

Peer Relations and Family Structure as Predictors of Emotional Promiscuity Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The study investigated peer relations and family structure as predictors of emotional promiscuity among undergraduate students. Ninety-five (95) undergraduate students comprising 59 females and 36 males with a mean age of 20.96 and SD of 2.15 were drawn using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Jones (2011) Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS) and Aydoğdu (2022) Peer Relationship Scale, while family structure was extracted using demographic variables. A correlational design was adopted, while Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics with the aid of SPSS version (27) to manage the data. Findings shows that peer relation (popularity $St\beta = .201$, $t = 1.214$, trust $St\beta = -.137$, $t = -.671$, insightfulness $St\beta = .148$, $t = .790$ at $p < .05$) did not predict emotional promiscuity. Family structure $St\beta = .159$, $t = .997$ also failed to predict emotional promiscuity at $p < .05$. hence, future researcher should investigate other variables that can cause or bring about significant prediction of emotional promiscuity.

Introduction

The adolescence period signifies dynamic transitions in terms of emotions, physiologies, behaviours and interests along with several challenges (Hurlock, 1982; Faiza, 2022) and young people continuously change their personalities (Cherry, 2017). The adolescent stage encourages romantic relationships and demands certain skills to sustain interactions in healthy manners (Noar, Carlyle, & Cole, 2006; Widman, et al., 2014). In today's world, promiscuity is rampant (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges 2007; Jones & Paulhus 2012; Faiza, 2022).

Promiscuity refers to the readiness to be involved in romantic activities with several partners and includes two domains: sexual and emotional (Jones & Paulhus 2012; Faiza, 2022). Sexual promiscuity refers to engagement in physical acts with several partners (Garcia et al. 2010; Faiza, 2022) whereas the latter refers to an inclination to readily fall in love, flirt, date and emotional vulnerabilities with individuals other than one's partner (Jones & Paulhus 2012; Faiza, 2022). Sexual and emotional promiscuity leads to sexual as well as emotionally unfaithful acts (Pinto & Arantes, 2016). People with higher levels of emotional promiscuity (EP) possess greater sensitivity to easily develop feelings of love and love at first encounters (Sprecher & Metts, 1989; Faiza, 2022). However, affective connections can grow with or without sexual relationships (Diamond, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987; Faiza, 2022). Individuals with higher levels of EP tend to be emotionally unfaithful to present partners, unreliable, and lack desirability as prospect mate; which leads to unprotected sex and greater chances for sexually transmitted disorders (Lalduhawmi, 2019; Jones & Paulhus, 2012). Students tend to engage in romantic relationships due to several factors such as personality, libido and lowered emotional intelligence. Lack of skills to control emotions leads to sexuality and promiscuity (Edobor & Ebiye, 2017). Promiscuity has several adverse effects on lifestyle (Okafor & Duru, 2010; Faiza, 2022), such as indulgence in relationships at young ages, opt bad

partners for themselves, inflicting harmful acts towards their current partners, unwanted pregnancies, economic, and psychological, and biological drawbacks (Jones, 2011; Faiza, 2022). It is a major issue for the individual as well as society and warrants attention. However, relatively under-investigated topic (Jones & Paulhus, 2012; Faiza, 2022). Different factors can contribute to emotional promiscuity, this study tend to investigate family structure and peer relations as predictors of emotional promiscuity among undergraduate student.

Family is the foundation for children that sets up how they are introduced to and interact with the rest of the world. A large body of research suggests that the family structures children grow up in influence children's lives across a wide variety of outcomes such as in the educational, social, cognitive, and behaviour realms (Brown, 2010; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). However, changes in family structure can disrupt this process, which can result in greater instability and stress as well as fewer resources. These changes can in turn influence children's mental health, socialization, and future success. For example, living in single-parent, stepparent, or cohabiting families is associated on average with lower academic achievement, including a lower high school GPA (Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023) as well as lower achievement test scores among both high school and elementary school children (Dufur et al., 2013; Dufur et al., 2010).

Children who live in homes with their biological parents who are married to each other on average enjoy better physical health than do their counterparts in single-parent or stepparent families (Bramlett & Blumberg, 2007; Wen, 2008; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). Their mental and emotional health may be affected in similar ways; for example, Carballo et al. (2013) find negative associations between living in family structures with access to both biological parents and both eating disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. These family structure associations seem to apply whether the biological parent is removed by marital or relationship dissolution (Kim, 2011), by death (Amato & Anthony, 2014), by overseas military deployment (Gorman et al., 2010), by immigration (Creighton et al., 2009), or by incarceration (Wildeman & Wakefield, 2013). These associations are also present for children parented by a mother who was never in a co-residential relationship with a partner, where a parent was not removed, but was never present (Thomson & McLanahan, 2012). Youth who live with neither biological parent on average also experience negative effects (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Thus, a large body of literature suggests that the number of biological parents available to children, and the formal relationship between those parents, can be an important factor in the family environments children experience and the outcomes they achieve (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994 & Amato, 2005; Ginther & Pollack, 2005; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023).

Studies have shown that living in family structures with two biological parents is, on average, associated with fewer child internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems compared to single-parent families (Dufur et al., 2008; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). Similarly, some research suggests links between a broader set of family structures and other problematic behaviours such as substance abuse or delinquency (Hoffmann, 2002; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Stoddard-Bennett, 2023). Research also finds that the relationship between family structure and behaviour problems can be long-term (Ryan & Claessens, 2013).

Finally, some evidence suggests that the observed family structure or transition effects on child outcomes are likely reflections of selectivity processes (Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). Parents are not randomly sorted into different configurations of partnering and childbearing, and as a result, children are not randomly sorted into different family configurations. Research finds that people who have children while cohabiting or before marriage are, on average, different on several demographic characteristics, including ethnicity, education, and labour market positioning, than people who delay childbearing until after marriage (Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). For example, people who have children outside of formal relationships or while cohabiting on average have lower levels of education and are less well-placed in the labour

market than people who have children within marriage (Western & Pettit, 2010; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). Similarly, maternal age at birth, which is associated with several important child outcomes, is on average lower for mothers giving birth outside of marriage (Western & Pettit, 2010; Stoddard-Bennett et al., 2023). Proponents of the selectivity argument propose that the negative associations with being raised in non-traditional family structures can be explained by who these parents are rather than by the specific family structures they construct. For example, using models that examine within-child change, Amato and Anthony (Downey, 1995; Stoddard-Bennett, et al., 2023) found that while some effects of divorce on child outcomes persisted, differences existed across which children were most likely to be affected, with the largest effects for children whose parents were at the highest risk of divorce before separation happened. These parents may have fewer resources with which to mitigate typical family stressors. As a result, they may be less likely to enter marriages in the first place and less able to maintain successful relationships, deficits that likely spill over into their parenting. Negative effects on offspring according to this selectivity perspective, then, are less about structure or transitions and more about the parents making those decisions (Stoddard-Bennett, et al., 2023). Another variable of interest is peer relation.

For decades, peer relationships have been considered by scholars to be one of the most important social relationships for adolescents. Peer relationship is a kind of interpersonal relationship developed by individuals of similar age or psychological development levels in the process of communication and cooperation. It is regarded as an important indicator to effectively measure the ability of adolescents to adapt to the social environment and cope with difficulties (Rubin et al., 2013). As non-kinship relationships, the development of adolescent peer relationships is affected by many different factors in family, school, and society (Ladd et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2022). Adolescents who are unable to effectively establish positive peer relationships may experience a decrease in their ability to accurately assess the value of relationships (Rosenbach & Renneberg, 2014; Long et al., 2021), and even show withdrawal and avoidance of future interpersonal communication and social activities (Molden et al., 2009; Haddow et al., 2021). Having good peer relationships plays an important role for individuals in adolescence. On the one hand, it can help adolescents develop positive interpersonal relationships and adapt to complex social situations, which directly impacts adolescents' self-identity; on the other hand, it can be a valuable source of emotional support for adolescents (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). Ecological systems theory suggests that everyone lives in a specific environment. Family and peer relationships are the most important microsystems for adolescents (King et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2020). It has been found that family intimacy affects adolescent peer relationships (Zemp et al., 2018; Noonan and Pilkington, 2020). The influential mechanism of the complex relationship between family background and peer relationships needs further investigation. Therefore, it is meaningful to study the influence mechanism of family intimacy on peer relationships, which can improve the level of positive peer interaction among adolescents. Despite this, most of the data to date show that research has focused primarily on peer relationships as a factor in adolescents' psychological development and social adjustment, while the exploration of family intimacy in adolescents' positive peer relationships has been very limited.

Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) is adopted as theoretical framework because it views interactions between individuals as an exchange of goods and services that is carried out in pursuit of individual goals. The terms of the exchange reflect the relative power of each partner. The partner who is least dependent on the relationship for valued benefits has greater bargaining power to improve on the exchange (Cook & Emerson, 1978; van de Rijt & Macy, 2006). Dependency and bargaining power are operationalized as partners' relative resources, and greater access to support outside the relationship is theorized to decrease dependency and

increase an individual's power to shape outcomes within the relationship (Bittmane et al., 2003). The amount of give and take will determine what a family structure will look like, this situation will build up the decision-making of the students, and also the type of peer relations he or she will develop. Hence, these hypotheses:

Peer relations will significantly predict emotional promiscuity

Family structure will significantly predict emotional promiscuity

Method

Participants

Two hundred and ninety-four (294) undergraduate students comprising 178 females and 116 males with an age range of 19-23 years, mean age of 20.66 and S.D 1.125 were drawn using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The students were clustered according to their faculties, simple random: balloting was used to pick the faculties/departments, while purposive sampling techniques were used to draw the participants, from the following faculties: Applied natural sciences (40), Agriculture and natural resource management (38), Environmental sciences (35), Engineering (39), Pharmacy (47), Education (53) and Law (42).

Instrument

Three sets of instruments were used for the study, namely

1. Jones (2011) Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS)
2. Aydoğdu (2022) Peer Relationship Scale and
3. Family structure

Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS) (Jones, 2011)

The Emotional Promiscuity Scale (EPS) was developed by Jones (2011) which contains 10 items designed in Likert-type format from 1 to 5 where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree. The scale measured the tendency of emotional promiscuity in university students of both sexes. The internal consistency of the scale was 0.69 Cronbach Alpha for both sexes.

Aydoğdu (2022) Peer Relationship Scale

Aydoğdu (2022) Peer Relationship Scale is a structure consisting of four sub-dimensions and 29 items. The sub-dimensions of the scale are named as intimacy, popularity, trust, and insightfulness, with a 5-point Likert type listed as strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and completely agree.. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, the model fit indices were found to have a good fit. Significant relationships were found with the Peer Support Scale and the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale during the analysis of the scale's criterion validity. Cronbach's α internal consistency, split half reliability, and the test-retest method were used to assess the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's α internal consistency coefficient for the total score was found to be .93, the split-half reliability was .85, and the test-retest reliability value was .82. Cronbach's α and split-half reliability analyses of the scale are. The internal consistency value for the overall scale is .93 and for the sub-dimensions this value is .94, .90, .87 and .84, respectively. The split-half reliability values are as follows: .85 for the total scale and .87, .82, .79 and .77 for the sub-dimensions, respectively. Given that scales with a reliability coefficient of .70 and above in the scale development and adaptation processes are considered reliable, it can be inferred that the internal consistency and semi-reliability coefficients of the Peer Relationship Scale for Children and Adolescents are sufficient (Landis & Koch, 1977; Robinson et al., 1991). The structure of the Peer Relationship Scale, which

consists of 29 items and four sub-dimensions, has a good and sufficient level of adaptation. When the model fit indices of the scale are examined ($\chi^2/df = 2.96$, RMSEA = .068, RMR = .041, SRMR = .061, CFI = .97, NFI = .98, RFI = .97, GFI = .96), they are found to be above the recommended critical values (Schumacher & Lomax, 2004; Seer, 2015).

Family structure

Participants were asked whether they lived with their family or in other situations such as foster or residential care. They were also asked to indicate which people they lived with from a list including mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, grandmother, grandfather, siblings, other children, other adults. In six of the eight countries, children were also asked a preliminary question about whether they regularly stayed in two homes. If so, they were asked to complete the above list for each home. Based on this information, for this paper, a variable was created indicating children's family type. For children living in one home the types identified were "two-parent" (mother and father), "step-family" (mother or father and stepmother or stepfather), "lone-parent" (mother or father and no stepparents), and "other". A fifth family type was identified—"split family"—for children living regularly in two homes.

Procedure

Undergraduate students were drawn as participants from seven faculties in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) using multi-stage sampling (cluster, simple random, by balloting, and availability) techniques for this study. The students were clustered according to their faculties, then a simple random: by balloting was used to pick the faculties, while a purposive sampling technique was used to draw students from the seven selected faculties. The researcher employed the research assistants, who are faculty students' executives from the selected faculties, to help distribute and retrieve the questionnaire. Three hundred and five (305) questionnaires were distributed; two hundred (200) were returned. Among the returning ones, four (4) bear multiple initials, and the other two (2) were not properly responded to, which makes the number of properly responded to be two hundred and ninety-four, which were used for data analysis.

Design/statistics

The design for the study is correlational. This is because the researcher investigated the relationship between the study variables without manipulating or controlling any of them. Therefore, the researcher adopted Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics with the aid of SPSS version (27) to manage the data to test the formulated hypotheses and account for the contribution of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Result

Table I: descriptive statistics

S/N	Variables	M	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Emotional promiscuity	25.5417	5.87805	1	.166	.039	.099	.118	.055	-.192	-.193
2	popularity	14.5417	3.76410		1	.436	.173	-.194	.019	.049	-.340
3	trust	26.3958	5.01801			1	.605	.151	.022	-.048	-.129
4	insightfulness	19.0000	4.41949				1	.281	-.101	-.058	.044
5	Family structure	1.6458	1.42156					1	-.023	-.073	-.042
6	age	21.2917	1.99956						1	-.210	.342
7	gender	1.5625	.50133							1	-.036
8	Year of Study	2.3333	1.19098								1

Table I above shows popularity $r = .166$, trust $r = .039$ and insightfulness $r = .099$ dimensions of peer relations did not relate with emotional promiscuity. Family structure $r = .118$ also failed to relate with emotional promiscuity. Age $r = .055$, gender $r = -.192$ and year of study $r = -.193$ demographic variables did not related to emotional promiscuity.

Table II: regression statistics

Model	R	R ²	St β	t	Sig.
1	.206	.043			.586
Popularity			.201	1.214	.231
Trust			-.137	-.671	.506
Insightfulness			.148	.790	.434
2	.253	.064			.324
Family structure			.159	.997	.324
3	.365	.133			.377
Age			.114	.690	.494
Gender			-.176	-1.160	.253
Year of study			-.202	-1.164	.251

Dependent variable= emotional promiscuity, at $p < .05$. r = relationship, r^2 =relation square, St β = standardised beta

Table II above shows that peer relation (popularity St $\beta = .201$, $t = 1.214$, trust St $\beta = -.137$, $t = -.671$, insightfulness St $\beta = .148$, $t = .790$ at $p < .05$) did not predict emotional promiscuity, hence the hypothesis tested which stated that per relation will independently and jointly predict emotional promiscuity is hereby rejected. Peer relation is not related to emotional promiscuity at $r = .206$, and it contributed 4.3% variation to emotional promiscuity, peer relation did not predict emotional promiscuity sig.= .586 at $p < .05$. Family structure St $\beta = .159$, $t = .997$ also failed to predict emotional promiscuity at $p < .05$. Peer relation and family structure were related to emotional promiscuity at $r = .253$, the two independent variables contributed 6.4% variance to emotional promiscuity and they jointly did not predict emotional promiscuity sig.= .324 at $p < .05$.

Age $St\beta = .114$, $t = .690$, gender $St\beta = -.176$, $t = -1.160$ and year of study $St\beta = .202$, $t = -1.104$ did predict emotional promiscuity at $p < .05$

Discussion

The first hypothesis tested which stated that peer relation will significantly predict emotional promiscuity was not confirmed, hence the hypothesis was rejected. The result shows that student tend to make their own decision and chooses their sexual orientation without any external factors, and these internal factors were not considered in this study.

The findings from this study implies that student that are emotionally promiscuous is not as a result of peer relations rather, and that peer relations does not contribute to either increase or the decrease of emotional promiscuity.

The second hypothesis tested which stated that family structure will significantly predict emotional promiscuity was not confirmed, hence the hypothesis was rejected. The result obtained indicated that family types does not define or determine undergraduate sexual orientation, it shows student chooses to be emotional promiscuous and that the type of family background is not the major cause

Implication of the Findings

The findings were incongruity with social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) which was adopted as a theoretical framework because it views interactions between individuals as an exchange of goods and services that is carried out in pursuit of individual goals. The terms of the exchange reflect the relative power of each partner. The partner who is least dependent on the relationship for valued benefits has greater bargaining power to improve the exchange (Cook & Emerson, 1978; van de Rijt & Macy, 2006). Dependency and bargaining power are operationalized as partners' relative resources, and greater access to support outside the relationship is theorized to decrease dependency and increase an individual's power to shape outcomes within the relationship (Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, & Matheson, 2003). The amount of give and take will determine how a family structure will look like, this situation will build up the decision-making of the students, and also the type of peer relations he or she will develop.

The finding indicated that either peer relations or family structure were factors that can help to determine emotional promiscuity, hence future researchers should consider other factors such like self-esteem, marital satisfaction and others if they can.

Limitation of the study

Some factors militated against this study, one of such is the sampled population. Sampling only one institution during exam reduces the numbers of participants, more students would have participated assuming more than one university was sampled.

The sampling techniques also affected the numbers of participants, the more students would have been sampled assuming a suitable sampling technique was adopted.

Some demographic variables were left on answered by the participants which lead to the researcher not including the outcome in the study, demographic such as religious affiliation, parental working status et al. These control variables would have help to give this study direction.

Suggestion for further study

Future researcher should consider sampling population from different institution and also to consider carrying this study outside examination period, this will give student opportunity to participate in the research.

A suitable sampling technique should be considered by future researcher, because this will give room for the selection of larger population.

The future researcher should consider to arrange the demographic variables in such a way that the participants will not leave them unattended to.

Summary and Conclusion

The study investigated peer relations and family structure as predictors of emotional promiscuity among undergraduate student, findings revealed that none of the independent variables predicted emotional promiscuity. Hence future researcher should explore or factors that can contribute or necessitate emotional promiscuity.

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