



## Parental Moral Training and Adolescents' Sexual Values in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Nigeria

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### Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated the parental moral training and adolescents' sexual values. The research assumption is based on Kohlberg's theory of moral reason, which is at the conventional level for adolescents. At this level, parents play a significant role, and so the parenting styles were used as determinants of adolescents' moral values. The study considered the relationship between parental moral training, peer pressure, media information and adolescents' sexual values. A total number of 300 adolescents were randomly selected from Adekunle Ajasin University in Ondo State. The age range of the respondents were from 17-21 years. The subjects were exposed to Adolescents' Sexual Value Questionnaire which consists of 30 items. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Chi-square statistics was used. Peers pressure, parental moral training and media information were significantly related. This implies that parental moral training (the chi-square cal. 179.84), peer pressure (the chi-square cal 191.20), media (the chi-square cal 211.68) information were significant because they were greater than the table value

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of 3.841 in determining the moral values of the adolescents. It was recommended that parenting styles should be based on setting realistic values for adolescents to be demonstrated by parents as model. Such values should be introduced very early in adolescents' life. Adolescents should be counselled to watch decent programmes both on television screen and social media. Undue pressure from peers to drop good family values should be avoided.

*Keywords: Adolescents; sexual values; parenting styles; parental moral training; peer pressure.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of rapid changes, and most adolescents experience lots of body chemical challenges as a result of these changes. It is the transition from childhood to adulthood. The adolescents are no longer children but they are yet to be considered as adult. The development of biological changes to many adolescents seems like a sign that they are moving gradually away from childhood state. Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. Cognitive process involves changes in an individual's thinking and intelligence. Biological processes involve physical changes in an individual's body while socio-emotional processes involve changes in an individual's emotions, personality, relationship with others and social contexts [1]. Adolescence is also a developmental period, lasting from about ages 12 and 18, during which many biological, cognitive, social and personality traits change from childlike to adult like [2].

The physical development of adolescents is very important in their sexual activities. There is need to have an idea about the functioning of the chemical reactions that trigger these sexual urges in adolescents. Every boy and girl desires to grow up to become a man and a woman which entails the process of going through puberty. Puberty launches the adolescents in physiological process that results in a girl reaching female sexual maturity which lead to the onset of menarche. Menarche is the first menstrual period, it is a signal that ovulation may have occurred and that the girl may have the potential to conceive and bear a child. Menarche may vary as a result of diet, exercise and genes. It may occur between age 14 and 16. Due to proper nutrition, many girls are reaching puberty early which has implications for sexual activities in adolescents [3]. It is quite normal for menarche to occur as early as age 9 or as late as age 16 but due to improved nutrition and health care, the

age at menarche has been declining. In the female, the ovaries are responsible for the release of the female sex hormones known as oestrogen and progesterone. The hormone functions as regulator to the female cycle of ovulation and menstruation. The sex hormones also trigger the development of both primary and secondary sex characteristics [4].

The primary sex characteristics are the structure that makes reproduction possible. In females, these structures are the ovaries, vagina, uterus and fallopian tubes. In males, they are the penis, testes, prostate gland and seminal vesicles. The secondary sex characteristics are physical indicators of sexual maturation that do not involve the reproductive structures. Apart from the primary and secondary sex characteristics experienced by the adolescent, value is another variable that is so important to them. Values are indicated by one's frequent and consistent actions. The society perceives adolescents as individuals who are constantly fighting against the norms, ethics and values of the society [5]. During the childhood stage, children are compelled to yield to these norms through scolding, punishment and rewards. At the adolescence stage, some may feel that they are no longer to be suppressed to adhere to any norms again since they have their peer culture. Value is also about how we have learnt to think things ought to be or people ought to behave especially in terms of qualities, such as honesty, integrity and openness. Values are transmitted directly or indirectly. The adolescents can acquire values through their interaction with parents, role-models, peers and so on.

The prevalent changing values and norms have made sexual attitudes of adolescents to reach alarming dimension. In the past, Nigerians handled sexual issues with great respect. The cultural practice then disallowed premarital sexual experimentation. The adolescents were not allowed to express their sexual urges as a result of cultural sanctions. The cultural belief was so practised to the extent that if a girl was

not found to be a virgin on her wedding night she has brought shame and disgrace to her family [6].

Young adolescents of today are dropping these cultural beliefs and values respected by their parents due to modernisation, civilization and technological advancement. Virginity at marriage of both male and female partners, which was respected as virtue has already approached vanishing point. The sexual value common among some adolescents of today is all about using sex as a weapon of love to their lovers. If a girl refuses to allow her boyfriend to have sexual act with her, such a girl is seen as uncivilized. Casual sex is common among adolescents of today. A lot of adolescents do not see anything wrong in engaging in casual sex. Casual sex is the sex for the sake of sexual pleasure. It does not involve a deep commitment. It is sex without prior or the promise of future attachment. Apart from casual sex, a lot of adolescents engage in promiscuous activities, rape, masturbation and cybersex [7].

When values are formed, it gives an adolescent a mental picture of who he is and this constitutes the self - concept of the adolescents among their peers. Also, there are lots of reasons while adolescents no longer value virginity. Among such reasons are what some studies have been able to identify as predictive and influencing variables that trigger sexual behaviour which include social, psychological and behavioural variables [8]. The family, school environment and parenting styles can also influence sexual values and behaviour of adolescents [9]. Peer pressure behaviour variable, adolescents' religiosity and the need for love and curiosity are other reasons for sexual value and behaviour [10].

There are still some adolescents that still value virginity and the reason they gave for abstaining from sexual activity included having caring parents, feeling unready, wanting to have control over their future, participating in abstinence programme and having concerns about sexually transmitted diseases [11]. Media influence, curiosity and film coverage together with peer pressure play a large role in motivating sexual activity among adolescents [12]. Puberty prepares adolescents' bodies for engaging in sexual behaviour. The majority of them especially girls are reported not being emotionally, psychologically or mentally prepared to deal with strong sexual desires and feelings [13].

The consequence of not valuing virginity is always unwanted pregnancy or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. When discussion with adolescents are handled by trusted adults like parents it goes a long way in helping teenagers make decisions about engaging or not engaging in sexual activities [14]. The underlining assumption that formed the theoretical framework of the study is based on the conception that moral reasoning influences sexual behaviour. According to Kohlberg's theory, the conventional level, which is the level that is peculiar to adolescence stage, has two stages. Firstly, moral decisions are guided mostly by conforming to the standards of others valued by the adolescents and secondly moral reasoning is determined mostly by conforming to the laws of the society. Moral reasoning of adolescents is influenced by the kind of rules that parents and the society use. Sexual values are viewed in this context as hanging majorly on parenting styles which can predict or explain elicited sexual behaviour of the adolescents. The study focuses on three parenting styles: authoritarian parents, authoritative parents and permissive parents. Authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control and evaluate the behaviour and attitude of their children in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard that comes from religious or respected authorities [15].

On the other hand, authoritative parents attempt to direct their children's activities in rational and intelligent way. They are supportive, loving, and committed. They also encourage verbal give-and- take, and discuss their rules and policies with their children. While permissive parents are less controlling and behave with a non-punishing and accepting attitude towards their children impulses, desires, and actions; they consult with their children about policy decision, make few demands and tend to use reason rather than direct power.

From the above explanation of the author, it is obvious that authoritarian parents are very strict disciplinarian and demanding. They benefit by preventing adolescents' behavioural problems, parents who state their values clearly benefit by having loving and supportive parent-adolescent interaction, which also benefits their adolescents. The permissive parents benefit by having to make fewer demands and enforcing fewer rules but will produce adolescents who are non-conformist, rude and who engage in anti-social

behaviour. Parents are important in moral training of their adolescent children [16].

When there is a conflict between accepting the values of the family, community and culture, the adolescent can experience value identity crises. Such adolescents challenge the religious values of their parents. Many adolescents try to oppose the limit set by their parents and authority. They always try to assert their independence and individuality through rebellion. Adolescents prefer to figure out things for themselves. Researches have shown that adolescents lack the mental and emotional maturity necessary for taking and making consistent wise decision. Adolescents who do not accept the traditional moral stances of sexual abstinence may feel as if there are no clear values associated with sexual activity. Sometimes, they feel the society gives conflicting messages through the media [17]. A lot of home videos shown on Nigerian television screen at times encourage sexual acts. The spoken words, the actions that are dramatized show a lot of sexual acts. Many adolescents are exposed to many of these home videos. Even though age limits are sometimes written on the disc, not all parents are strong enough to enforce the rules, because adolescents are susceptible to pressure, culture and social media [18].

Parents are regarded as the primary social influence on their children. From birth, children observe and learn from their parent's behaviour and the way parents answer questions and discuss issues related to sexuality. Parents can influence adolescent attitudes through their own attitude to sexual behaviour. Sometimes what is modelled by parents is what is most influential.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is to determine the relationship between the adolescents' sexual values with their parental moral training. The study also investigates the relationship between peer pressure and media information on adolescents' sexual values.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design used for this study is descriptive design of the survey type. The method made it possible to gather information from the representative sample of the entire undergraduate adolescents students population

in Adekunle Ajasin University and the description of the variable were made as the exist in the population. No manipulation of variables was involved, questionnaire was used for collecting relevant data possible.

### **3.2 Population and Sampling Procedure**

The population of the study consists of all regular students in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Nigeria who are in the age range of 16-21. A total number of 300 adolescents were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique among adolescents within the age range used for the study. The samples were adequately informed that the purpose of information taken from them is for research purpose. The samples were also assured that the information provided by them would be treated confidentially.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

The research instrument used for the study was a questionnaire titled: Adolescents' Sexual Value Questionnaire (ASVQ). The questionnaire consists of 26 items of two sections that is section A & B. Section A contains information about the Faculty, Department, Sex, Age, and Level while Section B consists of twenty items which contain relevant items for the study. Four Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree Strongly disagree and Disagree were used. The validity and the reliability of the instruments were ascertained.

### **3.4 Validity of the Instrument**

The face and content validity of the research instrument were ensured by the researcher.

### **3.5 Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was established using the test re-test method. The instrument was administered twice within two weeks interval on 40 undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The test re-test reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.69 and hence the instrument was considered adequate to elicit necessary information from the subjects.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data were analysed using chi-square statistical method. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Hypothesis One

This states that there is no significant relationship between parental moral training and adolescent sexual values. The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square statistical method at 0.05 level of significance. Table 1 below presents the data on this analysis.

The below table reveals that the calculated chi-square value which is 179.84 is greater than the table value which is 3.841. Hence, the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

### 5.2 Hypothesis Two

This states that there is no significant relationship between adolescent's peer pressure and their sexual values.

The Table 2 reveals that the calculated chi-square value which is 191.20 is greater than the (see above) table value which is 3.841. Hence, the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. It implies that adolescents' sexual values are significantly related to adolescents' peer pressure.

### 5.3 Hypothesis Three

This states that there is no significant relationship between media information on sexual matters and adolescents' sexual values.

The Table 3 shows that the calculated chi-square value which is 211.68 is greater than the table value which is 3.841. Therefore; the result is significant, which implies that the adolescents' sexual value is significantly related to media information, the null hypothesis was rejected.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The result in Table 1 shows that there is significant relationship between adolescents' sexual values and parental moral training. The moral training given to adolescents depends on the type of parenting styles that parent adopt.

The finding agrees with the author's opinion that authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control and evaluate the behaviour and attitude of their children in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard that comes from religious or respected authorities. Parents who adopt this style ensure that their adolescents' children adhere to their belief and conviction which may help such children to have sound moral value [19].

**Table 1. Relationship between parental moral training and adolescents' sexual value**

Items	Responses	
	Agree	Disagree
The attitude of dressing indecently as a result of improper parental training exposes adolescent girls to sexual activities early.	277	23
Moral decadence which is due to improper parental training may be responsible for inordinate sexual affection.	252	48
Virginity is seen today by adolescents as 'old school stuff.'	234	66
Many promising girls have died as a result of unwanted pregnancy and the practice of abortion.	292	08
Many wonderful girls have dropped out of school because of unwanted pregnancy.	282	18
Some girls may have sex with 5 or 6 men before they get married.	288	12
Many adolescents used to think that abstinence from sexual activities is 'old school stuff'.	238	62
Total	1863	237

  

	Average observed responses	df	$X^2_t$	$X^2_c$	p-Value
Agree	266.14*(150)	1	3.841	179.84	S
Disagree	33.86*(150)				
Total	300				

\* Expected cell frequency,  $X^2_t=3.841$   $P<0.05$  (significant result)

**Table 2. Relationship between peer pressure and sexual values**

Items	Responses	
	Agree	Disagree
Many young people are exposed to sex early because of peer pressure.	283	17
Exposure to sexual activities is earlier in girls than boys because of peer pressure.	273	27
Many young girls are lured into sexual activities by force; some are tricked while some may be raped.	262	38
Boys are exposed to sexual activities just because of peer pressure and exploitation.	261	39
Total	1079	121

  

	Average observed responses	df	$X^2_t$	$X^2_c$	P-Value
Agree	269.75*(150)	1	3.841	191.20	S
Disagree	30.25*(150)				
Total	300				

\* Expected cell frequency,  $X^2_t=3.841$   $P<0.05$ (Significant result)

**Table 3. Relationship between media and sexual values of adolescents**

Items	Responses	
	Agree	Disagree
The technological advancement or media activities also contribute to early involvement of adolescents in sexual matters.	270	30
Various home videos viewed by adolescents prompt them into sexual activities.	282	18
Total	552	48

  

	Average observed responses	df	$X^2_c$	$X^2_t$	P-value
Agree	276*(150)	1	211.68	3.841	S
Disagree	24*(150)				
Total	300				

\* Expected cell frequency,  $X^2_t=3.841$   $P<0.05$  (significant result)

On the other hand, authoritative parents attempt to direct their children’s activities in rational and intelligent way. They are supportive, loving, and committed. They also encourage verbal give-and- take, and discuss their rules and policies with their children. Adolescents from such background may also develop sound moral values. While permissive parents are less controlling and behave with a non-punishing and accepting attitude towards their children impulses, desires, and actions; they consult with their children about policy decision, make few demands and tend to use reason rather than direct power. Adolescents from permissive family may eventually develop good moral stand as well based on the accommodating attitude of their parents.

The result in Table 2 shows that there is significant relationship between peer pressure

and adolescent sexual values. This finding shows that the adolescents base their sexual values on what their peers’ value. They so much depend on their peers so as to gain recognition. The finding agrees with another author that peer pressure plays a large role in motivating sexual activities among adolescents. Adolescent prefer to be in the company of their friends so in order to be accepted by their peers, they have to do things that are valued and cherished by them. It takes adolescents from strong parental moral training to resist such pressure [20].

The result on Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between media information and adolescent sexual value. Adolescents have time to stay with television, have time in the use of cell-phone and the social media stuff. So, it may be so easy for them to copy whatever they see on such gadgets.

Unfortunately lots of negative and immoral issues are common in such gadget. A lot of immoral scenes are being shown on the television, social network, prints, home videos and cell-phones. Many adolescents who are exposed to these sexual activities through these media may be affected if they are not properly groomed from home. The finding also agrees with the same author above that the media influence adolescents' sexual values [21].

## 7. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that there was a significant relationship between parental moral training and adolescents' sexual value, peer pressure and media information. It therefore shows that the parental moral training, the pressures receive from peers, and media information may determine the sexual values of the adolescents. These variables are significant in determining the moral values of adolescents. Adolescents are in a stage of their life where they are not matured enough to take rational decision as a result they need the help of their parents to take such decision. Parents too are expected to be conscious of this so that they don't destroy the precious life of their adolescents' children through carelessness on their part.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should ensure that their adolescent children are well groomed right from their childhood days.
2. Parents should try and show good examples to their adolescent children, because many parents try to set good sexual values but are not really following them in reality.
3. The adolescents should be trained to know that it is not compulsory for one to always yield to the demands of their peer group. Also, they can also be trained to avoid joining any bad group no matter the names such groups are called especially if the sexual values of such groups are at variance with one's sexual values.
4. The adolescents can be counselled to use the technological advancement positively and to avoid the negative use of it. The social networking, the cell-phone, internet,

television and any other relevant equipment should be used for the benefit of themselves and others.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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