

# Influence of Home Video on Sexuality Aspirations of Secondary School Students in Ibadan, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Home videos are entertainment media but their use by adolescents transcends leisure to sexuality aspirations. A survey of 180 students in selected secondary schools in Ibadan showed that viewing influenced their sexuality knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP). The paper argues that exposure to home movies affect young people's life aspirations as higher viewership (95.6 percent) corresponds with high negative sexuality response (93.3 percent). Accordingly, the media teach 87 percent of students about girl-friend/boy-friend relationships, expose 82 percent to sexual relationships, arouse 85 percent and encourage premarital sex among 53 percent students. While entertaining, the media provide information that teenagers use to construct their sexuality, having far reaching health implications. Home video content and packaging thus place adolescent lives on a reproductive health disaster. This calls for alternative models of entertainment communication as well as critical censorship of home movies to help checkmate worsening sexual and reproductive health conditions in Nigeria.

**Key Words:** Entertainment Communication, Sexuality Aspirations, Media Use, Adolescents.

## Introduction

Television, home video and movies have become popular modes of entertainment communication, with enormous influence on adolescents, in Nigeria and other developing countries. The media are assuming a more powerful position since the explosion of the audio-visual in the 1930s, bringing events and news close to the audience at home, office and other convenient places. The growth of the electronic media is fast transforming the world from the "book culture" to "visual culture", putting words into images and using emotion-laden language and imaginations to affect receivers. Visual media are affective, creative and imaginative, impacting the human sensory organs. According to Mahoney (1992), only the human family surpasses the visual, forms consciences, provides role-models and motivates human behaviour in contemporary society.

Adolescents operate in a different cultural world of inquisitiveness and exploration. The information age thus acts as a catalyst to the emerging youth culture. They are bombarded from all sides, becoming too media conscious and utilizing them greatly. The vast advertising appeals target youths with various commodities. This fast moving youth culture, coupled with the captivating nature of the media, appears to aid youths by simply directing their minds to consumerist values and behaviours.

The media have created an environment that makes communication more dynamic. Strasburger and Wilson (2002) observed that modern youth are confronted with a media environment that is much different from what their parents or grand-parents were familiar

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with. Advancement in technology has greatly contributed in changing the nature of traditional media. Hence, the television screen, which was an avenue for watching broadcast programmes, is now utilised for a wider range of activities, including home movies.

Accordingly, the media are used for several purposes by people to satisfy their needs. With the advent of the Nigerian home video, young people use it for relaxation, leisure, information and entertainment. The relationship between the media and youths cannot be overemphasized. In carrying out its functions, the media create, teach and impose values through subtle means. While performing its traditional role of informing, educating, persuading and entertaining, media affect the character of its audience through information that expose them to behaviours beyond the primary and visible story lines.

Studies have laid emphasis on the family as an important focus for media use. Livingstone (2000), quoting Allan noted that “family life in the twentieth century saw an increasing focus on the home, so that now using media at home means for many people, using media in the context of family life.” The family is considered the first place values are learnt and its intrusion by the media are phenomenological. This is why a Nigerian adage states that “values observed in the public are built from the home.” The observation that children are restrained and have refrained from playing on the streets necessitated the impingement of the home with media leisure activities.

This shift from ‘street corner culture’, the decline in public leisure and after-school facilities enhanced the provision of media products to the privacy of the home. Home videos perfectly suit this media arrangement as it is used to service different human needs at various levels. In what perspective are home videos reflecting home training and integrity? To what extent are they encouraging merit and promoting reward for hard labour? Do they promote mediocrity? What cultural and moral values are showcased for human development? These reflections are necessary in determining the importance of home videos in the Nigerian social economy.

The emergence of Nollywood has been a product of many ‘successful’ video productions in Nigeria. The industry has been credited for laundering the nation’s image abroad and showcasing the potentials of Nigerians in the movie industry. It opened up the economy by creating job outlets through personnel involved in film productions, marketers, censor board, video clubs, and so on. Nigeria is currently acclaimed the 3rd largest movie producer in the world after India and United States.

Nigerian film entertainment products are widely available and in demand by not only Nigerians but by other Africans. The demand for Nigerian movies outside of Africa is driven by a huge population of expatriate Nigerians and other Africans living outside the continent. According to Mba (2006), despite the fact that professionalism and quality are usually sacrificed to speed and quantity, no other realm of endeavour by Nigerians has so profoundly conveyed the value, character and promises of the nation in the global brand view.

The success of the industry is also accompanied with some shortcoming like poor production and audio quality, unclear and hackneyed story lines, bad language and grammatical inconsistencies, among others. These limitations led to the decision by the Nigerian censor board to peg the total number of weekly allowed films into the market. Their shortcomings could be attributed to producers’ motivation, reason and desires which are strongly commercialization and profiteering oriented but less of cultural value promotion, education or quality.

### **Methodology**

The study sampled 180 secondary school students aged 13 -19years from Mokola and Old Ife Road in Ibadan. Three schools - St. Louis Grammar School (all female), Loyola College (all male) and Kings and Queens College (co-educational) - were selected for the

study. A cross-sectional sample of senior secondary school students (SS1 – SS3) was to ensure that findings cut across the different strata of students. Adopting a multistage sampling approach, stratified, simple random and systematic sampling enabled the selection of participants, eliminating sampling error and bias. 60 students spread across the senior classes were selected from each school. The questionnaire was the principal research instrument, structured as both the open and close-ended questions. This categorization enabled respondents to make appropriate choices as well as provide unrestrained original contributions.

## Results

### Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

A total of 180 respondents provided information for examining the influence of home video on adolescent sexuality aspirations. The sex of respondents comprised 47 percent males and 53 percent females. Both sexes presented a holistic view of the problem and captured the different sides of social reality. Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents are aged 16 – 19 years or 51 percent while 48 percent are aged 13–15 years. The age distribution corresponds to the population which comprised senior secondary school students, basically teenagers. This phase of adolescence is the most critical because it is around this period that most adolescents initiate sex and face pressures of being sexually active (Obono, 2008). Age is an important component of the study as it reveals the mind set of adolescents concerning home video sexuality-related behaviour.

**Table 1: Selected Sociodemographic Characteristic of Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	84	46.7
Female	96	53.3
Total	180	100
<b>Age</b>		
13 – 15	88	48.9
16 – 19	92	51.1
Total	180	100
<b>Class</b>		
Senior secondary 1	45	25.0
Senior secondary 2	60	33.3
Senior secondary 3	75	41.7
Total	180	100

Most respondents are in the final secondary school class. The choice of these student categories was to ensure that the sample already knows and is exposed to this entertainment industry and able to provide home video-related information from personal perspectives. Most of the respondents are found in the ultimate class where 41.7 percent are in SS3 while the least are SSI, accounting to 25 percent. This is in line with respondents' age group which shows the majority being in their late teens.

### Teenage viewership of home video

The relationship between the media and youths cannot be overemphasized. Youths constitute a large proportion of consumers of media production. Their interest in home

video is hinged to the fact that most leisure activities now take place in the home. It is interesting to note that a very high proportion of adolescent secondary school students in Ibadan are exposed to home videos viewing. Table 2 revealed that 95.6 percent of teenagers watch videos for entertainment although underlying this gratification is its provision of information that aids the construction of adolescent sexuality. Only 4 percent of the students are not into home video viewing.

**Table 2: Home video viewership**

Home Video Viewing	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	172	95.6
No	8	4.4
Total	180	100

This finding concerning the level of patronage against non-viewing students is worrisome in different ways. It implies that young people use most of their productive time for entertainment. This has implications on personal development especially if the content of the video is intellectually unchallenging, educationally unprofitable, morally debase and culturally incompatible. Occupying their minds with information that does not boost their academic, social and economic wellbeing may constitute to wastage of human time, resource and future.

High home video patronage could be attributed to various reasons. Since leisure activities available to young people are limited, the over dependence on home videos for relaxation is visible. This is particularly obvious among girls who are socialised into indoor activities like home making and care relative to their male counterparts who have freedom of movement. Home video therefore satisfies the entertainment needs of adolescents for the provision of leisure in more private and familiar settings, resulting to increased consumption behaviour.

Adolescence is a critical phase in children development. They respond to the social, emotional, psychological and physiological changes that take place in their bodies. The feeling is intensified by what they see, hear and taste. Hence, the messages portrayed in home videos, as well as the discussions that emanate from it can influence youth worldview, lifestyle, decision- making processes and sexuality aspirations. It is therefore important to guard what young people come in contact with until there are emotionally developed and stable to cope with challenges around them. This can be made possible through the acquisition of relevant information from credible sources, corresponding to Mead's argument that a crisis-free transition to adult status is possible with adequate preparation for it (Mead, 1930).

Being a period of peer pressure, adolescents can easily be influenced to watch various types of home video for companionship, relaxation or information acquisition. However, most young people are exposed to home videos primarily for entertainment but unconsciously affected in the process as they act according to the depiction in the videos.

In an era of audio-visuals, there are great potentials in combining images, words and sounds to entertain, inform, persuade, shock and translate people. These images can shape and reshape people's worldviews. As a powerful medium for the dissemination of messages, videos can have far reaching implications on adolescents. This power is multifaceted and multidirectional, a shift from Lasswell's linear model of communication to a more participatory one.

The self-evolving language of video, compared to other media outlets, contributes to the influence and transformation of students. Its nature suggests a limitless, unguarded permission to speak and express one's ideas and opinion in public. The influence that follows cannot be marginalized. As communication theories try to comprehend the

impact of television on viewers, video came with an added dimension. Whereas television was originally produced for mass consumption, video recorders produce resources for a narrower audience. Television was originally time bound but videotape introduced infinite flexibility into viewing schedules.

### **Influence of home video on students**

The advent of technology and newer media types – VCDs, DVDs, Satellite, cable, computer, among others - have diverse effect on youths. The study sought to know whether home videos influence adolescents and the nature of influence. Results showed that most teenagers are influenced by home video information and actions. Accordingly, table 3 indicated that 93.3 percent of young people are influenced by watching home videos relative to 6.7 percent that are not. This revelation is important as home videos could be exploited as veritable media to affect youth behaviour, education, attitudes and beliefs. Depending on their packaging, they can build or destroy adolescents. The nature of effect can make or mar adolescents' health situations as the media have been indentified as having indirect influence on the behaviour, value orientation and acquisition of people.

**Table 3: Home video influence on secondary school students**

<b>Home video influences you</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	168	93.3
No	12	6.7
Total	180	100

The cognitive needs of media suggest that youths seek information that will make them current among their peers. They use the media to seek information as well as learn and understand current issues. It is observed in Table 4 that most young people learn about the procedures of building boy-girl relationships through home videos. This is evident as 86.7 respondents noted that boy-girl friend relationships are encouraged through their exposure to home movies. The finding can be associated to the Nigerian home videos that portray intimate relationships in almost all their scenes irrespective of the composition of the target audience. Sexual acts are portrayed as an important and inevitable aspect of human existence. Various sexual characters are displayed in office, home and other non-official settings, portraying the relationships as a reality of daily living even among unmarried people.

**Table 4: Learning of boy-girl- friend relationship through home video**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	50	27.8
Agree	106	58.9
Disagree	18	10.0
Strongly Disagree	6	3.3
Total	180	100

Although the media have been greatly utilised as well as impacted human personality, there is the absence of Nigerian movies that emphasize positive aspects of life like economic and social reforms, anti-corruption crusade, family values, among others (Mba, 2006). Positive developmental themes of life should be identified, scripted and sold using the film entertainment media productions.

The table indicates that a large percentage of students learn about boy – friend and girl- friend relationships from their contact with home videos. Only 13 percent hold a contrary view, revealing home video as a powerful communication tool for influencing youths into sexual relationships. This agrees with Mba's opinion that movies communicate ideas, which influence human behaviour, and therefore movies must also influence some human behaviour. Adolescents thus turn to the media for solution to their needs, expectation and desires.

The impact of the media on the behaviour of vulnerable members of society can not be overemphasised because of the socioeconomic context within which they exist. In modern world, where parents and guardians are increasingly faced with the challenge of economic survival, more children are abandoned to television and movies. On the average, children spend over 30 hours in front of the television (Mba, 2006). This realisation brought about Censors Board argument about the increasing rate of abdication of parental responsibility because movies remain a great tool for mass mobilization and socialization.

Youths use the media to facilitate parties and enhance sexual encounters. Contemporary media content offers "new morality", which argues that sexual pleasure is an important part of human behaviour and should not be repressed. This is reflected in Table 5 where majority of respondents or 53.3 percent stated that home videos encourage premarital sex. This challenges cultural, social and religious expectations as children are socialised to abstain from premarital sex. The high level of sexual activity observed among young Nigerian adolescents is associated to media exposure which provides youth with contradictory messages that negates parental inclinations (Obono, 2008).

**Table 5: Home video influence on adolescent premarital sexual aspiration**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	40	22.2
Agree	56	31.1
Disagree	52	28.9
Strongly Disagree	32	17.8
Total	180	100

Youth therefore negate and object to cultural norms, mores, beliefs and moral prescriptions that expect them to abstain from premarital sex. The media while entertaining young people therefore provide them with values which are most times westernised and not based on the African reality. Such information is not holistically contextualized or packaged to enable adolescents make informed decisions concerning their sexuality. Most times, sexuality is presented as a desirable aspect of human life to satisfy people's emotional needs without also revealing its negative impact. Partial information provision has brought about the high incidence of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, teenage childbearing, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, infertility as well as maternal mortality.

The effect of home video may be positive, negative or both depending on the content and viewer. An assessment of its influence on the sexuality of students further revealed that it exposes them to sexual relationships and arousal. Table 6 indicates that 80.6 percent of young people are lured into sexual relationships through their exposure to home video. This influence is high relative to those without this exposure effect (19.3 percent).

This can be explained through the type of movies and songs displayed in the videos. Most television programmes or video are full of sexual suggestiveness even when they

are X- rated or for adults only. Exposure to these video productions leaves the impression that sexual activity is a normal and everyday aspect of most relationships.

**Table 6: Home video and exposure to sexual relationship**

Exposure to sexual relationships	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	72	40.0
Agree	73	40.6
Disagree	24	13.3
Strongly Disagree	11	6.0
Total	180	100

Although sexual content can affect any age group, adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Most times, messages range from mildly suggestive to various levels of explicit ones. The degree of explicitness in media content depends on what is left for imagination. Highly explicit ones like X-rated movies, videos or audio products leave nothing to the imagination of the viewer.

Adolescents are valued, respected and expected to act responsibly. Most adults trust them to make responsible choices because they are seen as assets rather than problems. To some extent, the entertainment media fill the gap in providing the information needs of adolescents which parents, schools and healthcare professional have failed to provide.

Social cognitive theory asserts that young people may adopt the behaviour of others through observational learning. The theory predicts that people are more likely to emulate the behaviour of others when those models are attractive (Baran, 2002). Applying this perspective, teens that spend more time watching television programming and home videos with attractive characters that enjoy kissing and physical fondling will likely imitate their behaviour or make a more generalised or related response. Correspondingly, table 7 shows that home videos make 85 percent of respondents sexually aroused. This implies that they will seek outlets to express these desires observed in movies and those that are not in control of their emotions may resort to raping as a response.

**Table 7: Home video and sexual arousal of youths**

Feel sexually aroused	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	65	36.1
Agree	88	48.9
Disagree	21	11.7
Strongly Disagree	6	3.3
Total	180	100

The finding confirms the cognitive theory as 36.1 percent of the respondents strongly agree that home videos make them sexually aroused. This is because youths desire virtual reality and the media speak the language of emotions and imagination. Youth thus tend to be moved by what they watch. The influence on adolescents invariably means that its impact will be felt on the society living in the midst of rapid cultural change and increasing intercultural connectedness (Kim, 1996).

### **Home video and the society**

The research also sought to know if the media has contributed to the degradation of the society. Table 8 indicates that more than half of the respondents noted that the media

have negative influence on society. About 62 percent of students stated that the media has greatly contributed to the degradation of the society.

**Table 8: Home video impact on society**

Home video and society degradation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	112	62.2
No	68	37.8
Total	180	100

This degradation is reflected in the attitude of young people in the society. Some people are of the view that many youths today lack home training, integrity, cultural, moral and religious values. They betray moral probity and the media have helped to propagate indecent dressing and exhibit fashion and language that are dishonourable. Through the media, adolescents imitate western cultures and values. They identify with models from pop stars, violence heroes and celebrated sex stars. Youths manifest all these in their utterances, behaviour and attitudes, saturating the society with values that are not in congruence with national ideology. Baran (2002:377) summarised that:

The media are corrupting influences that undermine the social order and that “average” people are defenceless against their influence...media are a dangerous drug or a killing force that directly and immediately penetrates a person’s system.

Since youths constitute the largest consumers of home video, some medium can be put in place to monitor and check the impact of the media on young people. This responsibility is best suited for some particular channels. Most respondents identified the family as the best medium for sensitizing youths about home video- related prospects and defects. This is portrayed in Table 9 where 49 percent of respondents identified the family for this purpose relative to church (7%), school (20%) and mass media (24%).

**Table 9: Desired sensitization medium for home video enlightenment**

Desired medium	Frequency	Percentage
The family/home	88	48.9
The church	13	7.2
The school	36	20
The mass media	43	23.9
Total	180	100

This is gratifying as it portrays the importance of the family in educating young people. Adolescents still impose confidence in family communication for primary socialization. According to Talcott Parson's “the basic and irreducible” functions of the family, the two basic processes involved in primary socialization are the internalization of society’s culture and the structuring of personality (Haralambos, 2004). This socialization is key to regaining adolescents and the Nigerian society from the impending home video-related sexuality disaster.

## **Discussion**

The media are daily bombarded with all kinds of messages that portray sexual impropriety. Musical videos, home movies and drama teach young people that waywardness is the quickest way to riches in the same way that some adverts encourage illicit sex and the use of condoms for young people. These deceptive media appeals send wrong signals and make the idea of sexual promiscuity appealing to adolescents who are the most vulnerable in the society.

Thus, young people are today faced with conflicting and confusing messages about sexual behaviour. Adults and socializing institutions are not in agreement with when, what or where youths should learn. Although, parents are meant to be the primary sources of sexual guidance for children, they often find it difficult to present timely, clear, or accurate information. While some parents want schools to provide sex education, schools are increasingly reluctant to do more than say “wait till marriage”. Hence, the information is considered inadequate by young people, mainly focused on discouraging students from sexual activities without providing explanation for the dangers and consequences of these actions (WHO 2000). In contrast, the mass media – television, home video, magazines, music, and the internet – frequently portray sexual behaviour as being central in everyday life and as though it is emotionally and physically risk free.

Youths and the electronic media today are dependent upon each other. The media need the youth market for economic survival while youths need the media for information. Video appears to be a more reliable provider of entertainment because they are readily available than most parents, teachers and guardians. There are indications that even when youths use home video actively in their effort to create and share meaning, their value consciousness is affected positively or negatively. This also affects the attitude and behaviour they exhibit in the light of individual background. It is imperative to turn concern on how youths can gain more control over their viewing habit. There exist great positive potentials of video for the moral and sexual development of youths if properly channelled.

A lot of factors determine how practitioners use media. Organizations determine what is packaged and how and where messages are directed. With the goal of profit making, information is used as a commodity because the bottom line for the media is profit making. Although the media influence people, such influence depends to a large extent on the users. There is a movement from the powerful effect of the media theory to the active audience theory because audiences pick and choose elements from the media to construct their own life story (Baran, 2002). The media can thus be used in a more dynamic and profitable way to build and shape youth sexuality.

Media Practice Model illustrates that most media use is active through selection processes. It assumes that an adolescent’s current and emerging sense of self of identity, is a compelling component as decisions are made about what media will be selected, interacted with and applied in everyday life. Studies of the effects of the mass media assume similarity in selection of, exposure to, and interpretation of media content. It is assumed that adolescents choose media and interact with media based on who they are or who they want to become.

This relates to uses and gratifications approach, which suggests that media consumers come to the media with different needs and motives. What they take from the media will depend on what they came to it for (Bara, 2002). The theory would predict, for example, that an adolescent who watches talk shows to learn more about relationships would learn something about relationships while another who watches to be entertained would more likely be amused than edified.

Media practice model goes beyond uses and gratifications theory to asserting that what is learnt will also vary according to adolescents’ sense of self identity and lived

experience. The latter is a socio genetic construct that accounts for the complex ways in which race, class, gender, developmental stage, and many other factors, differentiate personal experiences of persons. In all, there are adolescents that do not possess the power to resist information from the media. Hypodermic needle theory is strongly reflected as youths were found to respond highly and uniformly to the powerful stimulus from home video.

The effect of the media is not limited to individuals but institutions. This manifests in attitudes, emotions, acquisition of facts and even changes in body functions. The influence may not necessarily be what one intends but happen without one's intention. Media influence can affect value acquisition of target or unsuspecting audience. The characterisation and reception of home video products is like the nature of advertisement media products which seek to alter the thinking and behaviour of recipients of messages in a manner beneficial to the advertiser. Using influential forces like celebrities in movies and appealing to popular entertainment cause adolescents to place value in those they see as role models and practice accordingly, hence, the behavioural influence of media.

### **Conclusion**

Media content captivates young people because most of the video they watch are constructed with western appeals sexual images. The study established that home videos influence youths sexual knowledge, attitude and contribute to value acquisition. Home video thus arouses in youth strong emotional aspirations of premarital sex, sexual relationship, and sexual arousal. In other words, after seeing a particular style on home videos, one might go out to perform similar actions. This is the behavioural influence of media.

It is imperative to embark on a critical and effective media education for practitioners and viewers, the need to develop a wide-spread critical understanding of the media with emphasis on home video. The whole enterprise of developing media literacy among youths falls within the scope of education, which suggests a major function of the media. If educational issues bother on ethical issues, then there is a higher link between media education and ethics. Efforts should be made by video makers to emphasize values more than profit. X- Rated films should not be allowed because of its effect on teenagers.

It is recommended that the family step into its primary socialization role of educating young people about home video use and effect. Videos should not merely focus on entertainment but positive information functions. They should therefore be used to highlight social values and concern. Videos could equally be used as tools for empowerment and provision of dignity to youths. The combination of all will set the stage for a discussion that will culminate in attitudinal behavioural change.

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