

## Parenting styles as predictors to female students' sexual promiscuity in tertiary institution in delta state

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### Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between parenting styles and female students' sexual promiscuity in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The study was led by two research questions and two hypotheses. The study used an ex-post facto research design with a correlational technique. The population comprised all female students of tertiary institutions in Delta Central Senatorial District with a total sample of 1,566 students. Questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was validated by experts' judgement and factor analysis, with a sound psychometric property indicating that the instrument is valid and reliable. The data obtained were analysed with the aid of regression statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed a significant relationship between parenting styles and sexual promiscuity and that the relationship can be moderated by socio-economic status of parents. The study recommended amongst others that Parents should improve on their relationship with their adolescents and choose the right parenting style that will help the adolescents to abstain from risky sexual behaviour.

**Keywords:** Parenting Styles; Sexual Promiscuity; Socio-Economic Status; Female students; Tertiary institutions

### 1. Introduction

Majority of students in tertiary institutions are adolescents, who are between the ages of 15 to 30 years of age. The adolescence stage is a period of progression from appearance of sexual characteristics to sexual and reproductive maturity; development of adult mental processes and adult identity and a period of transition from total socioeconomic dependence to relative independence. Around puberty, secondary sexual growth, hormonal changes, emotional, cognitive, and psychosocial development occur, resulting in sexual desire and exploration.

Adolescents become conscious of their sexuality as a result of these biological and psychological changes, and they typically negotiate and adjust to rising demands for a more autonomous lifestyle. Hanlon (2010) reported that from ages 12–18 years, children experience distinct mental and physical changes. This period marks the beginning of girls' menstrual cycle and the boys mature in their genitalia. During this time of physical changes, individuals may become more self-centred, more comfortable with their body sexually and ready for romantic friendship. Their behaviour includes relating with peers at the expense of family members. Their curiosity and thirst for new experiences may push them into experimenting with behaviours that are socially unacceptable. One of such behaviours is sexual promiscuity.

Sexual promiscuity is the practice of having multiple sexual partners. It can be characterised as engaging in uncommitted sexual behaviours with non-monogamous and many partners (Garcia et al, 2010). When an adolescent has two or more sex partners at the same time and engages in sexual activity with all of them, they are said to be promiscuous (Onyezere & Onyezere, 2021). Reports from several parts of Nigeria indicate that there is a high level of promiscuity among young people, especially female undergraduate students. The fact that most female students in

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tertiary institutions move out with unknown clients, showed that they are easy tools in the hands of sexual promiscuity. A woman accepting money for sex has also given the man the authority and ability to pick what kind of sex she will have, and as a result, she should expect to be subjected to cruelty and other forms of criminality against her behind closed doors when she accepts money for sex. The ubiquity and complexity of female undergraduates' promiscuous behaviour, as hinted earlier, is sufficient to elicit a public discussion about the subject.

According to Orubuloye (quoted in Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2013), some students act promiscuously without even initially thinking about the consequences. For them, having sex is a way to have fun and experience pleasure. Kheswa and Mahlalela (2014) state that, among other things, the promiscuous behaviour of female students might have detrimental effects on their health, including HIV/AIDS and other STDs. In addition, some students could become pregnant and have to drop out of school early because of their pregnancy. Multiple abortions have been performed on other women, and some of them have passed away as a consequence of the operation.

The factors that adversely influence sexual promiscuity are numerous. However, the focus of this study is on parenting styles. Parenting is being viewed as an occupation which needs a lot of skill that works in order to influence a child's behaviour. In terms of their children's behaviour, especially their sexual behaviour, parents are widely seen as the key influencers. They have a significant impact on whether or not their wards abstain from sexual intercourse and when it comes to examining parenting approaches in regard to behaviour. In their research, Weiss and Schwartz (2009) discovered that parenting style can either improve or detract from the development of acceptable behaviour outcomes.

Democratic parenting style, the parents treat children as equals. In democratic parenting styles all members of the family are respected equally and treated the same (Barnes, 2002). Autocratic Parenting styles offer a properly made home setting for the children. They place high outlooks with clear regulations and anticipate children to follow the regulations. Parents anticipate their child to follow what they are told, and that is final. Their regulations are not questionable and debatable. Parents who are autocratic leave small space for creativity and feelings. They control their children with psychological discipline. Pychyl, Coplan, and Reid (2002) describe an autocratic parenting style as one in which the guardian serves as the kid's drill sergeant while the youngster is in boot camp. When parents are too exhausted, demoralised, overburdened, or preoccupied to be actively engaged in their children's lives, they adopt a permissive-laissez-faire parenting style. They are also often too demoralized to regularly enforce punishments. Siblings may have close bonds, yet family members are seldom together and are sometimes strangers. Without assistance or direction, children often learn to handle difficulties as best they can. Instead of at home, where there are minimal regulations or constraints, trouble usually happens at school or in the community (Lomeo, 2009).

A number of prior research have found that democratic parenting is related with beneficial behavioural outcomes like as autonomy, self-esteem, and improved peer relationships (Barnes 2002; Baumrind, 2004; Bystrit-Sky 2008; Lomeo 2009; Petit & Cummings 2000; Steinberg, Darling & Fletcher 2007). Autocratic leadership style, on the other hand, has been related to bad behavioural results in the past (Barnes 2002; Beyers and Goossens 2003; Pychyl, et al., 2002; Scales, 2000). Laissez-faire parenting style was found to be related to delinquency as a result of poor supervision and neglect. Consequently, adolescents from Laissez-faire homes tend to report higher frequency of involvement in socio public health problems.

After taking into consideration the aforementioned factors, it becomes apparent that parental styles have the potential to either enhance or lessen acceptable behavioural outcomes in children. An authoritarian parent tends to be the one who makes the final choice in the house, and they are often demanding and directive in their behaviour. Despite the fact that they have a well-organized environment with clearly established rules, they are strict, and as a result, teenagers from such homes are frequently terrified of their parents, which have a negative impact on their decisions. According to Steinberg (1994), the females in such homes are unable to withstand the pressure from the opposite sex and as a result engage in antisocial behaviours such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and promiscuity, among other things. Due to the severe application of power and punishment, this parenting style does not expect children to express disagreements with their parents' rules, but rather to simply follow them without question (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The democratic model, on the other hand, provides the adolescent complete autonomy over how they govern their behaviour. They succumb to the child, giving few rules and avoiding confrontation, as a result the adolescent lacks initiative and discipline and expects everything to be done for them. Although, the parent here expects maturity from the child, by maintaining their position and respecting the child's opinion which in turn gives the child freedom of speech (Martin & Colbert, 1997). Adolescents from such homes view sex as an expression of mature love.

The Laissez-faire parents tend not to interfere with the child's independence; thus, demands little obedience and respect for authority. Children of autocratic parents rarely use their initiative rather than relying on authorities to decide what

is correct because they are accustomed to adhering strictly to rules without being allowed to express their own opinion. This has been found to be a predictor of child well-being, and it is likely to continue to be so.

Children of democratic parents, on the other hand, have greater self-control, whereas children of laissez-faire parents demonstrate immature behaviour and have difficulties accepting responsibility for their own acts. And, of course, teenagers with absent or absentee parents are completely reliant on their parents and are unable to distinguish between right and wrong behaviour. Such adolescents will, without a doubt, become prey to their classmates. The acceptability of adolescent sexuality by parents appears to be associated with the adolescent's sexual behaviour. Using a sample of 10,000 adolescents, Dittus and Jaccard (2000) discovered that adolescents who were most satisfied with their relationship with their mothers and who perceived their mother's attitude toward premarital sex as disapproving of early sexual activity were less likely to initiate early sexual activity. They also found that the more satisfied the adolescents were with their relationship with their parents, and the more likely it was that they used birth control.

Similarly, in another study, Maguen and Armstead (2006) concluded among 568 adolescents where girls showed similar relationship between parents' approval and adolescent sexual behaviour because the adolescents tend to delay the onset of sexual behaviour when they perceived their parent's attitude about sex as restrictive. As a result, adolescents raised by "good parents" receive good home training and grow up to abstain from sexual activity until marriage; on the other hand, adolescents raised by "poor parents" have a greater likelihood of being pushed into early sexual initiation, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The democratic style of parenting has a stronger relationship with children's psychological and behavioural adjustment than the other parenting styles, according to research (Beyers & Goossens, 1999). When discipline becomes overly tight, the likelihood of the teenager engaging in antisocial behaviour increases (Weiss & Schwarz, 2009). Adolescents from autocratic homes are less likely to exhibit behavioural difficulties than adolescents from democratic families (Loeber et al. 2000). In contrast, adolescents who grow up with their parents who are uninvolved are less socially adept and experience adjustment difficulties across the board. Some academics argue that adolescents raised in laissez-faire environments do not sufficiently internalise social norms and standards, and as a result, are more prone to engage in antisocial behaviour than other adolescents. Many others believe that these teenagers have demonstrated social and behavioural adjustment comparable to that of their peers from democratic households (Musito and Garcia, 2004; Wolfradt, Hempel and Miles, 2003). It is therefore possible that the specific culture where the various researches were conducted could be responsible.

A growing body of evidence cites family system as the centre of learning. According to the family system theory, individuals cannot be understood in isolation from their family members since families are systems that are interrelated and interdependent with one another (Gavazzi, 2012). According to research by Coulshed and Orme (2006), teenage girls who grow up in homes with permissive and uninvolved parents are more likely to engage in concurrent sexual encounters than teenage girls who grow up in homes with authoritative and authoritarian parents. Sharif found that as early as 1993, parents in Ghana supported their daughters' premarital activities, showed gratitude for presents from their daughters' sexual partners, and believed it was acceptable for their daughters to have sex for cash. Despite being fully aware that their daughters are unemployed, families have been known to keep quiet when their daughters bring home cash, food, clothing, and other consumer things. When resources or money are traded in Malawi, the context of the transaction reveals how traditional courtship practices are used as well as how love is socially conveyed between two people (Poulin, 2007).

Because parents are laissez-faire, this may impact negatively on the cognitive, emotional and empathy developments of the adolescents which will in turn result in poor academic achievement and school involvement (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000). An African study by Holborn and Eddy (2011) found that adolescent females become pregnant before they complete their high school education due to a lack of parental guidance and non-commitment. Teenage girls may learn about social standards and behaviours from their friends and teachers, according to Nicholas (2008). By following and mimicking the behaviour of their parents and other family members, adolescents might easily succumb to sexual promiscuity, according to Bandura's social learning theory.

In view of the above, it is clear from the literature that parenting styles have a great role to play in students' indulgence in sexual promiscuity. The researcher, however, feels that such a relationship between parenting styles and sexual promiscuity may be moderated by the socio-economic status of parents. As this body of evidence shows, economic deprivation considerably affects the ability to negotiate or adopt protective behavior, especially among young women whose sexual partners are often older, richer, and more powerful men, with whom they may be unable to negotiate safe sex for fear of losing the economic benefits of such relationships. Also, Anthropologists Action Health Incorporated

(2006), examining the global AIDS pandemic, have highlighted the impact of poverty and inequality as fundamental structural determinants of who is at risk (Ayankogbe, Odusote, Omoegun, Ofoha, Adedokun & Abiola, 2011).

Consequently, according to Benatar (2008), risk sexual behaviour, adolescent pregnancy, and childbirth occur at higher rates among economically poor youths. Bradley (2002) found that unhappiness among poor parents as a result of economic pressure may result in the misuse of negative control tactics, a lack of warmth and responsiveness, and a failure to effectively monitor their children. As Cockcroft and colleagues (2010) point out, young women who are resistant to intergenerational partnerships despite living in difficult economic conditions are a stark contrast to those who are not. According to these writers, there are still schoolgirls in Botswana who exhibit positive characteristics, such as a strong sense of self-worth, assertiveness, and an ideal self. They also indicate that they have respect for marriage and believe that any older guy should be treated as a parent. This conclusion could imply that there are adolescent females in African cultures who are resilient and hopeful, based on the findings. In other words, they reject the notion that they are degraded, treated as sex objects, and kept hidden by their partners in order to avoid stigma. This is because in the Zulu or Xhosa communities, when a female is in a concurrent relationship with a married man, she is referred to as a "roll-on." The etymology of the term "roll-on" in English refers to something that is applied underarm to refresh in the same manner that deodorant is applied since they are complementary partners (Oxlund, 2007).

The above reviewed literature has shown that female sexual promiscuity is a global phenomenon that permeates parenting styles and socio-economic status. Sexual promiscuity is a means having many sexual partners which is a problem faced by female undergraduate in higher institute of learning. The reviewed literature revealed that sexual promiscuity cuts across all the four parenting styles. Empirical studies of seasoned scholars were reviewed to ascertain the reality and existence of sexual promiscuity. From the reviewed literature, the researcher observed that there is dearth of literature on sexual promiscuity in our educational setting especially in Delta State. Hence the current study is aimed to fill the gap in literature.

### 1.1. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- What is the relationship between parenting style and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity?
- What is the moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity?

### 1.2. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

- There is no significant relationship between parenting style and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity.
- There is no significant moderating impact of parents' socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity.

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## 2. Methods

This study employed the ex-post facto design, and it is correlational in nature. The target population of this study comprised all female students in tertiary institutions in Delta Central Senatorial District, with a population size of about 15,660. From eleven (11) tertiary institutions in the Delta Central Senatorial District, eight (8) tertiary institutions were sampled using balloting and stratified random sampling techniques. The strata to be used are urban and rural tertiary institutions. A total of 1,566 female undergraduate students was drawn to represent the total population. This is 10% of the target population. Thereafter, a disproportionate random sampling technique was used to sample the female students from each of the eight (8) tertiary institutions in Delta Central Senatorial District. This is to ensure that all female students in tertiary have an equal opportunity of being selected. From eleven (11) tertiary institutions in the Delta Central Senatorial District, 50 female students will be sampled from each of the eight (8) tertiary institutions using balloting and stratified random sampling. A total of 400 female students in tertiary will be drawn to represent the total population.

The instrument for this study is a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Parenting styles and sexual promiscuity (PSSP)." The instrument has two sections (sections A and B). Section A will seek biographical information about location of school, schools, level of studies, age, and nature of family. Section B is divided into two sub-scales measuring sexual promiscuity and parenting styles. It contains 46 items altogether (sexual promiscuity = 13; and parenting styles = 33).

The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka, for the purpose of correction. Some of the items were modified to suit the views of the respondents. The principal component analysis was used to estimate the content validity. The total cumulative variance method was used to estimate the content validity of the instrument. It yielded the following values: sexual propensity = 63.63%; authoritarian parenting style = 72.74%; authoritative parenting style = 70.74%; permissive parenting style = 59.08%; and negligent parenting style = 65.53%. The construct validity was estimated using the rotated factor loading matrixes. The following range of values were obtained: 0.55-0.84 for sexual promiscuity; 0.67 and 0.84 for authoritarian parenting style; 0.66 and 0.86 for authoritative parenting style; 0.56 and 0.87 for permissive parenting style; and between 0.62 and 0.85 for negligent parenting style. Hence, it was concluded that the instrument was construct-valid. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by using Cronbach's alpha for estimating the internal consistency of the instrument. This yielded for the sexual promiscuity scale alpha = 0.84; authoritarian parenting style scale alpha = 0.80; authoritative parenting style scale alpha = 0.81; permissive parenting style scale alpha = 0.73; and negligent parenting style scale alpha = 0.80. The researcher, with the help of three research assistants, administered the questionnaire to the respondents on their various campuses. The statistical tool that was used to analyse the collected data was regression statistics at the 0.05 level of significance.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parenting style and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity

**Table 1** Regression analysis on the relationship between parenting style and female students' sexual promiscuity

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	8.728	1	8.728	41.364	0.000
Residual	222.389	1054	0.211		
Total	231.116	1055			
Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.647	0.131	0.194	12.560	0.000
Parenting Style	0.279	0.043		6.431	0.000

$\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $R = 0.194$ ;  $R^2 = 0.038$

Dependent Variable: Female Sexual Promiscuity

Predictors (Constant): Parenting Styles

Table 1 shows a regression analysis of the relationship between parenting style and female students' sexual promiscuity. The result showed that  $F(1, 1054) = 41.364$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld. This implies that there is a positive significant relationship between parenting style and female students' sexual promiscuity. Parenting style accounted for 3.8% of the variance in female students' sexual promiscuity as indicated in the beta value of 0.19.

#### 3.2. Hypotheses 2: There is no significant moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity?

**Table 2** Multiple regression analysis on the moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity

Model	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Parenting Styles	0.235	0.044	0.164	5.348	0.000
Socio-Economic Status	.0128	0.027	0.144	4.700	0.000

Table 2 shows the result of the moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity. The beta weights of 0.235,  $t = 5.348$  for parenting styles, and

0.128,  $t = 4.700$  for socio-economic status are indicators of the degree of correlation between each variable of parenting styles and socio-economic status with sexual promiscuity. From the result, parenting styles and socio-economic status are significant at an alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there is a significant moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female undergraduates' sexual promiscuity.

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#### 4. Discussion

The first finding showed that there is a significant relationship between parenting style and female students' sexual promiscuity. This finding has shown that parenting styles could be responsible for female students' indulgence in sexual promiscuity. The possible reason for this finding may be rooted on the parenting styles of their parents. Female students whose parents are neglectful and those whose parents are authoritarian may seek attention from outside the homes, thereby becoming victims of wrong sexual orientation. These individuals may feel that the greater number of sexual partners they have, the more likely they will feel secured and gain attention. The finding agrees with the finding of Okhakhume (2014), which showed that adolescents with low authoritative parenting style significantly reported higher risky sexual behaviour than those with high authoritative parenting style. The finding is also in line with Ugoji and Ebenywa-Okoh (2015), whose finding found a significant relationship between parenting styles and adolescent involvement in risky sexual behaviour.

The finding also revealed a significant moderating impact of socio-economic status on the relationship between parenting styles and female students' sexual promiscuity. This finding implies that the possible influence of parenting styles on students' involvement in sexual promiscuity is not the same for students whose parents are in different socio-economic status. The possible reason for this finding may be because of the fact that often times, students who are from low socio-economic status are more likely to be sexually promiscuous due to financial needs. This finding is in line with the finding of Iwuagwu (2016), which revealed that female adolescents accepted socio-economic factors, family background, and early childhood sexual abuse as socio-demographic determinants of prostitution. The finding is further consistent with Kheswa and Mahlalela (2014), who stated that most adolescents indulge in sexual promiscuous behaviour due to their financial statuses as a result of their needs at school.

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#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In line with findings of the study, the researchers concluded that a significant relationship exists between parenting styles and female students' indulgence in sexual promiscuity. The relationship is moderated by their socio-economic status. In other words, the possible influence of parenting styles on sexual promiscuity among the students may likely to be the same for individuals from low socio-economic status and those from high socio-economic status. In view of this finding, the study recommended thus:

- That parents should insist on acceptable behaviour of their children starting from their tender age
- Parents should improve on their relationship with their adolescents and choose the right parenting style that will help the adolescents to abstain from risky sexual behaviour
- Adolescents from low socio-economic status should seek alternative source of income rather using their bodies to funds their educational needs.

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#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

##### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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