



The influence of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour of adolescents

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General Note

 Article is recommended to print as color digital version in recycled paper.

ABSTRACT

The study determined the responses of adolescents on influence of exposure to internet pornography on their sexual behaviour. The research design adopted to elicit information from respondents was descriptive survey. Design three hundred and ninety-eight adolescents were purposively sampled. Structured questionnaire face and content validated was the research instrument used. The determined reliability coefficient of .70 and .80 showed the instrument was dependable, reliable and consistent. The hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance revealed t-cal 1.67 was less than t-tab 1.671 at df 58. Thus, upholding the stated null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female adolescents on the influence of adolescent's exposure to internet pornography and sexual behaviour. Meaning that adolescents agreed that exposure to internet pornography influenced adolescents sexual behaviour. Results findings revealed among others that (i) Adolescents' exposure to internet pornography influenced their sexual behaviour negatively. The negative sexual behaviours identified are: engaging in pre-marital sex, sexual addiction, compulsion, aggression, homosexuality, lesbianism, oral sex and group sex, anal sex, bestiality, (ii) Dysfunctional sexual behaviour is responsible for increased rape, incest, increased teenage pregnancies, increased HIV/AIDS and

STIs. Recommendations were made among others that parental role in educating adolescents on human sexuality will help develop positive sexual behaviour.

Key words: Internet pornography, Adolescents Sexual behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet has brought forth a continuum of benefits and risks for the society. The significant benefits to families are research access, information, socialization and communication. In spite of these benefits Parent Link (2004) points out that the internet has double-edged sword characteristics for family members. It exposes family members, especially children and adolescents to negative values. Media Awareness Network (2003) lists the websites that are detrimental with negative content as; violent on-line games, online gambling, hate site and internet pornography. According to Cline (2001), is a sexually explicit material (SEM) disseminated via the World Wide Web (www) through e-mail, websites, per-to-peer file sharing, chat rooms and/or UseNet. Internet pornography includes on-line sexual activity and cybersex. On-line sexual activity is the use of internet (including text, audio or graphic files) for any activity that involves sexuality whether for the purpose of recreation, entertainment, exploration, support, education, commerce or finding/or meeting sexual or romantic partner. While cyber sex according to Cooper (2004) is a subcategory of on-line sexual activity and is a means of pursuing a sexual gratification via the internet (i.e. looking at sexually explicit images, engaging in sexual chat or e-mails or sharing sexual fantasia with another group; while masturbating. Although pornography is not new, internet has revolutionized ease of accessibility by children and adolescents.

The internet is a powerful resource tool through which adolescents access information, entertainment and social networking. It also educates adolescents about human sexuality. However, internet pornography seldom addresses the issues of responsible sexual behaviours (safe pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and STIs); rather fraudulent messages of bestiality, group sex, anal sex, oral sex, homosexuality and lesbianism are promoted. The adolescence period is a fundamental developmental stage in the formation of habits, values, attitudes and beliefs including sexual behaviour. Messages received during sexual maturation shapes an adolescent future sexual behaviour whether positively or negatively. Adolescents at this maturation stage expect parents to discuss sex education with them; unfortunately most African parents shy away or are reluctant to discuss sex topics with their children. In the absence of parental responsibility to discuss sexual issues, such adolescents resort to peers or pornographic materials such as literature, blue film or internet pornography.

Internet pornography is one of the easy devices adolescents use to educate themselves in this digital era. According to Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2003), 75.6 percent adolescents between 14-17 years representing accessed pornography websites. Kaiser Family Foundation (2002) reports that 70 percent of ages 15-17 reported accidentally coming across pornography on-line. They further stated that SEM on the internet is very intrusive and can be inadvertently stumbled upon, while searching for other materials. Pardun, Ladin L'Engle and Brown (2005) posit that behaviour exhibited in internet pornography complicates the sexual behaviour of adolescents exposed to internet pornography in the development of sexual behaviour of adolescents. Somers and Surmann (2004) say sexualized media is now serving as primarily agent of sexual socialization used primarily to learn sexual immorality.

Exposure of adolescents to internet pornography has influence on their sexual behaviour. A study by Oddone-Paolucci, Genius and Vilato (2000) reveal that exposure to internet pornographic material puts one at risk for developing sexual deviant behaviours; committing sexual offences; experiencing difficulties in one's intimate relationship and accepting rape myth. Zillman and Bryant (1998) found that effects of repeated exposure to standard, non-violent pornography has; increased callousness toward women; upheld trivialization of rape as a criminal offence; distorted perceptions about sexuality; and increased appetite for more deviant and bizarre types of pornography. A study by Allen D'Alesso and Brezgel (1995) reveal a correlation between exposure to pornography and subsequent sexual behaviour also as sexual aggression. Goodman (2005) and Boeringer (1994) studies revealed reliable association between frequent pornography use and sexually aggressive behaviour. They concluded that the association is strongest when violent pornography is viewed and/or when men at higher risk of sexual aggression are consumers. According to Stanley (2001), adolescents are the most vulnerable group because they are easily coerced into viewing pornography or manipulated with the production of it. He attributes the reason for the vulnerability to:

- adolescents having limited ability to emotionally, cognitively and physiologically process obscene material they encounter voluntarily or involuntarily.
- can have their sexual and social development negatively impacted through exposure to fraudulent and/or traumatic message regarding sexuality and relationship.

Exposure to internet pornography is one major source contributing greatly to the development of sexual dysfunctional behaviour of adolescents worldwide. Tyden and Rogals (2005) study reveals that today's youth is engaging in sexual intercourse earlier, because of their exposure to pornography. He concludes that:

- Internet is one of the common source of pornography.
- 71 percent believed pornography influenced their sexual behaviour by 'inspiring' them.
- males were considered high pornography consumers than females.
- those influenced by pornography were more likely to engage in sexual activities such as oral, anal or group sex; as well practice lesbianism and homosexuality.

Other negative influence of exposure to internet pornography includes sexual addiction, compulsiveness, masturbation, rape, pre-marital sex and indiscriminate sex. The rate of sexual immorality among adolescents is responsible for increased teenage prostitution, pregnancies, abortions, HIV/AIDS, STIs and single parenthood.

The easy access of adolescents to pornography via internet is altering the social and sexual landscape worldwide. The African value system demands adolescents not to engage in pre-marital sex. Therefore, pre-marital sex and sexual immorality among adolescents are considered a threat to African value of "virginity" before marriage, the consequences of indiscriminate sex resulting to communicable diseases is a source of concern to families, communities and the nation. Pornography is sweeping across the world with increasing momentum and devastating impact. Internet pornography is seen to escalate sexual immorality. Based on the pervasive immoral and destructive influence on sexual behaviour of adolescents exposed to it, the study tends to determine the knowledge of adolescents on the influence of internet pornography on adolescent's sexual behaviour in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The study determined knowledge of adolescents on the influence of exposure to internet pornography on their sexual behaviour. Specifically, the study:

1. Identified the influence of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour of adolescents.
2. Identified risks and dysfunctional behaviours associated with exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour of adolescents.
3. Develop strategies for mitigating adolescent's easy access and exposure to internet pornography.

Research Questions

1. What are the influences of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behavior of adolescents?
2. What are the risks and dysfunctional sexual behaviours exhibited by adolescents exposed to internet pornography?
3. What are the strategies for mitigating adolescents easy access and exposure to internet pornography and unhealthy sexual behaviour?

Hypothesis

H₀: 1 There was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adolescents on influence of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Area of the Study

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The research design was appropriate because it elicited the opinions and ideas of respondents without manipulating their responses. The area of the study was Ondo town in Ondo West Local Government of Ondo State, Nigeria. Ondo West Local Government Area consists of twelve (12) wards, namely: Surulere, Okelisa, New Town, Okerowo, Itanla, Igbado, Odojomu, Lekere, Odosida, Bagbe, Igunsin, Laje, and Yaba. Seven wards were randomly selected and covered for the study. The seven wards with high concentration of cyber cafes are: New town, Yaba, Surulere, Odojomu, Odosida, and Oka.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of the study consisted of computer literate adolescents who patronized cyber cafe or possess personal computer (PC). The sample of the study was three hundred and ninety-eight (398) computer literate adolescents. (male=199, female=199). Purposive sampling technique was used to draw the sample of the study.

Research Instrument Validation and Reliability

Structured questionnaire of four-point Likert scale was the instrument used to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire items were face and content validated by experts in Home Economics, Psychology, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The reliability of the instrument was tested using test/re-test method on ten (10) respondents different from the sampled group within an interval of two weeks. The responses were analysed using Pearson product (r) moment to determine the reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient obtained was .79 showing the instrument was stable, dependable and consistent.

Administration and Collection of Questionnaire

A questionnaire was personally distributed with the assistance of four assistant researchers to respondents at cyber cafe and hostels in tertiary institution of learning in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. Completed questionnaire were retrieved immediately.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics of frequency count, simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for research questions and hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule of 2.50 was used as cut-off point for agreed items, while less than 2.50 for disagreed items. The decision rule of 2.50 was based on four-point Likert scale of Agreed (D) 4, Strongly Agreed (SD) 3, Disagreed (D) 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1

Agreed: 4 point

Strongly Agreed: 3 point

Strongly Disagreed: 1 points

$$\text{Cut-off Point} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = 2.50$$

3. DATA ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 1 Mean Responses of Adolescents on Influence of Exposure to Internet Pornography on Sexual Behaviour

S/N	Items	\bar{x}_1	Decision	\bar{x}_2	Decision
1	Adolescents have easy access to internet pornography.	3.32	Agreed	3.17	Agreed
2	Male adolescents access and view internet pornography than female adolescents.	3.18	Agreed	3.32	Agreed
3	Exposure to internet pornography shapes adolescents sexual behaviour	3.05	Agreed	3.26	Agreed
4	Internet pornography exposes adolescents to pre-marital sex.	3.14	Agreed	2.61	Agreed
5	Internet pornography exposes adolescents to anal, oral and group sex.	3.20	Agreed	3.11	Agreed
6	Internet pornography exposes adolescents to bestiality and use of vibrators.	2.77	Agreed	2.64	Agreed
7	Internet pornography exposes adolescent to homosexuality and lesbianism.	3.18	Agreed	3.17	Agreed
8	Internet pornography exposes adolescents to sexual aggression and addiction.	2.50	Agreed	2.53	Agreed
9.	Internet pornography exposes adolescents to sexual	2.79	Agreed	2.58	Agreed

	behaviours that portray sex as normal and risk free.				
10.	Exposes adolescents to believe that internet pornography influences sexual responsibility such as use of condom	2.40	Disagreed	2.48	disagreed

Key:

\bar{x}_1 - mean response of male adolescents

\bar{x}_2 - mean response of female adolescents

Decision Rule: any mean below 2.50 is rejected, while any mean above 2.50 is accepted.

Table 1.0 shows items 1-9 were above the mean cut of 2.50. Meaning that the exposure of adolescents to internet pornography influenced their sexual behaviour. The influences include pre-marital sex; anal, oral and group sex; homosexuality; lesbianism, and sexual aggression and addiction. Sex is seen as normal and risk-free among the adolescents. However, item 10 was below 2.50, as the respondents disagreed that exposure to internet pornography do not influence sexual responsibility.

Table 2 Mean Responses of Adolescents on Problems Associated with Exposure to Internet Pornography

S/N	Items	\bar{x}_1	Decision	\bar{x}_2	Decision
1	Engage in pre-marital sex	2.62	Agreed	2.52	Agreed
2	Engage in rape, anal, oral and group sex	3.35	Agreed	2.62	Agreed
3	Practice homosexuality and lesbianism	3.35	Agreed	2.60	Agreed
4	Increased HIV/AIDS and STIs	2.82	Agreed	2.70	Agreed
5	Increased teenage prostitution, unwanted pregnancies and abortion	3.14	Agreed	2.61	Agreed
6	See women as sex objects	2.55	Agreed	3.17	Agreed
7	Indiscriminate sexual engagement	3.16	Agreed	3.17	Agreed
8	Participating in the production of pornography	2.94	Agreed	2.95	Agreed
9.	Masturbation and use of sex vibrators	2.95	Agreed	2.57	Agreed
10.	Committing incest	2.52	Disagreed	3.44	disagreed
11	Engage in on-line cybersex	2.58	Agreed	2.60	Agreed

All items were above the mean 2.50. Table 2.0 revealed that adolescents exposed to internet pornography engage in premarital sex, rape, homosexuality, lesbianism and use of sex vibrators. Women are seen and used as sex objects, as well engage in indiscriminate sex. The involvement of adolescents in pre-marital sex leads to having sexual partners, unplanned pregnancies, abortion, incest, and sexually transmitted infections.

Table 3 Mean Responses of Adolescents on Strategies in Mitigating Exposure to Internet Pornography

S/N	Items	\bar{x}_1	Decision	\bar{x}_2	Decision
1	Educate adolescents on risk of exposure to internet Pornography	3.16	Agreed	3.11	Agreed
2	Parents to monitor use of computers at home.	3.25	Agreed	3.00	Agreed
3	Computers should be centrally placed at home.	3.13	Agreed	3.17	Agreed
4	V-chips should be used to block pornographic websites by internet experts	3.00	Agreed	2.85	Agreed
5	There should be internet restructuring whereby pornographic websites cannot be easily accessed	3.16	Agreed	3.12	Agreed
6	Cyber café operators should not allow access to internet pornography	2.85	Agreed	2.60	Agreed
7	Law enforcement agents should monitor cybercafé activities and their operators.	2.55	Agreed	2.51	Agreed

Table 3.0 shows that the mean of all items were above 2.50. The table reveals strategies to mitigate the negative trends of internet pornography. The strategies include social norms, education, parenting approaches and law enforcement agents as well as internet restructuring.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adolescents on influence of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour, of adolescents in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Table 3.1

Responses	\bar{x}_1	SD	N ₁	Df	SE	t _{cal}	t _{table}
Male Adolescents	3.0	0.59	29	58	0.35	1.67	1.960
Responses	\bar{x}_1	SD	N ₂				
Female adolescents	3.0	1.29	29				

KEY:

\bar{x}_1 - Mean score of male adolescents

\bar{x}_2 - Mean score of female adolescents

SD - Standard deviation

N₁ - Number of male adolescents

N₂ - Number of female adolescents

df - Degree of freedom (60-2 = DF 58)

SE - Standard error variance

t-cal - t-test value calculated

NS - No significance

Decision rule

The t-cal 1.67 is less than t-tab 1.960 at df 58. The null hypothesis is upheld meaning there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adolescents on influence of exposure to internet pornography on sexual behaviour tested at 0.005 level of significance. This reveals that both male and female adolescents agreed that exposure to internet pornography influenced adolescent sexual behaviour negatively.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1.0 items 1-2 shows respondents agreed that adolescents have easy access to internet and there is dichotomy in access to viewing internet pornography between male and female adolescents. This finding corroborates Web Traffic (2004) report that pornography is easily accessed by adolescents on the internet. Internet Pornography Statistics (2005) reveal that 23 to 60 million persons visit pornography websites each day. And that pornography has become the most viewed spectator "sport" by adolescents. Affirming the dichotomy in accessing and viewing internet pornography; Stack, Wasserman and Kern's (2004) findings revealed pornography consumption is more prevalent among computer-literate males than females. Males are 6.43 times more likely to use internet pornography than females (N=531) and experience a 12 percent increase in internet pornography use for every one-unit increase in computer knowledge. According to Nielsen/Net Ratings (2005), 71.61 percent of pornography consumers were male and 28.9 percent were females. It was also reported that 4,803 children and adolescents between the ages of 2 to 17 years were exposed to or sought out pornography on-line. This age group represented 13-97 percent of all on-line pornography consumption.

Similarly, items 3-8 revealed that respondents agreed that there is a correlation between adolescents' exposure to internet pornography and subsequent sexual behaviour. The identified negative sexual behaviours are pre-marital sex, anal sex, oral sex, bestiality, use of vibrators, homosexuality, lesbianism, sexual aggression, addiction and compulsion. Similar studies conducted by Haggstrom-Nordin, Hanson and Tyden (2004), Cline (2001) and Freeman-Longo (2000) findings showed that is strong association between frequent exposure to internet pornography and sexual behaviour. The studies found that adolescents who viewed sexually explicit materials had mood-altering experience whereby they practice what was viewed. The unhealthy sexual behaviours were

enumerated as masturbation, early sexual priming, anal sex, oral sex, group sex, lesbianism, homosexuality, sexual addiction, compulsivity and aggression.

In a study carried out by Malamuth, Addison and Koss (2000) to determine whether frequent exposure to pornography was associated with much higher rates of aggression, the findings indicated that older adolescents already at high risk for sexual aggression became more sexually aggressive. The variables identified among such adolescents were impulsivity, hostility toward women and promiscuity. On the other hand, youths who had the same risk levels of aggressive behaviour, but who consumed pornography "somewhat", 'seldom' or 'never' did not show the same level of aggression. These studies established the fact that there is a strong association between exposure of adolescents to internet pornography and negative sexual behaviour.

Freeman-Longo (2000), an expert in sexual abuse, assessment, prevention and treatments, further explains that exposure of adolescents to incorrect information about human sexuality (e.g bestiality, sex with children and age-inappropriate sexual materials shapes adolescents' sexual behaviour negatively. Schneider (2004) explains sexual compulsivity as the loss of ability to choose freely, whether to stop or continue a sexual behaviour. The sexual behaviour includes autoerotic asphyxiation, cybersex, exhibitionism, fetishes, fantasy, frotteurism, masturbation, pedophilia, phone sex, pornography, sex within a relationship, sex with multiple partners, sex with prostitutes, sexual role play, violence and voyeurism. He stated that sexual compulsivity has been identified by neuroscience experts as a health problem. Sexual addiction is regarded as a maladaptive pattern of sexual behaviour, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time, (i) Withdrawal, as manifested by either physiological symptoms that are manifested upon discontinuation of the sexual behaviour or the same behaviour is often engaged over a longer period, in greater quantity, or at a higher level of intensity that was intended, (ii) There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control the sexual behaviour, (iii) A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to prepare for the sexual behaviour, to engage in the behaviour or to recover from its effects, (iv) Important social, occupational or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of the sexual behaviour, (v) The sexual behaviour continues despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the behaviour. The unhealthy sexual behaviours were enumerated as coercion, victimization and compulsion for instant gratification, mood shifts, impersonal and emotional detachment, negative consequences such as communicable diseases, shame, guilt, lack of satisfaction and erratic sexual behaviour. To buttress this, Haggstrom-Nordin, Hanson and Tyden (2005) in a study examined the association between pornography consumption and sexual practices among 718 high school classes in Sweden. The study found 53 percent reported that pornography (i) impacted their sexual behaviour by inspiring them, (ii) engaged them in sexual activities such as oral sex, anal sex and group sex. Their engagement was significantly associated with high consumption of pornography, item 1.0 was below 2.40. The respondents disagreed that internet pornography would exposes adolescents to believe that internet pornography influence sexual responsibility such as use of condom. Sex without condom increases the spread of communicable diseases.

Table 2.0 items 1-5 were agreed to as risks associated with exposure to internet pornography. Malamuth, Addison and Koss (2000) found that indiscriminate sexual practices by adolescents is responsible for increased STIs, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and abortion, which consequences may be damaged womb or death. Where abortion is not possible, children are given birth to and abandoned. There is also increase in single parenthood. Items 6-9 reveal women are seen as sex objects and manipulated to assume bizarre types of sexual posture.

Table 3.0 showed that all items were agreed to as strategies for mitigating easy access and viewing of internet pornography by adolescents. The strategies include parental role in educating adolescents on sex education, Sex education will inform adolescents on human sexuality and the need to be preserved. Parents should monitor and control the use of computer by adolescents in the home. According to Ogboru (2009), the computer should be put in a public part of the house and children should not be given internet access late at night. Parents should use V-chips to filter the contents on internet especially pornography. The internet needs restructuring by ICT experts to curtail the intrusion of pornographic websites. It was agreed by respondents that cybercafé operators should not allow adolescents to access pornography and law enforcement agents should monitor cyber cafe activities.

5. CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that exposure of adolescents to internet pornography influenced their sexual behaviour negatively. Adolescents, who are exposed to internet pornography displayed unhealthy sexual attitudes such as masturbation, sexual addiction, compulsivity, aggression, oral sex, anal sex, group sex, use of vibrators, abusive and bizarre types of sexual posture, hostility towards women, increased rape, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, prostitution, STIs and HIV/AIDS.

Internet pornography might be consumed by one household member e.g. adolescent in a solitary, secret fashion; the impact of sexually explicit material may be felt by entire family systems, not to mention communities and nations at large. The magnitude and

growth of on-line sexuality activity if left unchecked will alter social and sexual landscape of the world. Moreso, when sexual innuendos can be accessed on mobile phones. Childhood and adolescence are the foundational developmental stages in the formation of habits, values, attitudes and beliefs. Internet pornography messages distort or constrain healthy sexual development that may affect adolescents' future success in marital and family relationships. The internet is a powerful resource through which youth can access information, entertainment and social connection. While it is important to ensure adolescents have access to the increasingly important medium, it is equally important to minimize the associated risks of sexual solicitation, abuse, harassment and exposure to obscenity in the virtual square. Therefore, there is need for the issue of easy accessibility of adolescents to on-line pornography be top priority to parents, policy makers, ICT experts and educators to address.

Recommendations

To prevent the consequential impact of adolescents' exposure to internet pornography on their sexual behaviour, parents, government, educationist, and cyber cafe operators need to apply the suggested strategies to curb the menace of internet pornography: Parents should monitor the use of computer by adolescents at home. They should discuss human sexuality at the onset of puberty to prevent adolescents from navigating this complex topic from other devices like internet pornography. Sex education will help adolescents develop healthy sexual behaviour. Parents also should be good role models to adolescents by not accessing or viewing internet pornography or pornography literatures and films at home. As the children are growing parents should educate adolescents on exposure, impact and risks of internet pornography on future marital stability and family bond. Furthermore, parents should assist adolescents to differentiate between fantasy and reality, particularly when it comes to sex. Blocking the pornographic websites will prevent any access illicit sexual behaviours. The government needs to enforce laws regulating the operation of cyber cafe operators on accessible websites by youths. Cyber café operators should block pornography websites as well as monitor adolescents browsing in their cyber cafés from hacking pornography websites. Hence, sex education need to be taught from the cradle of education through higher institutions of learning i.e. nursery-university levels. This could curb negative sexual behaviours among the adolescents.

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