

Associated Factors Mitigating Undergraduate Students of Ekiti State University, Ado – Ekiti , Nigeria Into Risky Sexual Behavior

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Abstract.

The study examined the associated factors related to risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students. Four hundred students aged 15-24 years (mean age 21.3years, SD 0.85) were recruited from Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria and completed personally administered questionnaire on parental rejection; peer group; depression; exposure to pornography and self-esteem. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and simple percentage was used to analyze demographic data of the respondents, findings shows that 66.1% were between 15-19 years and 33.9% were between 20-24 years, this reflection that they were relatively young and sexually actives, this is confirmed by the National Demography Survey Data (NDHS) which revealed that more than half (66.1%) of adolescents' aged 15-19 were sexually active (NPC, 2009). Inferential statistics of linear regression was used to analyze the data collected and findings indicated that parental rejection F-ratio was 2.305, $P<0.05$; peer group F-ratio was 2.503, $P<0.05$; depression F-ratio was 2.103, $P<0.05$; exposure to pornography F-ratio was 2.004, $P<0.05$ and self-esteem F-ratio was 2.201, $P<0.05$. Parental behavior and peer influence were the most mitigating variables associated with risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students. This paper call for peers to create a sense of normative behavior in which early debut, having multiple sexual partners, and inconsistent condom use may be supported or rejected by peers, thus becoming a peer group norm and comprehensive sex education programs that provide necessary sexual health knowledge about safe sex should be developed and implemented in Nigeria universities.

Keywords: Adolescents, Parental, Peers, Pornography, Depression, self-esteem.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical transition period to establish a strong and healthy foundation in sexuality development for a healthier adulthood. Almost most of the challenges during this period are associated with puberty (Molak et al., 2007). These include getting comfortable with the changes of the shape of body, adjustment of thought and feeling around these changes and coping with others' responses to their maturing body. Furthermore, during this transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents need to develop capacity for self-regulation and taking responsibility for their behavior, making wise choice on their life's decision and developed capacity to maintain intimate relationship for adulthood (Yen et al., 2009). This is the periods when adolescents become sexually active and begin to explore sexuality.

Parents are associated with youths' sexual behavior and attitudes: affective factors such as warmth, support, hostility and instrumental characteristics such as monitoring, supervision, control (Baumrind, 1987). Affective factors related to delayed sexual debut include parental support, family cohesion and connectedness, close family relationships, and parent-teen relationship satisfaction (Chewing and Koningsveld , 1998 ; Danziger , 1995 ; Fisher and Feldman, 1998). Adolescent-reported satisfaction with the maternal relationship, such as affection, emotional support, and discipline, is associated with later sexual debut (Jaccard et al., 1996), whereas maternal reports of parental rejection are related to early-onset sexual intercourse of adolescents' (Whitbeck et al., 1999). Instrumental factors such as permissiveness and monitoring are also related to adolescent' sexual experience. Later sexual debut is associated with more parental monitoring, less parental permissiveness, and the presence of household routines and rules (Li et al., 2000 ; Miller et al., 1999 ; Romer et al., 1999).

Peer group influence becomes increasingly important during adolescence. Adolescents' intentions to engage in sex are strongly influenced by their social context in which peers play a major role in determining normative behavior (Sieving et al., 2008). Research on the effect of peer groups on adolescent behavior has been well established. The results of a recent study on 1,046 African American adolescents found the influence of peer norms to shape both their sexual attitudes and behaviors (Wallace et al., 2008). In addition, adolescents' religious beliefs have been found to influence their peer group affiliation. For example, Simons et al., (2004: a, b, c) found religiosity to decrease the likelihood that youth will associate with unconventional peers and engage in delinquent behavior. In part, this effect is probably a consequence of the fact that individuals tend to establish relationships with people who are similar to themselves. Negative peer and partner influences can lead to health-compromising behaviors (DiClemente et al., 1996 ; St. Lawrence, 1993), Positive peer influence has been an effective health-risk reduction method for adolescents' risky sexual behavior (Rollin et al., 1995 ; Swadi and Zeitlin, 1988).

Depression may lead to risky sexual behavior as it may impair cognitive function and memory, decrease one's ability to control impulsive behavior, increase emotional reactivity in peer relationships, reduce motivation, and increase fatalism. These effects of depression may inhibit an individual's clear perception of the risk of contracting an STD and their ability to prevent risky sexual behavior (Khan et al., 2009). Despite a substantial body of research that links depression and risky sexual behavior for both males and females across a broad age range, definitively establishing the direction of causality remains elusive. However, such studies are not indicative of causal relationships due to the potential endogeneity of depression. For example, those who engaged in sexual intercourse without a condom may become depressed and those who have an STD may also become depressed. In fact, there is no body of research that posits risky sexual behavior itself is a cause of depression, even when the sexual behavior is not forced (Ethier et al., 2006). Research in the medical and adolescent health fields has tried to establish the direction of causality from depression to risky sexual behaviors using the temporal ordering of events. Much of this research suggests that depressed adolescents and young adults are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors (CDC, 2010a; Averett et al., 2011; Jenness et al., 2010), have an increased risk of a sexually transmitted infection [Shrier et al., 2009], and are less likely to use condoms or use them appropriately (Shrier et al., 2001; Brown, 2006).

Pornography is a sexually explicit websites as those that “describe people having sex, show clear pictures of nudity or people having sex, or show a movie or audio that describes people having sex”. With the advancement and development of technology, mass media gradually become one of the important sources on sex related information for adolescents (Haggstrom-Nordin, Tyden, Hanson and Larsson, 2009; Lo and Wei, 2005). The rapid growth of the pornography facilitates adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit materials either intentionally or accidentally (Flood, 2007). Recently, tablet computers, smart phones, and other electronic devices have added ubiquity to electronic communication and the Internet. For example, a recent study found that one in three teenagers sends more than 100 text messages a day and 15% send more than 200 a day, or 6,000 a month (Lenhart et al., 2010). Four percent of teens have sent a sexually suggestive text message, which are often nude photographs, and 15% of this age group has received a sexually suggestive text (Lenhart, 2009). This side of world portray that sex is a pleasure enjoyment which without any responsibility. This sexual value and belief contradict with local cultural norm. Adolescents who are curious on sexual topic may adopt the value and rely on this kind of sources to fulfill their curiosity and avoid the embarrassment of discuss of the topic with adult. Yet, information from these sources may not be accurate and more likely to mislead adolescents' understanding concerning on appropriate sexuality and reproduction health.

Self-esteem plays an important role in risk-taking behavior; this may also apply to sexual risky behavior. Davies et al., (2003); Lejuez et al., (2004) and Preston et al., (2004) devised that the link between low self-esteem and sexual risky behavior (e.g. early sexual intercourse, inconsistent contraceptive and condom use) and the latter's possible consequences such as unwanted pregnancy and STI. Lejuez et al., (2004) reported that low self-esteem was related to risky sexual behavior in a sample of adults participating in a residential drug-treatment program. Preston et al., (2004) found that low self-esteem predicted sexual risky behavior in a sample of rural men. Magnaniet et al., (2001) conducted a large cross sectional study of adolescents in Peru, and reported that low self-esteem predicted both early onset of sexual activity and unprotected sex. High self-esteem is positively associated with less risky sexual behavior. Spencer et al., (2000) found that the probability of having sex was linked with high self-esteem in boys but with low self-esteem in girls, though in a study by Paul et al., (2000) girls with higher self-esteem were likely to have had early first sexual intercourse. Other associated factors characterizing risky sexual behavior are: community factor, school attachment, family support, parental communication, economic exploitation, poverty, stress, etc.

The majority of students in tertiary institutions are single, young adults who easily fall prey to exuberance coupled with the liberal nature of campus life that predisposes them to high risky sexual behavior and problems like HIV/AIDS or STI, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, poor school performance, high school dropout rate, psycho-social problems, conduct disorder, divorce, and economic problems (Prinstein and Greca, 2004; Russell et al., 2007; Dawud, 2003). Concerns regarding the implications of this behavior have led to increasing interventions particularly for in-school adolescents. Many studies have been carried out to determine the sexual behavior of adolescents in Nigeria, studies have looked at the tracing the roots of early sexual debut among adolescents in psychiatric care, reducing adolescent risk, family influences on adolescent sexual activity and alcohol use, parental factors as determinant of risky sexual behavior (Geri et al., 2003; Romer, 2003; Tsui-Sui and Winfred, 2013 and Ojo, 2014). This study therefore focused on the Associated Factors Mitigating Undergraduate Students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria into Risky Sexual Behavior.

1.1 Hypotheses.

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study.

- Parental rejection will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

- Peer group will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.
- Depression will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.
- Exposure to pornography will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.
- Self-esteem will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Design

The study was a descriptive survey research design that explored the associated factors mitigating undergraduate students' of the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria into risky sexual behavior.

2.1.2 Population

The population for this study comprises all students' in Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. As at 2012/2013 academic session, when the study was conducted, the university had students' population over 20,000.

2.1.3 Sample

Purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 400 respondents for the study. This was used because of the ongoing University second semester examinations at the time of the study and the main criterion for inclusion in the study was that a respondent is an undergraduate students of the University.

2.1.4 Ethical consideration

Detail, purpose and process of the study were explained to the respondents in which verbal consent were obtained from those who agreed to participate in the study. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and privacy for the information provided and giving the choice not to partake in the study if they so desired and as many that agreed were recruited for the study.

2.1.5 Instrument, Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire employed both open-ended and closed-ended questions; it was designed to be self-administered title Associated Factors Mitigating Risky Sexual Behavior (AFMRSB). The questionnaire was divided into two (2) sections. The first section asked for the socio-demographic data of the respondents. The second section assessed the parental rejection, peer group, depression, exposure to pornography and self-esteem among undergraduate students of the university. The copies of the questionnaire were administered over a period of one week. A total of 400 questionnaires was administered and retrieved immediately. The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and a coding guide was developed to facilitate data entry. The data was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package, version 18.0 to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and using descriptive statistics for demographic information.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Section A: Demographic Information.

Majority (66.1%) of respondents were between 15-19 years and 33.9% between 20-24 years, with a mean age of 21.3 ± 2.8 years. Virtually all (97.8%) respondents were single, 57.4% were females, 42.6% were male. Females were more than males, these is due to the fact that at the time of data collection more female students were on ground and were willing to be part of the study. In Nigeria and all over the world, the long years of continued education has created a big gap between the age of puberty and age at marriage, thus increasing the likelihood of sexual initiation and unprotected premarital sex, it thus create a situation where people are students and at the same time sexually active. 53.2% were Christians, 38.1% were Muslim while 8.7% were Traditional. The faculty affiliation of the students showed that 25.7% were in the faculties of Education, 24.2 % in Engineering, 20.6% in Language's, 16.8% in Sciences and 12.7% in Art and Social Sciences. The result of this study showed that 18.4% of the respondents live with their parents while 51.1% of them lived alone and 30.5% of the respondents either stay alone or live with boy/girlfriend. This further confirms the assertion that young people often take advantage of freedom from direct parental supervision and guidance to express their freedom by initiating sexual activity without adequate protection (Iwuagwu, Ajuwon and Olasheha, 2000). Indeed, the environment in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, like in many other parts of the world, is characterized by high level of personal freedom and social interactions. Socially, the typical university environment in Nigeria offers opportunities for high level of sexual networking, and the freedom that characterizes the higher institutions permits permissive lifestyle (Fatusi, 2001).

3.1.2. Section B: Research Hypotheses.

- **Hypothesis 1:** Parental rejection will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

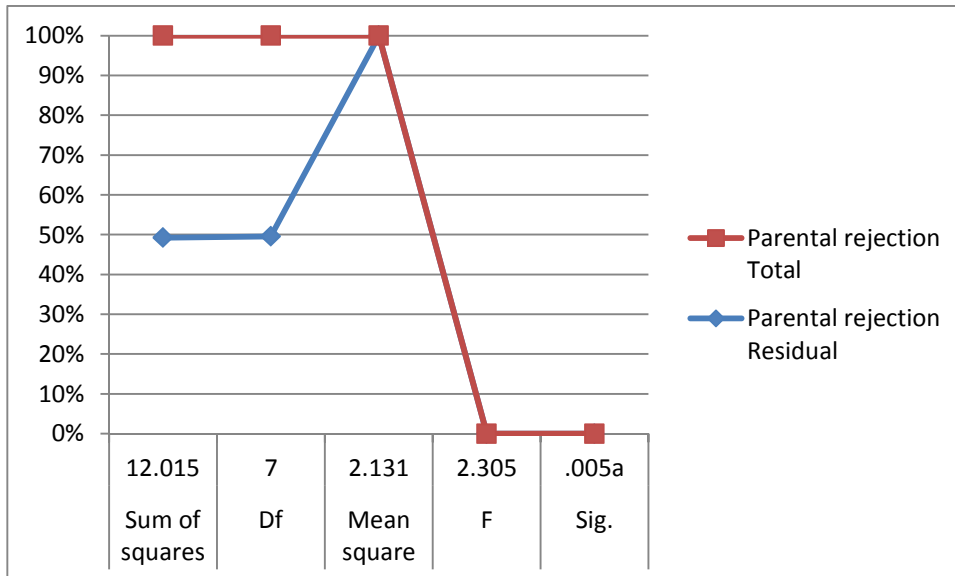


Figure 1: Linear regression analysis result on parental rejection.

Description for the above figure.

Figure 1 above shows the hypothesis 1 result on parental rejection. Calculated F-ratio was 2.305 and level of significance was 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis was totally accepted as an associated factor mitigating undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, into risky sexual behavior. This study is different to the result of the research carried out by Paikoff, (1995) that parental monitoring reduces opportunities for early sexual activity by limiting adolescents' exposure to sexual possibility situations. Li et al., (2000) ; Thomas et al., (2000) ; Ary et al., (1999) ; Gorman-Smith et al., (1996) ; Ku et al., (1993) and Upchurch et al., (1999) viewed that increased parental monitoring is also linked to reductions in other health-compromising behaviors that often co-occur with risky sex, such as drug and alcohol use and delinquency. Donenberg et al.,(2002) presented that rates of risky sexual behavior are linked to low parental monitoring, and for girls only, to high parental permissiveness. Therefore, this result was in line with the opinion of Donenberg et al., (2002) that parental rejection will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students of Ekiti State University into risky sexual behavior.

- **Hypothesis 2:** Peer group will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

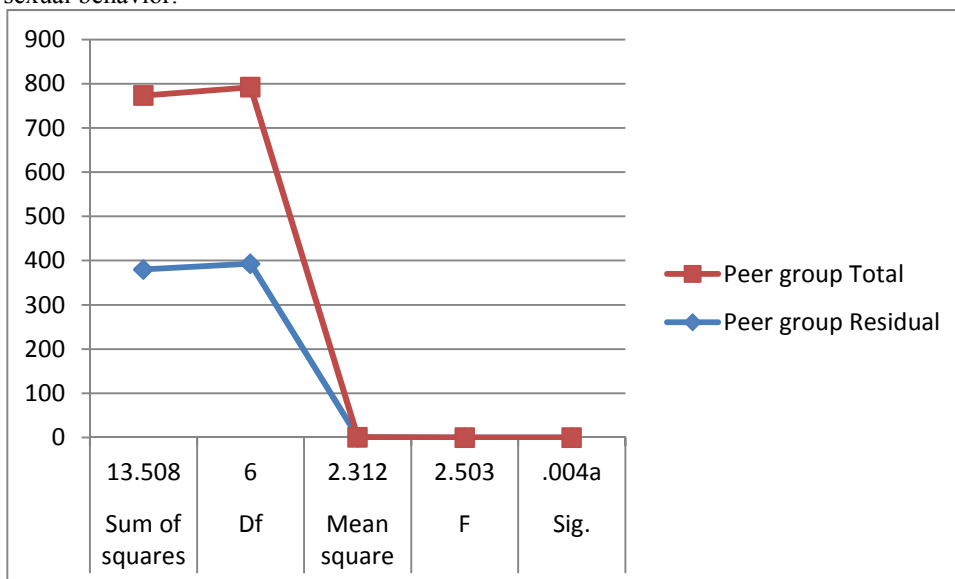


Figure 2: Linear regression analysis result on peer group.

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Figure 2 shows the hypothesis 2 result on peer group. The calculated F-ratio was 2.503 while level of significance was 0.05, than the hypothesis was accepted. Doljanac and Zimmerman,(1998) ; Roger, (1993) ; Whitaker and Miller,(2000) attributed that peers and romantic partners become increasingly important during adolescence, and perceptions of peer norms influence adolescent risky sexual behavior. Meschke et al., (2000) ; Whitbeck et al., (1999) ; Rollin et al., (1995) and Swadi and Zeitlin, (1988) suggested that pro-social peer influence (e.g. associating with peers who get good grades and avoid risk-taking) is related to delayed sexual behavior and positive peer influence has been an effective health-risk reduction method for youths. This study tested the relation among sexual debut, positive and negative peer influences, need for intimacy, and fear of rejection for troubled adolescents. Donenberg et al, (2001) viewed that negative peer influence affects adolescent sexual risk-taking, but this study extends the literature to early sexual debut and provides new information about the protective influence of peers who engage in positive behavior (i.e. after-school activities, clubs, sports, good grades).

- **Hypothesis 3:** Depression will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

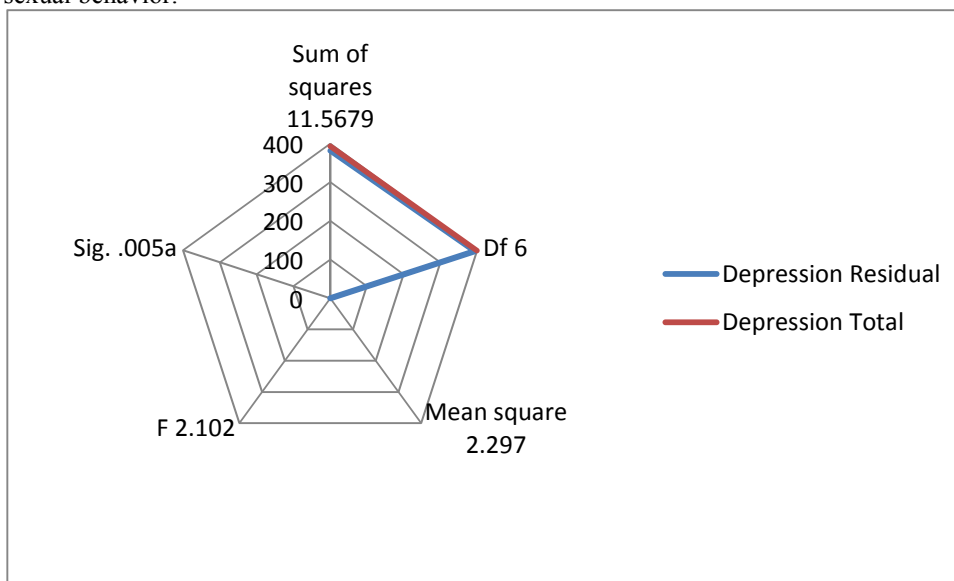


Figure 3: Linear regression analysis result on Depression.

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Figure 3 above shows the hypothesis 3 result on depression as a factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior. The calculated F-ratio was 2.102 while level of significance was 0.05, that shows F-ratio was higher than level of significance. This hypothesis was also accepted as a factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior. This finding was in line with Shrier et al., (2001) ; Mazzaferro et al., (2006) ; Mota et al., (2010) opened that depression and risky sexual behaviors are positively correlated using cross sectional data. Kahn et al., (2009) ; Shrier et al., (2011) ; Brown et al., (2006) ; Lehrer et al., (2006) ; Biggs et al., (2010) suggested that depressed adolescents and young adults are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, have an increased risk of a sexually transmitted infection, and are less likely to use condoms or use them appropriately.

- **Hypothesis 4:** Exposure to pornography will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

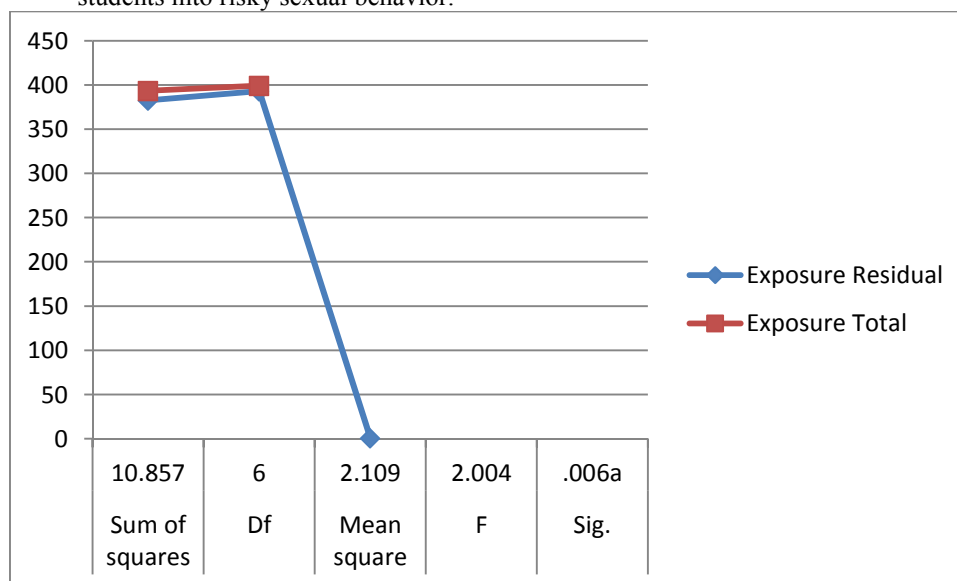


Figure 4: Linear regression analysis result on Exposure to pornography.

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Figure 4 shows the result of hypothesis 4 on exposure to pornography among undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, into risky sexual behavior. F-ratio was 2.004 which was also higher than level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis was also significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior. This result was an agreement with the finding of Zillmann, (2005) observed that adolescent exposure to material which contain of sex material intentionally and un-intentionally since they are young, this exposure may stimulate their curiosity to find out more information related to their sexual development. Thus, they have higher tendency to utilize the available media as an important sources of sex-related information. Tsitsika et al., (2009) affirmed that adolescents who are exposed to sexually explicit material may develop unrealistic attitudes about sex and misleading attitudes toward relationships. Peter and Valkenburg, (2010) suggested that as adolescents are more frequently exposed to sexually explicit material, their perceptions of the social realism and the utility of sexually explicit material increase. They also suggested that the greater adolescents' perceptions of social realism and utility of sexually explicit material, the greater their instrumental attitudes toward sex. Sabina, Wolak and Finkelhor, (2008); Ybarra and Mitchell, (2005) showed that exposure to sexually explicit material is a normative experience among adolescents who are following traditional developmental trajectories regarding sexual curiosity. Braun-Courville and Rojas, (2009) viewed that adolescents who are more frequently exposed to sexually explicit material are more likely to accept the notion of casual sex.

- **Hypothesis 5:** Self-esteem will be a significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior.

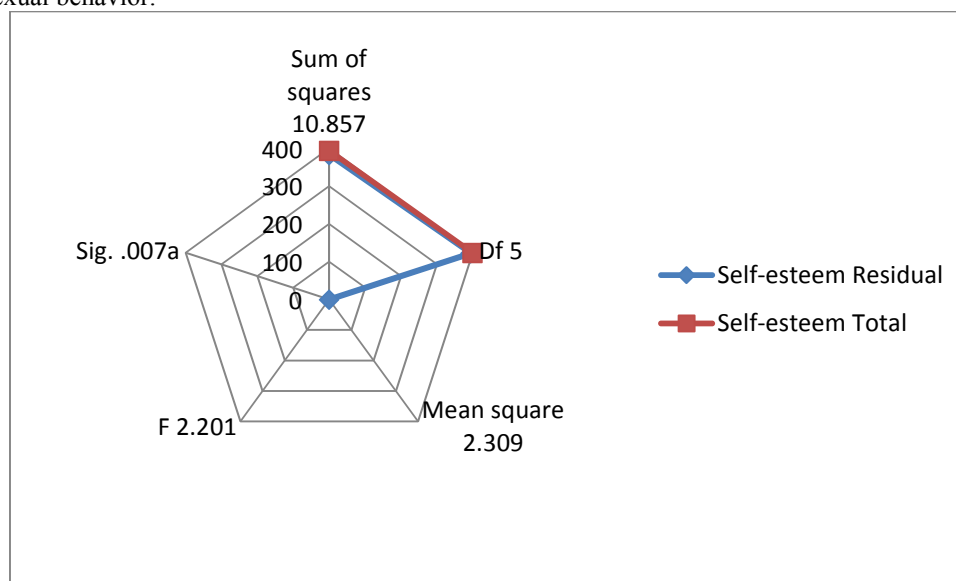


Figure 5: Linear regression analysis result on Self-esteem.

Description for the above figure.

Figure 5 indicates the result of hypothesis 5 on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, into risky sexual behavior. F-ratio was 2.201 which was also higher than level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis was also significant factor mitigating undergraduate students into risky sexual behavior. This result was contrary with the finding of Ethier et al., (2006) ; Gullette et al., (2006) indicated that high levels of self-esteem are protective against several types of risky sexual behaviors. Also, this result corroborate with the finding of Magnani et al., (2001) reported that both a positive and a negative subscale of self-esteem, adolescents reporting high levels of positive self-esteem are more likely to engage in risky sexual practices (rather than not to engage in sex) compared with those with low levels of positive self-esteem. This finding was partially in line with those of Spencer et al., (2002) ; Paul et al., (2000) and Halama, (2008), which indicated that higher scores of self-esteem were associated with more sexual activity among boys and girls which also applicable to undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

4. Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study viewed Associated Factors Mitigating Undergraduate Students of the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria into Risky Sexual Behavior. Most of these youth are students and they are also at a high risk for unsafe sexual behaviors and problems like HIV/AIDS or STI, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, poor school performance, high school dropout rate, psycho-social problems, conduct disorder, divorce, and economic problems (Prinstein and Greca, 2004 ; Russell et al., 2007). The findings of this study showed that risky sexual behavior exist among the undergraduate students in Ekiti state University based on variable tested (i.e. parental rejection, peer group, exposure to pornography, depression and self-esteem) and showed by linear regression analysis results because all the variables were mitigating risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students. This findings also indicate that peers have an influence on adolescent risky sexual behavior and suggest that, in addition to parents, peers are important influences on the risky sexual behavior of African American adolescents. Peers often guide and shape adolescent risk activities (Wallace et al., 2008 ; Maxwell, 2002). That is, peers create a sense of normative behavior in which early sexual debut, having multiple sexual partners, and inconsistent condom use may be supported or rejected by peers, thus becoming a peer group norm. Therefore, programs should encourage parents to be involved in monitoring their children's peer groups. This results suggest that parents are doing this with their daughters and it may be also doing so with their sons, parents can develop greater influence over their sons' choice of friends. Because this findings indicate that peers are an important added route through which sex messages are transmitted, preventative intervention programs may benefit from recognizing the impact peers have on adolescent decisions to engage in risky sexual behavior. It might be productive to include peers as a component in the program curriculum. This will allow adolescents and their peers to receive the same messages about risky sexual behavior, thus reinforcing the lessons to each other.

5. References

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