

## **Parental Guidance and Children Sexual Behaviour in Namibia: A Case Study in Windhoek**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is based on quantitative data collected from 347 school children in grades 8, 9 and 10 from three high schools in Windhoek, Namibia. Three schools were randomly selected from three strata (that is; one from low fees, another from medium fees and the last from high fees schools). This was done in order to accommodate children from different financial background. The main objective of the study was to identify the factors associated with early sexual activity by school children. The specific objectives were: (1) to examine the role parental guidance and values play in children sexual behaviour, (2) examine the role of peer pressure and self-control in children sexual behaviour, (3) investigate, whether children apply their knowledge to protect themselves from risky behaviour and (4) examine family backgrounds of school children and its influence on their sexual behaviour. Among the 347 children from ages 13 to 18, sixty-four (18.4%) had experienced sexual intercourse and the majority of these were male. The effect of peer pressure was significant in those 18.4% children, who were already sexually active. Findings suggest that parental guidance, support, and supervision were significantly (and adversely) related to the early sexual activity. Chi-square and regression analysis revealed that parental guidance, support and supervision might play a major role in deterring and delaying first sexual inter-course among children. Children who were supported, cared, and guided by their parents had their first sexual experience at an older age.

*Keywords:* Sexual behaviour, Parental guidance, Econometric, Children, Society, Religion.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 68% of adolescents and youths surveyed had engaged in sexual intercourse in Namibia (UNFPA, 2002). According to Namibia's sentinel survey about 17.7% of the country's population aged 14 – 49 years has been infected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Mostly as a legacy of AIDS, around 115 000 orphans are spread throughout Namibia (USAID, 2004a). It is these kinds of figures that have prompted research on sexual behaviour in Namibia. Despite this there appears to be a lack of research on children's sexual behaviour in Namibia in general and as a factor in producing a healthy society in particular. There is also a dearth of studies linking family

background to sexual behaviour. The present research which relates early sexual engagement of secondary school children to family background and related attributes tries to fill this gap. The family background and related attributes of children with stronger sexual self-control was compared and contrasted with those of children involved in early sexual engagement.

This study targets sexuality among children who are attending secondary school (grade 8 to 10) and are normally expected to be in their early teenage years. Sexual intercourse involving these children is referred to in this study as sexual engagement. Children that have had sexual intercourse are said to have had early sexual engagement. Conversely, those that have not are defined as having stronger sexual control. The rationale for the paper is that to protect society from HIV and AIDS there is need to focus on changing the sexual behaviour of young people. This in part requires understanding their sexual behaviour i.e. their knowledge on HIV/AIDS prevention methods; the social factors determining young people's sexual activity after puberty; and the role of parental influence and guidance (i.e. parental love, care, norms, advice and values) in shaping their sexual behaviour. This study attempts to examine the influence of parental guidance on children's sexual behaviour in the belief that certain family and parental attributes may dispose children towards vulnerability to early sexual engagement.

The general objective of the study was to identify the factors associated with early sexual activity by school children. The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the role of parental guidance and values on children sexual behaviour,
2. Examine the role of peer pressure and self-control on children sexual behaviour,
3. Investigate, whether children apply their HIV and AIDS knowledge to protect themselves from risky behaviour and
4. Examine family backgrounds and their influence on school children sexual behaviour.

This research uses ideas from social control theory. By the term social control sociologists refer "any social or cultural means by which systematic and relatively consistent restraints are imposed upon individual behaviour and by which people are motivated to adhere to traditions and patterns of behaviour that are important to the smooth functioning of a group or society" (Theordorson and Theordorson, 1980, 386). The social mechanisms used to regulate individual and groups may be formal ones such as rules and regulations, laws and statuses backed by authorities that punish deviancy. These are enforced by court systems through fines and imprisonment. On the other hand negative informal social controls may include sanctions such as ridicule, shame, guilt, and disapproval. Positive informal social controls may include praise and approval. Informal social controls usually become internalized in the individual.

All societies have norms, rules and regulations surrounding sexuality. These are aimed at ensuring that sexual desires are directed in a manner fitting what is cherished, healthy and respected in society. Those who break informal rules and norms about sex and sexual expression can expect some kind of punishment. It is the family that enforces such punishment for transgressing children. Such punishment may take the form of disapproval and ridicule of children that fail to observe the required rules regarding sex. But families are

not the same; some enforce these rules more than others. Some are quite lax about these rules while others are strict. Some families are structured such that they are not in a position to enforce the rules. Thus family background may be crucial to whether or not children exercise self-control over sexual matters.

One's perceptions and behaviour are influenced by members of groups to which one belongs and by members of one's personal networks among which family is primary. Auguste Comte believed that family plays a crucial role in the control of egoistic impulses and the emergence of individual altruism (Johnson, 1998). Similarly, Durkheim believed that only through discipline and by means of it alone are we able to teach the child to rein in his desires, to set limits to his appetites and to define the goals of his activity. This limit is the condition of happiness and of moral health (Ritzer, 1996). Social control primarily serves to dictate the norms of proper behaviour through social support, encouragement, and relationship building. Coercive discipline, though related to social control, is not the key mechanism (Cheung, et al 2005). Family and parents and religion are thus crucial to controlling behaviour including sexual behaviour. Conversely, lack of social control is seen as a determinant of deviation including early sexual engagement.

The aim of social control is to bolster social integration into society. Social control arising from conventional institutions, such as the family and school may elicit desirable effects (Ritzer, 1996). Parental, teacher and classmate control and support may serve to maintain social relationships and the individual's attachment to conventional social norms that include discouraging individuals from early sex engagement.

Parents can influence their children far better than their peers, educators, counselors, and other professionals as they serve continually and firmly over the life span of their children (Farmer, 1985). Parental guidance reflects their own behaviour, attitudes, and style in their children's perceptions (Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994). Overall, research reveals that what matters most is how children are raised, the values parents have, whether their parents follow what they say, and how their parents connect to their children (Galinsky, 2001). Steinberg and others (cited in Baumrind, 1991) reported that adolescents with higher academic achievement were likely to have more parental supervision. On the other hand teenagers whose parents have liberal attitudes about sex and who have friends that are sexually active are more likely to have sexual intercourse. Other research supports the association of parental supervision with a decrease in adolescent sexual activity (Velez-Pastrana and others, 2005).

Katz-Katz and others (1997) examined the relationship between family characteristics and adolescents' deviant behaviour in a sample of 1200 families in the USA. Their aim was to determine the effect of social control through family structure and parental attachment. Children of "disrupted" families were at a higher risk of initiating the use of controlled substances and engaging in sexual intercourse. A child's family attachment was more important than family structure, even though family structure does have an effect on family attachment. The child-parent relationship plays a protective role against HIV infection (Parera et al, 2005). Parera et al's (2005) found that having a good relationship with the mother is a shielding factor against sexual intercourse and multiple sexual partners. Similarly, Camlin and Snow (2008:536) report literature indicating that, "among the various dimensions

of family social support, positive family communication and connectedness is probably most important to adolescent sexual self-care or avoidance of risk". What is crucial is that the most socially competent children have parents with high ratings on both warmth and control (Putallaz, 1992).

Children of affectionate, optimistic parents develop a generally positive orientation to social interaction, and children of negative parents develop a generally negative and avoidant association with social interaction (Putallaz, 1992). Camlin and Snow (2008:536) agree by arguing that in the context of Cape Town, South Africa, "parents also have a crucial role to play in reducing risk behaviour of youth" The relationship between parental support and early sexual engagement may be mediated by other factors. Oman et al., (2005) and Halawah, (2006) found that the proportion of youth who reported never having had intercourse was significantly higher among those whose parents had a bachelor's degree than among those with less education. At least one study has suggested that peer influence on risky sexual behaviour is much higher in one-parent households than two-parent households (Oman et al, 2005).

Numerous studies have reported a relationship between religion and adolescent sexual activity. Adolescents with no religious faith are most likely to have early sexual intercourse. Those who are members of churches that recommend sexual abstinence before marriage are less likely to have had sexual intercourse than those who belong to other churches (Miller & Olson, 1988). In the United States, young people's participation in "prosocial activities," that is, group activities with school, church, or community, was found to be directly associated with a reduction in sexual risk behaviour (Ramirez-Valles et al., 1998) or the odds of having sex (Oman et al., 2005). The influence of religion as a social control occurs through provision of norms for acceptable sexual behaviour. Religious adolescents are less likely to engage in sexual intercourse than those who do not, although church involvement is no guarantee that adolescents will abstain from sexual activities (Bezuidenhout, 2004).

Bearman and Bruckner (2001) reported that religious beliefs delayed coital debut for White, Asian and Hispanic middle and late adolescents, but had no effect on Black adolescents (Rostosky and Regnerus, 2003). Brown and Schaik (1985) concluded that black religious institutions are an important influence on black adolescent girl's sexual behaviour. Rostosky and Regnerus (2003) found that religious parents teach norms, values and responsibilities to their children from religious views so that their children abstain from engaging in activities like initiating sexual intercourse while young. Their findings lend support to the hypothesis that religious beliefs have a direct and indirect effect on coital debut even when demographic characteristics such as age, race and parent education are controlled.

Kaberege and others (2003) found that parent sexual behaviour and modeling of peers was closely associated with adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviours. Empirical research suggests a strong relationship between number of friends who had initiated sexual activity and teenage sexual behaviour. Adolescents who report stronger peer involvement in sex and more positive sex outcome expectancies are more likely to initiate sex at a younger age. Peers can enforce or challenge the norms and authority of adult society.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The population consisted of children attending grades 8, 9 and 10 in public schools in Windhoek in 2006. The sample from this population was selected by using a combination of multistage and cluster sampling. In the first stage, public schools in Windhoek area were classified into three groups (clusters) in order of their fee scale: high, middle and low fees to make the sample inclusive of children from different economic backgrounds. From each fee group, a school was randomly selected. The three schools selected were: Windhoek High in which students pay N\$ 950 per term, Hochland High where students pay N\$ 300 per term and Hage-Geingob High where students pay N\$ 150 per term. All the pupils attending grades 8, 9 and 10 from each school (and hence three schools in total) were selected and interviewed in the sample. This approach is more specifically called a multi-stage cluster sampling design. Following this sampling approach 347 students in total were interviewed. Data for this sample were collected by means of a structured questionnaire that was distributed to each pupil. This instrument was pretested on grade 8 and 9 students from Highland Christian School, a private school in Windhoek and appropriate changes were made. This school has a student intake that is similar to all the schools in the sample.

The survey instrument had 35 structured items dealing with biographical information, parent-child relationship, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS, personal sexual behaviour, peer pressure and self control. Examples of questions on sexual engagement included, "Have you ever had sex?" The answering options were "yes" and "no"). An example of an item dealing with knowledge about HIV/AIDS was the following, "To protect myself from HIV/AIDS I need to (a) not be close to HIV infected person (b) must not have sex with HIV infected person (c) take medicine ahead of time". An example of an item dealing with religiosity is the following, "(a) religious faith is important to me (b) religious faith is not so important to me. This study relied on self reported data to sexual behaviour. One widely noted difficulty with self-reports involves recall. The sexual behaviours adolescents report they are involved in may not resemble the behaviours in which they are actually involved. Similarly, self-reports on disapproved behaviour such as that involving sex may focus on trivial or minor incidents. This is a limitation in our design that we have to note.

This research applied descriptive statistics to examine specific characteristics of different variables in the data set. It also used non-parametric approach, such as chi-square and Cramer's V test of independence to analyze the association between various categorical variables. The parametric method of multiple linear regression models was employed to infer variables influence the sexual behaviour of the children in the study group.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **(a) Sexual activity**

Among the 347 participants, 195 (56%) of the respondents were females, while 152 (44%) were males. Out of these, 103 (29.7%) respondents were from Hochland High, 96 (27.7%) from Windhoek High and 148 (42.7%) from Hage-Geingob High School. About 108 (31.1%) were in grade 8, 106 (30.5%) in grade 9, and 133 (38.4%) in grade 10. Among the respondents 18.4% (64) reported being sexually active and 81.6% (283) reported not being sexually active. The mean age of the sexual engaged (15.66) is slightly higher than the non engaged (15.04). Only 13% of females are sexually active compared to 37% for males. Clearly there is an indication that males are more sexually active than females and this is

consistent with expectations in Namibia (Mufune, 2008). There is also an increase in the percentage of sexual activity among children as they move to a higher grade. It indicates that as they grow older larger number of children become sexually active.

**(b) Parental Guidance and Children’s Sexual Behaviour**

The first objective of this research was to examine the role that parental guidance and values play in shaping children’s sexual behaviour. The questionnaire was designed to capture parental control by including a few statements relating to parental care and concern especially when children are involved in risky behaviour (Table 1). The hypothesis is that parental control factors significantly influence children’s sexual activity. The specified parental control factors include religious faith, care about test marks, care about coming home late, punishment for going out without permission, lying to parents, learning about sex from friends, and parents as role models. Cramer’s V indicates the strength of association between the specified characteristics and sexual-engagement variable. Chi-square values for each are significant implying that the difference in response between active and abstinent children is statistically significant.

Table 1: Family relations and other characteristics of sexually engaged and non engaged

Item	Sexual engagement		Cramer’s V
	Active ( % )	Abstinent ( % )	
1. Religious faith is important to me	76	91	.185***
2. Parents don’t care about my test marks	13	3	.156**
3. Parents don’t care if I come back home late	13	3	.158**
4. Parents don’t punish me if I go out at night without permission.	23	10	.157**
5. I lie to my parents about my sexual relationship	59	25	.28***
6. My friends teach me about sexual relationship	60	40	.20***
7. My role model is one of my parents.	13	87	.151**

Note: \*(p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001); where p is the probability-value.

As shown in Table 1 the Chi-square test carried out to examine the association between “faith” and “sexual engagement” showed that abstinent children (91%) are more prone to reporting “faith is important” than sexually engaged children (76%) ( $\chi^2 = 11.78$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $V = 0.185$ ). About 13% of sexually active children reported that their parents don’t

care about their school test marks while only 3% of abstinent children say that their parents do not care about their test marks ( $\chi^2 = 8.39$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $V = 0.156$ ). About 13% of children who have initiated sexual intercourse compared to 3% of abstinent children report that their parents do not care if they come home late ( $\chi^2 = 8.74$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $V = 0.158$ ). About 23% of sexually active students agreed to the statement that “parents don’t punish me if I go out at night without permission”, while only 10% of sexually abstinent students agreed with this statement ( $\chi^2 = 8.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $V = 0.157$ ). About 59% of the sexually active children said they lied to their parents about their sexual relationship, whereas only 25% of those who are abstinent did ( $\chi^2 = 27$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $V = 0.28$ ).

**(c) Role of Peer-pressure:**

The second objective of this research was to establish the extent to which peer-pressure and self-control influence sexual behaviour. The hypothesis was that peer-pressure significantly influences early sexual engagement. Most of the respondents (168 i.e.53%) claimed that they are taught about sexual relationships by parents. Among children who are taught by parents, only 37.5% are sexually active, while 62.5% of those taught by others are sexually active. It is also important to point out that the least abstinent children are from the group that is taught by friends pointing to the importance of peer pressure. In order to observe the influence of peer pressure on sexuality, specific hypothetical scenarios were presented to the respondents. In the first *scenario* children were told that, “close friends who are sexually active had organized a sexual partner for them and threatened to throw them out of the group if they refused to have sexual intercourse with the person. Would they go along with the request?”

The finding suggests that among the students who are sexually active, 31% felt strong peer pressure to comply compared to only 9% of those that are sexually abstinent ( $\chi^2 = 20.55$  ( $p < .001$ ; and  $V = 0.247$ ). This indicates moderate association between peer pressure and sexual engagement. In the second *scenario* children were told that “they had gone to a party with friends where all the friends picked sexual partners. They were asked what they would do”. About 18% of the children who were sexually active compared to 4% of those that were abstinent said they would also pick a sexual partner. Thus children who were sexually active were much more influenced by peer pressure ( $\chi^2 = 15.89$ ;  $p < .001$ ; and  $V = 0.21$ ).

This again shows moderate association between peer pressure and sexual engagement. In the third *scenario* the straight question “If you are forced by your friends to pick a sexual partner, what would you do?” was asked of respondents. Among children who were sexually active, 20% said they would whereas only 4% from the group of non-actives said they would do so ( $\chi^2 = 12$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and  $V = 0.19$ ) again implying moderate association between sexual engagement and peer-pressure.

**(d) Application of Knowledge and Risky Behaviour**

The third objective of this research was to investigate whether children apply their knowledge against risky sexual behaviour. The relevant hypothesis is, “the children who are knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS are less likely to be sexually active”. The findings show that

92% (314 students) of the respondents have basic knowledge on HIV/AIDS compared to only 8% who are ignorant of the fact that having sex with an HIV-infected person is life threatening. Among all the children, regardless of sexual status, 26% believed that condom protected 100% from HIV/STDs and pregnancy and 74% had good knowledge about the safety of condoms. Four (less than 1%) did not answer the question. In a further examination of whether children used their knowledge for protection from risky behaviour, 47 (74%) sexually active children who had sound knowledge on condom reliability were (individually) analysed. It was found that among the 47 children, 11 (23.4%) never used condoms or used condoms only sometimes while having sex. Thus it seems the majority of sexually engaged children apply their knowledge to protect themselves in risky sexual behaviour.

**(e) Family structure and its influence on children's sexual behaviour:**

The fourth objective of this research was to investigate the influence of family background on children's sexual behaviour. The relevant hypotheses are that, "Children from families with two parent families are less sexually engaged than children from single parent families" and "the quality of relationship between parents and children affect the sexual engagement of the child". Data were collected on such family attributes as mother's education, type of family the child lives in and the, time the parent(s) spend with the child. These data show that the least sexually active children (13.5%) are from mothers with university degrees while the most sexually active (33.3%) are from mothers with secondary school qualification. May be mothers with secondary school qualification have inadequate knowledge to guide their children and protect them from negative social influences, such as sexualized media, pornography, HIV/AIDS etc. or they don't teach their children about sexual matters. This observation is however contradicted by data showing mothers with 'below secondary education' having proportionately less sexually active (14.3%) children. These data also show that children from the "least educated parents" were overwhelmingly female (72%). Females are less sexually active than males in these data. This might explain the fact that children from the least educated mothers are less sexually engaged than children from mothers with secondary education.

Table 2 shows the relationship between child's living arrangement and sexual behaviour. Among children living with both parents, 13.6% are sexually active while only 16.9% of those living with mothers are sexually active. The difference in sexual activity between those living with both parents versus those living with mother is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Children living with relatives (26%) and with father (35%) are much more sexually active. The  $\chi^2$  value for difference in sexual activity between those living with both parents vs. those living with relatives is significant at  $p < .05$ . The difference in sexual activity between those living with both parents and those living with father is even stronger ( $\chi^2 = 10.19$  and  $V = 0.23$ ). We conclude that children living with fathers and with other relatives are more sexually active than children living with both parents and only mothers. These data agree with Young & Jensen's (1991) statement that children living with both parents are less sexually active than any other group. The ones living with only fathers are the most sexually active. These data also show that only 12.5% of children spending relatively more time with parents are sexually active compared to 26% of children whose parents spend little or no time with them ( $\chi^2 = 6.9$ ,  $V = 0.11$  and  $p < .05$ ).



Table 2: showing sexual engagement according to child's living arrangement

Living arrangement	Sexually active	Chi-square	Cramer's V
Living with both parents	13.6%		
Living with mother	16.9%		
Living with relatives	26%		
Living with father	35%		
Living with both parents vs. living with mother		0.46	0.04
Living with both parents vs. living with relatives		4.51*	0.154*
Living with both parents vs. living with father		10.19**	0.23**

Although this relationship is weak it is statistically significant. These findings broadly tally with observations by Velez-Pastrana and Perera et al. According Velez-Pastrana, et al, (2005) children who are guided by friends have a tendency to become more sexually active while mother-daughter communication is an important factor against the onset of early sexual activity. A good relationship with the mother is an inhibiting factor against sexual intercourse and multiple sexual partners (Parera et al, 2005).

**(f) Regression analysis**

The variables used in Chi-square analysis are also included in the regression analysis - which measures the magnitude and direction of relation between dependent variable and a set of independent variables (Pallant, 2001). The dependent variable is X1, which takes value of 1 if the respondent is sexually active and 0 if not. The independent variables used in this analysis are described as: G1 =1 if respondent is Male and 0 otherwise and G2 =1 if respondent is Female and 0 otherwise. This is a gender specific variable. The purpose of this variable is to identify whether one gender is more sexually active than the other. In order to do that two dummy variables, G1 and G2, for two categories (male and female) were created for the regression equation. C1 =1 if respondent is from Grade 8 and 0 otherwise, C2 =1 if respondent is from Grade 9, and 0 otherwise and C3 =1 if respondent is from Grade 10, and 0 otherwise.

This is a grade specific variable designed to determine the influence of three different grade (i.e. 8, 9 and 10) on children's sexual behaviour. The three dummy variables C1, C2 and C3 are used in this analysis to examine whether children in a particular grade are more sexually active than in other grades i.e. the higher the grade, the more sexually active. M1 =1 if respondent's mother has university degree and 0 otherwise, M2 =1 if respondent's mother has high school certificate and 0 otherwise, M3 =1 if respondent's mother has secondary school certificate and 0 otherwise and M4 =1 if respondent's mother has university degree and 0 otherwise. This is the mother's education variable. Its inclusion is meant to measure the effect

of mother's education on children's sexual behaviour. It is expected that the more the child is sexually active the less is the level of the mother's education. RF1 =1 if respondent says religious faith is important for them and 0 otherwise and RF2 =1 if respondent says religious faith is not so important for them, 0 otherwise. This is "religious faith of children" variable. This is included to examine the effect of children's religious beliefs on sexual behaviour.

Table 3: Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Estimates Using 347 Observations<sup>1</sup>

Variable	Dependent Variable: X1 (1 for sexually active)				
	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	p-value	
Constant	0.0123539	0.0131819	0.9372	0.34900	
G1	0.203576	0.0278168	7.3185	<0.00001	***
C1	-0.0580462	0.0333135	-1.7424	0.08189	*
C2	0.0315882	0.031908	0.9900	0.32254	
M1	0.105462	0.0403401	2.6143	0.00914	***
M2	0.140061	0.0377981	3.7055	0.00023	***
M3	0.172982	0.0454433	3.8066	0.00015	***
RF1	-0.0716952	0.0365097	-1.9637	0.04997	**
P1	0.00937326	0.0278883	0.3361	0.73690	
LW1	0.00948101	0.045253	0.2095	0.83411	
LW2	0.152125	0.0579297	2.6260	0.00883	***
LW3	-0.027264	0.0426093	-0.6399	0.52248	
T1	-0.0524478	0.0294156	-1.7830	0.07503	*
T3	0.0676501	0.0564762	1.1979	0.23139	
WIN	-0.0827178	0.0383594	-2.1564	0.03140	**
HAG	0.192885	0.0319261	6.0416	<0.00001	***

<sup>1</sup> For each attribute variable, although as many dummy variables as given by categories are created, however only "number of categories-1" can be included as the independent variables for each attribute variable. If this rule is not followed, then the regression is said to have a 'perfect multicollinearity' problem and the estimation falls apart.

Sum of squared residuals = 42.6685

Standard error of residuals = 0.250864

Unadjusted  $R^2 = 0.265577$

Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.249329$ , F-statistic (15, 678) = 16.3449 (p-value < 0.00001)

P1 =1 if respondent says his/her parent(s) go to church regularly and 0 otherwise and P2 =1 if respondent says his/her parent(s) go to church only occasionally or never, 0 otherwise. The fifth variable is parent'(s) religious belief. Dummy variables P1 and P2, are included to examine whether parents' religious beliefs have any impact on the children's sexual behaviour. LW1 =1 if the respondent lives with two parents; 0 otherwise, LW2 =1 if the respondent lives with father; 0 otherwise, LW3 =1 if the respondent lives with mother; 0 otherwise and LW4 =1 if the respondent lives with relatives/others; 0 otherwise. The sixth variable is children's family structure. The purpose of dummy variables: LW1, LW2, LW3, and LW4 is to estimate the influence, if any, of different living arrangements. It is expected that children living in two-parent families are more sexually abstinent. T1 =1 if the respondent says his/her parent(s) spend a lot of time with them; 0 otherwise, T2 =1 if the respondent says his/her parent(s) spend only little time with them; 0 otherwise and T3 =1 if the respondent says his/her parent(s) don't spend time with them; 0 otherwise. The purpose of dummy variables T1, T2 and T3 is to find out if there exists a relationship between parental time with children and children's sexual behaviour.

It is expected that the more time parent(s) spend with the children, the less the children are sexually active. WIN =1 if the respondent goes to Windhoek High School; 0 otherwise, HAG =1 if the respondent goes to Hage-Geingob High School; 0 otherwise and HOC =1 if the respondent goes to Hochland High School; 0 otherwise. The last variable measures school effect. It examines whether going to a specific school matters for sexual behaviour. Not all the dummy variables for each attribute are included in the regression model. The excluded variables are G2, C3, M4, RF2, P2, LW4, T2 and HOC. This group is said to compose the "reference group".

The estimation method is called OLS (ordinary least square)<sup>2</sup>. The independent variables for each attribute included in the model are shown in the first column (Table 3). The coefficient on constant 0.01, is insignificant and hence zero in a statistical sense. This value represents the probability of a child being sexually active in the reference group, (i.e. the group belonging to the categories of various attribute variables that are excluded from the regression) when all included independent variables simultaneously take zero values, being zero. The effect of each independent variable is given by significance of its estimated coefficient presented in the second column of Table 3. As long as the estimated coefficient has a p-value equal to 0.1 or less than 0.1 it is taken to have significant impact on the estimated dependent variable - the probability towards being more sexually active - compared with its reference category when the coefficient comes with a positive (significant) value. A negative (significant) value of the coefficient indicates a decrease in probability of being sexually active compared with the reference category of the particular attribute.

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<sup>2</sup> OLS method has been criticised as not appropriate when the dependent variable takes values of "0" or "1" because of the problem created by different variances of the error term. However, in a number of comparisons between OLS and other advanced methods such as logistic regression, the difference in results is not remarkable.

The estimated coefficient on gender variable, G1, is 0.204. Since G1=1 for male, the coefficient means the probability of males being more sexually active than females (the reference category) is 20.4% ( $p < .001$ ) which is significant. The coefficient of C1 is  $-0.058$ , indicating that grade 8 children are less sexually active than those in grade 10. There is no difference between grade 9 and 10 children's sexual behaviour. Mother's education seems to play a significant role in children's sexual behaviour. The coefficient of M1 is 0.105, the coefficient value of M2 is 0.14 and the coefficient value of M3 is 0.17 ( $p < .0009$ ,  $p < .00023$  and  $p < .00015$  respectively). Children of mothers who have university education are less sexually active than the children of mothers who have high school or secondary school education. Children of mothers who have secondary school qualification are the most sexually active.

Children's religious faith also plays an important role in sexual behaviour. More religious children are less sexually active than less religious children. The coefficient value of RF1 is  $-0.07$ . Parents' religious beliefs did not play any role in determining children's sexual behaviour.

Children's family background plays a role on their sexual behaviour. Children who live with father are more sexually active than the children living with other relatives, mothers, or both parents. The coefficient value of LW2 is 0.152 ( $p < .0008$ ) showing that children living with fathers have a 15% higher chance to be sexually active compared to children living with others (the reference category). Children living with two parents are the least sexually active compared with reference category (this however is not significant in the regression output). Parent-child bonding measured by the time spent with children has a significant role in shaping children's sexual behaviour. Children who spend a lot of time with their parents are less sexually active than children whose parents spend little or no time with them (reference group).

There also exists a significant school effect. The finding is that the children who came from Hage-Geingob high school are more sexually active than the children from Windhoek or Hochland high schools. The coefficient value of HAG is 0.19 ( $p < .00001$ ) implying that the chance for a Hage-Geingob school students to be sexually active is 19.3% higher compared to the reference category (Hochland High). While coefficient value of Windhoek High is  $-0.08$  meaning that the chance of Windhoek High student sexual engagement is 8.3% less than Hochland High School students.

Social control theory indicates that lax social control is a determinant of deviation including early sexual debut (Cheung et al., 2005). The goal of the present study was to discover if certain parental (family) characteristics contribute to delay in children's sexual engagement. According to Velez-Pastrana et al., (2005) in situations where parents know their children's whereabouts, are aware of what they are doing and spend time with them after school; there is less likelihood that they will be sexually active. All the parental (family) characteristics examined in this research were significantly associated with children's earlier engagement in sexual activities. These research findings concur with Young and Jensen (1991) statement that living in a two-parent family household has a positive influence on reducing early sexual engagement. These data suggest that children living with both parents are the least sexually active. The Chi square results suggest that there is no significant difference in the sexual activity of children living with both parents and children living with only their mothers. The findings also suggest that children living with fathers are at the highest risk of early sexual engagement. In country where 70% of children live in female

headed households (GRN, 2001), perhaps mothers are much more caring and concerned about their children than fathers. Single father may openly engage in dating and in sexual activities (with multiple partners) thus influencing some children to do the same. As Haralambos and Halborn (2000) indicate it is in the home environment that foundations for a healthy life style are initiated.

The proportion of youth who reported never having had intercourse was significantly higher among those who had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree than among those with less educated parents (Oman et al., 2005). The present research contradicts Oman et al's findings as it suggests that there is no paternal education influence on children's sexual behaviour. The finding suggests that parental religiousness has no effect on children's sexual behaviour but children's own religiousness has an important role in shaping their sexual behaviour. Religious adolescents are less likely to engage in sexual intercourse than those who are not (Bezuidenhout, 2004). It seems the case that religion teaches children to desist sexual temptations and the message is getting through.

This research indicates that parental supervision discourages children from early sexual engagement. Adolescents, who experience sexual intercourse at an early stage place a higher value on independence, may be less religious and more tolerant of deviance (Jessor et al., 1983). It seems parents spending more time with children help them understand what is valued with regards to sex. It may help them resist undue peer pressure. Such children may be more subjected to house rules and discipline which ultimately discourages early sexual engagement. The findings suggest that parents who teach sex education to their children have less sexually active children than those taught by friends and/or relatives. This is one of the most important results of the research. Parental guidance is crucial to raising healthy and responsible children for the future. Parents may teach their children about the danger of having sex at an early age and the consequences of HIV/AIDS.

## **CONCLUSION**

The importance of house rules and discipline for children should not be underestimated. Children getting permission to go out at night, teaching certain values from an early age, parental supervision (including checking children's home work, encouraging them to work hard, and importance of education in life) may be crucial in shaping children's behaviour including sexual behaviour. This research points to the importance of parents in controlling sexual behaviour of children. It puts the parent-child relationship at centre stage by identifying the crucial role parental guidance plays in children's sexuality. We conclude by saying that the family bond between children and parent(s) may be an important tool in the fight to control STDs, HIV and teenage pregnancy that has plagued Namibia.

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