

## **Child Rearing Styles, Premarital Sexual Practices and Drug Abuse among Senior Secondary School Students in Cross River State Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** Survey data collected from 600 Senior Secondary three students from Southern Cross River State were analyzed to determine the influence of child rearing style on premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. Two hypotheses were tested using One Way Analysis of Variance. The result of the data analyses showed that child rearing style (democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire) has a significant influence on premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. Adolescents reared with autocratic and laissez-fair styles were more involved in premarital sexual practices and drug abuse than those from democratic homes. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made.

**Key words:** Child rearing style, premarital sexual practice, drug abuse, adolescents, cross river state

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a transitional stage in life; it is the bridge between childhood and adulthood and is marked by significant biological changes in the body. It is also regarded by most psychologists as a period of storm and stress. Most senior secondary school students are adolescents. The physical changes they experience often bring them into conflict with social and environmental realities. Problems of identity and independence spring up for the adolescents when their behaviours and reactions contradict cultural and societal norms. Most of the adolescents see themselves as responsible enough to be held accountable for their actions, hence, they defy directives from parents and surrogates. In the bid to explore their new found liberty, tend to be vulnerable to deviant behaviours including drug abuse and premarital sex. In most cases, parents resent the new behaviour they observe in their sons and daughters and in an attempt to check such behaviours, parents exercise various control measures on the adolescents, some of which may backfire, depending on the degree of control exerted by the parents.

Premarital sexual practices and drug abuse constitute a social ill that has been an age long problem in the secondary school system. Premarital sexual practices and drug abuse have become an indelible problem among the adolescents. The rate of sexual immorality and school drop out as a result of pregnancy among adolescent girls is alarming. Mental derangement, aggression and violence

are equally a common phenomena among the adolescent boys especially those who indulge in addictive drugs and the situation is becoming uncontrollable (Ekpo, 1996). The school authorities blame parents for children's deviant behaviours, because as the home is the first point of social contact, it is expected to have shaped the adolescents' behaviour (Isangedighi, 2007). Hence, whatever behaviour the adolescents manifest is seen to be a reflection of home upbringing. Despite the effort made by the Federal Government and school authorities to curb the problem of premarital sexual practices and drug abuse among youths, the problem still exists hence this research, which was to determine the influence of child rearing style on adolescent students' premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. Two null hypotheses were to guide this study they are as follows:

- Child rearing style does not significantly influence students' involvement in premarital sexual practices.
- Child rearing style does not significantly influence students' abuse of drugs.

**Theoretical background:** Child rearing style can lead to premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. This statement is hinged on 2 theories. Sigmund Freud's psychosexual stages of personality development and Erickson's psychosocial development. Freud in his 5 stages of psychosexual development studied the personality of an adult by understanding the childhood experiences he passes through. He summarized that each stage is critical

and must be managed well, parents and adults must treat the children with care. Child rearing style should not be such that can distort, control and inhibit a child, which can drive him to extreme emotional reactions and deviant behaviours like premarital sex and drug abuse. Erickson (1963), expounding further on Freud's work, outlined 8 psychosocial stages of ego development that characterized human development. The fifth stage which is obviously concerned with adolescence emphasizes the identity and identity diffusion of this period. The adolescent behaviour is a product of the struggle between his internal urges and the environmental demands. During adolescent, Erickson points out that youths begin the search for self-identity, they continually endeavour to provide answers to the ever-reoccurring questions such as who am I. The parents at this stage also play vital role in guiding the youths to ensure they go through this stage successfully. Parental relationship with and the rearing style of the adolescents is significant at this period. Where the parents are democratic in their approach, they discuss, counsel and encourage the children to make appropriate decisions and it goes a long way in facilitating smooth transition. But where they are authoritative, they tend to control and make choices for their children. Neglectful parents who are ignoring and not involved in the experiences the children are passing through, could push them into deviant behaviours such as premarital sexual practices and drug abuse.

**Literature review:** Rollins and Thomas (1979) indicated that parental behaviours towards adolescents should be such that indicate to the child that he is accepted, approved of and loved. It is the summation of positive behaviours towards a child as expressed in terms of endearment, approval, acceptance, giving physical affection and help. Hence, the importance of warmth and nurturance for development of competence and moral behaviour can be traced to a healthy child-parent relationship.

Parenting styles influence the personality development in children and how they face challenging situations within their environment. Elder in Kalgo (2002), confirmed that children reared under democratic parenting style exhibit self confidence, a sense of autonomy and judgment; they are able to give a reason for their actions, while it is contrary for those brought under autocratic parenting style, who lack self-confidence and always look withdrawn and intimidated. While children with laissez-faire or uninvolved parents, seem not to have a clear focus or direction in life, they are unsure of themselves and prone to deviant behaviours such as premarital sex and drug abuse.

Kendel and Davies (1982) in his study carried out a longitudinal data which shows that somewhat cold and uninvolved parents promote the development of negative behaviours such as premarital sexual practices and drug abuse in adult life. This shows that stressful; rejecting environment can have negative effect on the development of the adolescents because these environments can force them to engage in independent action and may in turn lead to premarital sexual offences like homosexuality or lesbianism. This was also similar with the study carried out by Ekpo (1996), Akinboye (1987), Smith and Cowie (1995) and Ainsworth (1983, 1969).

Jacobson in Horner (1992) confirms that adolescents with laissez-faire parents are prone to deviant behaviours such as premarital sex and drug abuse, he emphasized that it is strongly high among adolescents with neglectful parents. Parenting styles have obvious consequences on the cognitive and behavioural development of adolescents. Horner (1992) discussed the behavioural characteristics of adolescents reared under permissive parenting style, one of which was conforming to peers easily with regards to sex, alcohol and drugs.

Steinberg (2001) concludes in a study that African and Asian American children, are not so negatively affected by authoritarian style of parenting than their white counterparts. Although, this style of parenting he pointed out is not so good in building well adjusted children. However, he discovered that it acted as a strong check from their engaging in deviant behaviours like premarital sex and drug abuse.

Literature so far reviewed, shows a significant gap in the absence of local empirical studies on parenting styles and premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. This is an area that has been of great concern to the schools, parents and society, because of the tremendous impact parenting styles have on the growth and development of the children. This study therefore, will be very strategic in providing local literature.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Subjects:** A total sample of 600 students were used for the study. In order to obtain an adequate sample of schools and subjects needed for the study, the stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample of schools and subjects involved. Southern Cross River State was stratified into 5 zones, based on the five local government area that make up Southern Cross River State namely; Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Calabar South, Calabar Municipality and Odukpani Local Government area, respectively. Two schools were randomly selected from each zone which yielded a total of ten secondary schools.

**Data collection:** An instrument captioned Child opinion Questionnaire (COQ) was constructed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instrument had 3 sections. Section A elicited from the respondents demographic information such as age, sex, school type and class. Section B was designed to measure the pattern of child rearing. It consisted of 18 items likert-type scale with 6 alternative responses. While section C was designed to measure delinquent behaviours such as premarital sexual practices and drug abuse. This section consisted of 12 items likert-type scale with 6 alternative responses. A total of 660 copies of the questionnaire were administered, but 600 copies were correctly filled and returned.

### RESULTS

The data generated were analysed using the one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Each of the hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis 1:** In Table 1, the upper part shows the means and the standard deviation for the 3 groups of child rearing style. The lower part shows the actual ANOVA results. The Table 1 that the calculated value of 73.90 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.02 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 597° of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between child rearing styles and students sexual practices. In other words, students sexual practices significantly depend on child rearing style used in the home. The nature of the influence is further explored using the Fishers Least Significant Different (LSD) Pair-wise multiple comparison analysis. The result of which is shown in Table 2.

Shows that the fisher's t-values of 11.09, -2.55 and -7.52 are each significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. With these results, the null hypothesis of equality of the 3 groups is rejected. The significant t-value of 11.09 means that the differences between group of students with autocratic child rearing (with X = 16.82) and the group with democratic child rearing (with X = 9.58) is significant. The mean value indicates that the level of premarital sexual practices of students with autocratic child rearing styles is significantly higher than that of student with democratic rearing style.

Also, a significant t-value of -2.55 indicate that the level of sexual practices of student with autocratic rearing style with (X = 16.82) is significantly lower than that of the students with Laissez-Faire child rearing style with (X = 20.50). A significant t-value of 7.52 in that

Table 1: Result of analysis of variance of the influence of child rearing style on students' sexual practices

Child rearing style	Number	Mean	S.D.	
Autocratic	305	16.82	9.31	
Democratic	263	09.58	5.20	
Laissez-faire	32	20.50	8.87	
Source of variation	Sum of square	d.f.	Mean square	F-ratio
Between group	8890.25	2	4445.12	73.90
Within groups	35911.71	597	60.15	
Total	44801.96	599		

\*Significant at 0.05 level ( $F_{2, 597} = 3.02$ )

Table 2: Result of fishers least significant differences analysis of the influences of child rearing style on students' premarital sexual practices

Child rearing style	Child rearing styles		
	Autocratic (n = 305)	Democratic (n = 263)	Laissez-faire (n = 32)
Autocratic	16.82 <sup>a</sup>	7.24 <sup>b</sup>	-3.68
Democratic	11.09 <sup>*c</sup>	9.58	-10.92
Laissez faire	-2.55 <sup>*</sup>	-7.52 <sup>*</sup>	20.50
MSW = 60.15			

a = Group means are placed along the diagonal, b = Differences between group means are placed above the diagonal, c = Fishers t-value are placed below the diagonal, \* Significant at: 0.05 level (critical t = 1.96)

Table 2 also indicates that the level of premarital sexual practices of students with democratic child rearing style (With X = 9.58) is significantly lower than that of students with Laissez-faire child rearing style (With X = 20.50).

Generally, the entries in Table 2 show that the level of students' involvement in sexual practices is highest among those with laissez faire rearing style, followed by those with autocratic child rearing style. The level is lowest among students with democratic rearing style. The level of premarital sexual practices among students with autocratic and laissez faire child rearing is significantly higher than the level among students with democratic rearing style. The level of premarital sexual practices among students with democratic rearing style is significantly lower than the level among students with both autocratic and laissez faire child rearing styles. The level of premarital sexual practices among students with laissez faire rearing style is significantly higher than the levels among students with both autocratic and democratic styles, respectively.

In Table 3, the upper part shows the mean and the standard deviation for the three groups of child rearing style. The lower part shows the actual ANOVA results. The table shows that the calculated F-value of 28.10 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.02 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 597° of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between child rearing style and students' involvement in drug abuse. In other words, students' involvement in drug abuse significantly depends on the child rearing style used in the home. The

Table 3: Result of analysis of variance of the influence of child rearing style on students' involvement in drug abuse

Child rearing style	Number	Mean	SD
Autocratic	305	11.16	7.48
Democratic	263	7.71	3.99
Laissez-Faire	32	13.75	8.73
Total	600	9.79	6.56

  

Source of variation	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio
Between group	2215.68	2	1107.84	28.10*0.90
Within groups	23535.58	597	39.42	
Total	25751.26	599		

\*Significant at 0.05 level ( $F_2, 597 = 3.02$ )

Table 4: Result of fishers' least significant difference analysis of the influence of child rearing style on students' involvement in drug abuse

Child rearing style	Child rearing styles		
	Autocratic (n = 305)	Democratic (n = 263)	Laissez-faire (n = 32)
Autocratic	11.16 <sup>a</sup>	3.45 <sup>b</sup>	-2.59
Democratic	6.53 <sup>ac</sup>	7.71	-6.04
Laissez Faire	-2.22	-5.14 <sup>c</sup>	13.75

MSW = 39.42

a = Group means are placed along the diagonal, b = Differences between group means are placed above the diagonal, c = Fishers t-value are placed below the diagonal, \*Significant at: 0.05 level (critical t = 1.96)

nature of the influence is further explored using the fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) Pair-wise multiple comparison analysis, the result of which is shown in Table 4.

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that the Fishers' t-values of 6.53-2.22 and -5.14, are in their absolute values, each greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. With these results, the null hypothesis of equality of the three groups is rejected. This means the differences among the three groups are significant.

The significant t-value of 6.53 means that the differences between groups of students with autocratic child rearing style with ( $X = 11.16$ ) and the group with democratic child rearing style with ( $X = 7.71$ ) is significant. The mean values indicate that the level of students' involvement in drug abuse with autocratic child rearing is significantly higher than that of students with democratic child rearing style. Also, a significant t-value of -2.22 indicate that the level of students' involvements in the use of drug with autocratic child rearing style with ( $X = 11.16$ ) is significantly lower than that of the students with Laissez faire child rearing style with ( $X = 13.75$ ) A significant t-value of 5.14 in Table 4 also indicates that the level of students involvement in drug abuse of students with democratic child rearing style with ( $X = 7.71$ ) is significantly lower than that of students with laissez fair child rearing with ( $X = 13.75$ ). From the Table 3-4, the result shows that the level of students' involvement in

drug abuse and premarital sexual practices is highest among those with laissez faire child rearing style, followed by those with autocratic child rearing style. The level among students with autocratic rearing style is also significantly higher than those from democratic rearing style.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the finding showed that children reared under autocratic and Laissez-faire rearing style exhibit more of premarital sexual practices and were also more involved in drug abuse. Autocratic and laissez-faire parenting styles promote the development of negative behaviours such as premarital sexual practices and drug abuse among the adolescents. This agrees with the findings of Jacobsen in Horner (1992).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions have been made. The pattern of child rearing style adopted by parents in the upbringing of their children at home influences the extent of premarital sexual practices and drug abuse among students in senior secondary schools in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. In view of this, the government at all levels should carry out an awareness campaign on the influence of child rearing styles and premarital sexual practices and drug abuse among senior secondary school students. Parents should endeavour to develop positive relationship with their children by adopting democratic rearing style in their homes. This will help curb the problem of premarital sexual practices and drug abuse among youths.

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