



## INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA USE ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN, NIGERIA

**Rebecca Oluwafunmibi Ojeniyi**

*Federal College of Education, Nigeria*

Availability of e-media has led to increased use by undergraduates to search for information. However, it has been observed that the explosion in availability and use of these media globally may be responsible for influencing health behaviour of undergraduates. This study investigated the availability, use and self-reported influence of e-media on sexual behaviour among undergraduates in University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study and the population comprised 7984 undergraduates. A sample of 479 was drawn using stratified and simple random sampling techniques and self-developed questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The findings revealed that mobile phone, internet facilities, computer and laptop and radio player were available and were always used by the undergraduates. There was positive significant influence of e-media use on sexual behaviour ( $r=0.179^{**}$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) among the undergraduates. Availability and use of e-media had great influence on sexual behaviour of the undergraduates. It is therefore, recommended that undergraduates should be more educated about good e-media use and be monitored to ensure that they are engaged in the use of e-media in a positive and constructive manner.

**Keywords:** Undergraduates, E-media, Sexual behaviour, Nigeria.

### Introduction

Presently, not only are undergraduates surrounded by e-media in their homes and schools, but the portability made possible by the increased miniaturization of digital media means that they can remain connected to them almost anywhere. Laptop, cell phones, iPods, androids I-phone, video games, camera, media players (MP3, MP4 etc.) and handheld Internet devices are rapidly becoming basic equipment for today's undergraduates. The availability and explosion in e-media outlets throughout the world is largely responsible for influencing the ways in which some undergraduates live their lives (Kalesanwo et. al., 2008).

Research by the Pew Internet and American Life Project revealed that 93% of the undergraduates in America aged 12 to 17 are always on-line, and 71% have a cell phone (Jones and Fox, 2009). Rideout et. al. (2010) also concluded that students in their study spend a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes each day using various e-media, including television, music/audio, computers, iPod, IPAD, video games, movies, and talking on cell phones and so on. E-media has become one of the most pervasive forces in the world today. The usefulness of new e-media in addressing issues of health and their potential role in placing undergraduates at risk depend critically on the extent with which such e-media are in use.

The use of e-media is an integral part of the lives of undergraduates in the twenty-first century because it helps them have access to various forms of information that is available through them. University students spend a significant amount of time viewing and interacting with e-media in the form of computer, video games, and the Internet (Walsh and Gentile, 2001). They further concluded that e-media use is highly prevalent among young people in developing countries: eight to eighteen year olds spend an average of 7.4 hours per day using electronic media, including 1.5 hours per day using a computer outside of school work and 80% of teens have some type of gaming console, this means that today's young people have unprecedented access to new media and use them in expected and unexpected ways.

E-media impact is increased significantly with the presence of a bedroom television: viewing increases 1 to 2 hours/day, (Dennison, Erb and Jenkins, 2002) risk of overweight increases by 31%, and the likelihood of smoking doubles (Jackson, Brown and L'Engle, 2007). When a television is in the bedroom, parents are less able to monitor viewing habits, therefore, young people participate in fewer activities such as reading and sleep is shortened (Zimmerman, 2008). Undergraduates can download violent videos, send sexual text messages or explicit self photographs to their friends, buy cigarettes and beer on the Internet, and post enticing profiles. Undergraduates are constantly bombarded with messages and images through different media channels whenever at home, on the road, in the mall or at school, this ranges from television to radio and to the Internet, from electronic billboards to iPods and DVDs in cars, there is really no escaping the reach of these e-media. Undergraduate's exposure and response to content in e-media may invariably influence their sexual behaviour.

Sexuality is often a vital aspect of young people's life and because they are at their developmental period, they tend to experiment with all forms of information they are growing with as a result of e-media use. The sexual behaviour of youth is, in most cases, influenced by their culture, norms and sexual orientation (John, 2000). As young people grapple with their own emerging sexual identities, they may seek out models in the media, wrestling with their initial attraction- repulsion to sexual issues, evolving into virtual relationships with celebrities and finally attraction to others in real life.

Sexual expression may take the form of masturbation or sex with a partner. Sexual interests among young people, like adults, can vary greatly. Sexual activity in general is associated with a number of risks, including sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS) and unwanted pregnancy which is considered particularly common among undergraduates, as their brains are not neurally mature (several brain regions in the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex and in the hypothalamus important for self-control, delayed gratification, and risk analysis and appreciation are not fully mature until ages 25-30). Because of this, most of them are deemed less emotionally mature and psychologically self-sufficient (John, 2000).

Currently, sexual content in the media is widespread. According to Sex on TV 4, a biennial study released in 2005 by the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that the number of sexual scenes on television has greatly increased since 1998. This study found out that during the 2004-2005 season, 70% of all television shows aired included some degree of sexual content. These shows averaged 5.0 sexual scenes per hour compared with 56% of shows aired and 3.2 sexual scenes per hour in 1998 (Kunkel et. al., 2005). They further opined that one older study published in the late 1980s showed that a very insignificant amount of television content dealt with abstinence, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, or pregnancy.

Undergraduates may be exposed to sexual content in the media during a developmental period when gender roles, sexual attitudes, and sexual behaviours are being shaped. Tejuoso (2004) and Ijaluola (2007) established the fact that sexual activities and explorations among the undergraduates has become sporadic as a result of the negative influence of mass media as well as the pornographic films to which they are exposed. Bleakley et al. (2008) in their study concluded that there is a relationship between exposure to sexual content and sexual activity and also can be characterized by a feedback loop. The more sexual activity they engage in, the more likely they may be exposed to sex in e-media the more likely they may have progressed in their sexual activities. Sexual content in the media can affect any age group, but undergraduates may be particularly more vulnerable because of the developmental stage they are.

Many undergraduates seek out sexual knowledge and experience through e-media, but may not have the ability to determine the quality of the information or the safety of the experience. The explosion of various forms of information media may liberate them from dependence on parents, schools or other means that may be helpful in their normal quest of socialization. E-media present new problems by offering few clues as to which sexual behaviours are appropriate, respectful and safe (Walsh and Gentile, 2001). They further reported that exposure to sexual content in e-media has consistently been associated with increases in sexual risk behaviours among undergraduates in their study and predicts earlier sexual initiation, more sexual partners, and higher risk of pregnancy and STIs. Olugbenga and Fasuba (2005) opined that the large number of the licit and illicit movies have contributed in no small measure toward the removal of guilt, fear and shame associated with unconventional sexual activities. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the extent to which the use of e-media affects or influences sexual behaviour among undergraduates of University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of the research:

- (1) What are the available e-media to undergraduates of University of Ibadan, Ibadan?
- (2) What is the frequency of use of e-media by the undergraduates?

### Research Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was tested in the course of the research:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Electronic media use will not have a significant influence on the sexual behaviour among undergraduates of University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

### Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted and the population comprised 7984 undergraduates of University of Ibadan who resided in the ten halls of residence. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 6% of the total undergraduates in each hall of residence and simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents giving a sample size of 479 (Table 1). A self developed questionnaire was used to collect the data.

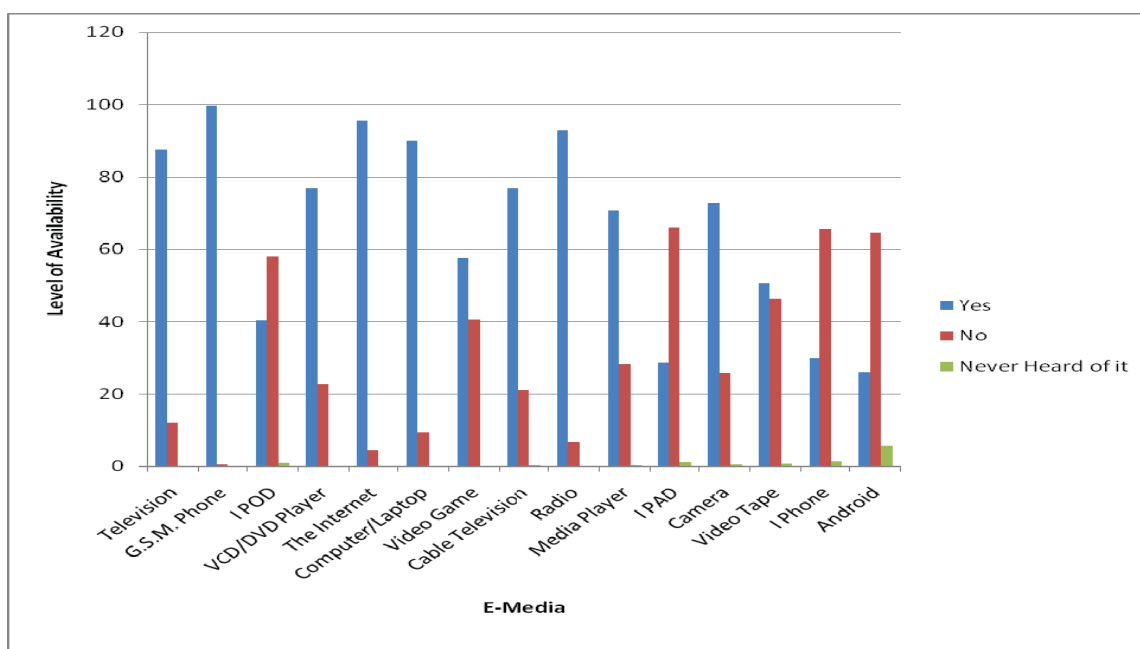
**Table 1.** Study Population and sample size.

S/N	Hall	Population Sample	Sample Size
1	Alexandra Brown	744	45
2	Independence	978	59
3	Kuti	520	31
4	Mellamby	414	25
5	Nnamdi Azikwe	999	60
6	Obafemi Awolowo	1800	108
7	Queen Elizabeth II	550	33
8	Queen Idia	1184	71
9	Sultan Bello	406	24
10	Tedder	390	23
<b>Total</b>		<b>7984</b>	<b>479</b>

## Results and Discussion

### Research Question One: What are the available E-media to undergraduates of University of Ibadan, Ibadan?

E-media that were available to the undergraduates included G.S.M Phones (99.6%), internet facilities (95.6%) and Radio player (92.9%), Figure 1. Donald and Ulla (2008) corroborates this that young people are surrounded by different kinds of E-media in their homes and schools and their portability made it possible for them to remain connected almost anywhere they wish to go. They further reported that Laptops, cell phones, Ipods, androids, I-phone, video games, camera, media players and handheld Internet devices are rapidly becoming basic equipment for today's undergraduates. Also, Jeanne and Donahue (2008) stated that the world of e media, however, is changing dramatically because television, which dominated the media world through the mid-1990s, now competes with cell phones, internet, virtual reality sites, social networks websites, and e-mail and so on.



**Figure 1.** Types of e-media available to undergraduates.

### Research Question Two: What is the frequency of use of e-media by undergraduates?

Mobile phones, the internet and computers were frequently used with response rates of 96.6%, 61.3% and 58.3% respectively (Figure 2). This finding agrees with Rideout et al. (2010) who concluded that undergraduates spend a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes each day using various media, including television content, music/audio, computers, iPod, iPad, video games, movies, and talking on cell phones. Jones and Fox (2009) also affirmed that the present undergraduates have unprecedented access to new media and use them often than before.

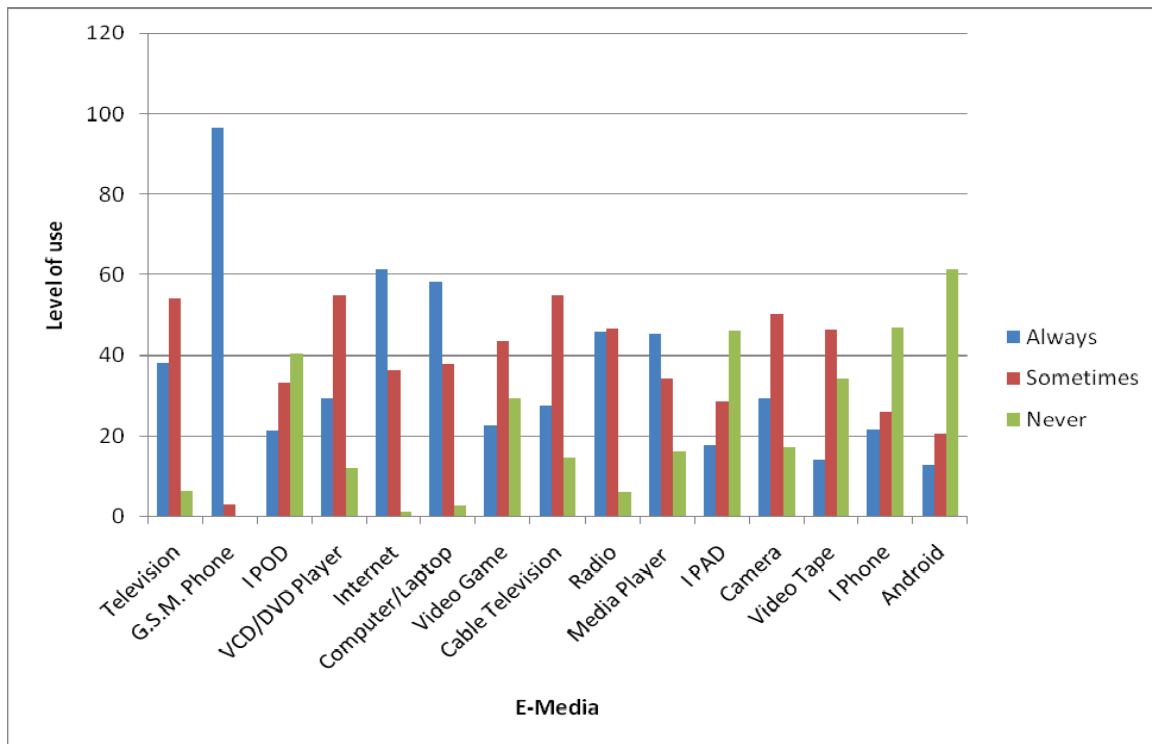


Figure 2. Use of E-Media by Undergraduates.

**Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** E-media use will not have a significant influence on the sexual behaviour among the undergraduates.

To determine the relationship between e-media use and sexual behaviour, the frequency of e-media use of the undergraduates were correlated with the scores of their sexual behaviour. Table 2 showed that there was a positive significant relationship between e-media use and sexual behaviour of undergraduates of University of Ibadan ( $r=0.179^{**}$ ,  $N=411$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). The correlation was significant hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, that is, e-media use has a significant influence on the sexual behaviour of the undergraduates. This implies that as e-media use of undergraduate student increases, their sexual behaviour increases.

Table 2. Correlation of E-media use and Sexual Behaviour of the Undergraduates.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Electronic Media use	28.0592	5.86326	411	0.179**	0.001	Sig.
Sexual Behaviour	30.5775	4.28063				

This implies that, about 3.2% of the variation was accounted for by the e-media use for sexual behaviour among the undergraduates, while the remaining 96.8% was not, due to chances by other factors not accounted for in this study. The findings of Bleakley et.al. (2008) supported this finding that there is a relationship between exposure to sexual content in e-media and sexual activities among undergraduates in their study. Also Olugbenga and Fasuba (2005) opined that the large number of the licit and illicit movies

have contributed in no small measure toward the removal of guilt, fear and shame associated with unconventional sexual activities.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

E-media was available and used by the undergraduates of University of Ibadan and this has been recognized as an important part of the social ecology, however its use is influencing their sexual behaviour. However, they should be made to realize their power to accept healthy sexual e-media messages, challenge unhealthy sexual messages, and make good decisions as a result of the content in the e-media. Undergraduates should be educated about good e-media use and be monitored to ensure that they engage in the use of positive e-media in a healthful and constructive manner. With the right content, educators can use e-media to help youth learn and to shape their sexual behaviour in positive directions. Parents should continue to be central to regulating their ward's e-media diet by working with governmental and especially nongovernmental organizations so that they can put pressure on industry to develop better content, create meaningful ratings systems, cut back on inappropriate sexual content and invent better products to help screen e-media content.

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