



PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND SELF-EFFICACY AS PREDICTORS OF SEXUAL ABSTINENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS

Anna Garos Ngbea
Lecturer
Department of Psychology
Benue State University Makurdi

Abraham Tersugh Kwaghgbah
(Corresponding author: abrahamkwaghgbah@gmail.com)
Postgraduate Student
Department of Psychology
Benue State University Makurdi

Abstract

This study investigated Psychological Abuse and Self-Efficacy as predictors of Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The Cross-Sectional Survey design was employed where 208 adolescents in Makurdi metropolis consisting of 98 (47.12%) males and 110 (52.88%) females were used. Their ages ranged from 12-22years with a mean age of 17.54years (SD=3.78). Simple Random sampling technique was used to draw samples for the study. Three instruments were used for data collection; Child Abuse Scale, Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale and the Sexual Abstinence Behaviour Scale. Three hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear and Multiple Regression. Findings indicated that there was a significant influence of psychological abuse on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Secondly, there was a significant influence of self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Lastly, psychological abuse and self-efficacy are significant joint predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents. It was recommended that the society should desist from abusing adolescents since it was known to affect their sexual behaviour.

Key words: Psychological abuse, Self-efficacy, Sexual abstinence, Adolescents.

Introduction

Sexual abstinence has recently caught the attention of contemporary researchers. Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide on the importance associated with sexual abstinence among adolescents (Duru, Ubajaka, Nnebue, Ifeadike & Okoro, 2012; World Health Organization, 2012). In developing countries, there are about 260 million female and 280 million male adolescents aged 15–19 (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2009). About 25% of these adolescents are resident in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Kenya, there are about 8 million young people aged 15 to 24 years in Kenya according to the 2009 Census. Research has shown that the average age of sexual debut stands at 17 years (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and ICF Macro, 2010) and no health threat is more pronounced to youth than that related to their sexual and reproductive health.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been elevated attempts in the promotion of sexual abstinence programs, as efforts to curb the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies among adolescents (Kantor, Santelli, Teitler & Balmer, 2008). Sexual abstinence is therefore often regarded as a primary response to prevention of adolescent pregnancy and STIs (Morrison-Beedy, Carey, Cote-Arsenault, Seibold-Simpson & Robinson, 2008; Ott, Millstein & Halpern-Felsher, 2006). During adolescence, the reasons behind abstinence from sexual intercourse are religious, cultural, medical and personal. About two decades ago, a nationwide survey of adolescents aged 15–24 years revealed that majority (82%) of adolescents reported never having sexual intercourse (74% of males and 89% of females) (Babalola, Awasum & Quenum-Renaud, 2002).

One of the major success stories of changes in risky sexual behaviors and the resultant reduction in the incidence of HIV in the African continent is that of Uganda, and their success has not been credited to use of condoms, but sexual abstinence (Green, Halperin, Nantulya & Hogle, 2006; Barnett & Parkhurst, 2005). This view is aligned with practices in many African communities, where traditions promote the avoidance of premarital sex and childbearing by young people (Kabiru & Ezeh, 2007). As a way of encouraging and enforcing sexual abstinence, some South African communities practice virginity testing, to promote sexual abstinence among female adolescents, to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS (George, 2008; Taylor, Dlamini, Sathiparsad, Jinabhai & de Vries, 2007; Vincent, 2006).

The issue of sexual abstinence is not novel to the Nigerian society. In a study in Niger State, it was found that majority of the respondents (73%) favoured remaining a virgin until marriage (Sunmola, Dipeolu, Babalola & Adebayo, 2003). In another study in Ogun State, more than 76.2% of adolescents agreed that youths should remain virgins until marriage. Irrespective of their previous sexual experience, 62.7% of the respondents intended to abstain until they marry, 30.7% were undecided while 6.6% would not opine (Slap, Lot, Huang, Daniyam, Zink & Succop, 2003). In Sagamu, Ogun State, it was found that 64.9% had not initiated sexual activity (primary abstinence). Amongst them, sexual abstinence was significantly associated with perceived self-efficacy to refuse sex and negative perception of peers who engage in sexual activities (Odeyemi, Onajole & Ogunowo, 2009).

In 2008, according to a survey by NPC and ORC Macro, 20% of women in Nigeria were sexually active by age 15, and the median age for first sex stood at 17.7 years, 18 for women and 20.6 years for men (Fatusi & Blum, 2008). In a study of 350 in-school adolescents in Nnewi, Anambra State, 34.4% (120) of the adolescents have had sexual

contact. Of these, 68.3% of them had their first sexual intercourse between the ages of 13 and 16 years (Ankomah, Mamman-Daura, Omoregie & Anyanti, 2011). These estimate both outside and within Nigeria have indicated that sexual abstinence is uncommon among majority of adolescents in our society today. However, the actual predictors of this behaviour are yet to be addressed. Several factors have been implicated in the prediction of sexual abstinence behavior among adolescents. Some of these factors are psychological abuse and self-efficacy.

One factor that has received research attention in explaining the phenomenon of sexual abstinence is psychological abuse. Psychological abuse is an under recognized and under reported phenomena especially in the case of adolescents and their own parents. It has been described as the most challenging as well as the most prevalent form of child abuse (Okonofua, Larsen, Oronsaye, Snow & Slinger, 2002). Psychological abuse can be described as verbal abuse, harsh non-physical punishments, or threats of abuse. It describes a repeated pattern of adult-to-child behavior (usually a parent) that makes the child feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting a third party's needs. This type of abuse can be extremely destructive and has been associated with a range of adverse child outcomes including emotional maladjustment, depression, poor self-esteem, conduct problems, aggression, inability to trust, and underachievement. This claim is supported by Nwogu (2010) who revealed that depression mediates the relationship between psychological abuse and sexual abstinence. Similarly, Imeh and Onah (2013) revealed psychological abuse as an antecedent to sexual inactivity. However, other authors have mentioned the role of adolescents' self-efficacy in explaining sexual abstinence.

Another factor implicated in the prediction of sexual abstinence is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Okonofua, Larsen, Oronsaye, Snow & Slinger, 2002). Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. They set themselves challenging goals such as submerging their sexual urges and they maintain strong commitment to them. A concomitant study by Ugoh (2014) supports the claim that adolescents with high level of self-efficacy are capable of overcoming the urges of sexual drive, hence abstaining from sex before marriage. Another study by Stretcher and Collins (2009) showed that self-efficacy explains 51.3% of the variances in sexual abstinence behavior among youth. However, Ngolo (2012) opined that sexual inactivity cannot be explained by mere self-efficacy abilities. This shows that research is not in unison on the predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents. Despite the few preexisting studies, majority of these studies were conducted outside the geographical scope of Makurdi metropolis. This leaves no data on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Therefore, this study seeks to cover the gap by investigating psychological abuse and self-efficacy as predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Psychological Abuse and Sexual Abstinence

Adeyemi and Temitope (2015) examined psychological abuse and religiosity as predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents in Ogun State. Using cross-sectional survey design, 406 adolescents were tested using three instruments. Three hypotheses were tested in the study. The result of the study showed that psychological abuse significantly influenced sexual abstinence among adolescents. Secondly, religiosity also significantly predicted sexual abstinence among adolescents. On joint basis, there was a significant joint influence of psychological abuse and religiosity on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Based on these findings, some recommendations and suggestions were made. Irrespective of the contributions of this study, adolescents in Makurdi metropolis were not covered in the study. Thus, the need for more research attempts.

A study by Deung (2015) examined psychological maltreatment and parenting styles as predictors of sexual abstinence among youths. The study employed cross sectional survey design, where 140 youths were assessed using three instruments. Three hypotheses were tested using Standard Multiple regression. The result of the study showed that psychological maltreatment significantly influenced sexual abstinence among youths. Secondly, parenting styles also significantly predicted sexual abstinence among youths. On joint basis, there was a significant joint influence of psychological maltreatment and parenting styles on sexual abstinence among youths. Some study limitations and suggestions were made. However, the study failed to assess the joint influence of psychological abuse and self-efficacy on sexual abstinence. A gap covered in the present study.

Another study conducted by Kerone, Manold and Kilman (2015) examined the relationship between psychological abuse and sexual abstinence among in-school adolescents. Using cross-sectional survey design, 319 students were drawn for the study. Two hypotheses were tested using Pearson's r and t -test. The result of the study showed that psychological abuse is significantly related to sexual abstinence among students. Secondly, male and female students differed significantly on sexual abstinence. Based on these inferences, some recommendations and suggestions were given. This study was however, not an indigenous study.

Tyonah (2012) examined psychological and sexual abuse as correlates of sexual abstinence motivation among secondary school students on Ukah. The study employed descriptive survey design with 408 students sampled via accidental sampling. Three hypotheses were tested upon data collection. Finding of the study indicated that, psychological abuse is positively related to sexual abstinence motivation among students. Similarly, sexual abuse was also positively related to sexual abstinence motivation. Lastly, psychological and sexual abuse were significant multiple correlates of sexual abstinence motivation among students. The limitations and way forward for the study were well discussed.

Self-Efficacy and Sexual Abstinence

Longerholm and Ferar (2015) investigated the influence of emotional abuse, self-efficacy and self-control as predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents in Dehran. The study used the cross-sectional survey design, where 426 adolescents were sampled accidentally. Four hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The result of the study showed that there was no significant influence of emotional abuse on sexual abstinence

among adolescents. Secondly, self-efficacy significantly predicted sexual abstinence among adolescents. Similarly, self-control also influenced sexual abstinence among adolescents. On joint basis, there was a significant joint influence of emotional abuse, self-efficacy and self-control on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Based on these findings, some recommendations and suggestions were made. This study however neglected the use of adolescents in Makurdi but rather focused on those in Dehran.

Wang and Leung (2015) examined self-efficacy and self-determination as predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents. Using cross sectional survey design, 205 adolescents were assessed using three instruments. Three hypotheses were tested using Standard Multiple regression. The result of the study showed that self-efficacy significantly influenced sexual abstinence among adolescents. Secondly, self-determination also significantly predicted sexual abstinence among adolescents. On joint basis, there was a significant joint influence of self-efficacy and self-determination on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Based on these findings, some recommendations and suggestions were made for the study.

Donaldson and Fieldshelm (2013) assessed the roles of self-efficacy and sensation seeking in predicting sexual reluctance behavior among in-school adolescents. A sample of 321 adolescents was drawn randomly. The ex-post facto study employed three instruments for data collection. Using regression analysis, finding indicated that self-efficacy and sensation seeking behavior significantly predicted sexual reluctance behavior on independent and joint basis. Based on the conclusions of the study, some further directions were outlined. This study employed an ex-post facto design while the present study employed a cross sectional survey design which is more appropriate for a study of this nature.

Ade and Umar (2011) examined physical abuse and self-efficacy as predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents in Kanyaspor, Turkey. Using cross-sectional survey design, 60 male and 60 female adolescents were tested using three instruments. Three hypotheses were tested using Linear and Multiple Regression. The result of the study showed that physical abuse significantly influenced sexual abstinence among adolescents. Secondly, self-efficacy also significantly predicted sexual abstinence among adolescents. Jointly, there was a significant influence of physical abuse and self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Based on these findings, some recommendations and suggestions were made. Having identified the gaps in previous studies, the following hypotheses were postulated to guide the study:

- i. There will be a significant influence of psychological abuse on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
- ii. There will be a significant influence of self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
- iii. There will be a significant joint influence of psychological abuse and self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Design

This study employed the use of Cross-sectional survey design to investigate Psychological Abuse and Self-Efficacy as predictors of Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The independent variables are psychological abuse and self-efficacy while the dependent variable is sexual abstinence.

Participants

The participants for the study were 208 adolescents in Makurdi metropolis consisting of 98 (47.12%) males and 110 (52.88%) females. Their ages ranged from 12-22 years with a mean age of 17.54 years (SD=3.78). In terms of their ethnic groups, 89 (42.79%) were Tiv, 91 (43.75%) were Idoma while the remaining 28 (13.46%) were from other ethnic groups. Concerning their religion, 170 (81.73%) were Christians, and the remaining 38 (18.27%) were Muslims. Lastly, 157 (75.48%) of them were secondary school students while the remaining 51 (24.52%) were in tertiary students.

Instruments

For the purpose of data collection, the Child Abuse Scale, Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale and the Sexual Abstinence Behaviour Scale were used.

- i. Psychological Abuse was measured using the Child Abuse Scale developed by Malik and Shah (2007). The 14-item scale is measured using a 4-point format of 1 (never) to 4 (always). The scale has an alpha coefficient of .90. However, the present study obtained an alpha coefficient of .64. Sample of items includes; “my relative/caregiver uses abusive language with me”, “my relative/caregiver expresses their aggression on me”.
- ii. Self-efficacy was measured using the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). This 10-item scale is measured on a 4-point Likert scale of 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). The total score is calculated by finding the sum of all the items. The total score ranges between 10 and 40, with a higher score indicating more self-efficacy. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale ranges from .76 - .90. The present study obtained a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .78. Sample of items include; “It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals”, “If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution”.
- iii. Sexual Abstinence was measured using the Sexual Abstinence Behaviour Scale developed by Norris, Clark and Magnus (2003). The 4-item scale response options range from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .73. The present study obtained an alpha of .69. Sample of items include; “Do you tell yourself you were making the right decision by waiting to have sex”, “Do you Say No to sex”.

Procedure

This study was conducted among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The researchers proceeded by contacting the adolescents in schools, social gatherings and religious units. The researchers assured them of ethical considerations, then they were exposed to the instructions on how to attend to the questionnaire. They were asked to go through each of the items and indicate their own opinion by ticking. It took the respondents an average of 10 minutes each to attend to the questionnaire. After the administration, a total of 208 copies out of the 210 copies administered representing a return rate of 99.05% was collected and found useful for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Data for the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages were used to describe the participants' demographic attributes. On the other hand, inferential statistics such as Simple Linear and Standard Multiple Regression were used to test the hypotheses for the study.

Results

The hypotheses raised in this study were tested using Simple Linear and Multiple Regression analysis. The results are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression showing Psychological Abuse as a predictor of Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.741	.549	249.507	1,206		12.459	.000
Psychological Abuse					.741	18.312	.000

The results as presented in table 1 shows that there was a significant influence of psychological abuse on sexual abstinence among adolescents $R^2=.549$, $F(1,206)=249.51$, $p<.001$. The result further shows that psychological abuse predicted 54.9% of the variance in sexual abstinence. Hence, this hypothesis was upheld.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression showing Self-efficacy as a predictor of Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.384	.147	485.117	1,206		6.022	.000
Self-Efficacy					.384	12.913	.000

The results as presented in table 2 shows that there was a significant influence of self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents $R^2=.147$, $F(1,206)=485.12$, $p<.001$. The result further shows that self-efficacy predicted 14.7% of the variance in sexual abstinence. Hence, hypothesis two was also upheld.

Table 3. Standard Multiple Regression showing Psychological Abuse and Self-Efficacy as joint predictors of Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.888	.789	55.679	2,205		12.487	.000
Psychological Abuse					.348	4.178	.000
Self-Efficacy					.427	3.983	.000

The results as presented in table 3 shows that psychological abuse and self-efficacy are significant joint predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents $R^2=.789$, $F(2,205)=55.68$, $p<.001$. The result further shows that psychological abuse and self-efficacy jointly predicted 78.9% of the variance in sexual abstinence. Hence, this hypothesis was upheld.

Discussion

Hypothesis one was tested to find out if there will be a significant influence of psychological abuse on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Findings indicated that there was a significant influence of psychological abuse on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Psychological abuse is capable of lowering adolescents' self-esteem and encouraging timidity and isolation. Under such conditions, abused adolescents may be ashamed of engaging in sexual activities at this age. This finding tallies with Adeyemi and Temitope (2015) who revealed that psychological abuse predicted sexual abstinence. In a similar manner, authors such as Deung (2015), Kerone, Manold and Kilman (2015) have also unveiled the role of maltreatment in sexual abstinence behaviour among adolescents. A later study by Tyonah (2012) is also in concordance with the present finding. This implies that abused adolescents may develop depression which may cause anhedonia to sexual activities.

Hypothesis two was tested to find out if there will be a significant influence of self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Findings indicated that there was a significant influence of self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents. Self-efficacy is characterized by the ability to efficiently handle tasks. In this case, adolescents who have high self-efficacy are expected to be principled and detest sexual activities at this early age. This finding tallies with Longerholm and Ferar (2015) who revealed that self-efficacy is a determinant of sexual abstinence behaviour. In consonance with this, studies (Wang & Leung, 2015; Ade & Umar, 2011) have found self-efficacy as a predictor of sexual abstinence among youths. Also, Donaldson and Fieldshelm (2013) revealed that self-efficacy explained 24% of the variance in sexual abstinence behaviour among adolescents. This implies that, high self-efficacy corresponds to more sexual abstinence and vice versa.

Hypothesis three was tested to find out if psychological abuse and self-efficacy are joint predictors of sexual abstinence among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Findings indicated that there was a significant joint influence of psychological abuse and self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents. However, this study lacks concrete research support as no previous study has examined the joint influence of psychological abuse and self-efficacy on sexual abstinence among adolescents.

Recommendations of the Study

Given the nature of this study and the findings obtained herein, it is recommended that the society should desist from the behaviour of abusing adolescents since it was known to affect their sexual behaviours. This can be ensured by the child welfare divisions.

Secondly, psychologists should develop self-efficacy training programmes that are aimed at elevating the self-efficacy of adolescents in the society. This will assist them in standing firm to desist risky sexual behaviours.

Thirdly, psychologists should put all hands on deck to ensure that indigenous scales are made available for researchers' use. This will drastically reduce the cultural influence associated with foreign scales.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has contributed a lot to knowledge, although some few hitches have hindered its complete perfection. Hence, the following shortcomings were noted:

- i. This study is a cross-sectional type, hence it can only be said of the extent to which the independent variables influence sexual abstinence. Therefore, no causal inference can be made.
- ii. The use of self-report questionnaires for data collection opens way for various intrusions such that respondents can fake their responses in order to align with social expectations.

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