

# Comparative Study of the Promotional Roles of the Media and Parents towards Teenage Sex Education

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## **Abstract**

*At no point in time is sex education needed in Nigeria than now, as she conspicuously occupy's the second position in the international index of HIV/AIDS prevalence rating. The role of the media and parents in the promotion of sex education cannot be undermined. This study compared the efforts of the two actors in sex education of Nigeria teenagers. The study employed survey method to gauge the perspectives of 300 teenagers that volunteered to participate in the study. Consistent with our prediction, we found that the media is more proactive in the promotion of sex education of Nigeria teenagers when compared to the role of parents. It was also discovered that culture is still an inhibitor to parents' involvement in the teens' sex education. We recommend among others that parents should be more proactive in teens' sex education if HIV/AIDS prevalence is to be reduced.*

**Keywords:** *Sex Education, Media, Parents, Teenagers, Promotion, Proactive, Teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, Condom, homosexuality.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The scorecard which placed Nigeria in second position in the year 2013, among community of nations with highest rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence underscores the reproductive threats young Nigerians are facing. One is not puzzled with the international rating judging from the sexual escapade the young ones are consistently engaging in nowadays. Sex among young ones is no longer a taboo or a secret issue in Nigeria, the mode of dressing of some Nigerian girls signifies an open invitation for an affair or sexual relationship.

Sex is fast becoming a commercial commodity in Nigeria. Although not open like the red light street of The Netherlands, prostitution is on the increase. The numbers of baby making factories in Nigeria are escalating. Sex in most cases are often traded for lucrative employment, while grades obtained from Nigerian higher institutions most often times do not reflect academic capabilities, but rather, bogus grades awarded in exchange for sex. Lesbianism and

homosexuality are rather becoming prevailing norms in the present day Nigerian society.

The resultant consequences of the irresponsible and unhealthy behaviors are quite numerous to mention. We now have higher number of teenage pregnancies, and abortions to contend with. The preponderance of STIs and HIV/AIDS infections are quite amazing. These have created low enrollment rate, and high school dropout among teens and young Nigerians. This is an indication that the young ones do not contribute their full social and economic potential towards the growth and development of the nation.

Sexual health has been a pressing issue. It has captured the attention of so many researchers. Research studies have consistently focus on prevention, and in the recent time demonstrate great interest in comprehension of how adolescents learn about sexuality, including safe-sex practices [1]. Research efforts [2], [3] attempt to fathom the role school – based programmes play in cultivation of positive sexual behaviours in children. Several studies [4] [5], [6], [7], [8] focus on understanding of media position in sexual orientation of the younger ones. Copious research attempts [9], [10], [11], [12], [13] x-ray parents' involvement in promoting sexual health among teenagers and adolescents. Most of these research studies cited concentrated on the study of the West, Europe, or Asian populations, with limited interest in Africa nations.

By contrast, little if any credible research work exists to substantiate who Nigerian teens turn to, to obtain sexuality education. A clear need exists to comprehend how and from whom Nigerian teenagers learn about sexuality. Lack of interest in Nigeria to understand how teens' learn about sex and sexuality may be responsible for the sexual recklessness among her teaming teenage population, which if not checked may rock the boat of her vision 2020 dream. Till today, Nigerian schools are not involved in impacting of sexual knowledge to the Nigerian teenagers.

Our major concern then is to carry out a trend setting study that will fill the gap created by dearth of research interest in the realm of sexual promotion. The study will generate insight into the promotional roles of the media, and the parents in the education of Nigerian teens. The study intends

to motivate an empirical study that will lead to an understanding of the approval rating of the two actors' commitment towards responsible sexual behaviors. In doing that, we will attempt to provide answer to the crucial research question: Whether the media and the parents are proactive in instilling of positive sexual behaviors among Nigerian teenagers.

In this light, we will attempt to resolve the following research questions;

RQ1 Do Nigerian media and parents make proactive contributions towards sex education of Nigerian teens?

RQ2 Comparatively, which of the two actors is more proactive in promotion of sex education among Nigerian teenagers?

### **Research Objectives**

- ✦ To access if both the media and parents are proactive towards sex education of Nigerian teenagers.
- ✦ To understand which among the actors is perceived by the teenagers to be playing more proactive role in promotion of sex education.
- ✦ To offer recommendations that will challenge parents to take serious their indispensable role as the prime promoter of sexual education,

### **Significance of Research Questions**

- The study is considered significant as it will yield insight into the existing gaps in scientific knowledge that may require attention.
- Accurate knowledge of the role of the media and parents in promotion of sexual education is necessary for judging the relative importance of the two actors in the fight against irresponsible sexual behaviors that have dangerous implications to the growth and development of the nation.
- The knowledge of the proactive nature of the two actors will help government in making policy decisions. Insight garnered from the study will surely motivate Nigerian government as well as policy makers to initiate policies that will promote responsible and healthy sexual behaviors.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

With regards to the research questions, the review of literature was guided by the fundamental concern as it relates to the promotional roles of the media and parents in sexual education of Nigerian teenagers. This review of literature is structured into three sections. 2.1 presents documented

opinions about the role of the media with regards to sexual education. 2.2 reviews research efforts made to evaluate the impact of parents in the promotion of sexual healthy behavior. Section 2.3 provides summary of the review.

### **Promotional Role of the Media**

Public health researchers are beginning to appreciate the role of the media in reduction of risky sexual behaviors among the adolescents. [13] Are of view that the media can function as a powerful teacher about sex and sexuality. The media serve as an important source of information and models of healthy sexuality for young people [4]. Past research efforts document that adolescents consistently identify the mass media as prime source of sexual information [3]. “ Reference [4] note that insertion of sexually responsible messages in entertainment media is a potentially powerful platform of promoting sexual behavior.” Recent study in US points that the media could be used in shifting cultural norms towards a healthier perception of sexuality. This is consistent with [4] view that the media can potentially reshape the pattern of individuals' thinking about sex, amidst cultural pressure to submit to sex at a tender age, to have sex forcefully or yield to sex unsafely. Research study demonstrates that safe sex media campaigns have been linked with increased teen condom use with casual partners, and drastic reduction in number of teenagers indulging in sexual activity.

Despite these perceived role of the media, opinion is divided on the credibility of media to function as a tool for sexual education of teens. Some scholars view the media as an influential factor in the models of teens' behavior [5]. “Reference [14] observe that the media predicts adolescent initiation of sexual behavior.” [15] Associate cause- and- effect relationship between earlier age of first sexual intercourse, and viewing sexual content in the media, No wonder [16] considers dependence on the media for sexuality education a “risky business.”

### **Perceived Parents' role on Sexual promotion**

Parents' role with regards to sex education continues to be a talking point. Empirical evidence is building up concerning the actual role parents should play in laying solid foundation, for sound sexual knowledge and skills among teens. [17] notes that it is the primary responsibility of the parents to imbue their children with the right moral values. No matter how absurd it may look, sex education is parents' responsibility [18].

[19] Observes that the family sexual socialization process is critical for adolescent sexual health. This may be the reason why [1] recognized parents as the main source of education about puberty. Positive outcomes for youth, such as delayed sexual debut, are linked to parents' attitude, knowledge and communication about

sexuality [9]. This is consistent with [20] view that improved parent – adolescent relationships bring about delayed sexual initiation among adolescents. A pointer that parents can be one of the strongest influences in adolescents' lives [20].

Although parents play critical role in instilling sound sexual health, studies have found that most parents experiences uncertainty and embarrassment about aspects of their role. [21] Acknowledges that some parents still feel uncomfortable discussing about sexuality issues to their children. While this may be the case to so many parents, research finding [22] highlight the essential of parent-child communication, and indicate a tendency of children wanting to learn about sexual matter via the parents.

#### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Literature demonstrates that both the media and parents are fundamental in promotion of sexual health of the young ones. Scholars highlight that parents should play an indispensable role in teens' sexual education [22], [18], [1]. Some are skeptical assigning such enormous task to the media. [14] and [16] express fear that media exposure rather than inhibiting sex predicts adolescents' initiation of sexual behavior.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The social ecology theory and ecological model of adolescent health risk behaviors can render a useful insight on the understanding of the media and parents role on promotion of sexual education.

Social ecology theory posits that the mass media are another major element of young peoples' lives that may take on special significance during adolescence, in particular for sexual habits [23]. The ecological model of adolescent health risk behaviors speculate that behavior is created by the interfaces between the environments and the people, for example family, peers and schools [23].

Based on these understanding, we predict that;

H1 Both Media and Parents play significant role in instilling of positive sexual behavior among Nigerian teens.

H2 The teenagers will perceive the media to be more proactive compared with the parents in promotion of sexual education.

### **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **Introduction**

Data for this article came from a longitudinal survey of 300 male and female teens aged, 12 -17 years, conducted in selected secondary schools in Bida. The target populations for this study cover teenagers in these selected secondary schools in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State. There are altogether six secondary schools; Federal Polytechnic Staff Secondary School, Federal Government Girls Secondary School, New

Creation Academy, Government Secondary School Bida, and Model Secondary School Bida.

#### **Sampling and Sampling Procedure**

The sampling units are full time students of the above listed secondary schools. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the participants of the study. As [24] notes, the purposive sampling gives one or more traits representative of the sample, which can result to cross section of the population. A researcher is likely to get the opinion of his target population with a purposive sample.

#### **Questionnaire**

The research instrument used for the current study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was employed to elicit reliable and valid data as far as teens perspectives of the promotional role of the media and parents in sex education.

The questionnaire was composed largely of closed-ended questions focusing on the perspectives of teens, and their approval rating of the media and parents effort towards promotion of sex education. The questions were framed to ascertain the source of knowledge about healthy sexual life, information on contraceptive, information about sex related diseases, and information relating to Lesbianism and homosexuality.

#### **Data Collection procedure**

In order to obtain maximum cooperation from the respondents, contacts were made with teachers in the selected secondary schools to enlist teens for participation.

#### **Participants**

Data were collected from students in secondary school, JS1 to SS3 as part of longitudinal study on teens' perspectives of media and parents' role in sex education of teenagers. Data were collected (N=300) across six secondary schools (N=50, 50, 50, 50, 50 and 50 respectively) in a semi-urban town. Data from these secondary schools were used in this study, although the schools were far from representing different communities within an urban town. This non urban reflective nature of the schools included in this study may affect the generation of the result of the results obtained.

#### **Plan of Analysis**

We used descriptive analyses that document teens' sociodemographic information, and perspectives of sources of information about sex and sexuality orientation. Next we used the teens' approval rating of the two actors (media and parents) to predict the level of commitment demonstrated by each actor towards sex education of the teenagers.

#### **Results**

The teens' sociodemographic characteristic are described below. The whole sociodemographic variables met our assumptions of normality. Almost all the participants (96%) were

senior secondary school students; 4% were still in their junior secondary education. Majority of the participants (79%) were Muslim, only (21%) of the respondents were Christians. Most teens' (92.7%) were staying with their biological parents. Majority of the teens' (96%) had TV set or Radio at home, and (87%) claimed to have free access to them. Approximately (92.6%) of the teens' discuss freely with one of their parents.

Majority (76%) of the teens' have knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The source of teens' knowledge about HIV/AIDS came mostly from the media (93.3%), parents (4.3%) and friends (2.3%).

Almost two thirds (68.3%) of the teens reported knowing something about condom, of whom (40%) got information from the media, parents (5%), friends (11%), while (44%) had it via their teachers.

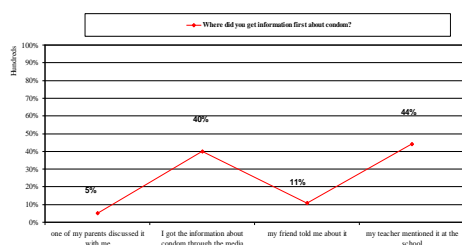


fig. 1. a simple line graph showing first source of knowledge about condom

Only a small number of teens' (9.6%) admitted they have used condom in the past. In terms of pregnancy related sexual information, nearly two thirds of teens' (66.6%) knew something about preventive pills. Specifically, most participants (38.5%) learnt of it via the media, parents (36.1%), and friends (23.3%).

On the issue of knowledge about lesbianism and homosexuality, majority of the teens' (77.6%) knew about them. The source of teens' knowledge lesbianism and homosexuality came mostly from parents (57.7%), media (27.7%), and friends (15.6%).

#### Discussions

To our knowledge, this is the first empirical study of Nigerian teens' perspectives on media and parents role in sex and sexuality education. In our sample, majority of the teens' admitted that both parents and the media were involved in the provision of sexual knowledge to the teens. However, only a scanty number of parents were committed in educating teens' sexually. This support our prediction that the media will be more proactive compared with the parents. The finding is consistent with [21] views that most

parents feel uncomfortable discussing about sexual matter with their children. Another important finding is that the teens' relied more on the media for sexual education. This finding supports other evidence that the media remain the highest supplier of sexual information, an act [15], [14] caution portend danger.

Majority of our sample had somewhat knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The source of teens' knowledge of HIV/AIDS came from media. This is the case because of the parents non-committal attitude towards provision of sexual education to their children, resulting to high HIV/AIDS prevalence among the teens' in the country.

Most teens' got information concerning condom and its use through their teachers; yet the large majority of teens' have not used condom in their life. This finding means that making sex education a core mission of school by the government and policy makers may have beneficial consequences.

[5] Highlight that concerns about encouraging sexuality behavior through sexual education of teens' have to be addressed or parents will end up missing the point. The fact that scanty number of parents discuss preventive pills with their children emphasis how unprepared Nigerian parents are to talk about sexuality with the teenagers.

It is important to note that the parents were more likely than the media to educate teens' about homosexuality. The reason for this could be to prevent the intrusion of foreign culture, and stern religious belief that homosexuality is a sin.

This study leaves much to be desired in terms of parents' role on sexual education of teenagers. As [16] cautions that "parents must recognize that they have to harness and exert control over the extraordinary power of the media to teach their children and adolescents about sex and sexuality, otherwise, it is anything goes." Opportunities abound for media [25] users to pollute the content, such introduction in both mainstream media or social networks may affect the child's attitude to sexual health.

Keep in mind that the findings of this current study must be interpreted with the following limitations. The sample was drawn among semi-urban town, mostly Muslim students and for that reason the result cannot be generalized. The educational level and income of the parents also were not ascertained. [26] are of the view that income level is linked to parents' predisposition to instill sex education.

This attempt could explain why training programmes should be organized for parents to ensure maximum commitment on sexual education, and impartation of the right skills and knowledge.

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