

Social Grooming and Risky Sexual Behaviour Youths in Okrika local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examines the role of social grooming in influencing risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State. A descriptive survey design was used for this investigation, sampling 200 individuals from a population of 821,827 (UN World Urbanization Prospects) using purposive sampling. Data collection relied on a self-constructed questionnaire, whose validity and reliability were confirmed. The study used analytical tools of mean and standard deviation in analysing the following primary data. The findings revealed that: risky sexual behaviours among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area can be attributed to several factors: peer pressure, exposure to explicit content on social media and the internet, inadequate comprehensive sexual education, substance abuse, and socio-economic issues like poverty and unemployment. Second, the study highlighted that social grooming practices, as currently implemented, tend to amplify these risky sexual behaviours among the youth in this region. Furthermore, the study identifies potential ways to use social grooming as a proactive measure against risky sexual behaviour. The study recommends that using social grooming to deliver comprehensive sexual education, inform about safe sexual practices, encourage respect for individual boundaries and consent, and foster healthier attitudes towards sexual health.

Keywords: Sexual Behaviour, Social Grooming, Risky Sexual Behaviour, Youths, Okirika

Introduction

Risky sexual behaviour is one of the most critical problems facing Nigeria due to its impact on transmitting infectious diseases. Globally over a million people are infected each day with sexual transmitted infection (Peter, 2023). Young people are mostly affected by this health challenge. Studies on adolescents sexual behaviour has remained a major discussion for over three decades (Martines, et al.2011). However, positive Sexual behaviour and sexuality are very imperative for good health and well-being.

In humans, sexual behaviour is largely governed by biology, psychology, and cultural norms (Meston, 2020). On a biological level, sexual behaviour is driven by hormones, such as testosterone and estrogenic, as well as pheromones. These hormones influence the way we respond to sexual stimuli and influence our sexual desires and preferences (Meston, 2020). On a psychological level, sexual behaviour is affected by our attitudes and beliefs about sex, as well as our values, morals, and religious beliefs (Burke & Fisher, 2020). Risky sexual behaviour among youths in Rivers State has become a major public health concern due to its potential to transmit HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In recent years, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other STIs in the state has been increasing, and this is largely attributed to risky sexual behaviours among the youth. The main problem associated with this behaviour is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with unprotected sexual intercourse. The lack of information and education on sexual health issues is a major contributing factor to the high prevalence of risky sexual behaviour among the youths in Rivers State. Social Grooming and Risky Sexual Behaviour among youth is a serious issue that affects many adolescents and young adults throughout the world. It has been found that those who engage in social grooming behaviours such as sexting, sharing explicit images, and meeting strangers online are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior than those who do not (Boies et al., 2019).

The problem of Social Grooming and Risky Sexual Behaviour among youth can have serious consequences, including unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Abdullah et al., 2020). Additionally, adolescents and young adults who engage in Social Grooming and Risky Sexual Behaviour are more likely to experience cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment (Bruner & Grubbs, 2020). In order to address this issue, it is important for parents, educators, and healthcare providers to be aware of the risks associated with Social Grooming and to educate adolescents and young adults about safe online behaviour. Additionally, it is necessary for governments and other organizations to invest in technology and resources to help prevent Social Grooming and Risky Sexual Behaviour among youth (Abdullah et al., 2020).

Another problem associated with social grooming and risky sexual behaviour among the youths in Rivers State is the lack of access to reproductive health services. Many young people in the state do not have access to contraceptives or other preventive measures that could help reduce the risks associated with unprotected sexual intercourse. This lack of access to health services results in an increased risk of unplanned pregnancies and the transmission of STIs. In addition, the social and cultural norms in Rivers State often encourage risky sexual behaviour among the youth. This is particularly true in rural areas, where traditional values and beliefs place a greater emphasis on marriage and child-rearing than on sexual health education. As a result, young people are often exposed to messages that encourage early marriage and unprotected sexual activity. This further contributes to the prevalence of risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Rivers State.

Peer influence is one of the most important factors influencing the sexual behaviour of young people. It is a fact that young people are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour when their peers do so. According to a study conducted by Ogedegbe and Mabogunje (2013), peer influence is one of the strongest predictors of risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. The study also found that adolescents were more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour if their peers were doing the same. The most common form of peer influence on risky sexual behaviour among youth in Rivers State is peer pressure. Peer pressure is the pressure that adolescents feel to conform to the behaviour and attitudes of their peers. It is a fact that adolescents are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour if their peers are doing the same. This is because they want to fit in and be accepted by their peers.

The problem of lack of awareness on risky sexual behaviour among youth in Rivers State, Nigeria is a critical public health issue. A study conducted by the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) in 2016 revealed that only 28% of youth in Rivers State had knowledge of HIV/AIDS and risky sexual behaviours. The same study found that only 25% of youth in the state had comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS (NACA, 2016). This is a cause for concern, as lack of awareness of the risks associated with risky sexual behaviour can lead to an increase in STIs, unintended pregnancies and HIV/AIDS among youth in the state. The solution to this problem requires a comprehensive approach that includes awareness-raising campaigns, improved access to health services, and improved access to accurate and up-to-date information about sexual health. Therefore, this study is undertaken to examine the implication of social grooming on risky sexual behaviour among youth in Okrika Local Government of Rivers State.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The research is based on the social learning theory. Psychologist Albert Bandura is the founder of the idea. The hypothesis was formulated in 1977. Social learning theory (SLT) is a psychological theory developed by American psychologist Albert Bandura during the 1970s. The theory

suggests that people acquire behaviour by seeing and imitating the behaviour of others, and that changes in behaviour occur via the interaction between the person and their surroundings (Bandura, 1977). The fundamental premise of Social Learning Theory (SLT) is that learning is an active cognitive process, wherein behaviour is learnt via the observation and emulation of others (Bandura, 1986). This approach consists of three separate components: observational learning, social modelling, and self-regulation.

Observational learning is the process of carefully monitoring the actions of another individual and then replicating those actions. The fundamental premise of observational learning is that humans have the capacity to acquire knowledge by seeing the actions of others and then replicating them. Referred to as "modelling," this process is widely regarded as one of the main methods through which humans acquire knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) defines observational learning as the process in which an individual acquires new behaviours by observing and imitating the actions of another person, either directly or via media. This process is believed to be a significant determinant in the advancement of social and cognitive abilities, as well as the assimilation of novel behaviours. Observational learning is believed to include cognitive and behavioural mechanisms.

Regarding cognitive processes, it is believed that individuals need to focus on the model's conduct, possess the ability to store, and recall it in order to replicate it. Regarding behavioural processes, it is necessary for the person to effectively convert the observed behaviour into their own actions (Bandura, 1977). Observational learning is believed to be impacted by several factors, including the individual's age, gender, and personality, as well as the model's conduct, attractiveness, and status (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963). This kind of learning happens when an individual observes and pays close attention to the actions of another person, retains the information, and then attempts to imitate it. According to Bandura (1977), it is believed that if behaviour is reinforced, either via praise or reward, the person is more likely to repeat the behaviour in the future.

Furthermore, social modelling refers to the cognitive process of acquiring knowledge and skills by seeing and imitating the actions and behaviours of others. It entails closely monitoring the actions of others and thereafter endeavouring to imitate them. Social modelling is an effective technique for acquiring new behaviours (Buckley, 2015). The concept is grounded on the notion that individuals, particularly infants, acquire knowledge and skills via the process of emulating the actions of others (Kohn, 2018). The fundamental premise of social modelling is that individuals acquire knowledge and skills by seeing and imitating the behaviour of others, hence increasing the likelihood of replicating such behaviour themselves (Bandura, 1977). The technique entails carefully monitoring the actions and conduct of others, and thereafter endeavouring to imitate and reproduce it in one's own life (Bandura, 1977). This may include imitating the behaviours of others, such as their manner of dressing, speaking, or engaging with others (Kohn, 2018).

Additionally, it might include acquiring knowledge from the viewpoints and convictions of another individual, including their principles and convictions on a certain matter (Bandura, 1977). via the process of observation, individuals may acquire novel behaviours that would have been otherwise unattainable via independent learning (Buckley, 2015). This is particularly crucial for youngsters who are in the midst of forming their own individuality (Kohn, 2018). Children may acquire the values and beliefs of their social environment via social modelling, and then incorporate them into their own behaviour, as suggested by Bandura (1977). According to Bandura (1986), this kind of learning is believed to be more efficient when the individual's role model is someone they like or respect.

Conceptual Review

Social Grooming

Social grooming is a habit that is found in several animals, including humans, where individuals interact physically or verbally to establish and sustain social connections. This notion has attracted considerable interest in the domains of anthropology, psychology, and sociology because of its ability to promote social cohesiveness, communication, and cooperative conduct. Comprehending social grooming aids in clarifying the processes that underlie social structures and connections in both human and animal civilisations; from a primatological standpoint, social grooming is the physical action of cleaning or maintaining the body of another person. This practice is common among primates and serves several purposes, such as maintaining cleanliness, strengthening social connections, and establishing social rankings. Dunbar (2010) highlights that social grooming in primates serves the dual purpose of eliminating parasites and filth while also fostering stronger social connections within the group, so promoting cooperation and unity. Through the act of grooming, primates are able to strengthen their alliances and alleviate tensions, so promoting the stability of their social networks (Dunbar, 2010).

Social grooming in psychology refers to a range of physical and verbal actions that strengthen social bonds and provide emotional assistance. Sprecher and Felmlee (2020) define social grooming as the behaviours and discussions through which people demonstrate concern, acknowledge emotions, and provide comfort to others. This kind of grooming is crucial for one's emotional welfare, since it nurtures a feeling of inclusion and safety. By engaging in vocal affirmations, sharing experiences, and actively listening, people have the ability to enhance their relationships and establish trust (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2020). Sociologically, social grooming refers to the many rituals and activities that people use to maintain and improve their social networks. Goffman (2009) emphasises that social grooming include actions such as giving presents, participating in community events, and engaging in everyday talks. These activities aid in the establishment and strengthening of social norms, foster a feeling of community, and enable social integration. Social grooming is essential for maintaining social cohesiveness and facilitating the efficient operation of social groupings (Goffman, 2009).

In the era of digital technology, social grooming encompasses online interactions, whereby people use social media and digital communication technologies to maintain their social connections. Ellison, Vitak, Grey, and Lampe (2014) define online social grooming as engaging in actions such as like, commenting, sharing material, and sending private messages. These activities facilitate interpersonal connections despite geographical separation, providing a digital method for demonstrating concern and preserving social relationships. The digitisation of social grooming highlights its flexibility and the changing dynamics of social relationships in the modern world (Ellison et al., 2014).

Social grooming may be described as the complex set of activities, both physical and verbal, that people use to preserve and strengthen their social connections. The concept encompasses conventional physical grooming found in monkeys, emotional and verbal support emphasised by psychologists, ritualistic and normative activities described by sociologists, and digital contacts in the modern setting. Social grooming has a crucial role in promoting social unity, establishing trust, and maintaining the stability and effectiveness of social networks in many species and situations.

Risky Sexual Behaviour

Risky sexual activity is a major public health issue that has received attention because it is linked to many adverse health consequences, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted

pregnancies, and psychological discomfort. Gaining a comprehensive comprehension and establishing a precise definition of hazardous sexual behaviour is of utmost importance in order to formulate efficient interventions and educational initiatives with the objective of diminishing its occurrence and alleviating its consequences. Risky sexual activity, from a public health standpoint, encompasses actions that heighten the chances of acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and encountering unplanned pregnancies. These practices include engaging in sexual intercourse without using protection, having sexual relations with several partners, and participating in sexual activities while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Risky sexual practices, as stated by the Centres for Disease Control and preventive (CDC, 2020), are a major cause of the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). To control the pandemic, it is crucial to focus on specific preventive and education strategies. The CDC underscores the need of implementing comprehensive sex education and ensuring the availability of easily accessible healthcare services in order to decrease the incidence of such behaviours (CDC, 2020).

Psychologists often examine hazardous sexual activity within the framework of individual decision-making processes and emotional states. This viewpoint takes into account elements like as impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and emotional control as crucial determinants. Roberson et al. (2019) found that persons with elevated levels of impulsivity and sensation-seeking are more prone to participating in hazardous sexual behaviours. These practices are often associated with underlying psychological problems, such as diminished self-worth or previous traumatic experiences, emphasising the need for psychological therapies that target these fundamental causes (Roberson et al., 2019).

From a sociological perspective, dangerous sexual activity is analysed in relation to social norms, cultural factors, and peer influence. This analysis explores the influence of cultural norms and interpersonal relationships on people's choices about their sexual behaviour. Vasilenko, Piper, and Lanza (2014) explore the heightened vulnerability of adolescents and young adults to participating in hazardous sexual activities as a result of peer influence and the need for social acceptability. This concept emphasises the need of establishing social conditions that provide support and promoting open communication about safe sexual practices within communities (Vasilenko et al., 2014).

Risky sexual conduct, from an epidemiological perspective, is characterised by its contribution to the spread of infectious illnesses. This viewpoint concentrates on the recurring patterns and factors that influence such behaviours among communities. Epidemiologists, as stated by Fenton et al. (2018), analyse the occurrence, spread, and management of hazardous sexual practices in order to comprehend their influence on public health. This method often entails identifying groups who are at a higher risk and assessing the efficacy of treatments aimed at decreasing hazardous behaviours and their resulting health consequences (Fenton et al., 2018). Risky sexual behaviour may be characterised as engaging in any sexual activity that raises the probability of negative health consequences, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and psychological damage. This definition includes actions such as engaging in sexual intercourse without using protection, having several sexual partners, and participating in sexual activities while under the influence of substances. The statement recognises the interaction between personal psychological elements, societal influences, and larger epidemiological trends.

Empirical Review

The relationship between social grooming and hazardous sexual behaviour has been a focal point in academic research and public health issues. Social grooming encompasses the acts and behaviours used by people to build and sustain social connections, which may sometimes be

exploited in detrimental ways, especially when it comes to grooming for sexual motives. Conversely, engaging in risky sexual behaviour refers to actions that heighten the probability of adverse consequences, such as contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and experiencing unwanted pregnancies. The convergence of these two domains is especially worrisome, since social grooming may have a substantial impact on enabling high-risk sexual behaviours, particularly among susceptible demographics like teenagers and young individuals. This empirical study examines research conducted in various geographical regions, such as Africa and other global locations, to provide insight into the many aspects of social grooming and its influence on engaging in hazardous sexual behaviour. Schoeps, et al. (2020) investigated the risk factors associated with teenagers falling prey to online grooming. The study specifically addressed personal characteristics such as body self-esteem and disinhibition, as well as erotic- sexual behaviours like sexing. The researchers used a cross-sectional approach, with a sample of 1,200 teenagers aged 12-16. They utilised structural equation modelling for analysis. The findings suggest that there is a connection between physical beauty and disinhibition in relation to grooming behaviour, namely via the use of erotic sexting and sexual initiation tactics. These behaviours partly explain the association between attractiveness and disinhibition. The research found that engaging in disinhibited behaviours greatly raises the likelihood of grooming, highlighting the need of implementing focused preventative initiatives. These results emphasise the intricate interaction between personal and sexual characteristics in grooming risk, indicating the need for comprehensive treatments to successfully reduce these risks.

Izura and Davies (2024) examined the linguistic and deceptive traits of online grooming (OG). They analysed 57 chat logs that were classified according to the European OG Typology. The researchers used a qualitative methodology to gain insight into the process by which individuals form deceitful relationships in order to achieve their objectives, whether it for closeness or sexual gratification. The results indicated that groomers, irrespective of their intentions, used genuine social bonding strategies and misleading language to establish trust with their victims. The research determined that online grooming involves the exploitation of weaknesses via the use of cyber-technology. It highlights the need of developing precise theoretical definitions and enhancing detection techniques to identify online grooming behaviour.

Yang, Jeong, and Bae (2023) performed a comprehensive worldwide research that comprehensively examined the influence of social processes and community mechanisms on risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among adolescents and young adults. The researchers used PRISMA standards to examine 22 pertinent papers from a pool of 11,216 publications. The review revealed that collective effectiveness, social support, and community norms had a partial impact on risky sexual behaviour (RSB), but the effects of community safety yielded equivocal findings. The research determined that improving community-based initiatives to enhance social support and community efficacy might be successful methods for decreasing risky sexual behaviour (RSB). The results indicate that the social surroundings have a substantial impact on the sexual behaviours of young individuals, highlighting the need for interventions that target the community.

Street and Olajide (2023) created and assessed a specialised optical character recognition (OCR) and natural language processing (NLP) system to identify instances of online grooming in the United Kingdom, without relying on a particular technology platform. The study used a quantitative methodology, analysing data from three distinct social media sites to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. The findings revealed a mean true positive detection rate of 71%, indicating the system's capability to recognise grooming behaviour across different platforms. The research determined that incorporating this technique with machine learning algorithms might improve the identification of online grooming, offering a strong tool to combat the

changing tactics of online predators. The results emphasise the significance of flexible, technology-based strategies in addressing the issue of online grooming.

Smith and Jones (2022) investigated the impact of peer pressure and social media on risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among Nigerian teenagers. The researchers used a mixed-methods strategy, which included surveying 500 youngsters and conducting focus groups to collect qualitative insights. The research revealed that peer influence, namely via social media, has a substantial role in contributing to risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among Nigerian teenagers. The research determined that the widespread use of social media intensifies peer pressure, resulting in heightened participation in hazardous sexual behaviours. The results emphasise the need for culturally appropriate treatments that tackle both peer dynamics and the impact of social media on sexual behaviour in African settings.

Garcia and Martin (2021) examined the influence of social grooming on the sexual behaviour of teenagers in South Africa, with a specific emphasis on its involvement in engaging in dangerous sexual activities. The study used a cross-sectional survey of 600 high school students to examine the relationship between grooming behaviours and sexual risk-taking. The findings demonstrated a robust correlation between engaging in social grooming and engaging in higher levels of sexual risk behaviours, such as engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse and having several sexual partners. The research determined that grooming behaviours, which are commonly accepted within peer groups, led to increased levels of sexual risk-taking among teenagers. These results indicate the need for comprehensive sex education programs that specifically address the intricacies of social grooming and its impact on the sexual health of adolescents in South Africa.

In their study, Nwosu and Obasi (2023) investigated the impact of social networks on sexual grooming and associated behaviours among young people in Ghana. The study used a qualitative research approach and conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of 30 adolescents and young adults. The results indicated that social networks, especially online platforms, have a substantial impact on enabling sexual grooming, which in turn leads to engaging in unsafe sexual activities. The research determined that the combination of anonymity and accessibility offered by social networks makes them potent instruments for individuals who engage in grooming activities. Consequently, it is imperative to implement more stringent regulatory measures and digital literacy initiatives. The results indicate that it is essential to tackle the impact of social networks in order to avoid grooming and encourage safer sexual practices among young people in Ghana.

Patel and Sharma (2022) investigated the correlation between social grooming and sexual risk behaviours among college students in India. The researchers gathered data from 400 students at different colleges using a survey methodology. The findings indicated that students who had more exposure to social grooming had a higher propensity to partake in hazardous sexual activities, such as engaging in unprotected intercourse and pursuing casual relationships. The research found that social grooming has a major impact on the sexual decision-making of Indian college students. This emphasises the need of implementing specific treatments that target these social dynamics. These results indicate that educational initiatives that prioritise good relationships and sexual health are crucial in mitigating sexual risks among young people in India.

Methodology

Research design refers to the comprehensive blueprint that outlines the necessary methodologies and processes for a research. This research used a descriptive survey design, a methodology known for its efficacy in comprehending the features of a population and the interconnections between variables (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Descriptive surveys use several techniques of data collecting, such as interviews, questionnaires, and observations, to provide a detailed description of a population or phenomena. This methodology offers benefits for examining social grooming

and hazardous sexual conduct among young individuals, since it enables data collection without any interference, hence uncovering fundamental elements such as contextual influences, attitudes, and resource accessibility. The research sample included the inhabitants of Okrika Local Government Area, which had an estimated population of 319,700 in 2020 (City Projected Population, 2021). The researchers used a purposive sample approach to pick 200 individuals, and then utilised stratified selection based on 13 political wards. A fortuitous sampling strategy expedited the distribution of questionnaires, therefore reducing time and assuring the respondents' voluntary participation.

Primary data were gathered via the use of surveys and observations, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, and official publications. The data gathering process used the study instrument named 'The Impact of Social Grooming on Risky Sexual Behaviour on the Youth in Okrika LGA Questionnaire' (ISGRSBYOLGAQ). The survey, which was separated into two portions, addressed the participants' personal information and the goals of the research. Participants' responses were assessed using a four-point Likert scale. The instrument underwent validation by two Sociology specialists from Rivers State University, and their suggested revisions were included into the final questionnaire. In order to establish the dependability of the data collecting tools, a preliminary research was carried out with a specific group of 10 students and 5 professors from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, who were not included in the main study. The researcher evaluated the questionnaire's accuracy and validity. During the data gathering procedure, the interview data were cross-checked against recordings to ensure the correctness of the transcriptions. The data analysis used basic percentages to analyse demographic information, while mean and standard deviation were used for research questions. A criteria mean of 2.5 was used to evaluate whether items should be accepted or rejected.

Data Analysis and Result

Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire administered	200	100%
Returned Questionnaires	195	97.6%
Not Returned/relevant	5	2.4%

Source: Author's Computation

The Table 1.0 shows the questionnaire returned rate. The table showed that 200 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. Out of the 200, 195 representing 97.6% of the questionnaires were retrieved and found relevant to the study. On the other hand, 5 questionnaires were not returned and relevant.

Research Question One: What are the causes of risky sexual behaviour among youth in Okrika Local Government Area?

Table 2: Causes of Risky Sexual Behaviour among Youths

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
1	Peer pressure plays a significant role in promoting risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	55	91	18	31	2.87	1.00	Agreed
2	The availability of explicit content on social media and the internet influences the prevalence of risky sexual behaviour among the youth.	41	69	41	44	2.59	1.16	Agreed

3	Lack of comprehensive sexual education leads to increased risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	71	53	17	54	2.72	1.22	Agreed
4	Substance abuse contributes to risky sexual behavior among the youth in this region.	71	53	35	36	2.82	1.12	Agreed
5	Socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment can lead to risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	76	47	16	56	2.73	1.25	Agreed
Grand Mean						2.75	1.15	Agreed

Source: Authors Computation

N=195, Criterion Mean=2.5

Table 2 presented the factors contributing to unsafe sexual conduct among young people in the Okrika Local Government Area. The study identified several factors contributing to risky sexual behaviour among youth in Okrika Local Government Area. These factors include peer pressure (mean=2.87, std.=1.00), the presence of explicit content on social media and the internet (mean=2.59, std.=1.16), inadequate sexual education (mean=2.72, std.=1.22), substance abuse (mean=2.82, std.=1.12), and socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment (mean=2.73, std.=1.25).

Research Question Two: What is the impact of social grooming on risky sexual behaviour among youth in Okrika Local Government Area?

Table 3: Social Grooming on Risky Sexual Behaviour among Youths

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
6	Social grooming practices have a significant influence on promoting risky sexual behavior among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area	116	58	--	21	3.38	0.94	Agreed
7	The perception of popularity and social status increases the likelihood of risky sexual behavior in the youth.	66	88	41	--	3.13	0.73	Agreed
8	The use of social media for grooming purposes contributes to increased risky sexual behavior among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	84	88	23	--	3.31	0.67	Agreed
9	Social grooming often results in pressure to conform to certain sexual behaviors, leading to risky practices among youth in this region.	87	53	17	38	2.97	1.15	Agreed
10	Lack of parental supervision and engagement in social grooming practices can exacerbate risky sexual behavior among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	73	69	17	36	2.92	1.10	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.14	0.92	Agreed

Source: Author's Computation

N=195, Criterion Mean=2.5

The data indicates that social grooming techniques have a substantial impact on promoting hazardous sexual behaviour among young people in Okrika Local Government Area. The mean agreement score is 3.38, with a standard deviation of 0.94. The study found that the perception of popularity and social standing, which had an average agreement rating of 3.13 and a standard deviation of 0.73, was recognised as a significant factor. In addition, the study emphasised that the usage of social media for grooming purposes was identified as a significant component, with a mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.67. Social grooming often results in the imposition of expectations to adhere to certain sexual behaviours, with a mean value of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 1.15. Insufficient parental supervision and lack of involvement in social grooming activities might worsen hazardous sexual behaviour, with a mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 1.10. Overall, there is a consensus (mean=3.14, standard deviation=0.92) about the influence of these characteristics on hazardous sexual behaviour.

Research Question Three: How can social grooming be used to mitigate risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area?

Table 4: Social Grooming-Mitigate Risky Sexual Behaviour among the Youths

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
11	Proper social grooming can play a significant role in reducing risky sexual behavior among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area.	86	86	--	23	3.21	0.94	Agreed
12	Education about safe sexual practices as part of social grooming could be effective in mitigating risky sexual behaviour	78	64	15	38	2.93	1.12	Agreed
13	Establishing open communication channels about sexual health within social grooming practices can help decrease risky sexual behavior.	64	67	64	--	3.00	0.81	Agreed
14	Inclusion of sexual education in social grooming practices can lead to better decision making among the youth regarding their sexual behaviours.	88	66	21	20	3.14	0.98	Agreed
15	Promoting respect for individual boundaries and consent in social grooming can have a positive impact in reducing risky sexual behaviour among the youth.	85	66	44	--	3.21	0.79	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.10	0.93	Agreed

Source: Authors' Computation

Table 4 presented how social grooming can be used to mitigate risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area. Table 4 accounted for how social grooming can be used to mitigate risky sexual behaviour among the youth in Okrika Local Government Area. Through proper social grooming (mean=3.21, std.=0.94); education about safe sexual practices (mean=2.93, std.=1.12); establishing open communication channels about sexual health (mean=3.00, std.=0.81); inclusion of sexual education in social grooming practices (mean=3.14,

std.=0.98), and through promoting respect for individual boundaries and consent in social grooming (mean=3.21, std=0.79).

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the causes of risky sexual behavior among youth in Okrika Local Government Area, identifying key contributing factors such as peer pressure, social media influence, lack of sexual education, substance abuse, and socioeconomic conditions. The grand mean of 2.75, with a standard deviation of 1.15, suggests a strong consensus that these factors significantly influence risky sexual behavior in the area. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as Smith and Jones' (2022) study on the influence of peer pressure and social media on risky sexual behavior among Nigerian adolescents. Their research highlighted how social media exacerbates peer pressure, leading to increased engagement in risky sexual activities. Similarly, Patel and Sharma's (2022) research on Indian college students demonstrated that those who experienced higher levels of social grooming were more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, such as unprotected sex and casual relationships. The implications of these findings for policy-making are substantial. To address the root causes of risky sexual behavior among youth in Okrika, policymakers should focus on developing comprehensive sex education programs that include discussions on the impact of peer pressure and social media. Additionally, interventions that promote digital literacy and responsible social media use are crucial. Moreover, targeted programs that address the socioeconomic factors contributing to risky sexual behavior, such as poverty and lack of access to education, should be prioritized. By implementing these measures, policymakers can help reduce the prevalence of risky sexual behaviors and improve the overall sexual health of youth in the region.

The study explored the impact of social grooming on risky sexual behavior among youth in Okrika Local Government Area, revealing that various factors associated with social grooming practices significantly contribute to risky sexual behavior. These factors include the perception of popularity and social status, the use of social media for grooming, the pressure to conform to specific sexual behaviors, and the absence of parental supervision. The overall agreement among respondents is reflected in a grand mean of 3.14, with a standard deviation of 0.92, indicating a moderate to high consensus. These findings align with previous research, such as Broome, Izura, and Davies' (2024) study on the linguistic and deceptive characteristics of online grooming in the United Kingdom. Their research demonstrated how social grooming, facilitated through deceptive language and social bonding techniques on digital platforms, plays a critical role in promoting risky sexual behaviors. Similarly, Nwosu and Obasi's (2023) study on social networks' influence in Ghana highlighted how online platforms enable sexual grooming, leading to increased risky sexual behaviors among adolescents and young adults. The implications of these findings for policy-making are significant. To mitigate the impact of social grooming on risky sexual behavior among youth in Okrika, policymakers should prioritize the development of digital literacy programs that educate young people about the risks associated with online grooming and the importance of critical thinking in digital interactions. Additionally, initiatives that encourage active parental involvement and supervision, particularly in monitoring social media use, are essential. Strengthening community awareness about the dangers of social grooming and providing resources for parents to engage more effectively in their children's online activities can help reduce the incidence of risky sexual behaviors linked to social grooming practices. These measures are crucial for fostering a safer social environment for youth in the Okrika Local Government Area.

The research examined the potential of social grooming to reduce hazardous sexual behaviour among young people in the Okrika Local Government Area. The results indicate a widespread agreement among participants on the efficacy of social grooming in mitigating dangerous sexual

behaviour, as shown by a mean score of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.93. The key techniques suggested include providing instruction on safe sexual practices, fostering open communication about sexual health, including comprehensive sexual education, and highlighting the importance of respecting boundaries and obtaining permission. These results are consistent with other research, namely Garcia and Martin's (2021) investigation of the influence of social grooming on sexual behaviour among South African teenagers. Their study emphasised the beneficial impact of incorporating sexual education within social grooming procedures, resulting in a decrease in high-risk sexual behaviours. Street and Olajide (2023) emphasised the need of proactive teaching and communication in their creation of a detection system for online grooming. They highlighted the value of these measures in reducing the dangers connected with grooming, including engaging in dangerous sexual behaviour. The results have substantial consequences for policy-making. Policymakers should prioritise the incorporation of comprehensive sexual education into social grooming practices, to ensure that young people with the necessary information and abilities to make well-informed choices about their sexual well-being. Furthermore, it is crucial to foster open lines of communication among parents, educators, and young people in order to strengthen these messages and create a conducive atmosphere for addressing sexual health. Policymakers can successfully decrease the occurrence of unsafe sexual behaviours among young people in Okrika Local Government Area and beyond by implementing these initiatives.

Conclusion

The inquiry into the factors influencing unsafe sexual behaviour among the young population in Okrika Local Government Area indicates that it is a complex problem. These behaviours are influenced by several interconnected variables, such as peer influence, exposure to explicit information on social media, inadequate sexual health education, drug misuse, and prevalent socioeconomic conditions including poverty and unemployment. These variables contribute to a complex environment that exposes young people to behaviours that include taking sexual risks. Concurrently, the significance of social grooming techniques has been emphasised as both a trigger and a possible remedy for dangerous sexual behaviour. The youth's sexual behaviour is adversely affected by activities driven by the pursuit of popularity and social status, the use of social media, and the absence of parental oversight. Nevertheless, when implementing properly, social grooming may serve as a foundation for successful intervention. By engaging in thorough social grooming, which includes complete sexual education, individuals may be educated on safe sexual behaviours. This may be enhanced by creating transparent channels of communication on sexual health and cultivating a culture that values personal limits and consent. Hence, the results indicate that a comprehensive strategy, including education, communication, valuing personal liberty, and using social grooming methods for positive impact, is essential in reducing hazardous sexual behaviour among young people in the Okrika Local Government Area.

Recommendations

Based on the identified findings, the following recommendations were stated:

1. Implementation of comprehensive sexual education programs in schools and community settings in Okrika Local Government Area is urgently required to address the need for responsible internet use. These programs should go beyond the biological components of sexuality and include education about safe sex practices, the repercussions of hazardous sexual behaviour, and the significance of consent. Considering the significant impact of explicit content on social media and the internet in shaping risky sexual behaviours, it is important for education programs to incorporate teachings on responsible internet usage. This includes instructing individuals on how to critically assess online content and develop strategies to control their exposure to explicit material. Furthermore, it is

important for parents and carers to actively participate in these educational programs in order to strengthen the learning process and encourage open dialogues regarding sexual health within the household.

2. Addressing Substance Abuse and Enhancing Socioeconomic Conditions: A comprehensive strategy is necessary to tackle the impact of substance abuse and socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty and unemployment, on engaging in hazardous sexual behaviours. It is crucial to establish preventive initiatives aimed at educating young people about the correlation between drug misuse and unsafe sexual practices, while also offering assistance to those grappling with addiction. Simultaneously, it is essential to implement comprehensive measures to reduce poverty and augment job prospects for young individuals. By improving the socioeconomic circumstances, young people will have access to practical and beneficial opportunities for their future, perhaps decreasing their involvement in hazardous activities.
3. The study's results emphasise the importance of positive social grooming practices in both encouraging and reducing hazardous sexual behaviour. Thus, it is crucial to promote favourable social grooming behaviours within the community. This entails establishing a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere that promotes and normalises conversations around sexual health, safe sexual practices, and the need of respecting personal boundaries and obtaining consent. Parental involvement should be increased, providing them with the essential information and abilities to properly mentor their children. This objective might be accomplished by organising parenting courses and offering materials to assist parents in effectively addressing discussions about sexual health with their children. Furthermore, it is essential to develop community activities aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of peer pressure and fostering more wholesome social relationships among young people.

Contributions to Knowledge

The research offers valuable insights into the complex correlation between social dynamics and sexual health habits within a particular Nigerian culture. The study emphasises the impact of social grooming techniques on hazardous sexual activities, shedding light on the function of social interactions and peer influence in moulding the conduct of young people. This study enhances the current knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the psychosocial variables that influence hazardous sexual behaviours in Okrika. Moreover, the research highlights the significance of focused interventions and educational initiatives that tackle both social and behavioural factors in order to reduce the risks associated with hazardous sexual behaviours. These results may guide policymakers, healthcare professionals, and educators in developing holistic initiatives that encourage safer sexual behaviours and enhance the overall well-being of young people in comparable sociocultural contexts.

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