specific implications of mother-daughter interpersonal communication on sexual behaviour. Therefore, this study was motivated to address this gap by investigating mother-daughter interpersonal communication and sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State, South West Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Today's teenagers can be described as a generation at risk due to their early sexual understanding, resulting in unwanted pregnancies and infection from sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. For a teenage girl, her developmental period is a time of self-exploration and identity development. It is at this period that girls are highly vulnerable as a result of their low self-confidence and desire for acceptance. They may find themselves giving in easily to unprotected sex with their male friends. However, to save teenage girls from consequences of early and unprotected sex, mothers are much expected to foster cordial relationship and also adopt some specific parenting strategies through which they can effectively communicate and instill acceptable lifestyle and healthy sexual behaviour in their children. Hence, this study intended to fill a gap by specifically examining the influence of mothers on the sexual behaviour of their teenage girls through interpersonal communication, as mothers are observed to share intimate and quality time with their teenage

girls more than the fathers and are more obliged to provide sex education to teenage girls. This helps to limit them from obtaining inaccurate information about sex from their peers and others.

This study seeks to investigate if a quality relationship between mother and daughter can influence a significant change in a teenage girl's sexual behaviour or whether it is the parenting strategies adopted by a mother that can influence the sexual behaviour of a girl child. The study also seeks to determine what influence both mother's quality relationship and parenting strategies can create on the sexual behaviour of a teenage girl.

To achieve these specific objectives, the following questions must be answered:

1. Does the quality of communications amongst mothers and daughters influence the teenage girls' sexual behaviour in Ogun State?
2. What is the influence of mothers' parenting styles on the teenage girls' sexual behaviour in Ogun State?
3. Is there any joint impact of mothers-daughters communication and mothers' parenting styles on the sexual behaviour of teenage girls in Ogun State?

Theoretical Framework

Mother-daughter interpersonal communication and sexual behaviour have received a great amount of attention from the theoretical point of view. The three main theories in focus are: the Bowen Family Systems Theory; Attachment theory and The Rommetveit and Blakar communication model. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory was developed and formulated in 1969 by using systems thinking while integrating knowledge from human species as a product of evolu-

tion and family research. According to Brownell (2006), the Bowen's theory is a theory of human behaviour that views the family as an emotional unit. Bowen originated this theory as an emotional-relationship system that integrates eight interlocking concepts, specifically: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, and societal emotional process. According to Bowen (1969), family members so profoundly affect each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions that it often seems as if people are living under the same "emotional skin". A change in one person's functioning (i.e., adolescent's sexual risk-taking behaviour) is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others (i.e., parent-adolescent communication). Communication is a central component of the family system's capability to change.

The Attachment theory is the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth in 1991. Bowlby and Ainsworth argued that children are genetically inclined to form attachments in the first years of their life as a way in which to enhance their probability of existence; thus, children are evolutionarily prepared to internalize interpersonal and emotional experiences with caregivers. Based on the quality of the child's interactions with their main caregivers, internal working models of self and others are developed which act as templates for how to form and maintain relationships in the future (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1991).

The Rommetveit and Blakar communication model addresses many relevant issues in the communication process and is thus adopted by this study. In the Rommetveit

and Blakar communication model propounded in 1981, there are six processes, namely: (1) Production of messages, (2) Encoding of messages, (3) Decoding of messages, (4) Processing and memory of received messages, (5) Sender's anticipation of receiver's decoding, and (6) Receiver's listening to the premises of the sender (Rommetveit & Blakar, 1981). In the parent-adolescent sex communication process, adolescents may regard their parents as being judgmental, overly protective, and disrespectful of their privacy and autonomy. Such factors may undermine the perceived trustworthiness of the parent as an information source, and the communication will not be effective. Communicants must also have a shared worldview. Intergenerational differences between parents and children can cause misunderstanding. For example, parents may talk to adolescents about the dangers of unprotected sexual intercourse while adolescents may erroneously think of this as a condemnation (Hokenberry et. al, 2016).

These three theories are relevant because of their capabilities to explain the processes of formation of relationship in a family system through interpersonal communication and how family members are dependent on each other and are affected by each other's positive or negative life decision.

Empirical Review

Mother-Daughter Communication about Sex

The family being the first social unit plays the most important role in educating adolescents and transferring information and hygienic behaviours to them (Mohammed *et. al*, 2017). A cordial relationship between adolescents and parents could foster training and acceptability of the norms (Lubinga, 2018). Children whose parents discuss sexual mat-

ters or provide sexuality education or contraceptive information at home are more likely than others to postpone sexual activity (Blake *et. al.*, 2001).

Several empirical studies (Obone, 2012; Nwagwu, 2017; Seif *et. al.*, 2018) conducted to examine the influence of mother-daughter interpersonal communication on sexual behaviour reported positive influence in both developed and developing nations. Obono (2012), examined trends and outcomes of teenagers' sexual behaviour and investigated the patterns of reproductive communication between mothers and daughters that have implications on girls' reproductive wellbeing. According to Nwagwu (2017), the context, form, direction and level of communication revealed that the females engaged in reproductive communication in a private environment and through peaceful and friendly strategies. Communication is achieved through sharing of meaningful experience and mutual understanding between the mother and her child, which has implications for adolescent female reproductive health.

In a descriptive cross sectional study by Seif *et. al.*, (2018), wherein communication among 400 mothers and their teenage daughters were assessed, the study affirmed a statistically significant positive correlation between mothers communication about puberty with daughters. Another cross-sectional study by Busi and Chea (2017), assessing the barriers of discussion among teenagers concerning sexual and reproductive health issues among High Schools students of Hawassa City in Ethiopia revealed that the majority of respondents did not discuss sexual matters with their parents. Social media causes negative and less significant effect on discussion between the par-

ents and teenagers on sex-related issues. Other variables that assist in curtailing adolescents' interest in parent-child sex communication are identified as: experienced sexual pleasure; amount of monthly stipend of the adolescent and feeling ashamed to talk to family about sex-related issues.

Mothers' Parenting Patterns in Teenage Girls Sexuality

Conceptually, parenting goes beyond being paternal or maternal progenitor but a representation of role model in the upbringing of a child. It is basically the ability of the parent to look, care, love and guide his child. It is in this process that adolescents are counseled on matters that come with growing up to maturity through various parenting styles. In this sense, children are monitored and supervised by parents as they grow up, and this is why it is pertinent to research into mother-daughter parenting pattern so as to ascertain how it correlates with adolescents' sexual behaviour.

Foremost, the authoritative parenting style, according to Barmurind (1991) is characterized by a parental provision of warmth and support and equally the ability of parents to monitor and control the child which has been linked to optimal child outcomes in African American youths. The authoritative parenting style entails the behavioural control/monitoring, psychological control, and warmth/support. Under behavioural control, the growing attitudes of a child is closely observed to detect whether there is any tendency of ill-manners, and to identify a child's preference for keeping female or male friends. At this stage of a child's attitudinal change, the parents would decide when it is most appropriate to call a child to order by giving her counsel, scolding or warning her against some unacceptable behaviour.

However, parental monitoring includes knowledge of youth whereabouts, as well as oversight of youth activities. Parental monitoring essentially affects sexual activity by restricting adolescent opportunities to engage in risk behaviours (Sieverding *et. al.*, 2005).

In addition to behavioural control, Barber (1996) further explained another pattern referred to as psychological control. This pattern is a psychologically-oriented, intrusive and manipulative form of parental control in which parents appear to maintain their own status at the expense of the child's autonomy by means of guilt induction, love withdrawal, and excessive criticism. By exercising control over the psychological world of the adolescent, parents inhibit the development of mature decision-making skills and appraisal of self as a competent, self-governing agent. Subsequently, these deficits are thought to increase vulnerability to sexual risk behaviour by damaging the adolescent's sense of self-competency and relationship stability (Kincaid *et. al.*, 2011).

Beyond the domains of behavioural and psychological control, parental warmth and support also hold important implications for adolescent development. Support refers to parental behaviours toward the child, such as praising, hugging and encouraging, indicating that the child matters to the parent. Parental warmth and support are associated with a range of positive adolescent outcomes, whereas a lack of support is often linked to a range of problem behaviours, including sexual risk behaviour. In regard to sexual behaviour among adolescents, positive relationships characterized by high levels of warmth and support may act as a conduit through which parents impart

their views or morals and help guide youth in decision making skills, affecting their involvement in risk behaviour (Coley *et. al.*, 2009). When parents provide warmth/support, appropriately monitor behaviour, and practice discipline in non-coercive ways, adolescents are more likely to develop interpersonal security and observe boundaries that shape involvement in sexual activity (Longmore *et. al.*, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the ex-post facto survey design because the study was conducted to gather already existing information among the population under study. The population of this study was made up of all mothers and teenage girls in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of the State. Two stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. The first stage involved the random selection of five public secondary schools from the list of registered public schools in the study area. The second stage was the purposive selection of 40 school girls from each of the five secondary schools, to give a total sample size of 200 respondents paired with their mothers.

In order to access the sample population for the study, the researcher aimed at each secondary schools' open day and Parents-Teachers' Association meetings which is a forum for parents to discuss about their children's performance and issues pertaining to their academics. On the consent of the school management, a list of attendees showing the names of parents and gender of their wards was generated during the meeting where the researcher purposively selected the first available 40 mothers who have female children in the school. Arrangement was thereafter made for the researcher and other two Assistants to meet with the first

set of twenty (20) mothers and their identified children before the meeting began and the other twenty immediately after the meeting. To ensure confidentiality in the administration process, mothers were first attended to and then their daughters. It was ensured that all the two hundred (200) participants completed the questionnaire correctly and were used in the data analysis.

The instrument (structured questionnaire) was divided into two sections. Section A comprised the demographic information of the participants such as age, ethnicity and religion while section B was divided into three parts; part 1 contained items on Adolescent sexual activities index (ASAI) as designed by William *et. al.*, (1999) to measure teenagers sexual behaviour; part 2 centered on mother-daughter interpersonal communication and measured using Parent-

Adolescent Communication Scale designed by Barnes and Olson (1982) while part 3 presented items on parenting style scale developed by Diana Barmurind (1991). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and ANOVA statistical methods were used to analyze the data for the study.

RESULTS

Research question one: Does the quality of communications amongst mothers and daughters influence the teenage girls’ sexual behaviour in Ogun State?

There was a negative and significant relationship between the quality of Mother-daughter communication and sexual behaviour among teenagers in Ogun State (Table 1). It can therefore be deduced that, sexual behaviour in teenagers reduces with increase in the quality of Mother-daughter communication.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results of the influence of quality of mothers-daughters communications on the teenage girls sexual behaviour

Variable	N	$\frac{\sum x}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum x^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Sig.
Quality of Mother-Daughter communication	200	8.156	.041	1.237	-.824(**)	.000
Sexual Behaviour		.276	.001			

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Research question two: What is the influence of mothers’ parenting styles on the teenage girls’ sexual behaviour in Ogun State?

There was no significant relationship between mothers’ parenting style (r=0.074,

p>0.05) and sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State at 0.05 level of significance (Table 2). It can therefore be deduced that sexual behaviour in teenagers does not change with changes in mothers’ parenting style in Ogun State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results of the influence of mothers' parenting styles on the teenage girls' sexual behaviour

Variable	N	$\frac{\sum x}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum x^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Sig.
Mothers' parenting style	200	8.156	0.041			
Sexual Behaviour		7.015	0.035	0.563	0.074	0.295

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Research question three: Is there any joint impact of mothers-daughters communication and mothers' parenting style on the sexual behaviour of teenage girls in Ogun State?

Mother-Daughter communication and Mother's parenting style are joint predictors of sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun

State. The multiple correlation coefficient r was 0.834 and that of the multiple adjusted R-square 0.690 (Table 3) implying that the effort of the mothers to jointly employ interpersonal means of communication and couple with appropriate parenting styles would yield a positive result on the sexual behaviour of a teenage girl in Ogun State.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Results of any joint impact of mothers-daughters communication and mothers' parenting styles on the sexual behaviour of teenage girls

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adj. R Square
Regression	5.676	4	1.419					
Residuals	2.480	195	.013	111.577	.000(a)	.834(a)	.696	.690
Total	8.156	199						

Source: Field Survey, 2019

DISCUSSION

Research question one: This research question investigated the relationship between quality of Mother-Daughter communication and sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State. By implication, negative sexual behaviour in teenagers will only reduce with increase in the quality of Mother-Daughter communication. Hence, a friendly and conducive atmosphere should be created by mothers to foster quality interpersonal communication between them and their daughters on sex-related issues. The finding is consistent with the result in the study of Obono (2012) on the trends and outcomes of adolescent sexual behaviour which also investigated the patterns of reproductive communication between mothers and daughters that have implications on girls' reproductive wellbeing. The context, form, direction and level of communication revealed that the females engage in reproductive communication in a private environment and through peaceful and friendly strategies. Effective communication can only be achieved through sharing of meaningful experience and mutual understanding, which has implications for adolescent female reproductive health (Nwagwu, 2017).

Research question two: This investigated the relationship between mothers' parenting styles on sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State. The result of the analysis showed that there is no significant ($p > 0.05$) relationship between mothers' parenting styles and sexual behaviour ($r = 0.074$) of teenagers in Ogun State. By implication, the result showed that, sexual behaviour in teenagers does not change with changes in mothers' parenting style in Ogun State. The result is in tandem with Busi and Chea (2017)'s finding on challenges faced by mothers in providing guidance to their ado-

lescent daughters' regarding pubertal changes and involvement in sexual activities.

Research question three: This examined the joint impact of mothers-daughters communications about sex and mothers' parenting style on sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State. The result showed that 69% of the variations in sexual behaviour in teenagers in Ogun State is accounted for by the two predictors (mother-daughter communication and mothers' parenting styles) when considered jointly while the remaining 31% variations in sexual behaviour is accounted for by other variable outside the model. The implication of the finding is that the combination of the two independent variables (mother-daughter communication and mothers' parenting styles) will cause a greater influence on teenage girls' sexual behaviour instead of mothers adopting any of the variables independently to address issues that relate to girls' sexuality. The finding is consistent with the result in the study conducted by Yinusa *et. al.*, (2017) on the influence of parental communication and parental monitoring on adolescents' sexual behaviour in Ogbomoso, South-West Nigeria which found a significant relationship between participants' sexual behaviour and parental communication and monitoring.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of mother-daughter interpersonal communication on sexual behaviour of secondary school teenage girls and from the findings concludes that:

A significant change may not be feasible in teenage girls' sexual behaviour regardless of the nature of their mothers' parenting style. Quality time spent between mothers and daughters to discuss sexual matters is essential for a positive effect on a girl child's sexu-

al behaviour.

Teenagers' sexual related activities reduce with increase in the quality of mother-daughter communication.

A greater positive result on teenage girls' sexuality is achievable when mothers do not only create quality relationship with their daughters but also continuously engage their daughters in sexuality discussion and ensure to adopt suitable parenting styles for controlling and monitoring their daughters in their adolescent age.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that mothers should continuously make out time for discussing sexual matters with their daughters and also create a friendlier and conducive atmosphere for quality relationship.

Mothers should endeavour to create intimacy through communication, bearing in mind the consequences of risky sexual behaviours on the teenagers' health and the society at large.

Mothers should learn to adopt appropriate parenting styles as it relates to their child's sexual education and monitoring according to the behavioural pattern exhibited by such child.

Counseling would be necessary to address teenagers' low understanding of various implications of their sexual behaviour in order to reduce the spread of reproductive health challenges.

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