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International note

Gender and other risk factors associated with risky behaviours among Nigerian adolescents



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ABSTRACT

Risky behaviours in adolescents, apart from substance use, and their associate factors, have not been thoroughly investigated in Nigeria. Hence, there is a need to study the prevalence of risky behaviours and their relationship with gender and other potential risk factors. Data comprising socio-demographic, risky behaviours, personality traits, religious orientation and substance use were obtained from 300 randomly selected secondary school students. Two risk groups (low and high) based on the number of risky behaviours were determined. Male was a risk factor for theft (OR = 2.1; 95%CI = 1.17–3.95), bullying (OR = 2.76; 95%CI = 1.37–5.56) and fighting (OR = 2.14; 95%CI = 1.35–3.40). Fifty-two (17.3%) of the students were of high-risk behaviour group. Furthermore, private school ($\beta = 1.05$; $P = 0.010$), poor perceived relationship with teachers ($\beta = 1.21$; $P = 0.002$), polygamy ($\beta = 1.20$; $P = 0.002$) and lifetime cigarette use ($\beta = 1.07$; $P = 0.027$) were predictors of high-risk behaviour group. Substantial proportion of adolescents in Nigeria exhibit risky behaviours of which gender and other factors play a significant role.

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Introduction

Risky behaviours are those with potential of having adverse effects on the overall development and well-being of youth (CDC, 2016; Guzman & Pohlmeier, 2014), and adolescents are at considerable risk to engage in these behaviours because of ongoing biological and social development (Sadock & Sadock, 2007; WHO, 2017). It is well reported that the prevalence of risky behaviours is fairly high (CDC, 2016; Nieri, Apkarian, Kulis, & Marsiglia, 2015; Zhou et al., 2012), and researchers from developed nations have identified individual, familial and extra-familial factors that are associated with risky behaviours in adolescents (Guzman & Pohlmeier, 2014).

Little is known about these behaviours in developing countries like Nigeria except for alcohol and other drug use which are well surveyed. Substantial data are available for substance use, hence, the focus of this study was on behaviours such as theft, bullying, suicide attempts, physical fighting, sexual intercourse, property damage, and gangsterism/cultism. The prevalence rates of some of these behaviours are unknown; while the available prevalence studies (Adenike, Wusiu, & Olugbenga, 2009;

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(Onukwufor, 2013; Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015) have focussed on isolation of one or two of these behaviours. No known single study in Nigeria has investigated the gamut of these risky behaviours. Furthermore, in terms of risk behaviour level, we hypothesized the existence of two distinct groups, low and high, according to previous work (Carli et al., 2014). The two groups were expected to defer in gender and other characteristics (Onukwufor, 2013; Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015).

Methods

This cross-sectional study was carried out in Benin-City, situated in the south-south region of Nigeria. A total of 300 students were selected as participants by multi-stage random sampling from 18 schools.

A written consent was either obtained from the students, or their parents/guardians after assenting if less than 18 years. Ethical approval was obtained from an ethics committee prior to the administration of the self-report questionnaire.

Some socio-demographic variables; drug use such as alcohol, cigarette, and cannabis; seven other risky behaviours adapted from the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) (CDC, 2016); religious orientation using the 'Age Universal' Religious Orientation Scale (Maltby, 1999); and the five-factor model of personality using the 44-item Big-Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1998), were obtained from the participants.

Each risky behaviour was scored '1' when response was 'Yes' and all the positive scores were added together to determine the level of risk. The overall risk behaviour score was dichotomised into low and high based on the sample mean of 1.32 (SD = 1.42). A cut off of 2 which is the next nearest integer to the mean score was employed. The group of students with 2 or less positive scores were described as low-risk behaviour group, while the other category with more than 2 risky behaviours were regarded as high-risk group.

Results

Findings are displayed in the tables below (see Tables 1–4).

Discussion

The prevalence rates of most of the risky behaviours, except for gangsterism/cultism (3.0%) and attempt at suicide (5.7%), were fairly high as previously reported in Nigeria (Adenike et al., 2009; Onukwufor, 2013; Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015). Behaviours such as bullying, fighting and theft were significantly more among the males and this has been similarly reported in the past in Nigeria (Onukwufor, 2013; Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015). The only risky behaviour that was more common in females, though not significant, was suicide attempt which is consistent with previous researches (CDC, 2016; Giru, 2012) and this is understandable because of its significant association with depression, a disorder, which is commoner in females.

The risky behaviours were grouped together and further dichotomised into two classes with the high-risk group comprising 52 (17.3%) of the students' sample who engaged in more than 2 of the risky behaviours. A previous study by Carli et al. (2014) showed different risk classes in terms of frequency of risky behaviours though a third category referred to as 'invisible-risk' which stood in between the high and the low was identified in their study. Other differences observed between

Table 1
Association of gender with risky behaviours.

Risky behaviour	Gender			Significant test			
	Male (n = 165)	Female (n = 135)	Total (n = 300)	X ²	df	p	OR (95% CI)
Theft				6.23	1	0.01	2.10 (1.17–3.95)
Yes	41 (24.8)	18 (13.3)	59 (19.7)				
No	124 (75.2)	117 (86.7)	241 (80.3)				
Gangsterism/cultism				1.95	1	0.16	2.95 (0.60–14.42)
Yes	7 (4.2)	2 (1.5)	9 (3.0)				
No	158 (95.8)	133 (98.5)	291 (97.0)				
Sexual intercourse				3.17	1	0.08	1.92 (0.93–3.96)
Yes	26 (15.8)	12 (8.9)	38 (12.7)				
No	139 (84.2)	123 (91.1)	262 (87.3)				
Attempted suicide				0.03	1	0.86	0.92 (0.34–2.44)
Yes	9 (5.5)	8 (5.9)	17 (5.7)				
No	156 (94.5)	127 (94.1)	283 (94.3)				
Bullying				8.53	1	0.00	2.76 (1.37–5.56)
Yes	35 (21.2)	12 (8.9)	47 (15.7)				
No	130 (78.8)	123 (91.1)	253 (84.3)				
Physical fighting				10.48	1	0.00	2.14 (1.35–3.40)
Yes	97 (58.8)	54 (40.0)	151 (50.3)				
No	68 (41.2)	81 (60.0)	149 (49.7)				
Damaged property				3.86	1	0.05	1.72 (1.00–2.96)
Yes	48 (29.1)	26 (19.3)	74 (24.7)				
No	117 (70.9)	109 (80.7)	226 (75.3)				

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