

## Sex and Sexuality Communication in African Families: The Dynamics of Openness and Closedness

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**Abstract :** Very little research exists on family sex and sexuality communication and identity formation and how communication is helping adolescents in forming their sexual identities in South Africa. This study is designed to explore the impact of sexual communication in African families and the dynamics that influence the openness or closedness of adolescent sexual identities. The primary objectives of this study are threefold; to understand how sexuality communication in African families impacts the closedness and/or openness of adolescent African identities; to explore the nature of African children's sexuality given the status of their families' communications on sex; to describe how parental or adult sexual knowledge, attitudes, values of sex, etc. are translated to children in African families, if at all. This study seeks answers to challenges faced by African parents and caregivers of adolescent children in South Africa regarding sex-sexuality communication and their shifting identities in different spaces. Its outcome seeks to empower these families on how to continue to effectively communicate sex and sexuality at different stages and circumstances. Two sets of people are interviewed separately in order to explore issues of familial communication and how to understand how together with religion and culture, adolescents are socialised to form the social and gender identities that they take to adulthood. They were parents of adolescents and young adult children who spoke in retrospect on when they were adolescents. The results of this study will fill knowledge gaps considering the chosen theory of communication that gives clarity to the topic of sex and sexuality communication in African families in South Africa and the dynamics of privacy that influence identity formation. A subset of the 40 conversations, 5 female parents, 5 male parents, 5 young female adults, and 5 male young adults, was used for this analysis. The preliminary results revealed five emergent themes informed by research questions and the theoretical framework of this study: Open communication, Discomfort discussing sex and sexuality, The importance of sex communication to African parents, Factors influencing African families' communication about sex and sexuality and Privacy and boundaries.

**Keywords :** sex, sexuality, communication, African families, adolescents

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