



# DEVELOPING GOOD MORAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF RELIGION

By

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examined the role of religion in the development of good moral sexual behaviours among University Undergraduates. In Nigeria, sex issues are considered as sacred and usually attached with a myth, however, observations have shown in recent times that these good virtues have been eroded among university undergraduates in Southwest, Nigeria. These category of students now exhibit unwholesome sexual behaviours such as lesbianism, homosexuality, adultery, indecent dressing, masturbation among others and this is considered a serious threat to national development. Therefore, to address this issue, a descriptive research of the survey type was adopted for the study while three hypotheses were tested. The population consisted of all unmarried undergraduates in all the universities in the Southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria. A sample of 1581 respondents which was made up of 750 males and 831 female were selected employing multistage sampling procedure. A simple random sampling technique was used to select three states out of six states in the Southwest, Nigeria. Two universities each were selected through stratified random sampling from Federal, State and Private universities, while 265 students were also selected from each of the universities making a total of 1590. However, 9 students did not filled the questionnaire properly and were therefore rejected remaining 1581 as sample. A self-designed questionnaire titled: 'Good Moral Sexual Behaviours' (GMSB) was used to collect data. The instrument is a 25-items four point- Liker type questionnaire. The findings revealed that religious inclination significantly influenced University undergraduates' values and moral sexual behaviours. The study recommended among others that religious organisations should be encouraged to intensify their sermons on acceptable values in terms of moral sexual behaviours to members of their society. University authorities were also advised to come up with appropriate policies to curb the acts of indecent and seductive dressing patterns common among university undergraduates.

## Keywords

Good moral, Sexual Behaviours, Undergraduates, Religious Inclination.

## INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, and particularly in Western region of the country, sex issues are generally believed to be sacred and attached with myth to enforce their secrecy while compliance is binding on all members of the society. However, it is observed that this belief is no longer respected by the youths these days. A lot of sexual immoral behaviours such as lesbianism, homosexuality, masturbation, adultery, indecent dressing among others are now common among the youths most especially University undergraduates. Religious affiliation is believed to be an agent of socialization that are employed to mould the thoughts and behaviours of followers. How people interact with the world and what they cherished are often largely influenced by the faith in which they were raised. Henslin, Glendey. Dufty and Norene (2004) noted that religion plays a significant role in the socialization of people of a society. They believe that religion influences morality which becomes a key component in people's ideas of right or wrong. Okon (2012) observed that it is through socialisation that the child is integrated into the meaningful structure of the society. Life has to be meaningful, and as a process of initiation into the larger society, religion is a veritable pivot of socialisation. In this case, parental faith or religion automatically becomes the faith of the children. Religious affiliation or preference has frequently been noted as a significant predictor of premarital sexuality.

Furthermore, it is also observed that religion is an influencing factor in shaping behaviours. For example, it serves as an agent of moral institution that plays a vital role in the moral uprightness of individuals. Every religion has a code of conduct or a set of values that adherents are expected to observe. Suffice it to say that, the lifestyle of a member of a religious group is expected to be a reflection of the values cherished by the group. Therefore, every religion places emphasis on worthy virtues while bad habits are usually frowned at and discouraged. However, Wodi and Dokubo (2004) discovered in their study that students' religious beliefs do not influence their values especially when it concerns social issues. They opined that religious affiliations are mere pass time, as they seem not to influence students' behaviours. Wilson (2004) observed that it was compassion and empathy and not religion that is the 'driving force' for good and decent moral values. He stressed further by giving a statistical proof that the United States is the most religious of all the industrialised nations. According to Wilson (2004), 44% of Americans attend church once a week compared with 27% in France, 16% in Australia and 4% in Sweden. Yet, violent crimes/social problems are not less common in the United States. He also stated



that Louisiana has the highest church growing rate in the U.S., but its murder rate is more than twice the national average; the same for New York City in terms of show business and immodesty in dressing.

In the Southwest, Nigeria, traditionally, the issue of sex and sexuality are sacred and are enforced by attaching a myth for it to be respected. This is exemplified in the fact that it must be performed mainly by husband and wife, and must be at night and not in the afternoon. Also a myth is also attached that if the act is performed in the afternoon, the child would likely be an albino! Hence, anything that relates to romance and sex is to be done secretly. However, it is observed that all these values have been eroded among the youths these days. For example, among the Yorubas, their religions forbid adultery, homosexuality, masturbation, incest among others. Akintunde and Ayantayo (2005) reported that these are not only taken as sexual immorality but as a sin against God as well as the society. With this, great premium was placed on virginity by the Yoruba people. A virgin girl boosts her own social status by her act of fidelity and faithfulness and honour to her parents. Babalola (2007) reported that in the past, a bride virginity was tested on the first night with her husband, using a blood stained white cloth, which is spread on the bed for the purpose of collecting the blood as a proof of her virginity. Now, virginity at marriage is no longer perceived as desirable in Southwest, Nigeria but seen as socially backward act or even associated with infertility (Babalola, 2007). The traditionalists believe that blood stains which proof the virginity of the woman marks a great covenant between the husband and the wife which according to them supports the strength of their marriage vows and relationship. That might be one of the major reasons for few divorce cases in the olden days compared with what the society is experiencing today.

Sex in the Christian context is only approved for husband and wife and it is seen as serving the purpose of procreation on one hand and provision of pleasure on the other hand. Furthermore, the Church appreciates virginity and the religious thinking shapes the morality of Christians regarding sex to the extent that the Church teaches against masturbation, homosexuality, lesbianism and other immoral behaviours. Akintunde and Ayantayo (2005) opined that practices such as adultery, sexual immorality, incest, homosexuality and other impure practices are all abomination to God and to mankind. God pronounced a severe judgment not only on those that do them but also on those that take joy in people that practice them because sexual sin is regarded as sin against the temple of God (our body) (Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians 6:13,18). Akintunde and Ayantayo, (2005) also reported that Islamic religion regards sex as one of the human instincts and its satisfaction as theological and it is a gift from God which should however, be consummated within marriage. It is on this ground that Islam instructs that sex outside of marriage is evil and sin punishable by God and man. It is said in Islam that every act of sexual immorality is regarded as Ziyah and Haram.

Religious institutions are found of transmitting the right values to their members through problem-solving sermons to accept societal values and norms. According to Michael, McFarland, Veker and Mark (2011), adolescents who belong to or identify with a religious denomination report lower rates of non-marital sex than those who do not belong to any religious affiliation, and that adolescents who belong to Christian fundamental denominations participate in less premarital sex than members of more liberal denominations. This is because the fundamentalist denominations sees pre-marital sexual activity as a great sin against God's temple than the liberal denominations who even allow pregnant ladies to be married in their Churches. The fundamentalists are guided by what the Bible says, 'thy body is not meant for sexual immortality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13)'.

## Statement of the Problem

Observations have shown in recent times that university undergraduates have deviated from societal values in terms of chastity, integrity, modesty and obedience. Observation also shown that many religious institutions have relaxed their preaching on salvation and sexual immorality to favour that of prosperity. The dichotomy that seem to exist between male and female gender as regards the incidence of double standards that are being portrayed by parents which allow sexual ability experiment for male as against its forbidding for female folks also constitute problem in this respect.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how religious inclination could influence university undergraduates' social values and whether it will significantly influence their sexual morality. The study also examined the level of gender influence on University undergraduates' sexual morality.

## Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested for the study.

1. Religious inclination will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values;
2. Religious inclination will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality; and
3. Gender will not significantly influence sexual morality of University undergraduates.

## Research Method

This study employed a descriptive research design of survey type. The study sought the opinions of university undergraduates on how religious inclination and gender could influence adolescents' values and sexual morality. The population for the study comprised all unmarried undergraduates in all the universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 1581 selected using multi stage sampling procedure. The only research instrument used to collect data for the study was a 25-item four point-Likert type questionnaire constructed by the researcher to elicit information on university undergraduates' sexual behaviours. The instrument was given out to experts in Social Studies Education and Tests, Measurement and Evaluation Department for face and content validity.



The data collected for the study were analysed using frequency counts, mean, standard deviation, ANOVA and t-test. Post-hoc Scheffe test was used to further analyse the hypotheses. All the hypothesis generated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis 1:** Religious inclination will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores on university undergraduates' social values were compared for statistical significance based on their religion inclination using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** ANOVA showing university undergraduates' social values based on religious inclination

Source	SS	df	MS	F <sub>cal</sub>	F <sub>tab</sub>	P
Between groups	712.822	2	356.411	3.824*	3.000	0.022
Within groups	147076.337	1578	93.204			
Total	147789.159	1580	1580			

\*P<0.05

Table 1 showed that there is significant influence of religious inclination on university undergraduates' social values (F=3.824; P<0.05). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant influence of religious inclination on university undergraduates' social values preference.

**Table 2:** Scheffe post-hoc analysis of university undergraduates' social values based on religion

Religion	Christianity	Islam	Traditional	N	Mean
Christianity			*	1291	61.94
Islam			*	276	61.22
Traditional				14	68.36

\*P<0.05

Table 2 revealed that there is significant difference between Christianity and Traditional religions as they influence university undergraduates' values. Islamic and Traditional religions also indicate a difference at 0.05 level of significance. The implication of this is that there is a significant difference in the way Christianity and Traditional religions influence university undergraduates' social values. Likewise, there is a significant difference in the way Islamic and Traditional religions influence university undergraduates' social values.

**Hypothesis 2:** Religious inclination will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

Scores relating to university undergraduates' sexual morality were compared for statistical significance based on religious inclination using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** ANOVA showing university undergraduates' sexual morality based on religious inclination.

Source	SS	Df	MS	F <sub>cal</sub>	F <sub>tab</sub>	P
Between groups	16763.286	2	8381.643	20.074	3.000	0.000
Within groups	658881.128	1578	417.542			
Total	675644.414	1580				

P<0.05

Table 3 showed that F<sub>cal</sub>(20.074) is greater than F<sub>tab</sub>(3.000) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that religious inclination significantly influenced university undergraduates' sexual morality.



**Table 4:** Scheffe Post-Hoc analysis of university undergraduates' sexual morality based on religion

Religion	Christianity	Islam	Traditional	N	Mean
Christianity		*	*	1291	63.44
Islam			*		69.15
Traditional				14	90.43

**P<0.05**

Table 4 revealed that there is significant difference between sexual morality of Christians and Muslims, Muslims and Traditional worshippers, Christians and Traditional worshippers at 0.05 level of significance. The implication of this is that there was a significant influence in the way Christian and Islamic religions influence university undergraduates' sexual morality. Likewise, there is a significant difference in the way Islamic and Traditional religions influence university undergraduates' sexual morality. Also, there is a significant difference in the way Christians and Traditional religions influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

**Hypothesis 3:** Gender will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores on university undergraduates' sexual morality based on their gender were computed and subjected to t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** t-test showing adolescents' sexual morality based on their gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>
Male	750	69.72	21.405	1579	9.454*	1.960
Female	831	60.13	18.893			

**P<0.05**

Table 5 showed that t<sub>cal</sub>(9.454) is greater than t<sub>tab</sub> (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that gender significantly influenced university undergraduates' sexual morality, with male exhibiting higher influence on adolescents' sexual morality.

## Discussion

The finding that religious inclination significantly influenced university undergraduates' values show that many religious organisations' sermons are centred on moral and values that their sect embraces. The implication of this is that, highly religious person may probably comply with cherished values or vice versa. This work agreed with Michael, et al (2011) that found out that religious institutions are found to transmit the right values to their members through problem-solving sermons. In contrast, Wilson (2004), Wodo and Dokubo (2014) affirmed that students' religious belief does not influence their values especially when it concerns social problems and contemporary issues. And that, it was compassion and empathy and not religion that serves as the driving force for good and decent values.

This revealed that religion significantly influence adolescents' sexual morality in the Southwest Nigeria Universities. This finding is consistent with Henslin et al (2004), Okon (2012) which reported that religion played a significant role in the morality of the youths, i.e. religion influences morality. Smith and Denton (2005) stressed the fact that young adults who belong to or identify with a religious denomination report lower rates of non-marital sex than those who does not belong. It is possible that university undergraduates who practices a religion or belong to a religious sect where issues like sexual morality is clearly and explicitly preached may not indulge in the act of sexual immorality because the adverse effect of such acts will be considered as sins against the temple of God (human body). Thornton and Comburn (1989) reported that there was a great correlation between young adults' sexual behaviour and religious participation. The acceptance of sexual activities is greater among those with low involvement in religious affiliation.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that religion inclination play prominent role in shaping and moulding the social values preference of university undergraduates and also influence their sexual behaviours positively. Furthermore, gender makes a difference in university undergraduates 'sexual behaviours.

## Recommendations

1. Religious organisations should be encouraged to intensify sermon / messages on acceptable values and appropriate sexual conduct to instil the right social values and attitudes in their members to discourage sexual immoral acts.



2. University management should formulate rules and regulations that will bring about awareness and compliance to good moral conduct among their undergraduates.
3. University authorities should formulate policies to ban all forms of immodest dressing and seductive dress patterns that makes the university undergraduates more vulnerable.
4. A campaign on dress code to regulate indecent and seductive dress patterns should be conducted in all our universities across the country.

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