Expanding notions of social reproduction; Parents and Young people's sexual Reproductive Health Behavior

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Abstract

Building on the evidence that parent, family structure and child characteristics reflect broader emotional and social behavioral problems of children, the study investigated (1) association between young people and their sexual reproductive health behavior, and (2) how parents' social characteristics and family structure directly affect the sexual reproductive health behavior of their children. The sample for this study was obtained from the second round of EDULINK 2011 Urban Health and Poverty Project data set. The sample consist of young people aged 15-24 years who had never married. Regression analyses include controls for parent, family structure and child characteristics. Young people's characteristics such as age, sex, educational level, living arrangements is associated with reproductive health sexual behaviour. The study found that the influence of parents is contingent on children and parent's (i.e the father's) educational level. This result point to the need for making education accessible and affordable especially among the poor and marginalized societies.

Key words: parents, social class, risky sexual behaviour, young people.

Introduction

The issue of whether social class of parents affects children's outcomes is much contested in the social mobility and social inequality literature. Menaghan (1999) has shown that parent and child characteristics, the quality of parent-child interaction, and social stressors contribute to social explanation of internalizing and externalizing behavior in children. Literature on parental effects has focused on three pathways: biological, economic and socio-emotional (Ermisch 2008; Heckman, 2006, 2011). This study is set within the socio-emotional context. The confluence model (Zajonc and Markus,1975) suggested that the presence of parents (especially the educated) may enhance a family's intellectual environment and play a significant role in

the socialization process by serving as role models and promoting traditional values, ethics and the relevance of education. If socio-emotional support of parents exert significant influence on children's outcome then living arrangements and social status (including education, place of residence) of parents should play substantial role in their children's reproductive health behaviour. Despite a rampant public education on STIs/HIV among poor populations, there remains a need for understanding the influential child and parental factors related to risky sexual behaviours for this population.

This study examined the association between young people and their sexual reproductive health behavior, and how parents' social characteristics directly affects the sexual reproductive health behavior of their children.

Methods

Data

The sample for this study was obtained from the second round of EDULINK 2011 Urban Health and Poverty Project data set. The sample includes 285 young people aged 15-24. The analysis was limited to those never married.

Measures

Dependent Variable

Sexual reproductive health behaviour was categorized into three variables. Two questions used for this categorization are; (*1) how many persons in the last 12 months have you had sex with?* and *(2) did you use condom in the past 12 months with the people you had sex with?* The four categories are *risky sexual behaviour* (refers to those who had sex with one or more persons and did not use condom with either most or all of them), *safe sexual behaviour* (refers to those who had sex with one or more persons but used condom with all of them), *inactive sexual behaviour* (refers to those who have not had sex in the last 12 months and those who have never has sex).

Independent Variable: Child and Parent Characteristics

Given that factors such as parent and child characteristics are shown to be associated with young peoples' sexual reproductive health behaviour, it is relevant that these factors be controlled in the analyses. Young people's characteristics used as control variables include age, gender, ethnicity, education, religion, and age at first sex. Parent characteristic include educational level of both the mother and father. Family composition variable include living arrangement (stays alone, lives with parent(s), partner, and other adult).

Results

The results indicate that young peoples' age, sex, education and living arrangements is significantly associated with reproductive health behaviour. Thus, adolescents (15-19 years) report been sexually inactive while young adult (20-24 years) report practising safe sexual behaviour. Males were found to be significantly associated with safe sexual behaviour while females were found to be associated with risky sexual behaviour. Young people with no education is significantly associated with risky sexual behaviour. Interestingly, young people with higher education were found to be associated with risky sexual behaviour. Young people living with their parent(s) report to been sexually inactive.

Table 1 presents estimates from multinomial regression models. Models 1 and 2 test the main effect of child characteristics and parent characteristics on sexual reproductive health behaviour. Model 1 shows that the odds of risky sexual behaviour was 4.09 times higher for males compared to females. Thus, gender had significant influence of sexually reproductive health behaviour. Also, the odds of risky sexual behaviour was 13.86 times higher for young people with no education compared to those with secondary or higher education. In model 2, controlling for parental characteristics, the study found out that young people with no education were more likely to practise risky sexual behaviour compared to those with higher education. Also, young people with fathers who had secondary/higher education were less likely to practise risky sexual behaviour compared to those with no education.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that parent's social class affects their children's reproductive health behaviour, but is contingent on the child's education and fathers' educational level. This finding leads to the conclusion that education is an important moderator of parent effect. This suggests that causal processes of parental influences occur through the vehicle of education. This reaffirms the relevance of the socio-emotional pathway for parental effects. More comparative work spanning across generations is needed to determine the trend of parents influence.

Table1: Multinomial regression models of risky sexual behaviour

	Model 1			**Model 2**		
Young people's characteristics	Coeff	SE	Odds Ratio	Coeff	SE	Odds Ratio
Age						
15-19years	1.233	0.642	3.431	1.08	0.823	2.945
20-24years (rf)						
Sex						
Male	1.409	0.562	4.092*	1.336	0.704	3.805
Female(rf)						
Education						
No education	2.629	1.073	13.862*	3.502	1.37	33.191*
Preschool/Primary	0.156	0.801	1.169	0.209	1.018	1.232
Middle/JHS	-1.139	0.676	0.32	-1.801	0.84	0.162*
Secondary/Higher (rf)						
Ethnicity						
Akan	3.312	1.609	27.430*	2.845	1.909	17.201
Ga-Adangme	2.415	1.501	11.19	1.996	1.753	7.356
Ewe	2.851	1.823	17.31	2.645	2.099	14.088
Other(rf)						
Religion						
No Relligion	-1.81	1.35	0.164	-2.667	1.806	0.069
Christian	-1.19	1.088	0.304	-1.276	1.396	0.279
Moslem(rf)						
Age at first Sex						
Not had sexual intercourse	-2.74	2.674	0.65	-1.949	6.516	0.142
<15 years	0.33	0.871	1.391	0.632	1.015	1.882
15-19years	-0.701	0.716	0.496	-1.607	0.924	0.201
20-24years(rf)						
Living arrangements						
Stays alone	1.155	0.846	3.174	1.105	1.004	3.018
Parent(s)	0.211	0.612	1.235	0.367	0.706	1.443
Partner	-0.562	0.979	0.57	-0.332	1.239	0.717
Other Adults(rf)						
Parents Characteristics						
Mothers Educational level						
Secondary/Higher				0.009	1.124	1.009
Middle/JHS				-1.547	1.175	0.213
Preschool/Primary				0.552	0.928	1.737
Don’t Know				1.697	1.074	5.458
No education(rf)						
Fathers Educational level						
Secondary/Higher				-2.405	1.101	0.90*
Middle/JHS				-0.476	0.879	0.621
Preschool/Primary				-0.396	1.416	0.673
Don’t Know				-1.945	1.61	0.143
No education(rf)						

* Only *p* values < .05 are displayed

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