

The Fantasy of the Media and the Sexual World of Adolescents: The Relationship between Viewing Sexual Content on Television and Sexual Behaviour of Adolescents

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Abstract : The influence of television on adolescents is prevalent and widespread because television is a powerful sex educator for adolescents. This study examined the relationship between viewing sexual content on television and sexual behaviour of adolescents in public senior secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design with a structured questionnaire as instrument. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Firstly, purposive sampling was adopted in selecting 3 educational districts namely: Agege, Maryland, and Agboju. These educational districts were chosen for convenience and its wide coverage area of public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. Secondly, the researcher adopted systematic sampling to select the schools. The schools were listed in alphabetical order in each district and every 10th school were selected, yielding 13 schools altogether. A total of 501 copies of questionnaire were administered to the students and a total 491 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Only 453 copies of the questionnaire met the inclusion criteria and were used for analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, Principal components analysis, and regression analysis. Results of correlation analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between adolescent sexual belief and their preference for sexual content in television ($r = 0.117$, $N = 453$, $p = 0.13$), viewing sexual content on television and adolescent sexual behavior, ($r = -0.112$, $N = 453$, $p < 0.05$), adolescent television preference and their preference for sexual content in television ($r = 0.328$, $N = 453$, $p < 0.05$), adolescent television preference and adolescent's sexual behavior ($r = 0.093$, $N = 453$, $p < 0.05$). However, a negative but significant relationship exists between adolescent's sexual knowledge and their sexual behavior ($r = -0.122$, $N = 453$, $p = 0.0009$). Pearson's correlation between adolescents' sexual knowledge and sexual behavior shows that there is a positive significant but strong relationship between adolescent's sexual knowledge and their sexual behavior ($r = 0.967$, $N = 453$, $p < 0.05$). The results also show that adolescent's preference for sexual content in television informs them about their sexuality, development and sexual health. The descriptive and inferential analysis of data revealed that the interaction among adolescent sexual belief, knowledge and adolescents' preference of sexual in television and its resultant effect on adolescent sexual behavior is apparent because sexual belief and norms about sex of an adolescent can induce his television preference of sexual content on television. The study concludes that exposure to sexual content in television can impact on adolescent sexual behaviour. There is no doubt that the actual outcome of television viewing and adolescent sexual behavior remains controversial because adolescent sexual behavior is multifaceted and multi-dimensional. Since behavior is learned overtime, the frequency of exposure and nature of sexual content viewed overtime induces and hastens sexual activity.

Keywords : adolescent sexual behavior, Nigeria, sexual belief, sexual content, sexual knowledge, television preference

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