

ADOLESCENTS' DRESSING AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Rowland A. E. Iheanacho and Mrs. J. D. Nanjwan

Abstract

This study was to find the relationship between dressing and adolescents' sexual behaviour. A sample of 323 students was drawn from eight secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. The subjects were aged 14 to 22 years and included students from different geographical locations of the Calabar metropolis and from different socio-economic levels. A "Dressing and Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire" (DSBQ) constructed by the researcher, with a reliability coefficient of 73 was the instrument used for data collection. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between adolescents' dressing and their sexual behaviour and that adolescents social class did not determine the relationship between their dressing and sexual behaviour. These were discussed in terms of prevailing circumstances, such as sexual behaviour being influenced by other factors like religious affiliation, parenting style and peer orientation.

Introduction

The adolescents' mode of dressing has been changing over the years. As if they are in competition, a generation of adolescents tends to be more fashion conscious than the preceding generation. They keep devising ways to look more attractive. Bearing in mind that sexual feelings are unavoidable in adolescence (Dacey & Kenny, 1994), one wonders if such attractive gesture has any relationship with adolescents' sexual behaviour. This suspicion may attract some credibility in the finding that the rate of premarital sex among adolescents continue to increase over the years (Gullota, Adams & Montemayor, 1993). Furthermore, physical attractiveness which is enhanced by dressing, is overwhelmingly important in determining personal appeal to members of the opposite sex, or at least, the person's initial appeal. This is supported by the vast sum of money people spend on cosmetics and fashion, and as people ornament themselves in different ways in different cultures (Gleitman, 1996). The hairstyle, for example, in some cultures signifies a girl as an unmarried virgin (Hyde, 1979).

Physical attractiveness bestows more popularity on people (Feldman, 1999; Hyde, 1979). Semi-nude (See-through dress) is viewed as an aspect of attractiveness in American culture (Gleitman, 1996). Perhaps to emphasize attractiveness, Gleitman notes that every culture expects males to look male while females look female, probably with their dressing as one of the cues. Hyde (1979) reports the existence of strong relationship between attractiveness and sexual behaviour, as women judged attractive were said to have had more dates than the less attractive for a particular period. Such a relationship was less pronounced for men. Physical attractiveness is most important element that promotes initial liking for undergraduates' dating situations, even though this influence tends to fade as the individuals get to know themselves better (Zuckerman, Miyake, & Elkin, 1995; Kowner & Ogawa, 1995; Keller & Young, 1996; Hyde, 1979).

In apparent attempt to highlight the relationship between fashion and sexual behaviour, Janda and Klenke-Hamef (1982) explain that articles of clothing such as high-heeled boots or black leather garments can arouse individuals. Durand and Barlow (1997) add that some people are sexually aroused by wearing articles of clothing of the opposite sex, such as in transvestic fetishism, a paraphilic disorder. Such cross dressing, usually for the males, is primarily for purpose of sexual gratification. _ Cross dressing could be a devise for sharing values and attitudes. Such similarity promotes interpersonal attraction (Lancaster, Royal & Whiteside, 1995; "Giaman, Jones & Rozelle, 1996). ,

As expected, it is not all dresses that are attractive. Among the females, the dresses may be good or bad, flamboyant or outrageous (Dnyo-Aiyetan, 2003a). Some are sexy (Knpoluyi, 2002). However, this study is not considering sexy dressing, but focuses on whether one's dressing is attractively rich or simple or casual. Some women are fashion freak no matter what, they wear, including elegantly cut native attires, or the flared arm lace blouse on long skirt which makes them look radiant (Dayo-Aiyetan, 2003b). Some are "power-dressers" going for expensive things "with designers shoes and matching bags, 'gele', and other accessories adorning their... physique" (Doya-Aiyetan, 2003c:29).

It is worthy to note that it is not all adolescents that are involved in the attractive fashion tendency. Whether one is involved or not depends on one's peer group. This is because adolescents' peer group plays an unusually dominant role in the life of the adolescents, as the peer group is inherently attractive (Conger, Mussen & Kagan,

1.974). This makes conformity to peer dress costumes unavoidable (Bee, 1995) for peer group that is fashion oriented. The changes in adolescents' peer culture in fashions in clothes are to make them look different. It is "to establish a clear line of demarcation from adults" as they turn to new fads to preserve their separateness when adults incorporate current fashion into their culture (Conger et al, 1974 p. 575).

Since adolescents differ in their mode of dressing, it may be possible to have a strong relationship between adolescents' fashion consciousness in dressing and their sexual behaviour. This study, therefore, is interested in finding out if such a relationship exists. The type of dressing considered here is attractive dressing and not sexy dressing. It therefore would test the hypotheses that: (1) There is no significant relationship between adolescents' dressing and their sexual behaviour; (2) There is no significant relationship between female adolescents from high socio-economic class' mode of dressing and their sexual behaviour; (3) The sexual behaviour of female adolescents from low-socio-economic class is not significantly related to their dressing (4) The male adolescents from high socio-economic class' mode of dressing does not significantly relate to their sexual behaviour; and (5) The sexual behaviour of low class male adolescents is not significantly related to their mode of dressing.

Method

Participants: The sample for this study was made up of 323 adolescents drawn from eight secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. This sample was made up of 181 females (127 from low socio-economic class and 48 from high socio-economic class) and 143 males (95 from low socio-economic class and 48 from high socio-economic class). The subjects were all in their final year of secondary education (ie SS 3). They were aged from 14 years to 22 years.

Procedure: The selection of the sample was through the process of stratified random sampling to ensure that different geographical locations of the Calabar metropolis -were represented. Other Considerations to ensure the representativeness of the sample were in terms of gender and socio-economic class. The eight schools were chosen based on these considerations while the students in each school were chosen to ensure that both science and non-science students were equally represented to further enhance the probability of selecting the serious and non-serious students.

A "Dressing and Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire" (DSBQ) was the instrument used for gathering data, It was constructed by the researcher. It has a reliability correlation coefficient (r) of 0.73. It contained such items as "I like wearing very attractive dresses", "I always wear the best current type of eyeglasses", etc for the mode of dressing. The sexual behaviour item sought information on how often (he individual engaged in premarital sex. Items of dressing were written in Lickert-Scale type of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The items were scored 4 for SA; 3 for A; 2 for D; and 1 for SD for all the positive statements. These were reversed for the negative statements. The item on sexual behaviour was scored 6,5,4,3,2 and 1 for Weekly, fourth-nightly, monthly, six-monthly, yearly and none at all respectively.

Results

The result for the hypothesis seeking to find the relationship between the mode of dressing of adolescents and their sexual behaviour is presented in Table I.

Table 1: Relationship between Adolescents Dressing and their Sexual Behaviour

Variables	n	$\sum x^2$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y$	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}
		$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$				
Dressing	323	4365	62301				
Sex Behaviour	323	876	3312	2122	321	0.1611	0.1946*

*p>.05

The result shows there is no significant relationship between adolescents' dressing and their sexual behaviour. The mode of dressing of adolescents does not indicate or determine how often they engage in premarital sex.

The result for the hypothesis that attempts to know the relationship between female adolescents from low socio-economic class' mode of dressing and their sexual behaviour is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Low socio-economic class Female Adolescents Dressing and their Sexual Behaviour

Variables	n	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}
		$\sum y$ <td>$\sum y^2$</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>	$\sum y^2$				
Dressing	127	1593	21019				
Sex Behaviour	127	326	1216	4164	125	0.1194	0.1946*

*p > .05

The result shows no significant relationship between mode of dressing of low class female adolescents and their sexual behaviour. The way low class adolescents dress cannot determine their sexual behaviour.

The result for the hypothesis on the relationship between dressing of female adolescents from high socio-economic class and their sexual behaviour is presented in table 3.

Table 3: High Class Female Adolescents' Dressing and their Sexual Behaviour

Variables	n	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}
		$\sum y$ <td>$\sum y^2$</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>	$\sum y^2$				
Dressing	53	686	9308				
Sex Behaviour	54	123	417	1598	52	0.1244	0.276*

*p>.05

The result has shown that there is no significant relationship between the dressing of female adolescents from high socio-economic class and their sexual behaviour. Their dressing does not give any hint on their sexual experience.

The result for the hypothesis seeking to know the relationship between the dressing of male adolescents from low socio-economic class and their sexual behaviour is shown in. table 4.,

Table 4: Male Adolescents From Low Class and Their Sexual Behaviour

Classes	n	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}
		$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$				
Dressing	95	1399	21525				
Sexual behaviour	95	297	1205	4433	93	0.1174	0.208*

5

The result shows no significant relationship between the male adolescents from low socio-economic class' dressing and their sexual behaviour. It is not possible to determine their frequency of premarital sex based on their dressing.

The result for the hypothesis that intends to find the relationship between the dressing of male adolescents form high socio-economic class and their sexual behaviour is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Male Adolescents From High Socio-Economic Class Dressing and Their Sexual Behaviour.

Variables	n	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}
		$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$				
Dressing	48	688	10334				
Sex Behaviour	48	139	501	2040	46	0.2209	0.312*

*p>.05

From the table, it is clear there is no significant relationship between male adolescents from high socio-economic class dressing and their sexual behaviour. Their mode of dressing does not indicate how often they engage in premarital sex.

Discussion

The finding that adolescents' dressing has no significant relationship with their sexual behaviour was unexpected. Since dressing enhances attractiveness and attractiveness is strongly related to dating (Hyde, 1979), one would have expected adolescents who are fashion conscious to have strong attachment to premarital sex. But it is clear from this study that adolescents who do not dress very attractively could be as promiscuous as those who are attractively dressed and vice versa.

The finding that social class factor has no significant relationship between female adolescents' dressing and their sexual behaviour is equally unexpected. This is borne out of the knowledge that articles of clothing such as high-heeled boots or black leather garments are capable of eliciting sexual arousal among individuals (Janda & Klenke-Hamel, 1982). Since the female adolescents from high socio-economic class are more probable to possess them, coupled with their tendency to be flamboyant and look radiant (Dayo-Aiyetan, 2003a, 2003b), one would have expected them to elicit more sexual arousal from the opposite sex, and consequently become more likely to succumb to such pressure. As the result has shown, such expectations were misconstrued. It could be that other factors like religious affiliation, parenting style, peer group orientation, among others, have influenced the female adolescents' sexual behaviour more than dressing. The female adolescents' tendency to conform more than the males could have enhanced the influence of these factors.

The finding that social class factor has no significant relationship between male adolescents-dressing and their sexual behaviour also portrays the relevance of other factors in moderating sexual behaviour. It would have been expected that the male who dress attractively would not resist the possible number of female admirers, thereby becoming more involved in premarital sex. This assumption becomes more applicable to the adolescents that wear female dresses such as in transvestic fetishism, who are more likely to be sexually aroused (Durand & Barlow, 1997). This finding demonstrates that male adolescents (like their female counterparts) dress attractively and change their fashion in clothes merely to establish a clear line of demarcation to separate them from the adult culture (Conger et al, 1974). It is not essentially for sexual attraction.

Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that the mode of adolescents dressing is not significantly related to their sexual behaviour. It is therefore, very unnecessary to suspect adolescents who are attractively dressed as possibly being promiscuous. Attractive dressing should be regarded as a necessary transitional trend that enables adolescents to feel different from, the adult world. It must be emphasized here that the mode of dressing considered does not include the sexy dressing, as sexy

dressing may possess different motivations.

References

- Bee, I I. (1995). *The growing chili*. New York: Harper Collins College..
- Conger, J. J.; Mussen, P. M. & Kagan, J. (1974). *Child development and personality*. (4th ed.) New York: Harper & Row,
- Dacey, J. & Kenny, M, (1994). *Adolescent development*, Wisconsin; Brown & Benchmark.
- Dayo- Ayelan, I. (January 19, 2003 a). So many babes, but where are the guys? *Sunday Punch*. Pp. ' 27,30.
- Dayo - Aiyetan, I. (January 26, 2003 b). What do women wear now? *Sunday Punch*, Pp. 28-29.
- Dayo - Aiyetan, I. (January 19, 2003 c). The amazing troika. *Sunday Punch*, P, 29.
- Durand, V. M. & Barlow, D- M. (1997). *Abnormal psychology: An introduction*. Pacific drive: Brooks/Cole.
- Feldman, R.'S. (1999) **Understanding psychology** (5th ed.). Boston:. McGraw-Hill College.
- Glaman, J. M, Jones, A. P. & Rozelic, R. M, (1996). The effects of co-worker similarity on the emergence to affect in work teams. *Group and Organizational Management* 1, 2 I 192-21 5.
- Gleitman.H. (1996). *Child Psychology*(4thed.) New York: W.W.Norton.
- Gullota, T. P.; Adams, I. R. & Montemayor, R. (Eds.) (1993). *Adolescent sexuality*. Newbury Park, CA; Sage.
- Hyde, J. S. (1979). *Understanding human sexuality*. New York: McGraw-Hill,
- Janda, L. H. & Klenke-Hamel, K. E. (1982). *Psychology; - Its study and uses*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Keller, M..C, & Young, R. K. (1996). Mate assortment in dating and married couples, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 21, 217-221.
- Kowner, R. & Ogavva, T. (1995). The role of raters' sex, personality and appearance in judgments of facial beauty. *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 18,329-349.
- Kupoluyi, O. (December 22, 2002). Nigerian star shines in U. K. *Sunday Punch*, pp. 26-27.
- Lancaster, L.; Royal, K. E.; & Whitesicle, II. D. (1995). Attitude similarity and evaluation of a woman's athletic team. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 10, 885-890.
- Zukerman, M.; Miyake, K.; & Elkin, C. S- (1995). Effects of attractiveness and maturity of face and voice on interpersonal impressions. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 29, 253-272.