

## Peer pressure and parental style as predictors of undergraduates attitude toward rape victims

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### Abstract

*Many researchers have been interested in the various psychological impacts of being a rape victim to the extent that researches have been tailored towards rape victims' experiences and the assistance they get from the mental health, medical and legal systems; and also on how these interactions impact on their psychological well-being. Rape victims do not only feel distressed from the traumatic experience of being raped but also from the way the society acts towards them. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and social categories have been used to predict attitude towards rape victims. This study was conducted to assess the predictive influence of peer pressure and parenting style on undergraduates' attitude towards rape victims. Three hundred undergraduates from two different Universities in Ekiti State, Nigeria, responded to self-report instruments that comprise of Attitude towards Rape Victim Scale, Peer Pressure Scale and Parenting Style questionnaire. Using convenient sampling method one hundred and fifty participants were drawn from each of the institutions. Participants were aged between 15- 25 years. Males were 173 (57.7%) while the females were 127 (42.3%). Multiple regression analysis revealed that parenting styles predicted undergraduates' attitude towards rape victims. The study also revealed that peer pressure significantly predicted undergraduates' attitude towards rape victims and that parenting style and peer pressure, interactively predict undergraduates' attitude towards rape. Based on the findings, it was concluded that peer pressure and parenting are significant predictors of undergraduates' attitude towards rape victims.*

**Keywords:** Parenting style, peer pressure, rape victims, undergraduates

## Introduction

Rape can be seen as the forceful, violent and coercive way of having sexual intercourse with the opposite sex, or same sex. Adolescents suffer more as victims of rape and also from the adverse effects of the negative attitudes people have towards victims of rape. Yusuf, Omolayo and Azikiwe (2015) described attitude as a concept that involves the way individuals think, act and behave. Attitude towards rape victims involves the perception or dispositions individuals hold or have towards those who have been victims of rape. Some of these attitudes may cause victims to suffer emotional trauma or disturbances such as depression, bipolar disorders and schizophrenia in extreme cases. Most often than not, females are victims of rape because people tend to hold several beliefs to the female factor. Such beliefs include; women can easily be persuaded, they naturally give most times, they say no even when they mean the opposite, etc

The issue of rape is one act or serious behaviour, which keeps affecting individuals and the rate at which it is taking serious differ from country to country. As such in Nigeria perpetrators of this act often go unpunished because most times the victims do not report it to avoid being stigmatised. In other countries like the US, this is a very felonious act which is taking serious and can earn an individual or perpetrator life imprisonment. In Nigeria and other African countries rape cases are seen as misdemeanours which do not require much punishments as such leaving some unremorseful individuals to go back to this unkind act of dehumanizing people of their virtues and right. In Lagos State, Nigeria, a total of one hundred and fifty (150) cases of sexual and physical abuse

reported were recorded for one year period as of April 27, 2016 (Eguagie, 2016). This is why social groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sprung up to correct this menace of rape in society, and to protect rape victims and help them recover from the psychological, emotional traumas and finally lead a more useful and positive life in society. The university is one home for several activities, and as such most cases of rape, assault etc. also emanate from higher institutions and colleges.

## Peer pressure

Every individual, one way or another belongs to a group which affects how such individuals think, behave and view things. We all have peer groups, and these groups are crucial in our social interactions, and the attitudes we form towards things and people around us. Armengol and Jackson (2008) distinguished between positive and negative peer pressure. The pressure that forces one to form good relationships, hold good values and treat people well and strive to excel in academics etc is a positive one while those that cause one to do the opposite, associate with bad and wrong individuals, form bad, wrongful friendships and exhibit deviant behaviours are the negative peer pressure.

Understanding peer pressure is very much important because it decides and influences one's life. Peer pressure influence on an individual is mostly seen during his or her adolescence. It is during this stage that several physical and psychological changes happen within the individual. It is also at this stage that there arises a little of unconformity in their fixation with the society and with their peers. It is from here an individual either starts loosing or starts hiding his innocence, his uniqueness, his value (Markus & Nurius,

1986; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Nurmi, 2004; Carlson, 2010).

### **Parenting and Parenting Style**

The intricacy of raising a child apart from the biological relationship is what parenting entails (Brooks, 2012). It is the process of being a parent. According to Morrison (1978) parenting involves the practice of developing and utilising the knowledge and skills appropriate to plan, create, give birth, and provide care for offspring. Parenting has so many characteristics among which are – it is a choice that one has to decide on and also a life-long commitment. It involves both physical and psychological responsibilities and also involves all the family members.

Parenting style can be seen as the overall emotional climate in the home (Spera, 2005). There are three main styles of parenting identified by Baumrind – the authoritative, the authoritarian and the permissive parenting styles (Baumrind, 2007). The uninvolved style was later added to make it four parenting styles. Parenting style has been seen to be related to well-being and mental health of children (Santrock, 2007; Rubin, 2015, Rubin & Kelly, 2015).

### **Demographic Variables and Attitude toward Rape Victims**

Research has shown that females hold lesser rape myths although they have more negative attitude towards victims of rape and that there is a significant influence of social category and gender on causal attribution for sexual violence (Mittal, Singh & Kumar, 2017). Some other researches have been conducted considering the influence of age on attitude toward rape victims. Older participants express less favourable attitudes towards rape victims than the younger participants (Matsuo & McIntyre 2005).

Wittenborn (2002) believed that parents basically shape and mould their children into adulthood and as such have a whole of influence over them. Consequently parental styles can positively or negatively influence children attitudes and behaviour. A large body of research on attitudes indicates that parental warmth in combination with reasonable levels of control or restrictiveness combine to produce positive child outcomes.

It is on the basis of the above that this study was conducted to test the following hypotheses:

- Peer pressure will predict undergraduates' attitudes towards rape victims.
- Parenting style will predict undergraduates' attitudes towards rape victims.
- Peer pressure and Parenting style will jointly predict undergraduates' attitudes towards rape victims.

### **Method**

#### ***Research Design***

The researchers used the ex-post facto research design since there were no actual manipulation variables done. The independent variables of interest were peer pressure and parenting style while the dependent variable was attitude towards rape. The study population consisted of undergraduates drawn from Federal University Oye Ekiti and Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. These two institutions were used because they are the public universities available in Ekiti State. A sample of 300 participants (150 from each institution) were drawn through convenient sampling method and used for the study. Of the 300 participants, male and female respondents accounted for 57.7% and 47%, respectively. First year students totalled 40%,

second year students 32.7%, third year students 22%, fourth year students 3.7% and year five students 1.7%. Participants were

Predictors	B	T	P	R	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Authoritarian Parenting	.079	1.281	>.05	.288	.083	8.897	<.05
Authoritative Parenting	-.228	3.905	<.05	-.288	.139	2.293	<.05
Permissive Parenting	.139	2.293	<.05	.139	.083	2.293	<.05

aged between 15- 25 years.

**Research Instruments**

Attitude toward rape was measured using The Attitude towards Rape Victims Scale, a 25 items scale developed by Ward (1998). The scale is scored from 0-4 and a respondent can score from 0-100. For some of the items the scoring is reversed. The higher the score, the more negative the attitudes that the respondent holds towards the rape victims.

Peer Pressure was measured using the peer pressure scale an 11 item scale developed by Santor, Messervey and

Kusumakar (2000) which measures peer pressure, peer conformity, and popularity. The scale is measured in a yes or no format.

The parenting style scale developed by Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart (1995) was used to measure Parenting Style. It is a 30 item scale that measures parental attitudes and behaviour.

**Statistical Method**

Data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Hypotheses stated were tested using regression analysis (simple and multiple).

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Table showing independent and joint prediction of attitude towards rape from parenting styles**

The table reveals that Authoritative Parenting and Permissive Parenting styles independently predicts undergraduates’ attitude towards rape ( $\beta = -.228, t = -3.988, p < .05$ ) and ( $\beta = .139, t = 2.293, p < .05$ ) respectively. However, Authoritarian Parenting style does independently predict undergraduates’ attitude towards rape in Ekiti State. All the predictor variables jointly predict undergraduates’ attitude towards rape ( $F(2, 297) = 8.897, p < .05$ ). Accounting for 8.3% ( $Adj R^2 = .083$ ) variance in attitudes towards rape.

**Table 2: Simple Regression Table showing prediction of attitude towards rape victims from peer pressure**

The results presented in table 2 shows that peer pressure significantly predicts undergraduates’ attitude towards rape. ( $f_{299} = 23.561; t = 4.854, P < .05$ ).

Predictor	B	T	P	R	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
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Peer pressure	.271	4.854	<.05	.271	.073	23.561	<.05
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**Table 3: Multiple Regression Table showing independent and joint prediction of attitude towards rape victims from parenting styles and peer pressure**

Predictors	B	T	P	R	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Peer Pressure	.186	2.975	<.05	.331	.109	9.063	<.05
Authoritarian Parenting	.061	1.003	<.05				
Authoritative Parenting	-.185	-3.168	>.05				
Permissive Parenting	.070	1.094	>.05				

Result in Table 3 shows that Authoritarian Parenting and Peer pressure independently predicts undergraduates’ attitude towards rape victims ( $\beta = -.185, t = -3.168, p < .05$ ) and ( $\beta = .186, t = 2.975, p < .05$ ) respectively. However, neither permissive nor authoritative Parenting style independently predicts undergraduates’ attitude towards rape. All the predictor variables jointly predict undergraduates’ attitude towards rape ( $F(3, 296) = 9.063, p < .05$ ).

**Discussion**

The study reveals that peer pressure predicts attitude towards rape victims. A plausible reason for this is conformity and the need for belongingness. Most individuals do not want to stand alone and thus easily conform to pressure from their peer groups and act in ways and manners that depict the goals of such group since peer groups give a sense of security and help provide a sense for identity for such an individual. This is in congruence with related studies that were involved with the identification of group behaviour and sexual orientations. For instance, Martin and Hummer (1989) argued that many fraternities create a social environment in which sexual coercion is normalized because women are perceived as commodities available to meet men’s sexual needs. These fraternities include groups whose membership initiation involves pressures from peers.

This study also showed that parenting style predicts attitude towards rape victims

lending credence to the work of Odebumni (2007) who noted that the foundation of adolescent delinquency is rooted in the kind of home the adolescent is brought up and their intention towards criminal behaviours and attitude. It is also consistent with previous studies that found out that an authoritative parenting style has positive effects on child adaptation, whereas the remaining styles place the child at risk for negative outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983)

The study also reveals a joint influence of peer pressure and parenting style on attitude of undergraduates toward rape victims. This implies that the kind of company or associations an undergraduate keeps and the style of parenting adopted by their parents goes a long way in determining how they perceive individuals that were victims of rape.

The inclusion of peer pressure in the regression model changed the direction of influence making authoritarian parenting



become significant and others not; this finding contradicts one of the findings of this study that showed significant independent influence of authoritative and permissive parenting styles but no influence of authoritarian parenting style. Authoritarian parenting style has been shown to result in child's restriction in explorative capacity, social interaction, dependence on parental guidance and direction; since it has been related to lower self confidence and ability to employ coping mechanism among adolescents (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). Adolescence is a stage where adolescents try to assert themselves since they are being gradually viewed as adults by their parents. At this stage there is usually parent-child conflict and less cohesive familial bond. This conflict increases as peer influence increases in adolescents. When an adolescent has a good relationship with his/her parents, such an adolescent is less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as rape or hold negative behaviours toward rape victims. The reverse is the case when such an adolescent sees the parent as being too authoritarian. The result of this study is in line with Sarwar (2016) study that found that authoritarian parenting style makes children rebellious and adopt problematic behaviour. This is because at this stage, adolescents value peer relationship and view authoritarian parents to be exercising too much power on them. Studies have shown that authoritarian parenting style has deep connection with more negative behavioural outcomes (Kerr, Stattin & Ozdemir, 2012; Hoskins, 2014).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study concludes that peer influence and parenting style independently and jointly predict undergraduates attitude

towards rape victims. The researchers therefore recommend that individual involvements with groups and identification with group goals should be for a positive course rather than the negative one. Also upcoming parents should be aware of the several parenting styles and evaluate or experiment to be sure of which is the right and appropriate style in helping their children develop and form right attitudes.

### **Limitation**

A limitation of this study is that the researchers used self-report instruments of which there was no way to confirm the authenticity of the responses got.

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