

## EFFECTS OF FAMILY UPBRINGING ON FEMALE ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF AWKA SOUTH COUNCIL AREA, ANAMBRA STATE

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### **Abstract**

Female Adolescent sexual behavior is of a public concern, and when treated with accordingly it avoids future problem, the study focuses on the influences of family upbringing on female sexual behavior, where the researcher investigated the family role in shaping the female adolescent sexual behavior in Awka south LGA. This study used Eco system theory, also adopted Mixed method design, with the population of 189,654. Using the Cochran formula to determine the sample size, the convenience sampling was adopted. The structured questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide were the instruments for data collection. The quantitative data were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Frequency tables and chart were used to analyze, describe and present the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were analyzed using manual content analysis. One research hypothesis was formulated and tested using chi-square inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed the study equally found that there was a perceived lack of open discussion around issues associated with sexuality in households and at the community level. There is need to reinforce the practice of sex education within households and communities.

**Keywords:** female adolescent, sexual behaviour, family upbringing, cultural norms, sexual debut

### **Introduction**

The adolescent stage of human development is a very critical stage. It is characterized by experimentations that could jeopardize the life of an adolescent if not well handled (Fortenberry, 2013). In adolescence, new patterns of behaviours are acquired, learned, and assimilated; while some other behaviours are modified to fit into the present behavioural expectations of individuals within such age. Sexual behaviour is one of the most critical behaviours learnt in adolescence. It is often a difficult time for adolescents due to the development of hormonal organs that often manifest in the presence of physical features in the physique of the adolescent such as the development of breasts, the experience of monthly menstruation on the part of the female adolescents. At this stage of experiences in the lives of adolescents, some of them become overwhelmed by such experiences while others may become confused about the proper actions to take regarding the changes they experience. It is at this level that certain family upbringing can play a significant role to influence the pattern of sexual behaviours that an adolescent could develop.

The family has remained an important focal point in the analysis of social factors influencing and affecting the development, behaviour and well-being of individuals within the society. The family in itself is crucial as it provides a sense of belonging, love and protection; and an overall foundation for the emotional, social and behavioural development of the children (Chan, Chen, Chen & Ip, 2017; Hanley, Mhamied, Cleveland, Hajjar, Hassan, Ives, Khyar & Hynie, 2018). The family also plays a vital role in the socialization of children regarding sexual behaviours. As such, traditional norms associated with family life often discourage sexual activity outside the family unit (marriage in this case). Hence, the upbringing of the family is very critical in the sexual behavioural formation of adolescents.

The concept of family upbringing relates to the set of social, economic, cultural and welfare characteristics of a family (Akabayashi, Nazoki, Yukawa & Li, 2020). These may include some indicators such as the structure in terms of the type of marital relationships (divorces, single-parent, separated etc), or other forms of relationships that have to do with religious affiliation (where both parents may have a different religious affiliation with varying religious values); or in terms of parental income, education, occupation, size of the family (Kao & Carter, 2013), among other indicators. Family upbringing plays an important role in the sexual behaviour of adolescents (Olurunsola, Muyibi, Irabor, Adetunji, Ismail & Ogunniyan, 2021). This is because the structure of a family can provide the adolescent with knowledge about sexuality or prevent him or her from having the basic knowledge regarding sexuality. (Mmari, Kalamar, Brahmbhatt & Venables, 2016). This view is in line with some scholars who acknowledged that good family functioning helps with safe sexual practices such as abstinence, regular use of condoms and maintaining a relationship with steady partners among sexually active adolescents, while poor family systems lead to involvement in higher risky sexual behaviour with its resultant consequences (Olurunsola et al., 2021). As vital as the family is to adolescent sexual behaviour, its influence on female adolescents is more significant than that on male adolescents. Another dimension that significantly influences adolescents' sexual behaviour is socioeconomic status in terms of income and education. Olurunsola et al (2021) documented female adolescents from poor family backgrounds in an attempt to meet basic needs involved in commercial sex for monetary gain. This could be true considering that poverty places a huge burden on the lives of adolescents. A female adolescent who came from a lower socio-economic status family would more likely be tempted to engage in sexual activities in exchange for monetary benefits, as a survival strategy. For instance, there may be a significant difference in the sexual behaviour of adolescents who are raised in a single-parent family structure and those who are raised within a nuclear family unit. This is arguable considering the view that single-parent families have relatively lower resources to cater for the children's developmental needs than those with nuclear structure. To buttress this point, Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod and Letsoale (2009) concluded that family structure characteristics such as single parenting and poor parental supervision due to work or alcohol use play a role in determining adolescent sexual behaviour including pregnancy. This view coincides with Ajayi and Okeke (2019) who submitted that living with both parents is positively associated with protective sexual behaviours among adolescents.

Other scholars have submitted that families with permissive parenting are a significant risk factor for early sexual initiation of adolescents; while decreased parental involvement and an absence of parental decision-making about a child's health were predictors of early sexual initiation (Kao & Carter, 2013). Equally, other scholars have the opinion that less permissive parenting is a protective factor against early adolescent sexual initiation. Daughters with mothers who restricted and monitored their participation in external activities demonstrated a lower risk for sexual activity (Dancy, Crittenden, & Ning, 2010). Additionally, a significant association was found between single-parent families and early sexual intercourse among adolescents. In specific terms, adolescent girls living in dual-parent families and adolescent boys whose mothers reported higher levels of education were more likely to remain abstinent. Although it is clear through these researches suggest that good family background could serve as a positive influence on adolescents' sexual behavior, it is not yet ascertained whether such is true about the present study area. Thus, the family upbringing of adolescents about sexual behavior would be measured in this study based on the indicators highlighted above.

Evidence indicates that parents have a great influence on children's feelings about sexuality through the information they discuss with their daughters regarding sexuality (Grossman et al., 2014; Murry et al., 2014). As a result of the quest to identify or resolve the internal conflicts that come with adolescence, particularly on the issue of sexuality, many adolescents may have varying forms of influences, which may help them form proper sexual behaviours or introduce them to risky sexual habits. In this direction, it may be plausible to assume that the type of influence that an adolescent has regarding sexuality may either have a positive or negative influence on his or her sexual behaviours. Positive influence on sexual behaviour may help an adolescent avoid risky sexual behaviours or help him or her become knowledgeable about appropriate sexual behaviours, while a negative influence on sexual behaviour would do the contrary to an adolescent.

In Nigeria, sexuality is viewed as a realm of starting adolescent maturity, which adolescents lack. When an adolescent becomes sexually active is depicted as abnormal, experimental and risky (UNIAIDS 2012). The negative part of the adolescent sexual activity is that it creates a culture of silence and restricts open discussion on adolescent's sexuality which could lead to the aforementioned risky sexual behaviors that could as well as result in high teenage pregnancy, Unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases etc. (WHO 2014), also known to have negative health consequences on female adolescents' future (Graaf .et.al 2012). This is particularly problematic among female adolescents who often bear the brunt of poor sexual orientation. Thus, adolescent sexual behavior continues to be a course for concern, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria.

Due to the concerns about the challenges associated with wrongful sexual behavior among female adolescents, various government policies and agencies have been instituted to address such challenges. For instance, the National Policy on the Health and Development of Adolescents and Young People in Nigeria (NPHDAYPN) was instituted as

a national framework to enhance technical capacity, interventions, collaboration, and coordination for the promotion of the health and development of young people, among other objectives (Federal Ministry of Health (FMH), 2007). However, this and other policies to date have not yielded significant results in addressing the challenges associated with adolescents' sexual behaviour in Nigeria. These could be associated with the view that many young female adolescents are faced with a lack of proper education on sexuality because issues regarding sexuality are not freely discussed in families if parents fail to initiate discussion about healthy sexuality development or create a safe space for their daughters to ask questions, they may feel ashamed or uncomfortable seeking guidance. This lack of education can lead to confusion and engaging in risky sexual behavior without understanding the consequences. More so in the aspect of absence of boundaries and emotional neglect, parents should profound effects on their daughter's sexuality, because when the fail to provide emotional supports or create boundaries that could help them, they tend to turn to unhealthy relationships. These trends are very dangerous for the sustainable development of youths and communities in Nigeria.

The study area, Awka South L.G.A, is one of the geographical enclaves in Nigeria and as a cosmopolitan area, female adolescent may encounter various influences from peers, social media and family that could change the perception of sexuality, that could lead to negative influences. Unfortunately, there is no single study, as much as the researcher knows, that has specifically addressed socio-cultural factors influencing the sexual behavior of female adolescents within the context of Awka South L.G.A. It is based on this backdrop that this study is positioned to examine the influence of family upbringing on female adolescents' sexual behavior in Awka South Area, Anambra State, Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

The study was guided by one research question, viz: How does family upbringing affect female adolescent sexual behavior?

### **Research hypothesis**

The hypothesis stated and tested in this study reads thus: 'Family upbringing does not have significant impact on female adolescent sexual behaviour'

### **Theoretical Framework**

This theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) to explain how everything in a child and the child's environment affects the development of the child. This is based on the assumption that human beings do not exist as an isolated entity; but rather in constant interaction with other systems such as communities, family, other institutions in the society as the globe as a whole (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

This theory is very relevant for this study considering that the understanding of the nature of adolescents' sexual behavior within a socio-cultural context could be enhanced through the exploration of the socio-cultural variables that influence their lives. What this implies is that there is a direct relationship between an adolescents' family upbringing and his or her sexual behavior. As such, it could further be hypothesized that adolescents who has strong family beliefs, good parenting can positive influence him/her.

### Materials and methods

The study was carried out in Awka south, Anambra state Nigeria. This study adopted the mixed-method survey research design. This research design involves the combination of elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and presentation and allows the use of a sample to study the characteristics of a larger population and to generalize the findings to the larger population. This design is considered appropriate for this study because it will enable the researcher to gather a wide range of relevant data with the combination of the two approaches complementarily. The design is also perceived to be economical when compared to other research designs and would provide the needed data for this study within a limited time frame. Using the 2006 National Population Census in Nigeria, Awka South L.G.A has a total population of 189,654, with a male and female population of 96,902 and 92,752 respectively (United Nations Human Settlements Programme UN-HABITAT, 2009). When projected to the current year (i.e., 2022), the area has a population of 316,722 (Males - 161,826; Females - 154,896). This shows that males constitute 51.1% of the entire population structure, while females comprise 48.9% of the population. However, the target population for this study is infinite/ unknown. It will include both male and female parents, teachers and custodians of female adolescents within the study area, with this we made use of the Cochran formula (1963) which gave us the sum total of 385. the research questionnaires were developed to get the quantitative data, while an IDI (In-depth interview) was used for the qualitative. The consent of the respondent was approved before insuring out the questionnaires, the convenient and accidental sampling techniques will be useful in this study because the criteria for using probability sampling techniques are not feasible, both male and female respondents who meet the enlistment criteria and consent to participate shall be sampled. Such a person must have lived with a female adolescent as a parent, teacher, guardian, custodian etc. for at least 2 years.

### Research Findings/ Results

A total of 398 copies of questionnaires were issued out. However, only 388 were correctly filled and submitted. The researchers thus used 388 for analysis presented in sections below:

#### Analysis of Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This sub-section contains information on the analysis conducted on the socio-demographic variables of the respondents including: gender, age, education, religious affiliation, marital status, number of females ever lived with, occupation, income and place of residence. A composite result of the data analysis was presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Description of Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	152	39.2
Female	236	60.8
Total	388	100.0
<b>Age Categories</b>		
28 - 33 Years	103	26.5

34 - 39 Years	138	33.0
40 - 45 Years	85	22.4
46 - 51 Years	65	18.0
Total	388	100.0
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Primary School	57	12.1
Secondary School	76	19.6
Tertiary (Diploma)	100	27.1
Tertiary (Bachelors)	137	36.6
Tertiary (Post-graduate)	18	4.6
Total	388	100.0
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Christianity		
- Anglican	80	20.6
- Roman Catholic	133	34.3
- Pentecostal	44	11.3
- Protestant	36	10.6
- Others	24	7.5
Islam	24	3.6
African Traditional Religion	47	12.1
Total	388	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	77	19.8
Married	27	61.1
Divorced	16	4.1
Separated	25	7.7
Widowed	33	7.2
Total	388	100.0
<b>Number of Female Adolescents ever lived with</b>		
1 - 2	112	30.2
3 - 4	276	69.8
Total	388	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Artisan	78	20.1
Self-employed	77	19.8
Civil Servant/public servant	14	3.6
Unemployed	37	10.8
Trader	150	39.9
Others	32	5.7

Total	388	100.0
<b>Income Level</b>		
Below 50,000.00	8	2.1
51,000.00 - 100,000.00	32	8.2
101,000.00 - 150,000.00	132	35.3
151,000.00 - 200,000.00	160	42.5
201,000.00 - 250,000.00	38	7.2
Above 250,000.00	18	4.6
Total	388	100.0
<b>Place of Residence</b>		
Rural	139	37.1
Urban	239	62.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 contains a composite analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The first variable analysed in the table is the respondents' gender, for which the female respondents constituted the largest proportion (60.8%) of respondents compared to a lower proportion (39.2%) of males. Although male and female caregivers may have similar experiences and insights in regards to the topic, there could be some differences in their perspectives due to their gender. This data could therefore be a valuable consideration when comparing the differences in gender perception regard sexual behaviour among female adolescents in Awka South I.G.A.

Age-wise, the findings reveal that there is a relatively even distribution of respondents with 26.5% of them falling within the age range of 28 to 33 years age, 33.0% in the range of 34 to 39 years, 22.4% in the 40 to 45 years age range and 18.0% in the 46 to 51 years age range. These findings are equally interesting to this study, in the sense that majority of the respondents fell within the adult age, implying that they have adequate life experience regarding sexual behaviours, and would thus provide reliable information for this study

In terms of education level, there was diversity in the distribution of respondents with the majority (36.6%) of them attaining up to bachelor degree level. This was followed by 27.1% of them who attained up to the diploma level. 12.1% in the primary level, 19.6% in the secondary level, and the least proportion (4.6%) being those who attained up to the postgraduate level. This diversity in academic levels suggests that the respondents in this study may have different perceptions and experiences in regards to the theme of this study, based on their relative level of academic qualification.

In terms of marital status, the sample consists of 19.8% single individuals, 61.1% married, 4.1% divorced, 7.7% separated, and 7.2% widowed individuals. This diversity suggests

that individuals in different marital circumstances may have different perspectives and experiences in regards to the theme of this study.

In terms of the number of females ever lived with, the sample consists of majority (69.8%) who had lived with 3 to 4 females, and 30.2% individuals who had lived with 1 to 2 females. This finding equally reinforces the view that majority of the respondents have had adequate experiences from different female adolescents which gives qualifies them to have adequate knowledge about the sexual behaviour of female adolescent, and the socio-cultural factors that may influence their sexual behaviours.

In terms of occupation, the sample consists of diverse occupational categories, with the majority (39.9%) of the samples being traders, followed by other occupational categories as follows: 20.1% artisans, 19.8% self-employed, 3.6% civil servant/ public servant, 10.6% unemployed, and 5.7% others. This diversity suggests that individuals with different occupations may have different perspectives and experiences in regards to the socio-cultural factors influencing sexual behaviour of female adolescents in Awka urban.

With respect to respondents' level of income, data analysis showed that majority (42.5%) of the respondents had an income level of 151,000 to 200,000 Naira. This was followed by 35.3% them who earned an income level of 101,000 to 150,000 Naira. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents belong to the middle and upper-middle income level. It is also worth noting that income level is an important factor that could have an influence on the perception of parents and caregivers towards socio-cultural factors influencing sexual behaviour of female adolescents in Awka South L.G.A. For instance, individuals with higher income levels may have greater access to resources, education, and better healthcare, which could positively impact their perception towards the topic.

In relation to respondents' place of residence, the data suggests that the majority (62.9%) of the respondents reside in urban areas, while the rest (37.1%) reside in rural areas. Urban and rural areas can have different social, economic, and cultural environments, which can influence the perceptions and experiences of individuals living in these areas, including their perception towards the socio-cultural factors influencing sexual behaviour of female adolescents in Awka urban.

#### **Analysis of Research Question**

How does family upbringing affect female adolescent sexual behaviour?

**Table 1:** Respondents' views on the level of communication about sexuality and relationship within the family

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Open communication	106	26.8
It is not easily discussed	156	39.7
It is discarded	77	19.6
Others	49	13.9
Total	388	100.0

**Field Survey, 2023**



As presented in table 4, it appears that open communication about sexuality and relationships within the family is still a challenging issue for many families. While only 26.8% of respondents reported open communication about sexuality and relationship within their family systems, a relatively larger proportion (39.7%) indicated that such issues were not easily discussed, and 19.6% said that such topics are even discarded within their family. These findings suggest that there may be social, cultural, or religious taboos surrounding sexuality and relationships within the family, which can make it difficult for family members to communicate openly about these topics. Additionally, the fact that nearly 20% of respondents reported that sexuality and relationships are completely discarded within their family may indicate that some individuals do not feel comfortable or safe discussing these topics within their families, which may have negative consequences for their emotional well-being and sexual development of female adolescents within such families. This view coincides with the opinion of one of the interviewees who opined that, ...most families have wrong perception about issues relating to sexuality... some families tend to perceive discussions around sex as sin, probably due to the high religiosity of most families in this part of the world... such practices are very dangerous for the sexual knowledge and development of the adolescents within such families...(Male, 62 Years, Counselor).

**Table 2:** Respondents' view regarding whether or not there is proper level of parental monitoring and supervision that regulates the sexual behaviour of female adolescents

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	67	16.5
Maybe	108	28.6
No	157	41.8
Not Sure	56	13.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Field Survey, 2023**

Based on the data presented in table 5, the respondents seemed to have mixed opinions about the level of parental monitoring and supervision that regulates the sexual behaviour of female adolescents in their communities. While approximately 16.5% of respondents felt that the level of parental monitoring and supervision was "absolutely" sufficient, 28.6% indicated that it was "maybe" sufficient, and 41.8% said that it was "not sufficient." Additionally, 13.1% were "not sure." It is worth noting that the majority of respondents did not feel that the level of parental monitoring and supervision was "absolutely" sufficient, which suggests that there may be room for improvement in this regard. The findings also signify that poor parental monitoring and supervision could be an important socio-cultural factor that influences the sexual behaviour of female adolescents negatively.

**Test of Research Hypothesis**

There is a significant relationship between family upbringing and female adolescent sexual behaviour. Data on Table 1 formed the basis for testing hypothesis 1.

**Table 1: Relationship between family upbringing and female adolescent sexual behaviour**

		<i>Do you subscribe to the view that majority of female adolescents in your locality engage in risky sexual activities?</i>			
		<b>Responses</b>			
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Can't say</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Nature of family upbringing as it relates to female sexuality</b>	Open communication	45 11.6%	30 7.7%	29 7.5%	104 26.8%
	It is not easily discussed	109 28.1%	25 6.4%	20 5.2%	154 39.7%
	Its discarded	37 9.5%	23 5.9%	16 4.1%	76 19.6%
	Others	21 5.4%	19 4.9%	14 3.6%	54 13.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b> <b>54.6%</b>	<b>97</b> <b>25.0%</b>	<b>79</b> <b>20.4%</b>	<b>388</b> <b>100.0%</b>	

*Chi – square  $x^2 = 21.336$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $N=388$ ,  $p = .000$*

The result of the Chi-square test shows that there is a statistically significance between family upbringing and female adolescents' sexual behaviour in their locality,  $X^2(6, 388) = 21.336$ ,  $p = .000$ . This means that there is a positive relationship between family upbringing and female adolescents' sexual behaviour in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. This implies that the nature of family upbringing influences female adolescents' sexual behaviour in the study area.

### **Discussion of findings**

The specific objective of this study interrogated the influence of family upbringing regarding female adolescent sexual behavior within the study area. Interestingly, the study revealed that that open discussion around issues of sex was perceived to be a non-allowable practice within different communities in the study area. This can have several consequences on the sexual behavior of female adolescents. For instance, when there is a lack of open communication regarding sexual behavior, it becomes difficult for young people have right information about sex, which can increase the risk of sexually transmitted infections including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and other health risks associated with risky sexual behaviors.

The study also found that parental monitoring and supervision were perceived to be inadequate in regulating the sexual behavior of female adolescents in the study area. This was however attributed to the harsh socio-economic situation of many parents, which makes it difficult for them to fulfil their supervisory role effectively. What this implies is that many female adolescents lack proper parental monitoring and supervision, which could have several implications such as vulnerability to sexual exploitation,

unintended pregnancy and other negative health outcomes. A number of prior studies also support the view that lack of parental supervision is a precursor to negative sexual outcomes for adolescents (Sousa & Reis, 2021:)

### Conclusion

This study equally found that there was a perceived lack of open discussion around issues associated with sexuality in households and at the community level. The study also revealed that parents and guardians perceived that there was poor parental monitoring and supervision that was inadequate in regulating the sexual behavior of female adolescents in the study area.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need for Community-based interventions aimed at improving the awareness and knowledge of female adolescents about safe sexual behaviours and reducing their involvement in risky sexual behaviours such as unprotected sexual intercourse and sexual activities with multiple partners.
2. There is equally need to initiate programs focused on promoting open discussions around issues associated with sexuality in households and at the community level in order to reduce the stigma associated with discussing sexual health.
3. There is need to reinforce the practice of sex education within households and communities. This can be done through increased awareness campaigns targeting both parents/guardians and young girls in the Awka South LGA on the negative effects of risky sexual behaviour. Such awareness campaigns can be conducted through media outlets, such as radio and television, and through community leaders and religious organizations.

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