

ABSTRACT

With increasing rates of HIV prevalence in South Africa, research focus is on examining factors that may affect HIV-related sexual risk behaviour, especially in adolescents. Two such factors, parenting styles and socio-economic status (SES) have been highlighted. Despite remarkable consistence in parenting style research, with the authoritative parenting style reliably associated with positive outcomes, the applicability of this model in diverse contexts is questioned given that the majority of this research was conducted in White, middle-class populations. Both parenting practices and SES have produced some inconsistent results in relation to sexual risk behaviours; where results have been dependable, they have failed to account for the mechanisms influencing such relationships. The current study aimed to determine if the documented parenting styles – and SES - sexual risk behaviour relationships could be found in 366 South African adolescents. The study also explored parenting style as a moderator and/or a mediator in the SES – sexual risk behaviour relationship, and SES as a moderator on the parenting style – sexual risk behaviour model. The participants completed adapted self report questionnaires (Parenting Style Index (PSI) and Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviour Questionnaire) and a self-developed biographical questionnaire. Both the parenting styles – sexual risk behaviour and the SES – sexual risk behaviour relationships were found ($r = -.21$ and $-.24$ respectively, $p < .0001$). While the mediation model was disproven, SES and parenting style were both found to act as moderators ($F_{6, 363} = 2.15$, $p = .0469$). These results are valuable in terms of providing knowledge that may help to develop relevant and effective sexual risk behaviour intervention programmes, as well as adding richness to the current fields of parenting style, and sexual risk behaviour research.