

# **What do parents think they do and what do adolescents say they are doing? Discrepancies in parent- and adolescent self-report of parental monitoring in Nairobi slums and implication for reproductive health programs**

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## **Short abstract**

Measures of parenting practices in studies conducted in Africa have been assessed solely from children's perspective. Research using parent-child dyads have shown that there are some inconsistencies between parents and children reports, suggesting that children reports may not reflect actual parental practices. This study represents a first attempt in the literature to determine the level of inconsistencies in an African context and to tease out recommendations for research and practice. Questions of interest are: 1) is the discrepancy between parent- and adolescent self-report associated with parents' characteristics; 2) is the discrepancy between parent- and adolescent self-report associated with adolescents' characteristics and sexual behaviors. The data analyzed are drawn from a population-based study in two slum and two non-slum settlements in Nairobi, Kenya. Analyses are limited to reports on parental monitoring from 8,676 dyads of parents and 12-24-year-olds adolescents living in the same household.

## **Background**

Parenting is one of the key aspects that have been targeted in the efforts to decrease sexual risk behaviors among the young. Because they constitute a crucial part in their social environment and daily interactions, family members and parents in particular, are viewed as influential actors for children's development and health outcomes. This topic has extensively been addressed cross-culturally in explaining a wide range of behaviors including psychological adjustment, social competence, school misconduct, and alcohol use.<sup>1-3</sup> Decades of inquiries have also allowed establishing evidence that parenting practices such as monitoring, support, and sexual communication are associated with children's risky sexual behaviors.<sup>4,5</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, the research is just beginning to document the effects of parental involvement on children's sexual behaviors.<sup>6</sup> Measures of parenting practices in studies conducted in Africa have been assessed solely from children's perspective. Research using parent-child dyads have shown that there are some inconsistencies between parents and children reports, suggesting that children reports may not reflect actual parental practices.<sup>7</sup>

This study represents a first attempt in the literature to tease out the discrepancies in reports. We use survey responses from dyads of parents and 12-24-year-olds adolescents living in Nairobi,

Kenya to answer the following questions: To what extent parent- and adolescent self-report of parental involvement discrepant?

- 1) Are there discrepancies observed in parents and adolescent self-report of parental monitoring?
- 2) Is the discrepancy between parent- and adolescent self-report associated with parents' characteristics (gender, age, ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status);
- 3) Is the discrepancy between parent- and adolescent self-report associated with the sexual behavior of the adolescent (sexually active, risky sexual behaviors)?

## **Data and Methods**

The data analyzed are drawn from a population-based study in Nairobi, Kenya by the African Population and Health Research Center. The study was nested in the Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUHDSS), which collects data for more than 50,000 individuals. The study followed children and adolescents 5-24 years living in two slum areas in the city (Korogocho) and (Viwandani) and in two non-slum but low-income communities (Harambee and Jericho) since 2005.<sup>8</sup> Information on adolescents' perceptions of parental involvement, sexual behavior, and other risky behaviors were collected as part of the survey. A questionnaire on parental involvement was also administered to the main parents/guardians. Ethical approval of the study was granted by the ethical review committee of the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI).

The analyses presented in this paper are limited to reports on parental monitoring from 8,676 dyads of parents and 12-24-year-olds adolescents living in the same household.

## **Preliminary Results**

Table 1 presents the results of Pearson's chi-squared tests of the differences between parents- and children self-report of parental monitoring. Findings indicate significant differences in reports for all the 6 questions items usually used in survey to evaluate the impact of parental monitoring on adolescents' behaviors. Findings indicate for instance that for parents who reported to know where the child spends time after schools, only 0.8% of the children reported that the parent always know. About 6% reported that the parents sometimes know, 14% reported the parent usually knows and 79% reported the parent doesn't know. Further analyses are conducted using multinomial regressions to tease out the factors associated with discrepancies in reporting. Preliminary analyses suggest that adolescent boys and older adolescents are more likely to differ with their parents in their reports. These findings point to the fact that reports from parent-child dyads should be considered in analyzing the impact of parental monitoring on adolescents' behaviors. Self-reports from adolescents are not sufficient as they might reflect adolescents' need to misreport parents' behaviors to justify their involvement in risky behaviors.

**Table 1.** Pearson's chi-squared tests of the differences between parents- and children self-report of parental monitoring

<b>Item 1: Parent knows where child spends time after school</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Always know (n=11,459)	0.8	6.0	14.0	79.2	100
2. Sometimes know (n=4,771)	1.6	6.4	48.8	43.2	100
3. Usually knows (n=427)	2.1	19.2	30.7	48.0	100
8. Don't know (n=208)	0.5	17.8	29.8	51.9	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>100</b>
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(9) = 2535.7521					
Design-based F(9.00, 151776.00) = 281.7335 Pr = 0.000					
<b>Item 2: Parent knows with whom child spends time after school</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Always know (n=10,638)	6.2	18.3	74.7	0.0	100
2. Sometimes know (n=5,362)	7.2	51.2	40.1	0.0	100
3. Usually knows (n=553)	20.6	32.4	44.8	0.4	100
8. Don't know (n=312)	16.3	42.0	41.3	0.0	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>100</b>
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(12) = 2293.2520					
Design-based F(12.00, 202368.00) = 191.0968 Pr = 0.000					
<b>Item 3: Parent knows where child spends time on weekends</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Always know (n=10,754)	0.8	6.0	19.2	74.0	100
2. Sometimes know (n=5,351)	1.5	6.8	52.0	39.6	100
3. Usually knows (n=489)	2.9	23.7	31.3	42.1	100
8. Don't know (n=271)	0.4	17.0	36.5	46.1	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>100</b>
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(9) = 2290.3851					
Design-based F(9.00, 151776.00) = 254.4721 Pr = 0.000					

**Table 1 - Continued**

<b>Item 4: Parent knows with whom child spends time on weekends</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1. Always know (n=9,382)</b>	0.8	7.2	25.3	66.8	100
<b>2. Sometimes know (n=6,511)</b>	1.3	8.5	55.4	34.8	100
<b>3. Usually knows (n=672)</b>	2.8	22.8	34.7	39.7	100
<b>8. Don't know (n=300)</b>	0.3	19	36.7	44	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	1.1	8.5	37.5	52.9	100
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(9) = 1959.9588					
Design-based F(9.00, 151776.00) = 217.7603 Pr = 0.000					
<b>Item 5: Parent knows how child spends his/her money</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1. Always know (n=6,426)</b>	1.1	14.4	25.8	58.7	100
<b>2. Sometimes know (n=6,682)</b>	1.9	18.8	53.1	26.1	100
<b>3. Usually knows (n=2,886)</b>	1.9	50.6	26.2	21.3	100
<b>8. Dont know (n=871)</b>	1.5	37.1	29.4	32.0	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	1.6	23.5	36.9	38.0	100
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(9) = 3267.0316					
Design-based F(9.00, 151776.00) = 362.9820 Pr = 0.000					
<b>Item 6: Parent knows what TV, video or films child watches</b>					
	<b>Child Report</b>				
<b>Parent's report</b>	<b>1. Always Know</b>	<b>2. Sometimes Know</b>	<b>3. Usually Know</b>	<b>8. Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1. Always know (n=6,512)</b>	1.3	13.5	27.6	57.6	100
<b>2. Sometimes know (n=7,205)</b>	2.1	15.0	56.9	26.0	100
<b>3. Usually knows (n=2,331)</b>	2.8	51.3	26.2	19.7	100
<b>8. Don't know (n=817)</b>	2.4	42.7	23.1	31.7	100
<b>Total (n=16,865)</b>	1.9	20.8	39.7	37.6	100
Pearson: Uncorrected chi2(9) = 3632.1811					
Design-based F(9.00, 151776.00) = 403.5517 Pr = 0.000					

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