

P2.11. Effect of Sex Stereotyping on School Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour in Osun State, Nigeria
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Background/Significance: Sexuality is an issue that many young people have difficulty talking about. Many Nigerians believe that sexuality and related issues must be regulated by the society to ensure stability and survival of family and societal life. Among the Yorubas of South Western Nigeria, social control of sexuality is evident in sex stereotypes that individuals internalize as they grow up, and which are reflected in numerous social myths and popular sayings among the people. Sex stereotypes refer to statements about human sexuality generally accepted as true by people in a society, but which lack any empirical or scientific proof. It is assumed that people who believe in popular sex myths or stereotypes would manifest unhealthy sexual behaviours or engage in dangerous sexual interactions.

Main Question/Hypothesis: This study investigated the prevalence of sex stereotyping and its effects on the sexual behaviour of Nigerian school-going adolescents. It also ascertained the effects of age and sex on adolescents' belief in sex stereotypes.

Methodology: The study sample consisted of 658 (Male = 287, Female = 371) adolescents from nine randomly selected secondary schools in three urban towns in Osun State, Nigeria. The students, who were in the final class in the secondary school, had a mean age of 17 years. A self-constructed questionnaire with a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.82 over an interval of two weeks was administered. The questionnaire consists of items describing various misconceptions about sexuality to which respondents were to indicate their levels of agreement on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument also measured the extent to which respondents engaged in risky sexual behaviour such as casual sex, multiple sexual partners and unprotected sexual intercourse. Respondents were to indicate their involvement in identified sexual behaviours on a three-point scale of 'always', 'occasionally' and 'not at all'. Data obtained were analysed using simple percentages and chi-square statistics.

Findings: The results of the study showed that there was an emerging pattern of sex stereotypes among adolescent students. A high percentage of adolescents who participated in the study (58.4) reported strong agreement with such sex stereotypes as "Boys have greater need for sex than girls", "Sexual drives in human beings are not controllable", "Girls having sex for the first time cannot get pregnant", "Only promiscuous people get HIV/AIDS", "Decent people do not openly discuss sex", "A person who is sexually active before marriage, usually makes a good spouse", etc.

Findings from the study also showed that respondents who reported high level of sex stereotypes showed the tendency to engage in risky sexual behaviour. Chi-square value revealed that sex stereotypes significantly influenced the tendency of respondents to engage in risky sexual behaviour ($\chi^2 = 176.08$, $p < 0.05$).

The results of the study also showed that respondents' sex had a significant influence on reported belief in sex stereotypes. A chi-square value of 52.52 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained on the relationship between sex and belief in sex stereotypes. An overwhelming majority of respondents who reported high level of stereotypes (65.3) were male. On the other hand, a substantial percentage (52.3) of respondents who reported moderate level of sex stereotypes were females, lending credence to the assumption that male adolescents were more likely to manifest higher level of sex stereotypes than their female counterparts.

Knowledge Contribution: The study concluded that there was a high prevalence of sex misinformation and sexual risk-taking among school-going adolescents in Osun State. There is need for virile and radical programmes of sexual re-conditioning to enable this population develop responsible sexual behaviour.