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Original Research

Parenting practices and Adolescents' Involvement in Risky Behaviors

Adugna Bersissa Merdassa*

College of Educational Sciences, Kotobe University of Education, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

This study was conducted aiming to determine the associations between parenting practices and adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors. To this end, the correlational research design was employed. The samples of the study were 354 secondary school adolescents in three Wollega zones. The results showed that the majority of the parents in the study area practiced an authoritative parenting style; higher levels of adolescents' perception of parenting practices were correlated negatively with their involvement in risky behaviors. The variance in adolescents' involvement in risky behavior was significantly attributed to parental monitoring, parent-adolescent connectedness, and parenting styles. However, the influence of perceived parent-adolescent communication was non-significant. The present study finding also revealed that male adolescents were more involved in risky behaviors than their female counterparts. It is recommended that community-based interventions should be provided by the professionals in the area mainly to the non-authoritative parents to help them equipped with the knowledge and skills of raising children involving the supervision of children's whereabouts, connectedness and closeness to children, and communication on sexuality and other issues to safeguard adolescents from being involved in risky behaviors.

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*Corresponding Author:

Adugna Bersissa Merdassa

E-mail: adugnaber@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

The family environment is an important arena for the child's social, emotional, and intellectual development. The parental role in the family milieu is mainly to teach and train children concerning the rules and discipline to prepare them for adult life. Although peer pressure is a serious concern during adolescence, most research findings (Gavazzi, 2006; Dekovic et al., 2003) underscored the

- important contribution of parenting practices than any other variables.

The different aspects of parent-adolescent relationships might interfere with the healthy development of adolescents. The most prominent types of parent-adolescent associations include parent-adolescent attachment, parent-adolescent communication, parental monitoring (Amsale & Yemane, 2015), and parenting style (Belete &

Adugna, B.M., Wassachew, 2019). While most previous literature focused on examining the relationships between the different dimensions of parenting and adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors only on an individual basis, it is important to consider the collective and individual contributions of the different dimensions of parenting practices to adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors.

Parenting style is defined in terms of parental warmth and control. When parental behaviors (warmth and control) are combined in different ways, four distinct parenting styles emerge: parents with a high level of warmth and control (authoritative parents), parents with little warmth and are highly controlling (authoritarian parents), parents with much care but not demanding (permissive/indulgent parents), and parents who are neither strict nor warmth (neglectful/uninvolved parents). The findings of most empirical studies conducted on the relationship between parenting styles and involvement in risky behaviors steadily show that adolescents raised in authoritative families are involved in risky behaviors as compared with adolescents from authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parents. For example, Newman et al. (2008) reviewed fifteen empirical studies that examined the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent use of drugs and alcohol. The findings of these studies revealed that adolescents with an authoritative parenting style were less involved in drug use. On the other hand, the findings by other researchers (Patock & Morgan, 2006) indicated that adolescents raised in neglectful/unengaged and authoritarian families had an increased incidence of using substances. Indulgence parenting style was also correlated with an

Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan.– March 2025, 14(1), 19-31 increased incidence of adolescent alcohol and tobacco use (Patock et al., 2001).

Parental monitoring refers to the extent to which parents know their child's friends and whereabouts. Research findings confirmed that a higher level of parental supervision is associated with a lower level of adolescents' engagement in substance use (Blocklin et al., 2011), and a decreased age of sexual imitation and sexual risk-taking behavior (Hair et al., 2008). A study by Patock et al (2001) revealed a significant correlation between the level of parental monitoring of their child's whereabouts and adolescents' engagement in various health risk behaviours, indicating parents who closely supervise their adolescents tend to lower the incidence of adolescents' involvement in sexual risk-taking.

Parent-adolescent communication refers to the conversations between parents and their adolescents on various topics, such as sexual and birth control, and drug and alcohol use. Creating an environment that encourages adolescent-parent conversation serves as a buffer for the adolescents' involvement in various risk-taking behaviors. In this regard, adolescents who reported that they communicated with their mothers on diverse risk-associated issues engaged in lower levels of substance use (Roche et al., 2007), female adolescents had a lower incidence of sexual intercourse, and more often used contraception (Hutchinson et al., 2003).

Parent-adolescent attachment refers to the level of warmth, love, and affection between parents and their children. The attachment bond is formed between parents and their children starting from an early age in life. This emotional bond is a useful tool that plays an essential role in minimizing adolescents'

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Existing literature, mainly from Western countries, has shown that higher levels of parental monitoring, parent-adolescent communication, parent-adolescent connectedness, and authoritative parenting style buffer adolescents from risk-taking behaviors (Newman et al., 2008; Campero et al., 2011; Hutchinson & Wood, 2007). However, very little research approached the problem from this viewpoint in Ethiopia, and the results obtained from the existing studies were also inconclusive. Most studies conducted in Ethiopia pointed out different reasons why adolescents take different kinds of risks, such as availability of substances, exposure to friends using substances (Wakgari & Aklilu, 2011), social norms, family history, and poor knowledge of the health effects of substance use (Anteneh et al., 2014).

In Ethiopia, although much emphasis was given to the role of aforementioned non-parenting factors as immediate causes for adolescents' engagement in various risky behaviors, the role of parenting practices and adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors was not given much attention. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the relationships between adolescents' perception of parenting practices and their involvement in risky behaviors among a sample of secondary school adolescents in the three Wollega zones.

Research questions

To this end, this study attempted to answer the following five research questions:

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1. Which parenting style is practised more by the parents in the study area as perceived by the adolescents?
2. How is adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors related to their perception of parenting practices (parental monitoring, parent-adolescent communication, parent-adolescent connectedness, and type of parenting style)?
3. To what extent do adolescents' perceptions of parenting practices predict their risk-taking behaviors?
4. Do male and female adolescents differ in their risk-taking behaviors?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference among adolescents in their involvement in risky behaviors in terms of their perceived parenting styles (neglectful, indulgent, authoritarian, and authoritative)?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed to determine the relationship between adolescents' perception of parenting practices and their involvement in risky behaviors.

Population and Sampling

The study population includes secondary school adolescents in the three Wollega zones (West Wollega, East Wollega, and Horro-Guduru Wollega) in 2020/21. Five secondary schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique from each zone; hence, 15 secondary schools were included in the study. The total population of secondary school students was obtained from record offices.

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Accordingly, about 32,000 students were enrolled in the sampled secondary schools. The sample size for this study was determined using Naing et al. (2006) formula, which is commonly used in behavioral science studies.

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The formula yielded 384 sample participants. A proportional method was used to include students from each secondary school. To deal with this, the students' population and samples drawn were summarized according to Table 1.

Table 1

Secondary School Students' Population and Samples in 2020/21

School	Population	Expected Sample	Actual Sample
Fincha Secondary	2535	35	32
Alibo Secondary	2506	34	27
Shambu Secondary	1800	24	24
Shambu Preparatory & Sec	1144	15	15
Goticha Abishe Gerba Sec	1307	18	18
Gimbi Secondary	1346	18	18
Biftu Gimbi Secondary	1709	23	21
Sena Gimbi Secondary	2954	40	35
Nejo Secondary	2045	28	23
Nejo Alaltu Secondary	1930	26	26
Kumsa Moroda Secondary	988	13	13
Biftu Nekemte Secondary	1875	25	25
Darge Secondary	1928	26	26
Gida Secondary	2451	33	29
Getema Secondary	1949	26	22
Total	28467	384	354

Data Gathering Instruments

The following instruments, such as Perceived Parental Monitoring, Perceived Parent-Adolescent Communication, Perceived Parent-Adolescent Attachment, Perceived Parenting Styles, and Health Risk Behavior Scales were used to gather the data for this study.

The perceived Parental Monitoring Scale (Small & Kerns, 1993) was designed to measure adolescents' perception of parental monitoring. Participants were asked six items and were required to choose from five options: "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often", and "very often".

The perceived Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Small, 1991) with seven items was used to assess the frequency of parent-adolescent communication. Five possible responses were "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," and "very often" used by adolescents to rate their parents.

The perceived Parent-Adolescent Attachment Scale was used to assess the level of attachment between parents and children. Three items were used to assess the level of parent-child attachment as perceived by adolescents; adolescents were presented with five options to rate their responses, "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "most of the time," and "always."

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The Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (Small, 1991) was used to measure adolescents' perception of the type of parenting style their parents are practising. One item was used to assess adolescents' perception of the parenting style their parents practice. This item was used to successfully categorize the parents of 354 adolescents into one of the four parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful).

A self-developed Health Risk Behavior Scale involving seven items was used to assess the level of adolescents' involvement in various risk behaviors, such as substance abuse and sexual risk-taking behavior.

Method of Data Analysis

Both descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, standard multiple linear regression, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA) were used in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

This section is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the data gathered from 354 secondary school adolescents. Presentations of the findings were made in line with the research questions.

Table 2

Background Characteristics of Secondary School Adolescents

Background Characteristics		F	%
Age	14-16 years	45	12.7
	17-19 years	309	87.3
Sex	Male	214	60.5
	Female	140	39.5
Place of birth	Rural	180	50.8
	Urban	174	49.2
Grade Level	9 th	86	24.3
	10 th	83	23.4
	11 th	86	24.3
	12 th	99	28.0

Table 2 presents the background characteristics of secondary school adolescents. Adolescents were categorized into three in terms of their age: early adolescents (less than 14 years), middle adolescents (14 to 16 years), and late adolescents (17 to 19 years). Analysis of the age of secondary school adolescents shows that the majority of the participants (309 or 87.3%) who partook in the study were late adolescents, and the remaining 45 (12.7%) participants were middle adolescents; no early adolescents

partook in the study. In terms of the sex of the adolescents, 214 (60.5%) were males while the remaining 140 (39.5%) were females. Almost equal numbers of adolescent students participated in the study from rural (180 or 50.8%) and urban (174 or 49.2%) settings, respectively. Nearly equal numbers of adolescent students from grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 participated in the study: 86 (24.3%), 83 (23.4%), 86 (24.3%), and 99 (28%), respectively.

Table 3*Summary of Adolescents' Perceived Parenting Styles*

Parenting styles	F	%
Authoritative	195	55.1
Authoritarian	100	28.2
Permissive	24	6.8
Neglectful	35	9.9

As indicated in Table 3, most adolescents perceived that their parents practice an authoritative parenting style (195 or 55.1%), followed by authoritarian, neglectful, and

- permissive: 100 (28.2%), 35 (9.9%), and 24 (6.8%), respectively. This finding implies that most parents from the study area were practising an authoritative parenting style.

Table 4*Correlations between Independent and Dependent Variables (N=354)*

Variables	PPM	PPAC	PPAA	PPS	HRB
PPM	1				
PPAC	.452**	1			
PPAA	.552**	.392**	1		
PPS	.250**	.130*	.290**	1	
HRB	-.475**	-.207**	-.532**	-.269**	1

Note: ** Significant at .01 level; * significant at .05 level (2-tailed).

PPM, perceived parental monitoring; PPAC, perceived parent-adolescent communication; PPAA, Perceived parent-adolescent attachment; PPS, perceived parenting style; HRB, health risk behaviors

Based on a review of the literature, a higher level of adolescents' perceptions of parenting practices was expected to relate to a lower level of risky behaviors. Consequently, Table 4 presented that perceived parental monitoring, parent-adolescent communication, parent-adolescent attachment, and type of parenting style were correlated negatively with involvement in risky behaviors ($r = -.475$; $p < .05$), ($r = -.207$; $p < .05$), ($r = -.532$; $p < .05$;) and ($r = -.269$; $p < .05$), respectively. From this, one can realize that higher levels of parental monitoring, connectedness, communication, and endorsing authoritative parenting styles are associated with lower levels of adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors.

To examine if parental monitoring, connectedness, communication, and parenting styles significantly predict adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors standard multiple regression analysis was conducted. The result has shown that the combination of four independent variables accounted for 34.4% of the variance in adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors ($R^2 = .344$, $F(4, 349) = 45.719$, $p < .05$). From this it can be understood that variables other than these that were not considered in this study accounted for about 65.6% of the variance in involvement in risky behaviors among adolescents.

Table 5

Relative Contributions of Adolescents' Perception of Parenting Practices on their Involvement in Risky Behaviors

Model	B	SE B	β	t	P
Parental monitoring	-.304	.061	-.275	-4.993	.000
Parent-adolescent communication	.091	.057	.080	1.612	.108
Parent-adolescent attachment	-.863	.122	-.382	-7.089	.000
Parenting style	-.664	.304	-.100	-2.185	.030

Each predictor variable's beta weight was assessed to examine which of the four predictor variables remarkably explained the variance in involvement in risky behaviors (Table 5). Perceived parental monitoring, connectedness, and parenting styles were

- significantly contributed to the variance in risk-taking behaviors in the negative direction ($t = -4.993$; $P < .05$), ($t = -7.089$; $P < .05$) and ($t = -2.185$; $P < .05$), respectively, while the contribution of perceived parent-adolescent communication was non-significant ($t = 1.612$; $p = .108$).

Table 6

Involvement in Risky Behaviors in terms of Adolescents' Sex

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Risky behavior	Male	214	11.62	7.16	352	3.472	.001
	Female	140	9.22	4.84			

Note: Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 presented the results of the independent sample t-test were male ($M = 11.62$) and female ($M = 9.22$), $t(354) = 3.472$, $P = .001 < .05$ secondary school

- adolescents were compared to their involvement in risky behaviors. It has been indicated that male adolescents were more involved in risky behaviors than their female counterparts.

Table 7

Adolescents Involvement in Risky Behaviors as a Function of Perceived Parenting Styles

Sources	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2701.924	3	900.641	26.347	.000
Within Groups	11964.406	350	34.184		
Total	14666.331	353			

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As presented in Table 7, adolescents from parents practicing different parenting styles differed in their level of involvement in risky behaviors ($f(3,350) = 26.35, p = .000$). This implies that adolescents varied in their involvement in risky behaviors on account of

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 their perceptions of parenting style differences. Thus, to determine the type of perceived parenting style that leads adolescents to be involved more in risky behaviors the following post hoc comparison test was computed.

Table 8

Tukey HSD Test of Adolescents Involvement in Risky Behaviors in terms of Parenting Styles

(I) PPSS	(J) PPSS	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Neglectful	permissive	8.97738*	1.54952	.000	4.9774	12.9773
	authoritarian	10.05571*	1.14827	.000	7.0915	13.0199
	authoritative	8.29084*	1.07331	.000	5.5202	11.0615
Permissive	neglectful	-8.97738*	1.54952	.000	-12.9773	-4.9774
	authoritarian	1.07833	1.32897	.849	-2.3523	4.5090
	authoritative	-.68654	1.26477	.948	-3.9514	2.5784
Authoritarian	neglectful	-10.05571*	1.14827	.000	-13.0199	-7.0915
	permissive	-1.07833	1.32897	.849	-4.5090	2.3523
	authoritative	-1.76487	.71913	.069	-3.6212	.0915
Authoritative	neglectful	-8.29084*	1.07331	.000	-11.0615	-5.5202
	permissive	.68654	1.26477	.948	-2.5784	3.9514
	authoritarian	1.76487	.71913	.069	-.0915	3.6212

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 8, adolescents who reported that their parents practice neglectful parenting styles were more partaken in risky behaviors than those who reported their parents practice authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent parenting styles. Thus, it can be concluded that adolescents from neglectful parents were more susceptible to participating in risky behaviors than those from authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent parents.

Discussions

This section discusses the study findings in line with the five research questions. The first research question was aimed at examining the parenting style practised by most parents as

perceived by participant adolescents in the study area. Accordingly, the sample respondents reported that authoritative parenting was the predominantly practised style, followed by the authoritarian style. In addition, it has been reported that permissive and neglectful parenting styles were also practised by some adolescents' parents. The present study finding is in line with (Boja et al., 2016), who reported that the style of parenting predominantly practised among families in Ethiopia is authoritative type.

The result of the pearson correlation has shown involvement in risky behavior was correlated negatively with adolescents' perceived parenting adopted by their parents, indicating higher levels of adolescents'

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perceived parental monitoring, connectedness, communication, and adoption of an authoritative style were associated with decreased reports of risky behaviors. This finding is in line with most of the evidence in the literature showing parents' supervision of the whereabouts of their adolescents is associated with lower reported incidences of substance use (Blocklin et al., 2011), later sexual debut, and having fewer sexual partners (Hair et al., 2008).

The present study findings indicated communication between parents and their adolescents on the health effects of the use of substances and involvement in unsafe sex is indispensable. This result is similar to the findings of Roche et al. (2007), who reported that adolescents who communicated with their mothers on diverse risk-associated issues tend to engage in less use of substances. This study's findings also support the view that communication between parents and their adolescents serves as a buffer lowering the occurrences of early sexual intercourse and encouraging more regular use of contraception reported by Hutchinson et al. (2003).

Another parenting behavior that was found to be significantly correlated with adolescents' risk-taking behavior was parent-adolescent connectedness/attachment. The feeling of being connected to parents in this study served as a buffer against various risky behaviors. The present finding is consistent with many findings depicted in the literature, which reported close family ties provide an environment that fosters closer supervision, monitoring, and decreased family stress, which in turn, leads to less sexual activity and protects against substance use like illegal drug, tobacco and alcohol (Hill et al., 2005).

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The result of Pearson correlation analysis further revealed significant negative correlations between authoritative parenting style and risky behaviors among adolescents. This study is consistent with previous studies that have shown the protective role of the authoritative style of parenting against sexual risk-taking (Amsale & Yemane, 2015). These scholars associated the reason behind lower risk-taking behavior with the authoritative parenting style, which encourages open discussion between parents and their adolescents.

Standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which adolescents' perceptions of parenting practices predict their involvement in risky behaviors. Perceived parental monitoring, connectedness, and parenting styles contributed significantly to the variance in involvement in risky behaviors in the negative direction, while the contribution of parent-adolescent communication as perceived by the adolescents was non-significant. Consistent with the findings of Stanton et al. (2000), this study discovered that parental monitoring is an essential protective factor safeguarding adolescents from taking different kinds of risks. Adolescents who were closely supervised were less involved in sexual risk-taking. This finding is also in line with other research findings in Ethiopia (for instance, Elias, 2014) reported that close parental supervision helped adolescents abstain and isolate themselves from peers with deviant behavior. In line with previous studies, the finding of this study has shown the essential role of the close emotional ties between parents and their adolescents in protecting against risk-taking behaviors (Longmore et al., 2009; Amsale & Yemane, 2015). A direct

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effect was also found for perceived parenting style on adolescents' risk-taking behaviors. This finding is similar to previous research by Heubner and Howell (2003) who reported the protective effect of authoritative parenting from risky sexual behavior.

However, adolescents' involvement in risky behavior was not influenced by perceived parent-adolescent communication. This study is inconsistent with the study by Elias (2014), who claims that open discussions between parents and their adolescents provide adolescents with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from sexual risk-taking.

The result of an independent sample t-test revealed a statistically significant mean difference between male and female adolescents in their engagement in risky behaviors. This means, that adolescents participating in risky behaviors have varied in terms of their sex; male adolescents were found to engage more in riskier behaviors than their female counterparts. This result is consistent with Dawit's (2015) finding that regular substance consumption is much higher among male adolescents than female adolescents.

The result of one-way ANOVA revealed that adolescents from neglectful parents tended to take more risks than adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent parents. This finding supports the view that parenting styles either risk or safeguard adolescents from various risk-taking behaviors established in the literature. For instance, in line with the present finding (Boja et al., 2016) reported that adolescents from neglectful parents engaged in more risks than those from authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent parents. The present study finding is also partly in line with the findings by

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Villarejo et al. (2023) who found that permissive parenting was related to less drug use than authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles. Correspondingly, Garcia et al. (2020) reported that indulgent parents had decreased the likelihood of alcohol use and abuse, while authoritarian parents had a higher risk.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study findings indicated higher levels of adolescents' perception of parenting practices were correlated negatively with their involvement in risky behaviors. Importantly, helping parents to display high parental supervision, a greater sense of connectedness, enhancing open discussions, and promoting authoritative parenting that reduces involvement in various risk behaviors is imperative. This indicates that as adolescents navigate from childhood to adulthood, the family remains important in protecting them from various risk-taking behaviors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded:

1. Intervention programs should be provided mainly to non-authoritative parents to equip them with the knowledge and skills of rearing children involving close monitoring, communication, and connectedness. This is intended to increase adolescents' awareness that their parents know where and with whom they are and to enhance their perception of parental disapproval of involvement in various risk-taking behaviors.

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2. Professionals in the area like psychologists should direct efforts toward educating parents so that parents are equipped with adequate communication skills, and feel comfortable and open to discussing diverse risk-causing factors with their adolescents.
3. Psychologists, social workers, religious institutions, and schools need to design strategies that promote high levels of parent-adolescent connectedness and encourage parent-child communications that may help protect adolescents from various risk-taking behaviors.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

The author confirms the sole responsibility for the conception of the study, presented results, and manuscript preparation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The data used in this research is available upon request.

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