

Criminal Behaviour, Substance Abuse and Sexual Practices of South African Adolescent Males

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ABSTRACT Crime, alcohol abuse and unhealthy sexual practices among adolescent males have reached alarming proportion. Youth reared by uninvolved and unemployed parents, or nurtured in dysfunctional families or child-headed households, tend to belong to gangs and violate the right of others. By employing systematic review as a form of methodology to investigate these phenomena, the researchers explored various books, dissertations and internet journals. The aim of this paper is to suggest multiple approaches that may educate adolescent males about the effects of rape and violence. Grounded in social-disorganization, social learning and super-trait theories, the findings revealed that adolescent males become susceptible to imprisonment, sexually transmitted infections and impaired psychological well-being. With the new drug called “nyaope”, the following symptoms are noticeable: poor concentration, erectile dysfunction and depression. The recommendations are that: parents, schools and government should be engaged in awareness campaigns and workshops to advocate drug-free life.

INTRODUCTION

Various literature in the domains of sociology, education and psychology highlight that the key variable identified in the development of individual characteristics and any criminal propensities, is the role played by parents in terms of factors such as attachment, child-rearing practices, neglect, abuse, supervision, and the parents own anti-social or criminal behaviour (Louw and Louw 2007; Lutya 2012). Biologically, there is no direct link between biological causes, criminal behaviour and sexual aggressive behaviour, but some neuro-chemical imbalances in the body influence adolescent males to display sexual prowess, negatively (Sadock and Sadock 2007; Comer 2013). Sexual aggressive behaviour of adolescent males is a behaviour which originates from chemical imbalances; *neurotransmitters* (Nicholas 2008). According to Casey and Jones (2010), hormones play an important role in predisposition of adolescent males to behave aggressively. Males tend to be more aggressive than females and these sex variations are linked to hormones of testosterone before and during birth. Testosterone is not the only hormone associated with aggression, but serotonin which is associated with depression has the propensity to lead adolescent males to behave impulsively (Nolen-Hoeksema 2008). In the study conducted in Umtata region in the Eastern Cape Province,

Zenzile (2008) highlighted that criminal behaviour including rape of young people starts from adolescent stage to mid-twenties and the danger is that rape may lead to unplanned fatherhood, dropping out at school prematurely, imprisonment and HIV/AIDS which will sometime result to death. Against this background, this research paper attempts to discussing the three types of parenting styles by Diana Baumrind (1967) since parents are perceived as primary caregivers, then followed by the causal factors and effects of the aforementioned variables, namely; criminal behaviour, substance abuse and sexual practices of adolescent males.

Parenting Styles

Authoritative Parenting Style

Authoritative parents are open, warm, realistic, and motivational and allow children to be responsible for their actions (Louw and Louw 2007). These parents communicate with their children and involve them in making decisions regarding career choices, peers and seem willing to spend quality time with their children in a friendly environment. As a result adolescent males reared in such households tend to independent, have sound interpersonal relationships with significant others and positive self-concept of themselves (Sigelman and Rider 2009).

Authoritarian Parenting Style

According to Sigelman and Rider (2009) parents who display rules and seek obedience from their children, may contribute towards producing children who are reserved, dependent and unable to make informed decisions owing to the belief that should children be involved in matters such as sexuality, they may be sexually active at an early age. Children who grow under the guidance of authoritarian parents often display lack self- confidence, tend to be moody, unhappy, easily annoyed and unpleasant to be around others (Pastarino and Doyle- Portillo 2011). As a result, children from authoritarian parents lack positive self- concept and an ability to regulate their emotions. Because they lack skills for dealing with their emotional experiences, they may be inclined to risky sexual behaviour (Hessler and Katz 2010).

Uninvolved Parenting Style

Uninvolved parenting style is inextricably linked to multiple social outcomes which may deter the personality of adolescent males. Due to neglect and lack of commitment from parents, adolescents may start to drink alcohol and experiment with drugs from an early age to cover their emotional inadequacy (Holborn and Eddy 2011; Weiten 2013). Having realised that their parents are not involved in their well-being, they may as well leave home and live on the streets and fend for themselves, which will expose them to criminal behaviour. For example, they may sniff glue, steal and involve in transactional sex with older men (Louw and Louw 2007; Bezeidenhout and Joubert 2011) and these will endanger their health. In Limpopo province, Onya and Flisher (2008) found that adolescent males, who started drinking alcohol at an early age, had no respect for other people's properties. For example of the participants were quoted as follows:

"I started drinking alcohol when I was still young and even now. I am still drinking it. During the olden days I could even go to the extent of selling my father's property in order to have money to buy alcohol."

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this paper are as follows;

- ♦ To investigate factors associated with criminal behaviour, alcohol abuse and sexual practices among adolescent males.
- ♦ To explore the consequences of criminal behaviour and alcohol abuse by adolescent males.
- ♦ To recommend suggestions on how adolescent males' well-being can be improved.

Conceptual Framework

Social- disorganization Theory

Social- disorganization theory by Shaw and McKay (1942) asserts that when the residents of same neighbourhood lack the ability to unite to achieve a common goal, to reduce crime and rape, such community is most likely to suffer economically, psychologically and socially since its youth may model unhealthy behaviour as their own (Wilcox et al. 2003). Leoschut and Burton (2009) are concerned that when nothing is being done to improve the communities, adolescent males, in turn, will be influenced by antisocial role models. To date, in most South African black townships, schools are being violated by learners themselves who are criminals and who deal with drug-dealers due to poor security system. Moreover, sexual bullying by adolescent males at schools is common and contributes to rampant violation of girls' dignity and constitutional rights (Ncontsa and Shumba 2013; Prinsloo 2008).

Social Learning Theory

In societies where culture dominates, majority of adolescent males tend to imitate adults by having multiple sexual partners (Swartz et al. 2008). Social learning theory pioneered by Albert Bandura states that through observing how fathers treat women, adolescent males may model such behaviour and apply it to their own lives (Gupta et al. 2008). Furthermore, they may also acquire criminal behaviour from other adolescents as they interact at school and in the neighbourhood especially when parents are violent and dishonest (Ncontsa and Shumba 2013). For example, when parents are deficient on the level of morality, use alcohol extensively and are dependent on drugs, adolescent males may develop behavioural problems and be unable to differentiate right from wrong (Rice and Dolgin

2008). To confirm this, Kann (2008) found that adolescent males, who forced their sexual partners into having sex, were the ones reported have witnessed their father's fighting women when under the influence of alcohol.

Super Traits Theory

According to Robert Agnew's (2006) super traits theory, adolescent males' criminal behaviour is generated by personality, family, school, peers and work. Agnew asserts that adolescent males are more likely to inherit low self-control than their female counterparts because in terms of evolution, males are perceived as aggressive and competitive (Agnew 2006; Walsh 2012). Adolescents with low self-control and irritable temperaments have the propensity to evoke negative emotionality from violent family members and socially destructive educators, peers and workmates (Ryckman 2008).

Definition of Terms

Substance Abuse

Dietrich et al. (2011) describes substance abuse or drugs as being the repeated consumption of a drug which produces a state of periodic or chronic intoxication which affects the individual as well as society. It occurs after a period of physical dependency from heavy use. In many societies, substance abuse is aggravated by complex socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment and crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2008) as already highlighted under social disorganization theory. In South Africa, Masombuka (2013) found that in most black townships, a new drug called "nyaope" which is a mixture of heroin and dagga seems to be smoked mostly by adolescent males. It is put on the foil to heat and the smoke is inhaled. In Pretoria and Soweto, *nyaope* has been found to be destroying lives of youth (Masombuka 2013) who end up begging or steal money to feed their drug-dependence (Louw and Louw 2007).

Adolescence

In traditional developmental psychology, adolescence refers to that stage of human development that follows middle childhood, and

that serves as a transition from childhood to adulthood (Swartz et al. 2008). This stage is generally perceived as beginning with the onset of the biological changes of puberty and ending with cultural identity of the adulthood. Most cultures, including Xhosa communities have rituals related to the transition from childhood to adulthood and Kang'ethe (2013) believes that the cultural rite of circumcision has continued to play an integral part of making pertinent stages of individual growth. He further argues that circumcision rite for many societies correspond with some notable biological stages of puberty and psychologically, the adolescent stages of identity crisis. Adolescent stage is characterised by the struggle of an adolescent to be recognised as a grown-up by the adults and is a vigorous psychological and physiological changes in their lives as well, drawing from psychosocial developmental stages by Erikson (Nicholas 2008).

Criminal Behaviour

Criminal behaviour can be defined as any behaviour that results in punishment by law enforcement of some type, or the failure to conform or deviate from the societal rules and regulations resulting to punishable criminal behaviour (Leoschut and Burton 2009). Theft, assault, robbery and rape, are some of the example of criminal behaviour (Stevens and Cloete 2010) that cause a person to break the law (Walsh 2012). Robbery is the unlawful taking or attempted taking of property in the immediate possession of another person by force or threat of force (Stevens and Cloete 2010). In a study of school violence in South Africa, Burton (2008) found that of 1.8 million of all learners from Grade 3 to Grade 12, (15.3%) had been in violence, 5.8 percent had been assaulted, 4.6 percent had been robbed and 2.3 percent had experienced some form of sexual harassment.

AGGRAVATING FACTORS OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR, ALCOHOL ABUSE AND UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES OF SOUTH AFRICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

The social factors that fuel criminal behaviour and accompanied drug abuse originate from poverty, unemployment, patriarchal notions of

masculinity and weak culture of enforcement and failure to uphold safety as a fundamental right.

Gangs

Boys who are members of gangs are most likely to possess guns than non-gang members (Louw and Louw 2007). Availability of guns and violence in most black townships has led to sexual harassment to take place; leaving girls (that is, victims) traumatised (Ncontsa and Shumba 2013). Lack of enforcement of rules on dangerous weapons (for example, knives) by the School Governing Body (SGB) and parents contributes to criminal behaviour and interschool rivalries (Onya and Flisher 2008) because gangs may be formed by adolescent males who rebel against educators and when controlled by drug-addiction (Prinsloo 2008). Various scholars have found the inextricable link between adolescent males joining gangs and the parents' financial status (Louw and Louw 2007; Holborn and Eddy 2011; Jewkes and Sikweyiya 2013). Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2013) highlight that adolescent males who are prone to joining gangs are reared from homes where parents are very young and impoverished. It is important to note that even when the age-gap between parents or caregivers and adolescents is wide, adolescent males may be manipulative, arrive home late, start to drink alcohol and visit *shebeens*. For example, in a quantitative study conducted among adolescents in Soweto, Kheswa (2006) found that an alarming proportion of adolescent males who displayed criminal behaviour were raised by grandparents as compared to adolescent males raised by both parents who are between 35 and 55 years of age.

Following Alfred Adler's (1923) theory of individual psychology, such adolescent males tend to formulate a destructive philosophy of life to guide them along. The destructive path leads them to seek to dominate and exploit others especially when they conspire against their counterparts who progress academically and/or demonstrate sound leadership qualities (Ryckman 2008; Schultz and Schultz 2013). Based on the notion that men are heroic "*ndlavini*", they tend to disrespect authority figures and sexually harass girls. Little do adolescent males (who belong to gangs) know that they contravene constitutional rights to human dignity (Section 10), the right to freedom (Section 12) and the right (Section, 29)? As a result they may face

legal consequences of sexual harassment, immoral behaviour or profanity, hate speech, victimization and disrespect of other learners' sexual orientation, following the Child Care Act 74 of 1983, the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957, and the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (de Wet and Jacobs 2009).

In comparison, Leoschut and Burton (2009) found that adolescent males, who are in Grade 12, tend to have positive attitude towards school and work very hard to obtain university – entrance. They become more attached to their caregivers and more inclined to conforming to conventional societal expectations. In other words, their protective factors (that is, parents, community members and school) build on their resilience. Resilience may be defined as the ability to bounce back, resist peer influence, and successfully adapt despite threatening circumstances (Ungar 2008).

Child-headed Households

Child-headed households are commonly referred to as households where all members of the family are below age 18. In 2006 General Household Survey recorded 0.67 percent of children reared in child-headed households, which translates to 122 000 of the 18.2 million South African children. Approximately 90 percent of all child-headed households are located in the following provinces: Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape (van Blerk 2012). According to Holborn and Eddy (2011) the increase of South African child-headed families is caused by death of parents due to HIV/AIDS and as by 2015 approximately 5 700 000 children under the age of 18 would be orphans due to AIDS pandemic. As a result, adolescent males from these households tend to engage in criminal activities such as rape and alcohol abuse because they lack guidance from adults. Alcohol is a very powerful, mood altering drug and when it is used by adolescents it poses very serious health risks: it clouds judgement and interferes with the development of social skills and with school achievement (Meintjies et al. 2009).

Homelessness

Adolescent males who live on the street are often plagued by poverty which necessitates

them to drop out of school and resort to crime in order to survive. According to van Blerk (2012) such youth's trajectories have drugs, risky sexual behaviour and robbery in order to cope. Sadly, they become victims of *pap sak* (cheap wine), *dagga* and *tik* (methamphetamines) which they buy from the drug-dealers. The extract below illustrates some of the activities as part of the production of homelessness or street life:

"You just do this with burglar bars.... Then we all go in.... Off with the door, all of us go in then ...we just take the geyser, DVD, copper pipes.... we take friends with us to look for the police and help carry the stuff..... Someone that can stick with you[someone that can be trusted]"

Majority of homeless adolescents live in big cities- Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Durban, East London and Pretoria and engage in transactional sex (Louw and Louw 2007; Holborn and Eddy 2011). Because they loiter at night and often found in the vicinity where crimes take place, they become suspects. In Cape- Town, Samara (2003) established that police arrested (for no apparent reason) and shipped them off to Pollsmoor Prison where they were exposed to male rape.

Divorce and Single Parenthood

Arkowits and Lilienfield (2013) argue that divorce is characterized by conflict and dissatisfaction amongst the family. Furthermore, in a recent study conducted among adolescent males in rural areas, Eastern Cape, Takatshana (2013) found adolescents who grew up in a family where violence is common prior the divorce to be prone to drugs and alcohol consumption. One of the reasons to indulge in alcohol abuse may be an attempt to fill in the emotional void and sense of loneliness by also searching for connection with others for sex (Hessler and Katz 2010). Similarly, the South African Institute of Race Relations undertook a study into the South African families and youth. Statistics showed that only 35 percent of children were raised by their biological parents, 40 percent lived with mothers only while 2.8 percent lived their fathers only, which leaves 22.6 percent being raised neither by their biological parents (Holborn and Eddy 2011). From these findings, it could be deduced that majority of adolescent males do not get as much sex- education from their parents, which could

be translated to delinquency, truancy and early sexual debut since they grow without adequate adult-supervision.

Dysfunctional Families

According to Holborn and Eddy (2011) adolescent sexual offenders are the outcomes of dysfunctional families as the absence of a parent in the development of the child has a great impact on the adolescent's sex attitude and relationships. Furthermore, adolescent sexual activity is more likely to occur among children from divorced, separated and single parents households. According to Underwood et al (2008) domestic violence and sexual aggression are the major factors contributing to adolescent sex offending behaviour. Additionally, caregivers' employment status has been associated with adolescent males' trajectories (Donna and Sarah 2007). For example, poverty gives impoverished youth an inducement to resort to violence, gangs and to drop out of school (Seekings and Thaler 2011).

Mass-media and Pornography

Drawing from modelling theory as pioneered by Albert Bandura (1977) adolescents who are exposed to messages broadcast on radio and television, printed in magazines, distributed on the Internet, and presented in video games are likely to display aggressive behaviour (Gupta 2008; Schultz and Schultz 2013). Majority of adolescent males surf sex sites out of curiosity from the internet and eventually become addicted to pornography (Pastarino and Doyle- Portillo 2011). They usually view magazines with nude pictures, underwear's and sexual activities done by adults even through their phones and experiment (for example, masturbation). At school they may bunk classes and join learners who are already troublesome because they do not have time for their school work as they spend most of their time watching pornography (Louw and Louw 2007). Because of obsession, Takatshana (2013) posits that their cognitive and moral domains may be swayed and end up contemplating to rape.

According to Kheswa and Notole (2014) adolescent males tend to manipulate girls with less power by inviting them to a party and once they are drugged, rape them. Rape is forced sexual

intercourse in which the penetration is by insertion of a penis or foreign object into the vagina or anus, and includes verbal threats, humiliation and violence (Ozen et al. 2005; Spies 2012). In South Africa, Finkelhor et al. (2009) found that adolescent males tend to sexually coerce girls especially when they are under the influence of alcohol and in the company of peers for approval and acceptance. The reason for such behaviour is explained by Cicognani (2011). These researchers found that majority of adolescent males who grew up in communities which uphold culture and traditions, develop patriarchal attitude towards girls and demean the integrity of women. Parallel findings of the effects of watching pornography and mass media have been investigated among a group of adolescent males in the Eastern Cape by Kheswa et al. (2014). The extracts below illustrate how powerful the impact of TV programmes with sexual content is:

“Mass-media has an impact on my sexual offending because for instance after watching yizo-yizo, smoking or drinking, I develop some sexual feelings [ukubatywa] where I might end up raping even your sister”

“Mass media has an impact because they see people kissing in Generations, watch pornography and tend to imitate that to test and prove themselves as men”

“we as males are copying on what we see in movies and music videos then assume that girls are supposed to be like those we see on television and acting like them also like in pornography, hence we force sex upon them”

CONSEQUENCES OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

Psychological Dysfunction and Ill-Health

The toxic chemicals found in drugs, alcohol and *nyaope* distort perceptions, slur speech, lessen attention-span and retards respiration. Adolescent males who inject heroin in their blood stream have been reported to experience analgesic and euphoric feeling which generally last for three to four hours (Masombuka 2013) which may put their lives at risk of being arrested for drunk and driving, raping girls, and contracting sexually transmitted infections (Louw and Louw 2007). Furthermore, drugs weaken the sperm count, lead to erectile dysfunction, kidney

failure, lung-cancer, insomnia and loss of appetite (Nolen-Hoeksema 2008; Comer 2013). Epidemiologically, the HIV/AIDS prevalence among youth in South Africa is escalating and pregnant females who are tested positive when attending public clinics claim that it was due to rape by their partners who did not approve of safe –sex (Jewkes and Skweyiya 2013). From these findings, the implication could also be:

1. Majority of adolescent males do not know their HIV status and drawing from gender –strain theory, they legitimize their masculinity by drinking alcohol and oppress women.
2. Adolescent males who have concurrent sexual partners are the carriers of HIV/AIDS and proliferate the sexually transmitted infections (for example, gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia), which may have the impact on the economy of the country because the supply of antiretroviral drugs will increase
3. Parents or guardians of adolescent males are susceptible to be mentally disturbed or treated for stress illnesses especially when their sons get imprisoned. South African prisons are overcrowded and living conditions are poor. Ramagaga (2011) supports that the consequence of overcrowding may aggravate the health of prisoners, owing to poor sanitation and hygiene. Furthermore, opportunistic diseases such as TB, pneumonia including HIV/AIDS are rampant in prisons (Ramagaga 2011) due to influx of drugs, alcohol (Naidoo and Mkhize 2012) and sodomy (Kheswa and Lobi 2014).

Poor Academic Performance

Drug and alcohol abuse affect academic performance of adolescent males. Kheswa (2006) found that adolescents, who reported to be drinking alcohol from one school in Soweto, had been repeating grades as compared to those who reported to be non-drinkers of alcohol. In the same vein, Onya and Flisher (2008) in Limpopo province found that there is an inextricably link between abuse of home brewed alcohol (for example, *mbamba*, *mqombothi*) and poor grades, truancy, poor participation in discussion groups and arguing with educators and classmates. These researchers found that of 1 600 high

school learners, 22.5 percent (n=335) indicated that they drank home brewed alcohol. A notable finding regarding gender also revealed that boys by far were the one who drank home brewed alcohol.

Suspension from School and/or Imprisonment

In a study conducted among four secondary schools in Buffalo City district in the Eastern Cape Province to investigate the nature, causes and effects of school violence, Ncontse and Shumba (2013) found that an adolescent male learner stabbed one educator. Although the matter was reported to the police and SGB, the learner was arrested but never served a sentence. From this implication, one wonders why the government uphold the rights of youth even when they are capable of killing and destroying the properties of others. Other questions are:

- ♦ What about the safety of other learners in the school?
- ♦ During lessons, will the learners concentrate?

Teenage Fatherhood

Teenage fathers who live in cohabitation with their babies' mothers may face profound psychological hazards and ingrained deprivation especially when they live in informal settlements (Langa 2010; Sverdlik 2011). In a study conducted among adolescent males in Nteselamanzi village, Eastern Cape, Kheswa and Notole (2014) found that majority of boys who participated in a qualitative study expressed unpreparedness regarding early fatherhood since they were still attending school. These participants cited that the reason for not practising safe sex, it is influenced by peers despite knowing that they would experience financial difficulties should they impregnate their sexual partners. From this finding, it is clear that there could be conflicts when the baby is sick or struggle with food. As a result, intimate partner violence is likely.

WAY FORWARD

The recommendations that are proposed to enable adolescent males to reach responsible adulthood are as follows:

- ♦ Primary crime prevention programmes as well as crime awareness workshops

should be implemented at school and community levels.

- ♦ Considering that the context within which adolescents are parented, lack warmth and emotional connectedness, the government must provide financial support (to parents who are unemployed in terms of community engagement projects to alleviate poverty) and shelter to the homeless.
- ♦ Educators should liaise with the social workers and the Department of Health in identifying boys who display behavioural problems.
- ♦ Schools being the only institution to target majority of adolescent males, comprehensive sex-educational programmes must be made possible so that they can acquire skills that are necessary for their sexuality.

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