

# Understanding Peer Sexual Norms, Attitudes, and Pressure: Correlates of Risky Sexual Behaviours among Secondary School Adolescents in Anambra State, Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** Sexual behaviour initiation often takes place throughout adolescence and is typically linked to engaging in unprotected sexual practices and other high-risk sexual behaviours. This research investigated the correlation between peer sexual behaviour, sexual attitudes, pressure to engage in sexual activity, and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

**Methodology:** The study was carried out with a correlational research approach. The research included 1,200 individuals from a population of 19,048 SS2 teenagers in public secondary schools. Cronbach's Alpha statistics were used to evaluate the internal consistency of three scales: the Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS), the Pressure to Have Sex Questionnaire (PTHSQ), and the modified Sexual Risk Behaviour Scale (SRBS). The reliability coefficients for the Adolescent Sexual Behaviour Index (ASBI) were 0.86, 0.96, and 0.80, respectively. The reliability index of the ASBI was determined using Kuder Richardson statistics, resulting in a coefficient of 0.86. The data was obtained by directly administering the instruments and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson Product Moment Correlation is a statistical measure that quantifies the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Coefficients were used to address the research enquiries, while the null hypotheses were examined using a t-test to determine significant association.

**Results:** The results indicated a weak positive association between the sexual conduct of peers, sexual attitudes, and pressure to engage in sexual activity, and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school teenagers in Anambra State. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated a notable association between these variables and the sexual risk behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

**Conclusion:** Based on these data, it was determined that there is a weak positive link between peer sexual behaviour, sexual attitude, peer pressure to engage in sexual activity, and unsafe sexual behaviours among secondary school teenagers in Anambra State. Given this information, it is advisable for school administrators to establish health initiatives aimed at assisting young people in adopting enduring sexual habits that promote their overall health and well-being. These practices should also aim to minimise their susceptibility to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

**Keywords:** Peer, sexual behaviours, sexual attitudes, pressure to have sex, risky sexual behaviours, school, adolescents

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a significant phase of growth when significant consideration is given to interactions with individuals of the opposite gender. The persistent pursuit of romantic connections heightens the probability of teenagers partaking in intimate relationships with individuals of the opposite gender, potentially resulting in unsafe sexual conduct. Adolescence is often described as the transitional phase that occurs between the onset of puberty and the attainment of adulthood. As stated by

UNICEF (2018), this is a phase of change that starts when a person reaches physical maturity and ends when they take on the responsibilities and rights associated with being an adult, including social, sexual, economic, and legal aspects.

The World Health Organisation (2015) provided a definition of adolescents as those who are between the ages of 10 and 19. Adolescence is a period of major physical, mental, and social changes that may greatly influence the sexual and reproductive health practices of young individuals. According to Desale et al. (2016), adolescence is a crucial period for the acquisition of information, skills, emotional and relational management, as well as the development of qualities and talents that are necessary for a fulfilling teenage experience and the assumption of adult responsibilities. Therefore, according to this research, adolescence is a crucial stage characterised by significant physical, emotional, and social growth, which may significantly impact an individual's sexual and reproductive health habits. Adolescence, as defined in this research, covers individuals aged 14 to 19 years. This research delves further into the ramifications of this advancement on sexual conduct.

Sexual behaviour includes any action that elicits sexual desire, such as kissing, hugging, and other forms of physical touch (Laddunuri, 2013). This may also include actions such as sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, and manual sexual stimulation (Okafor & Akude, 2023). Sexual activities may fall into either the category of being beneficial for one's well-being or potentially dangerous. Risky sexual behaviours include any actions that heighten the likelihood of acquiring HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or becoming pregnant. This include engaging in sexual activity at a young age, having sex without using protection consistently, having sexual encounters with individuals who engage in high-risk behaviours such as drug injection, engaging in survival sex (exchanging sex for money, drugs, food, or shelter), or having sex with a partner who has several partners simultaneously (Envuladu, 2016). The repercussions of these activities may be grave, and, in some instances, may even result in untimely death.

Adolescent sexual risk behaviour refers to any action that raises the chances of an adolescent participating in sexual activity with another adolescent who may have a sexually transmitted infection (STI), getting pregnant, or causing their partner to become pregnant (Dimbuene, Emina, and Sankoh, 2014). It encompasses all actions that heighten the likelihood of a teenager acquiring a sexually transmitted infection, becoming pregnant, or engaging in a sexual partnership before they possess the necessary maturity to comprehend what constitutes a healthy relationship. Contributing factors to sexual risk behaviours among teens include smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, unemployment, familial instability, age, and puberty. Adolescents who abstain from drug use are the least like to engage in risky sexual behaviour (Potard, Courtois, and Rusch, 2018).

Adolescence is a phase characterised by concurrent physical and cognitive growth, including several simultaneous changes. These factors include physical growth, the need for autonomy, heightened social and peer engagements, and cognitive advancement (Adimora, Akaneme & Aye, 2018; Anagbogu, Nwankwo & Azuji, 2020; Rimande, Agu & Terzungwe, 2021). Adolescents have a higher likelihood of engaging in hazardous sexual practices, which makes them more susceptible to

reproductive health issues such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancy, and abortion. UNICEF (2018) states that there are more than 2.1 million adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 who have HIV, mostly because of engaging in hazardous sexual conduct. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2017) confirms that sexually active adolescents aged 15 to 19 are more likely to have sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). According to Udigwe, Adogu, and Nwabuez (2014), the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV among teenagers in south-eastern Nigeria is 17%, whereas 32% had undergone unsafe abortions.

Risky sexual behaviour can be seen as a way for adolescents to gain social status, just as engaging in pseudo-mature behaviour can be seen as a sign of independence and maturity. Thus, adolescents who are sexually active may be more popular with their peers, which in turn increases their sexual opportunities and behaviours. In addition, the digital age has also brought new risks to sexually developing adolescents, such as the potential negative outcomes of online peer sexual behaviour. Peer sexual behaviour refers to the sexual practices and activities that are typically carried out by individuals within a peer group (Agan et al., 2015). Within the Nigerian setting, these practices include masturbation, oral-genital stimulation, penile-vaginal intercourse, and, in exceptional instances, anal stimulation or anal intercourse (Okafor & Akude, 2023). In addition, Okafor and Akude noted that actions that may be considered sexually arousing, such as viewing pornography, engaging in sexual discussions or online sex chats, dating, and courtship, may be classified under this category.

The manifestation of sexual conduct among peers may be categorised as either beneficial or detrimental to one's well-being. Healthy sexual behaviours refer to actions that have a beneficial impact on an individual's well-being and help them achieve their sexual development goals. These actions further contribute to the development of positive connections with individuals of the opposite gender. Conversely, unhealthy sexual habits refer to actions that have an adverse impact on an individual's physical and mental health. Unhealthy sexual attitudes often result in actions that harm one's physical and mental health.

Perceptions of sexual conduct play a crucial role in comprehending the sexual behaviour of peers. Sexual attitude pertains to an individual's mental disposition towards sexual behaviours, influenced by their reactions to oneself, others, locations, objects, or events, and may impact their thoughts and behaviours (Eagly and Shelly, 2018). Adolescents' development of sexual attitudes may be ascribed to their families, since families serve as the fundamental unit of socialisation in society. Nevertheless, Valley's (2015) research has shown that dysfunctional family dynamics, parental mistreatment or neglect, inadequate parenting, peer influence, and family hardships might contribute to the emergence of unfavourable attitudes and behavioural issues.

Peer pressure refers to the direct or indirect influence exerted by individuals within social groupings who have similar interests, experiences, or social standing on a person (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2016). Adolescents often face adjustment challenges dealing with peer pressure, especially when it involves sex and relationships (Azuji & Nwanna, 2019). While some people might choose to engage in sexual

activity because their partner is pressuring them to, others might do it to blend in and gain acceptance from their peers. This can lead to the engagement in risky sexual behaviours as the individual may not be concerned with what is right or wrong, but rather with pleasing their peers. Studies have revealed that during the transition from childhood to adolescence, there is an increase in the amount of time spent with peers, which can lead to the exploration of sexual relationships and a greater risk of engaging in unprotected sexual activity (Wolf, Bazargani, Kilford, Dumontheil, 2015).

Risky sexual behaviours among adolescents are a major social and public health concern in Anambra State, Nigeria. Those in the age bracket of 15 to 19, have a higher propensity for participating in sexual activities that carry a greater risk of negative outcomes compared to those in other age groups. According to a research done by Folayan, Odetoynbo, Brown, and Harrison (2014), the data reveals that 56 percent of males who engage in sexual activity and 39.6 percent of girls who engage in sexual activity had intercourse without using protection with partners they are not married to during the last year. There is an increasing prevalence of other high-risk sexual habits, such as engaging in transactional sex, having many sexual partners, and engaging in sexual activities with different partners. Peer group pressure is widely acknowledged as a significant determinant in shaping the choices of teenagers to partake in risky sexual behaviours.

In a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation (2012), adolescents reported that they learn the majority of their information about sexual health from their peers. Moreover, a study by Adimora, et al. (2018) found that peer group pressure, as well as factors such as parental influence, social media, teachers, place of residence, culture, religion, and social circumstances all contribute to adolescents' engagement in risky sexual behaviour. Similarly, Cherie and Berhane (2012) reported that perceptions of peers' involvement in risky sexual practises were strongly associated with risky sexual behaviour in adolescents.

In order to address this issue, it is necessary for all stakeholders to find ways to guide adolescents and monitor their activities. This study aims to investigate peer sexual behaviours, sexual attitudes, and pressure to have sex as correlates of secondary school adolescents' sexual risk behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State. This will help to identify the underlying factors that may be leading to adolescents' engagement in risky sexual behaviour as well as potential solutions for addressing this problem.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Adolescence is a period of intimate relationship formation, exploration of desires and fantasies, and negotiation of sexual relationships. These activities may lead to risky sexual behaviours, such as unprotected intercourse, with increased exposure to STDs and unintended pregnancy. Factors such as peer pressure, male sexual views, age, drug usage, psychological distress, school absenteeism, lack of parental support, and peer pressure contribute to the occurrence of sexual risk behaviour among adolescents. There is a dearth of evidence about the sexual behaviour and its associated risk factors among adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. This research aims to

address this knowledge gap by examining the relationship between peer sexual conduct, sexual attitudes, and pressure to engage in sexual activity, and the sexual risk behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to explore the correlation between peer sexual behaviours, sexual attitudes, pressure to have sex, and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to understand:

1. Relationship between peer sexual behaviour and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State
2. Relationship between sexual attitude and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State
3. Relationship between pressure to have sex and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The present study seeks to evaluate the connections between peer sexual behaviour, sexual attitude, pressure to have sex, and sexual risk behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is the relationship between peer sexual behaviour and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between sexual attitude and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State?
3. What is the relationship between pressure to have sex and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State?

### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The hypotheses that will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance are as follows:

1. The relationship between peer sexual behaviour and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State is not significant.
2. The relationship between sexual attitude and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State is not significant.
3. The relationship between pressure to have sex and sexually risky behaviours of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State is not significant.

4. There correlation among peer sexual behaviour, sexual attitude, pressure to have sex, and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State is not significant.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Research Design**

A correlational research design was employed for this study in order to investigate the correlation between peer sexual attitude and sexual risky behaviour of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. The design was used because the study sought to establish the relationship that exists among the variables

### **2.2 Research Setting**

Anambra State, located in the South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria, was chosen as the location for the study due to the students in the area being in their puberty years and exposed to peer sex relationships. This high possibility of students engaging in different sexual activities at the secondary school level was the main factor in deciding the location.

### **2.3 Participants**

This study aimed to investigate a sample of 1,200 adolescents from the 19,048 SS2 students in public secondary schools across Anambra State using a multi-stage sampling method.

The process began by selecting four out of the six education zones in Anambra State through simple random sampling. From each of these four zones, one urban and one rural local government area were randomly chosen, resulting in a total of eight local government areas.

Next, three coeducational secondary schools were selected from each local government area using disproportionately stratified random sampling. This resulted in eight schools from rural areas and sixteen from urban areas, making a total of 24 schools.

Within each selected school, 50 students (both male and female) were randomly chosen, though schools with fewer than 50 students included all available students. Despite initially selecting 1,200 participants, 1,075 successfully completed the survey. This method ensured a representative sample from both urban and rural schools.

### **2.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

The study employed four data collection instruments: the Adolescent Sexual Behaviour Index (ASBI), a modified version of the Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS) created by Hendrick (2006), the Pressure to Have Sex Questionnaire (PTHSQ) developed by the researchers, and a modified Sexual Risk Behaviour Scale (SRBS) developed by Fino, Jaspal, Lopes, Wignall, and Bloxsom (2021). The ASBI is a metric that gauges the range of sexual activities commonly shown by adolescents in the last year. The test consists of 14 items and requires respondents to choose between "yes" or "no" as their

answer choices. The revised BSAS is a 21-item questionnaire specifically created to assess the sexual attitudes of adolescents across four dimensions: permissiveness towards open relationships, responsibility in birth control, attitude towards the significance of meeting a sexual partner, and attitude towards enjoying physical sexual experiences. The measurement is conducted using a five-point Likert scale, which spans from strong agreement to strong disagreement, and assigns scores between 1.0 and 5.0. The PTHSQ is a 12-item questionnaire devised by the researchers. It is assessed using a 4-point scale, with answer choices ranging from Never (1) to Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), and Always (4). The revised SRBS prioritises crucial sexual risk behaviours among students and comprises of seven questions with four answer alternatives: never 1, rarely 2, sometimes 3, and always 4. The Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to determine the internal consistency of the BSAS, PTHSQ, and SRBS. The reliability coefficients for these measures were 0.86, 0.96, and 0.80, respectively. The reliability index of the ASBI was determined using Kuder Richardson statistics, yielding a value of 0.86.

### **2.5 Data collection and analysis**

The research instruments were administered to all the participants in the study through a direct delivery approach. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) was used to analyse the data collected for the research questions, and a t-test for significant correlation was employed to test the null hypotheses.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data obtained from the field for this research was analysed in this part, and the findings were presented in tables to display the results.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

#### **Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

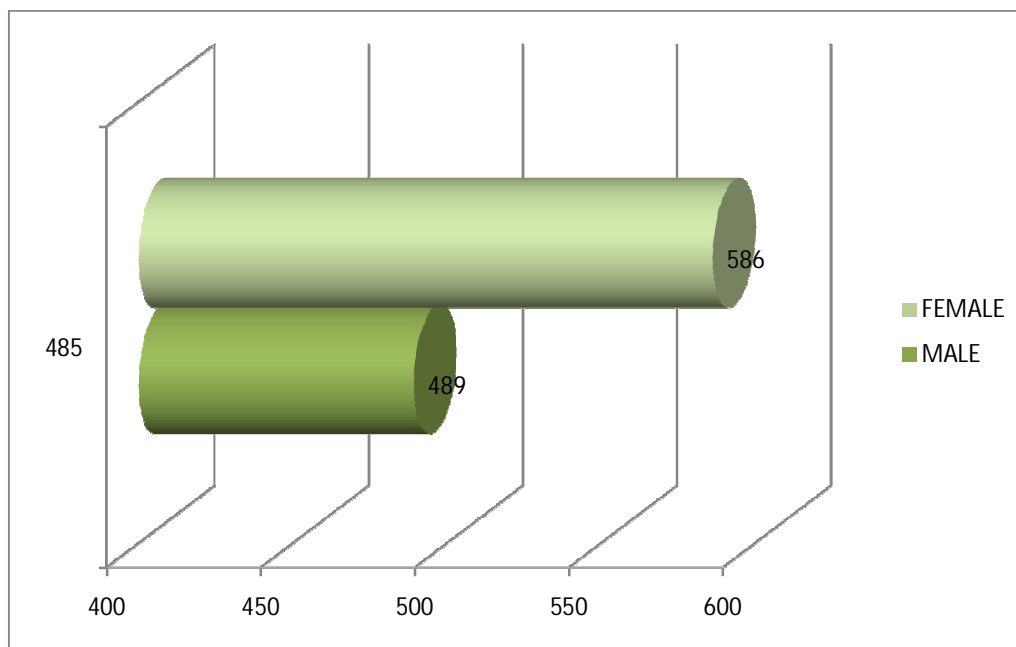


Table 1 and the bar chart illustrate the gender distribution of respondents. Of the total, 586 respondents (54.5%) were female, while 489 respondents (45.5%) were male. This indicates that the majority of respondents were female, with males comprising a smaller proportion.

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between peer sexual behaviour and risky sexual behaviours of adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 1: The Pearson correlation coefficient measures of the strength and direction of the association between peer sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviours.**

Variables	N	Peer Sexual Behaviour r.	Sexual Risk Behaviours r.	Remarks
Peer Sexual Behaviour	1079	1.00	0.197	Low positive relationship
Sexual Risk Behaviours	1079	0.197	1.00	

Table 1 reveals a Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.197, indicating a slight positive relationship between sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviour among public secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours of adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Pearson r on the relationship between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours**

Variables	N	Sexual Attitude r	Sexual Risk Behaviours r	Remarks
Sexual Attitude	1079	1.00	0.02	Very low positive relationship
Sexual Risk Behaviours	1079	0.002	1.00	

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) in Table 2 is 0.002. This indicates a negligible or nonexistent correlation between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours among students attending public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between pressure to have sex and sexual risk behaviours of adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 3: Pearson r on the relationship between pressure to have sex and sexual risk behaviours**

Variables	N	Pressure to have sex r	Sexual risk behaviours r	Remarks
Pressure to have sex	1079	1.00	0.109	Low positive relationship
Sexual risk behaviours	1079	0.109	1.00	

Table 3 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is 0.109, demonstrating a weak positive relationship between the pressure to engage in sexual activity and sexual risk behaviours among students attending public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### Null Hypotheses

**4.4 Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between peer sexual behaviour and sexual risk behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State

**Table 4: Testing the significance of the relationship between peer sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents.**

Variable	Cal. r	Df	Cal. t	P-value	Remark
Peer sexual behaviour	0.197	1077	6.181	0.000	*S

\*Significant

Table 4 indicates that at a significance level of 0.05 and with 1077 degrees of freedom, the estimated t-value was 6.181, and its associated P-value was 0.000. Given that the result is below 0.05, we can deduce that the initial null hypothesis is rejected. This is a significant correlation between the sexual

conduct of peers and the sexual risk behaviours of adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours of I adolescents in publicsecondary schools in Anambra State is not significant.

**Table 5: Statistical analysis to determine the significance of the relationship between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents**

Variable	Cal. r	df	Cal. t	P-value	Remark
Sexual attitude	0.002	1077	0.144	0.885	*NS

\*Not Significant

Table 5 indicates that, with a significance level of 0.05 and 1077 degrees of freedom, the computed t value of 0.144 has a P value of 0.885, which exceeds 0.05. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that there is no statistically significant correlation between the sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

**Hypothesis 3:** The relationship existing between pressure to have sex and sexual risk behaviours of adolescents in public secondary schools inAnambra State is not significant.

**Table 6: Statistical analysis to determine the significance of the relationship between the pressure to engage in sexual activity and the occurrence of risky sexual behaviours among adolescents in secondary school**

Variable	Cal. r	df	Cal. t	P-value	Remark
Pressure to have sex	0.109	1077	2.787	0.005	*S

\*Significant

Table 6 shows that the estimated t-value of 2.787, with 1077 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05, has a P-value of 0.005. This P-value is below the threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the rejection of the third null hypothesis indicates a substantial correlation between the urge to engage in sexual activity and the sexual risk behaviours shown by secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

### 3.1. Discussion

Findings of this study are discussed as follows:

### **3.1.1 Relationship between Peer Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Risky Behaviours of Adolescents in Public Secondary Schools Anambra State**

The study's results reveal a mild, positive association between sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviours among students attending public secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that while there is a correlation between the two, it is not sufficiently robust. The results show that there is a statistically significant association between peer sexual behaviour and sexual risk behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. However, the strength of this association is weak.

The results of this research may be due to a variety of factors. These include the level of knowledge of sexual health and the potential consequences of engaging in risky sexual behaviour among public secondary school students, the lack of access to accurate information and resources to support safe sexual practises, the inadequate quality of sex education in schools, and the potential stigma or disapproval associated with discussing sexual health and engaging in safe sexual practises in some communities. The results of this research are consistent with the results of previous investigations, including Udigwe, Adogu, and Nwabueze (2014); Pengpid and Peltzer (2015); and Chi, Yu, and Winter (2012). This implies that there is a causal relationship between sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviours among students in public secondary schools in Anambra State. However, it should be noted that this correlation is not very substantial.

### **3.1.2 Relationship between Sexual Attitude and Sexual Risky Behaviours of Adolescents in Public Secondary Schools**

The study findings show that there is a limited or nonexistent relationship between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours among students attending public secondary schools in Anambra State. This suggests that if there is a rise in the students' sexual attitude, which refers to their ideas about sexuality as shown by their actions, it is possible that there will be an increase in their engagement in sexual practices that carry potential risks. Nevertheless, the correlation between the two variables was very weak, suggesting the absence of any significant relationship. Additionally, the study discovered that there was no statistically significant relationship between the sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. This implies that there is not a significant connection between the two variables.

There are many possible reasons for the study findings that showed a slight or nonexistent connection between sexual attitude and sexual risk behaviours among public secondary school students in Anambra State. These results align with previous research, namely Miller and Sneesby's (2018) study, which found a minimal positive relationship between students' sexual attitude and sexual risk conduct in the United States. This may be attributed to the fact that sexual attitude is more strongly associated with other variables that were not examined in this research. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that a significant proportion of the adolescents in this research had negative sexual attitudes, which might have limited their likelihood of engaging in risky sexual practices. The acquisition of this unfavourable attitude may have stemmed from influences such as

parental upbringing, peer groups, media exposure, classroom teachers, and previous sexual experiences. In their study, Jahanfar and Pashaei (2022) discovered a minimal positive association between engaging in hazardous sexual conduct and religion, along with a negative sexual attitude. The rationale for this result was the notion that individuals who actively adhere to their religious beliefs are less prone to engaging in sexually unsafe conduct compared to those who do not.

### **3.1.3 Relationship between pressure to have sex and sexual risky behaviours of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State**

The findings of this research indicate a slight although noteworthy correlation between peer pressure to engage in sexual activity and sexual risk behaviours among students attending public secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that a small increase in pressure from peers could lead to an increased risk of engaging in sexually risky behaviours. This result is in line with previous studies, such as Rimande, Agu, and Terzungwe (2021), Adegboyega, Ayoola, and Muhammed (2019), and Adimora, Akaneme, and Aye (2018). These studies have all highlighted that peer pressure is a significant predictor of risky sexual behaviour among adolescents and young adults.

The reasons for this could be attributed to various factors, including exposure to multiple sources of peer pressure, a lack of access to comprehensive sex education, a lack of family support and guidance, and messages from the media and popular culture that portray sexual activities as a way to gain acceptance and respect. All of these factors could lead to adolescents feeling pressured to engage in sexual activities despite the potential risks. The increasing prevalence of sex among adolescents has made it easier and less intimidating for them to discuss the topic. This has made it more difficult to manage them due to their being exposed to sex through their peers, social media, and television shows. As teenagers strive to discover their own identities, parental controls become less relevant, and their peers have a greater influence on them. When peers give approval for certain behaviour, adolescents are more likely to take on that behaviour and incorporate it into their lives.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The results of this research indicated a minor but positive connection between peer sexual behaviour, sexual attitude, peer pressure to engage in sexual activity, and unsafe sexual behaviours among adolescents in secondary school. The correlation was found to be significant, implying that the aforementioned factors are interconnected and must be addressed collectively in order to reduce the sexual risk behaviours among adolescents in Anambra State.

### **4.1 Implications of the Study**

The findings of the study indicated a weak positive association between sexual conduct and sexual risk behaviours among adolescents attending public secondary schools in Anambra State. This highlights the need for health education and prevention strategies to be implemented to protect the sexual health of adolescents. It is essential that students and educators are aware of this relationship and take action to ensure they are properly informed of the risks associated with sexual activity. This

can be done by providing access to resources and information, as well as fostering an open dialogue between students and adults. Ultimately, this study emphasises the importance of continued education and awareness surrounding the risks of sexual behaviour among young people.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

The findings of the study have led to the following recommendations :

1. School management should work collaboratively with guidance counsellors and health educators to start prevention programmes intended to broaden adolescents' aspirations for the future, increase their social and interpersonal skills, and engage them in more school and community activities in order to reduce their involvement in various deviant activities.
2. School health educators should collaborate with school guidance counsellors to organize school programmes that teach safe sex and the behavioural skills required for negotiation and refusal to effectively address peer group influence, social norms, and pressures to have sex. These programmes could be offered in various settings, such as health education classes, after-school recreational programmes, and school-based health or family planning clinics.
3. Parents should focus on strengthening family relationships as a key preventive measure against risky behaviour, particularly sexual behaviour involving their adolescent child. This should be included in policy-making, public education, and premarital, marital, and parent counselling.
4. Health educators should provide age-appropriate educational and counselling messages that are suited to secondary school adolescents' stages of sexual activity.

## **CONSENT**

The authors have collected and safeguarded participants' signed consent in accordance with the required scholarly standards.

## **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

This study has been reviewed and approved to have adhered to the ethical principles of research involving human subjects, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The potential benefits of the study outweigh the risks, and appropriate measures have been taken to protect participants' rights and well-being.

## **Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

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