



# RISK TAKING BEHAVIOURS SUSCEPTIBLE TO PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS: A STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The study explored the influence of moderating variables of gender, age, family type and religious affiliation on adolescents' risk-taking behaviours. Thus, the study employed a descriptive survey method, where a total of 384 married adults were selected through simple random sampling techniques. The participants responded to a questionnaire designed by the researchers titled 'Risk Taking and Parental Monitoring Questionnaire (RTPMQ)'. The content and construct validities of the instrument was adjudged by a team of experts from the Department of Educational Foundations in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The reliability of the instrument was established using internal consistency method which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics; thus, for the demographic data, percentage was employed while an independent t-test and ANOVA statistical tools were employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results reveal no difference in gender, age, family type and religious affiliation in risk-taking behaviours among the adolescents. One of the recommendations made was that the family and the society should ensure effective and efficient training, proper upbringing, equal treatments and empowerment in order to apprehend adolescents' risk-taking behaviour.*

**KEY WORDS:** Risk taking behavior, Parental, Adolescents, Adults, Monitoring

## INTRODUCTION

In the simplest form, adolescence is seen as the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 (Tsagem, 2022). Adolescents are often faced with a number of challenges that are unique and these challenges vary from one country to another. These challenges usually predispose the adolescents to risky behaviours; that has become a global issue of great concern that requires immediate attention. According to Cerkez & Hocaoglu (2017) the most common problematic behaviors faced at adolescence ages are alcohol, tobacco and drug taking, anti-social behaviors, and sex experience at a young age. Researches reveal that alcohol, tobacco and other addictions at early ages lead an individual to take other drugs and exhibit behaviors leading to violence and crime, and cause physical and mental disorders

Accordingly, Trimpop (1996) saw risk-taking as a conscious or unconscious behavior, the result of which cannot be definitely foreseen. Some studies, like that of Alişafakoğlu & Ercan as cited in Cerkez & Hocaoglu (2017) drew attention that problems arising in adolescence age put the individual in one of the problematic groups under risk in the society. Changes experienced at this age, plays a great role on personality

development and failure in adopting to these changes brings together risky behaviors to affect the individual's future life. Among others, some of the risky behaviors that adolescents engage in include substance and drug use, self-harming and intention to harm others, risky/careless driving, non-protective sexual encounters, crime commissions, committing suicide (Güler, Güler, Ulusoy & Bekar, 2009; Eneç Can, 2007; Kaya, 2011; Kaşıkçı, 2014; Ercan, 2001).

Risk is described the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1984:900) as a hazard, a chance of or of bad consequences, loss, etc., exposure to mischance. Thus, risk-taking behaviour is viewed as behaviour that possesses the chance or possibility of bad consequences or loss. Although risk-taking sounds dangerous, it is a normal part of growing up for young adolescents ([http://www.penpages.psu.edu/penpages\\_reference/28507/2850](http://www.penpages.psu.edu/penpages_reference/28507/2850)) Almost half of all adolescents are at moderate to high risk of engaging in one or more self-destructive behaviours, including unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy and childbearing, drug and alcohol use, underachievement, failure and dropping out of school, delinquent or criminal behaviours, suicide, practicing satanism, violence, unsafe driving, fighting, foul language and running away from home.



There are different viewpoints concerning adolescent risk-taking behaviour. Some authors suggest that adolescents engage in risky behaviour in order to demonstrate a mature status or to mark the conversion to adulthood. Others, like Elkind (1985), argue that risk behaviour is a consequence of heightened egocentrism and sensation seeking during adolescence. Various scholars view risk-taking behaviours as tendencies that depend on social and environmental factors such as family, peers, school, community, and cultural belief systems (<http://web17.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1>).

Parental monitoring refers to the aspect of raising a child aside of biological relationship (Martin, 2010). It is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. The most common character in parental monitoring is the biological parents of the child in question, although others may be older siblings, a grandparent, a legal guardian, aunt, uncle or other family members or family friends (Robert, 2018). Parental monitoring skills vary and parent with good parental monitoring skills may be referred to as good parent (Ashish, 2014). Accordingly, Yilmaz & Traş (2019) noted that one of the notions that are thought to affect the risk-taking behavior is attachment styles. Bowlby (1973) describes attachment as strong emotional bonds that people develop for those they consider important to them. Attachment is a system that shapes the person's pattern of forming a relationship with other people around her/him, which is thought to be shaped in infancy and continue in later periods of life. It is the first link between baby and mother or caregiver and constitutes the basic trust feeling (Budak, 2005).

There is more than one right way to be good parent, good parental monitoring includes; keeping your child safe, showing affection and listening to your child, providing order and consistency, setting and enforcing limits, spending time with your child, monitoring your child's friendships and activities, and leading by example (Human Development Report, 2014). Parental monitoring practices around the world share three major goals: ensuring children's health and safety, preparing children for life as productive adults and transmitting cultural values. A high-quality parent-child relationship is considered ideal for healthy development (American Psychological Association, 2014).

Parental monitoring and care giving make sure that children are healthy and safe, equip them with skills and resources to succeed as adults and transmit basic cultural values to them. Parents and care givers offer children love, acceptance, appreciation, encouragement and guidance. They provide the most intimate context for the nurturing and protection of children as they develop their personalities and identities, and also as they mature physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially (American Psychological Association, 2014).

Seven general concepts of parental monitoring as postulated by Howard (2013) include *independence* (the overriding goal of all

parents in creating children that can be independent and self-sufficient by the time they reach adulthood), *choices* (has to do with giving children choices that are age appropriate and holding them responsible for their actions), *respect* (sense of dignity can be promoted by creating an atmosphere in which children feel they can do, rather than they cannot do), *validation* (reinforce a loving environment by telling children, how much you love them, and by physically giving them hug), *ownership* (identifying early on, "Whose problem is it?", parents should not assume the need to solve problems for their children), *communication* (when parents talk to their children, they should try to use the "I" messages format. Parents should never criticize the child, but criticize behaviour), and *discipline* (setting realistic limits and enforce those limits so the child learns the concept of ownership of their behaviour and feel more secure).

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is hinged upon the group dynamics approach which, according to Dietrich (2003), is derived from a cognitive, field-theory orientation. This approach assumes that man is a social being who needs other people as a basis for (a) self-knowledge, (b) determining appropriate responses to environmental demands, and (c) channelling and regulating his current behaviour through the operation of group norms. The instrument of change is a group norm discrepant with the individual's attitude or behaviour, a norm that may be communicated informally. The agent of change is pressure toward uniformity within the group, coupled with a need to be accepted in the group, or a fear of being rejected from it. This theory is apt in the sense that adolescents mostly engage in risky behaviors first because they want to impress their peers and gain acceptance and secondly, because they want to 'hit-back' at their parents' shackles.

### LITERATURE

Studies like the study conducted by Kerr, Statti and Burk (2010) entitled revealed that parental monitoring efforts did not predict changes in delinquency over time, but adolescents' disclosure did. The study used a longitudinal data over 2 years from 938 seventh and eighth graders and their parents and findings further indicated that adolescents' disclosure was a significant longitudinal predictor of parental knowledge in single and cross-rater models. Neither measure of parents' monitoring efforts, control or solicitation was a significant predictor. Other studies in literature point out that risk-taking, when gender is at stake, is more in males compared to females (Bayar & Sayıl, 2005; Greene, Kremar, Walters, Rubin & Hale, 2000; Gullone, Moore & Boyd, 2000), and when age is considered, there is more risk-taking behavior in middle adolescence ages compared to early adolescence ages (Klein, Brown, Childers, Oliveri, Porter & Dykers, 1993; Simons, Morton, Haynie, Crump, Eite & Saylor, 2001). Gender difference data obtained in the study show that, boys exhibit more risk-taking behaviors compared to girls both in middle and advanced ages. Boys have higher points related to risk-taking behaviors than girls (Uz Baş, & Siyez, 2010).



In another vein, Çok & Güney Karaman (2008) specified that starting from childhood, family life and relationships with peers have an effective role on shaping one's behaviors. Thus, Yurtsever (2011) maintains that adolescents engage in risky behaviors due to loss of mother or father or both, divorce of parents or living separately, lack of affection, and an insecure, problematic, and unsystematic family environment. From birth onwards, children are affected by their parents and reflect this during childhood and adolescence years. Similarly, Petraitis, Flay and Miller (1995) show that strong bonds between child and mother minimizes risk-taking, whereas, lack of bond works the opposite way and increases risk-taking behavior.

Furthermore, Freisthler, Byrnes and Gruenewald (2019) reported that adolescents who have higher grade point averages and have not used alcohol reported the lowest levels of deviant behaviours. Furthermore, the density of bars interacts with reports of parental monitoring such that adolescents in areas with more bars per roadway mile report lower levels of parental monitoring behaviours, which is associated with higher levels of deviance.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Fear of adolescents' risky behaviour is a constant concern for millions of stakeholders across the globe. Adolescents seem to engage in behaviours that are outrightly against the societal norms and disobey the stipulated laws and policies of the constituted authorities. It appears that more horrendous crimes are being committed by adolescents. Low levels of parental monitoring could be associated to a wide range of antisocial and risk behaviours, such as initial levels of alcohol misuse, high rates of increase in alcohol misuse, and frequent drinking; of which the consequences on adolescents and the society at large include hooliganism, poor academic performance, community violence, psychological problems and sometimes death. It is in view of these, that the present study therefore investigated the influence of parental monitoring in curbing adolescents' risky behaviour as expressed by married adults in Sokoto metropolis.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study determined if there is:

1. difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by gender as expressed by marital adults.
2. difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by age as expressed by marital adults.
3. difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by family type as expressed by marital adults.
4. difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by religious affiliation as expressed by marital adults.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null research hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by gender.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by age.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by family type.
- H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by religious affiliation.

### METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research method. The population of this study was all the married individuals in the five local government areas within Sokoto metropolis. According to 2017 projected population and housing census of Federal Republic of Nigeria, there are 573, 358 married people in Sokoto metropolis (NPC Sokoto, 2017). Proportionate sampling technique was used to sampled 384 (determined by Research Advisors, 2006) from the number of married adults to represent each of the five selected local government areas, while giving every subject equal chance to participate, simple random sampling technique was used in selecting target participants at the field.

**Table 1: Sample Sizes of the Selected Local Government Areas**

S/N	Local Government	Population of Married Adult	Sample Size
1.	Dange/Shuni	118,356	79
2.	Kware	81,882	55
3.	Sokoto North	142,561	96
4.	Sokoto South	121,014	81
5.	Wamakko	109,545	73
<b>Total</b>		<b>573, 358</b>	<b>384</b>

Source: National Population Census, FRN (NPC Sokoto, 2017)

### INSTRUMENT OF THE STUDY

The instrument used for data collection for the respondents was a questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "Risk Taking and Parental Monitoring Questionnaire (RTPMQ)". The instrument is a structural questionnaire consisting of two main sections. Section

'A' deals with demographic data of the respondents, while Section 'B' elicits information on risk taking behaviours of adolescents. The thirty items questionnaire was patterned in a four-point Likert rating scale format with SA = Strongly Agree



(4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), and SD = Strongly Disagree (1) reflecting different levels of response.

In validating this instrument, its draft was exposed to experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto for ascertaining its construct and content validities. Their corrections and suggestions satisfied both its construct and content validities and is therefore adjudged suitable for use in the study.

The reliability of this instrument was ascertained by using internal consistency reliability method. The instrument was administered on 20 married adults by the researchers, that were not part of the study but possess similar characteristics of those involved in the

study. The score obtained was analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistics; and a reliability coefficient index of 0.78 was obtained which was considered high enough and reliable for use for this study.

The collected data was analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0, to ensure accuracy and proper conclusions that would lead to accurate generalization of findings based on the hypotheses raised. Hypotheses one and three were subjected to an independent t-test analysis while hypothesis two and four were analyzed using ANOVA. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## DATA PRESENTATION

The demographic data of the study was presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Demographic information of the respondents**

SN	Information	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	256	66.7
	Female	128	33.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>
2.	<b>Age</b>		
	12 – 15 Years	57	14.8
	16 – 19 Years	93	24.2
	20 Years and above	234	61.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>
3.	<b>Family type</b>		
	Monogamy	101	26.3
	Polygamy	283	73.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>
4.	<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
	Islam	328	85.4
	Christianity	56	14.6
	Traditional & Other religions	0	0.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, study indicated that of the 384 subjects that participated in the study 256 (66.7%) are male while 128 (33.3%) are female; which can be attributed to the fact in the area of study, the male children are mostly given free opportunity to come out while the movement for the female is tightly controlled, and as such their (female) engagement in social activities is greatly limited. The table further shows that of those who participated in the study 57 (14.8%) were of the age range of 12 – 15 years, 93 (24.2%) were in the age bracket of 16 – 19 years while 234 (61.0%) were and above 20 years of age; the reason for the highest number of respondents in the last category may be simply ascribed to the fact that they are the majority in the society. Furthermore, the table indicated that 101 (26.3%) of the respondents are from monogamous type of marriage while 283

(73.7%) are from the polygamous type of marriage; this is for the simple fact that people in the area of study mostly practiced the polygamous type of marriage and regarded it with high esteem also. Finally, the table also revealed that 328 (85.4%) of the respondents practice the Islamic religion while 56 (14.6%) of the respondents practice Christianity but, none indicated practicing any other religion; this should not be surprising since the area of study is fully Muslims dominated.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by gender.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the male and female adolescents' risk-taking behaviours scores to an independent t-test analysis as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Adolescents' risk-taking behaviours by gender**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Male	256	26.38	2.999	6.117	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Female	128	22.02	3.804			

Result of table 3 indicates scores for male ( $M = 26.38$ ,  $SD = 2.999$ ) and for female ( $M = 22.02$ ,  $SD = 3.804$ ),  $t(381) = 6.117$ ,  $p = .000$ . This indicates that there was difference, with the males having higher mean, in how adolescents' gender influences their risk-taking behaviours because the  $p$ -value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore,  $H_{01}$  which states that there is no

significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by gender was rejected.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by age.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the response scores to an F-test analysis as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Adolescents' risk-taking behaviours by age**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Regression	799.374	2	399.687	33.788	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Residual	4506.978	381	11.829			
Total	5306.352	383				

Result of table 4 indicates  $F(2, 381) = 33.788$ ,  $p = .000$ . This indicates that there was difference in how age influences adolescents' risk-taking behaviours because the  $p$ -value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore,  $H_{02}$  which states that there is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by age was rejected.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by family type.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting scores for adolescents from monogamous and polygamous families to an independent t-test analysis as shown in table 5.

**Table 5: Adolescents' risk-taking behaviours by family type**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Polygamous	283	26.60	3.531	7.466	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Monogamous	101	22.58	3.338			

Result of table 3 indicates scores for polygamous ( $M = 26.60$ ,  $SD = 3.531$ ) and for polygamous ( $M = 22.58$ ,  $SD = 3.338$ ),  $t(381) = 6.117$ ,  $p = .000$ . This indicates that there was difference, with those from polygamous families having higher mean, in how adolescents' family type influences their risk-taking behaviours because the  $p$ -value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore,  $H_{02}$  which states that there is no significant difference

in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by family type was rejected.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in adolescents' risk-taking behaviours predisposed by religious affiliation.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the response scores to an F-test analysis as shown in table 6.

**Table 6: Adolescents' risk-taking behaviours by religious affiliation**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Regression	200.524	1	200.524	15.003	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Residual	5105.827	382	13.366			
Total	5306.352	383				

Result of table 6 indicates  $F(1, 382) = 15.003$ ,  $p = .000$ . This indicates that there was difference in how religious affiliation influences adolescents' risk-taking behaviours because the  $p$ -

value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore,  $H_{04}$  which states that there is no significant difference in adolescents'



risk-taking behaviours predisposed by religious affiliation was rejected.

## DISCUSSION

Result from the study indicates difference in how gender influences adolescents' risk-taking behaviours. This finding is in consonance to studies that point out that risk-taking, when gender is at stake, is more in males compared to females (Bayar & Sayil, 2005; Greene, Kremar, Walters, Rubin & Hale, 2000; Gullone, Moore & Boyd, 2000); with boys exhibit more risk-taking behaviors compared to girls both in middle and advanced ages. Likewise, the note that males engage in risk-taking behaviours more than the females is also supported by Uz Bař and Siyez (2010) when they pointed that boys have higher points related to risk-taking behaviors than girls. This is understandable since, in the area of the study, the male children have more freedom to freely moved out and about than the females who are always in their parents' homes and could only move out when there is cogent reason(s) to do that.

Result from the study also reveals difference in how age influences adolescents' risk-taking behaviours. This lent support to studies which shows that age is a more risk-taking behavior in middle adolescence ages compared to early adolescence ages (Klein, Brown, Childers, Oliveri, Porter & Dykers, 1993; Simons, Morton, Haynie, Crump, Eite & Saylor, 2001). This is also the same story in this area of study and could well be for the fact that at the early and middle adolescences the children are still under the watchful eyes of their parents and also that most of their activities are still being determine by them. But as for those in their late adolescence, they would have more freedom and are less 'shackled' to their parents' strings; nowadays such a group are being given economic independence and this plays an important part in letting them experience an unbounded freedom and as such may engage in risky behaviors than previously.

Result of the study also shows difference in how families' influence risk-taking behaviours. This finding is in line with the study of ok and Gney-Karaman (2008) which specified that starting from childhood, family life and relationships with peers have an effective role on shaping one's behaviors. It is also in agreement with the study of Yurtsever (2011) which points that adolescents engage in risky behaviors due to an unsystematic family environment and other factors. Similarly, the study somehow points to the work of Petraitis, Flay and Miller (1995) which shows that strong bonds between child and mother minimizes risk-taking, whereas, lack of bond works the opposite way and increases risk-taking behavior. Thus, in essence, children from families that are monogamous stands to be better off than those from polygamous families for the simple reason that they can get better care and attention. Another thing is that, the parents may find it less tedious to easily concentrate their attention on children in monogamous families than in the polygamous. Coupled with that is also the issues of economic disadvantage and

rival-jealousy experienced among siblings of co-wives usually found in polygamous marriage arrangements.

Finally, the study also reveals difference in how religious affiliation influences adolescents' risk-taking behaviours. This is understandable since based on religious affiliation respondents are categorized mainly into two; Islam and Christianity. And in fact, modes of children upbringing are quite different since its highly influenced by the respected religions. However, it seems that there are no clearcut studies that dealt with the religions in question. Nevertheless, there is nothing surprising about the finding since the tenets, teachings and approach though, in the deepest form are almost the same, are usually different. This is also due to the fact that practicing of the two religions is deeply rooted in the cultural practices of the people. In this respect, the indigene majority Hausa/Fulani people in the area of study practice the Islamic religion while the non-indigenes from the southern part of the country usually practice Christianity. Thus, there are some things that the culture of the indigenes is strict upon while the culture of the non-indigenes is favourable to, and these things extend to risk taking behaviour of the adolescents. For example, inherently the culture of the Hausa/Fulani is vehemently against alcohol or anything to do with it, which Islam also supports; but in the culture of the non-indigenes, alcohol is allowed which also Christianity is somehow lenient towards. Because of that and its like, it is not surprising if difference is found.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- i. parents have vital roles to play in monitoring to ensure reduction of adolescents' risk-taking behaviors;
- ii. parents and the community should become very vigilant in the behaviours of children in all the adolescence stages but, especially of those in the late stage;
- iii. the families and the society should ensure effective and efficient training, proper upbringing, equal treatments and empowerment in order to apprehend adolescents' risk-taking behaviour;
- iv. religious teachings should be geared towards invigorating people to adhere to moral wisdoms that will ensure observing admonitions and rules which will help in reducing risk taking behavior among the adolescents.

## CONCLUSION

Adolescents is a time when the child want to have freedom and explore his environment and in doing so mostly engage in behaviours that are conflicting with the general needs and aspirations of the community in which they belong. In doing so, the adolescents usually ended up engaging in such behaviours that are risky; behaviours that are detrimental to their physical, emotional, social, psychological and general health and that could affect their subsequent performances later on in life. In this



regard, parents, the school and the general community should work together to ensure that such behaviours are monitored with a view to reducing or curving them altogether. In this way, parents have a great role to play being the first to nurture and socialize the child before being released into the society. In this respect, the parents should also understand that age, gender, family type, religious affiliations etc. are not to be taken lightly in ensuring reducing such risky behaviours in the adolescents.

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