

## Impact of Online Sexual Contents on the Sexual Conduct of Teenagers Muhammad I.Y.

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### ABSTRACT

The potential impact of the internet on young people's sexual conduct has been a source of increased concern. Youth have access to the internet from very young ages and research has demonstrated that kids are exposed to sexual content online, especially on Instagram and Youtube. Similarly, many parents view the adolescent years as a challenging time because of all the experimentation and teenage role modeling. Early adulthood and adolescence can be seen as a period of adjustment. At this point, people also start to think about what kinds of sexual practices are pleasurable and moral. During this time, many teenagers begin to engage in sexual activity and in America and other developed. This study therefore examined the ways by which exposure to online content affects young people's sexual behaviour.

Keywords: online, internet, sexual content, teenager, behavior.

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### INTRODUCTION

Teenagers develop attitudes toward sex that are idealistic, ignore harmful effects, are stereotyped and sometimes unhealthy [1]. It has been noted that it is critical to understand how attitudes are formed and what influences them due to this influence and the media's dissemination of unrealistic pictures and ideas. Many facets of social behaviour, including aggression, social stereotyping, pro-social behavior and social views, have been found to be impacted by the media. Nowadays, the majority of social scientists concur that being exposed to violent contents online has a direct correlation with aggressive behaviour [2]. However, studies show that there are solid theoretical grounds for thinking that the internet may play a significant role in the socialisation of sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Despite this, the effects of sexual content and advertisements on the internet and new media have received relatively little attention from social researchers.

Accordingly, the potential impact of the internet on young people's sexual conduct has been a source of increased concern. Youth have access to the internet from very young ages and research has demonstrated that kids are exposed to sexual content online,

especially on Instagram and Youtube [3]. Previous research has not conclusively proven the impact of this exposure. According to [4], exposure to sexual content can alter one's attitude about sex. In addition, [2] pointed out that acceptance of gender stereotypes was likely to encourage sexual initiation, unhappiness with virginity, and other conceptions of typical sexual conduct. Although, it is claimed that the internet has no discernible effects on children, parents and educators have expressed concern about these effects. In light of this, [5] urged extreme prudence in internet exposure, particularly sex related content. Both positive and bad impacts could result from accessing the internet. As a result, it is sad that a lot of the internet contents that young people watch is sexual in nature. Although, studies indicate that there are compelling theoretical arguments to think that the internet may play a significant role in the socialization of sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, the effects of sexual content and advertisements on the internet and new media have received relatively little attention from social researchers. This study examined the ways by which exposure to online

content affects young people's sexual behaviour.

### **Literature Review**

Many parents view the adolescent years as a challenging time because of all the experimentation and teenage role modeling. Early adulthood and adolescence can be seen as a period of adjustment. At this point, people also start to think about what kinds of sexual practices are pleasurable and moral [6]. During this time, many teenagers begin to engage in sexual activity and in America and other developed nations across the world, 46% or so of high school students have engaged in sexual activity [7]. Each generation deals with the developmental milestone of sexuality for young people. Behavioural aspects of sexuality are included and the limits of sexual activity are becoming more relaxed. The only thing that seems to have changed over time are the circumstances, not perceptions [8]. A society's emphasis on individual freedom and a right-driven culture, according to Szabo [9], may contribute to this perceived permissiveness. In recent years, the media, particularly the internet, has played and continues to play a significant role in influencing adolescents' sexuality and sexual behaviours. Other factors that immunisation, coverage for new vaccines, measures against prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable, as well as communicable diseases and effectiveness of interventions against these diseases [10].

Researchers, parents and policy makers are becoming concerned that modern media may also promote antisocial behaviour. For instance, in the United

States, before the age of 18, 93% of males and 62% of females are exposed to online pornographic materials [11]. Out of 1,500 adolescents tested, more than 20% claimed exposure to SEM and over half of the respondents said they looked for pornography on phone sex lines, according to Ybarra and Mitchell's [11] research. Teenagers' sexual conduct is impacted by their exposure to online porn. According to studies, teenagers who are exposed to uncensored pornographic content online are more likely to report having oral virginal intercourse and to report having permissive sexual views (such as accepting premarital or casual sex) [12]. [13] investigated the influence of social media sexual contents on the sexual behaviour of the students of Kogi State University, Anyigba. The findings showed that Facebook and 2go were the most used new media by students of Kogi State University. The findings also showed that Kogi State University students exposed themselves to sexual contents in the new media. More so, findings show that exposure to sexual contents in the new media lead to promiscuity among youth. [14] note that governments and public institutions attempt to protect the population from the consequences of unhealthy behaviour by way of social marketing campaigns. The primary objective of any campaign is to positively affect the behaviour of the target audiences. Thus, [15] note that the mass media can be used to induce positive attitudinal change.

### **Theoretical Framework Social Learning Theory**

The SLT is a significant social psychological theory. Albert Bandura developed the key ideas and fundamental presumptions of the theory approximately fifty years ago. Children and teenagers pick up new knowledge and habits by observing and imitating others, claims SLT. SLT is a theory of learning that claims that antecedents like observation and watching typically

cause behaviours to be triggered. Reciprocal determinism, which claims that environmental factors both influence and shape an individual's behaviour, is one of the mechanisms that promote learning. Charles Bandura and his colleagues' research in the 1960s and 1970s examined whether or not live models were a more effective method of transmitting learned violence than the

media [16]. The researchers of the Social and Dynamic Learning Theory (SLT) argued that the media are an effective tool for teaching children how to behave in a variety of social situations. The assumptions of the SLT include that children imitate aggressive behaviours of a live model and are able to generalise such responses to novel settings. Every age group is susceptible to the sexual stuff on the internet. Adolescents may be more at risk because they are still going through impressionable developmental stages and trying to forge their own identities [2]. Due to their developmental phases and inability to distinguish between good and bad media programming, adolescents may be exposed to sexual content in the media. The world's social and economic conditions have been dramatically altered by the digital age. The ICT has greatly benefited Sub-Saharan African nations since access to mobile network coverage has increased dramatically. Between the 1990s and 2000s, mobile network coverage in Africa increased from a pitiful 16% to an astounding 90% [17]. About 700 million people still do not have access to mobile internet services in SSA [18], suggesting that access to the internet in this part of the world is still very poor. Research has found that adolescents are the most users of the Internet. Teenagers are the most regular Internet users, and SSA is no different. This is due to the fact that they are more intelligent, imaginative and adaptable when it comes to digitalisation [19]. Adolescents make up the majority of SSA's 420 million internet users, while older generations are still lagging behind the rising trends in mobile and Internet usage. It should be noted, though, that not all teenagers have equal access to cell phones and the Internet. Whereas the majority of the older generations are still struggling to catch up with the growing trends in mobile and Internet usage in SSA. However, it must be emphasised that not all adolescents in SSA have equal access to mobile phones and the internet. Most mobile phone

and internet users in SSA live in cities and come from middle-and upper-class families. For these young people, access to and distribution of sociopolitical knowledge crucial for individual and societal growth is made possible by new media in a limitless number of ways. The internet played a significant role in the 2012 protests against the increase in pump price in Nigeria. Facebook, Twitter and other applications provided the platforms for mass mobilisation. Apart from aiding quick access to and dissemination of information, the new media are means of communicating with friends and family [20]. The mass media generally have a crucial role to play in every society; they inform, entertain, educate and socialise members of the society [21]. To be in good health, the people need adequate and accurate information and knowledge on health measures, health conditions and diseases and more so, government health care programmes such as behaviour occurs when the modeled behaviour is coded into words, labels or images.

ii. The adoption of the modeled behaviour is strengthened when the outcomes of the behaviour are valued, seen as important to the individual or lead to desirable outcome.

iii. The modeled behaviour is more likely to be integrated by the observer when the model has characteristics similar to the observer. In other words, where there is a cognitive-behavioural connection with the model, the model is admired by the observer and the behaviour that is adopted has practical or functional value [16].

This theory of how young people learn about sexuality from others portrayed in the media aids in the understanding of how internet content that portrays sexual norms, stereotypes, double standards and sexual roles may have a significant impact on teens' perceptions of sex, body image, and social norms. Understanding how youth in Nigeria utilise internet content and engage in sexual behaviour is also helpful [22; 23; 24].

### Exposure to Sexual Contents

Teenagers are exposed to sexual contents on social media according to [25]. Also, they are not only exposed to sexual contents on social media, but they are frequently exposed. [6] also note that members of the first generation to grow up with the internet commonly used the medium on a regular basis to meet new people and to date. Youtube is the preferred medium of accessing sexual content probably because it is mainly a video sharing site. This attests to the power of audio-visual media. Similarly, information from research has clearly shown that the youth have access to internet from very tender ages and that they are exposed to sexual content on the

internet, particularly Youtube and Instagram [3]. More so, [7] found that exposure to internet pornography is related to multiple sex partners. Lo & Wei [20] also found that Taiwanese adolescents with increased exposure to internet pornography reported increased sexual permissive attitudes and sexually permissive behaviour. Also, the volume of intentional exposure to internet pornography has a relationship with sexual preoccupation, defined as a strong cognitive engagement in sexual issue, including thinking frequently about sex. This upholds the postulation of the theoretical foundation of this study which is the social learning theory.

### CONCLUSION

Government and other critical stakeholders should carry out strict regulation on internet sites to ensure that contents that are not teenage friendly are not posted. Since it is established that teenagers are highly influenced by their exposure to sexual contents on the internet, there is the need to carry out

constant online and offline sexual education among the youth.

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