



# Effects of sexual self assertiveness and sexual self esteem on sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria

Adedeji J. Ogunleye and Oyewole S. Oke

Faculty of the Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, University of Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

Previous perspectives have indicated that self disclosure is an indication of intimate relationships. The high incidence of broken homes, non working and unhealthy interpersonal relationships, and multiple partners menace among adolescents around the world, in the recent times require that concerted efforts be geared towards an understanding of the root causes of this problem. This is particularly so because children of such broken homes are often mal-adjusted and constitute problems to the society. This study therefore examined the effects of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria. A sample of 172 Nigeria undergraduate students randomly selected from among the undergraduate students of the University of Ado Ekiti, Nigeria; whose mean age is 28.2 was used. Four hypotheses were tested and it was found out that sexual self esteem is not a significant factor affecting sexual self disclosure [ $F(1) 164 = .311, P > .05$ ]. It was also revealed that sexual self assertiveness is a significant factor affecting sexual self disclosure [ $F(1) 164 = 16.594, P < .05$ ]. And it was found out that there is no significant interaction effect of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria [ $F(1) 164 = .456, P > .05$ ]. No significant relationship was also found between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness [ $r(168) = .060, P > .01$ ]. The findings were discussed in light of available literature and it was recommended that sexuality education should be included in schools curricular to enhance the acquisition of sexual life skills for the communication of sex related issues and boost a healthy sexual and interpersonal relationships.

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## Introduction

Marriages are broken these days, not because the intimate partners that are involved are not compatible or that there is no love between them, but rather due, perhaps, to ineffective communication. Ineffective communication in a relationship often includes non disclosure or holding back vital relational information and such leads to divorce (Price and Kunz, 2003). Nowadays, partners are not always honest to themselves. They engage in extra marital affairs due to a lack of sexual satisfaction resulting from inability to disclose to one another. This may have negative effects on our society in the forms of increased crime, prostitution, single parenthood, extra marital affairs and sexually transmitted infections, among others. Lack of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness may impact sexual self disclosure and thus, lead to a strong sense of sexual dissatisfaction.

Sexual self-disclosure is the extent to which individuals reveal personal and private information about themselves as they communicate with, or relate to others (Jourard and Lasakov, 1958). Sexual self assertiveness is a sub-type of sexual communication. It has been defined as a person's ability to communicate sexual needs and initiate sexual behavior with a partner (Shafer, 1997). And sexual self esteem has been defined by Zeanah and Schwarz (1996) as one's affective reactions to the subjective appraisals of one's sexual thought, feelings, and behavior.

Rubin, Hill, Peplau and Dunket-Schetter (1980) have found intimate self disclosure to be associated with greatest emotional involvement in dating relationships. Such emotional involvements may include finding intercourse pleasurable. And Haavio-Mannila and Kontula (1997) have found out that an association exists between sexual assertiveness and finding sexual intercourse pleasurable in both men and women. There had also been studies showing relations of sexual self esteem to safer sex behaviours (e.g. Adler & Hendrick, 1991, Seal, Minichiello and Omodei, 1997). Nonetheless, studies examining sexual self esteem and sexual satisfaction have not focused on the relations directly. Hale & Strassberg (1990) and Mona, Kranse, Norms, Cameron et al (2000) noted that a lack of specific research on self esteem and sexual satisfaction represents a significant omission given the connection that appears to exist between the two variables. Mennard and Offman (2009) however have found a positive relationship between self esteem and sexual self disclosure. The study was however, conducted elsewhere. The present study is therefore poised to:

1. Investigate whether sexual self esteem will affect ability to disclose sexual likes and dislikes among heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria.
2. To find out whether sexual self assertiveness will affect sexual self disclosure.

3. To know if there will be a significant interaction effect of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure.

4. To know whether there are any relationships between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness.

The following hypotheses are therefore generated.

1. There will be a significant effect of sexual self esteem on sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria.

2. There will be a significant effect of sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria.

3. There will be a significant interaction effect of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria.

4. There will be a significant relationship between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness of heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria.

## Methodology

### Research design

This study is a survey research using the factorial design. The factorial design makes it possible to know the individual and interaction effect of the identified independent variables on the dependent variable.

### Participants for the study

The population of this study consists of undergraduate students of the University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. A sample of 172 research participants was randomly chosen from among the population of study. They are comprised of 104 males and 68 females. The participants' selection cut across all levels (i.e. from 100 to 400 levels). The participants' age ranges between 19 to 34 years with a mean age of 28.2 years.

### Measures

The index of self esteem (ISE), sexual self assertiveness scale and sexual self disclosure scale (SSDS) were used.

The index of self esteem scale was developed by Hudson (1982). It consists of 25 items and has 5 points rating scale ranging from none of the time, to most of the time. The measure is a self report inventory. The author reported a co-efficient alpha of .93 and a two hour test-retest co-efficient of .92. A cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient of .84 was recorded for the scale in the present study.

Sexual self assertiveness scale was developed by these authors. It consisted of 5 items which seek to know the extent to which individuals can handle sexual issues with their intimate partners (e.g. "I am very assertive when it comes to discussing about my sexual experience". I do not hesitate to ask for what I need to arouse me sexually." etc). A cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient of .65 was recorded for this scale in this study.

The dependent variable in this research is measured using the sexual self disclosure scale (SSDS). Sexual self disclosure scale (SSDS) was designed by Snell (1989). The initial version of the SSDS consist of 120 items that form 12 separate 5 item subscales for each of 2 disclosure targets (males and females). To respond to this version of the SSDS, individuals are asked to indicate how willing they would to discuss the SSDS sexual topics with the disclosure targets. A 5 point likert scale (scored 0 to 4) is used to measure the responses. Subscale scores are created for each disclosure target person by summering the 5 items on each subscale. Higher scores thus indicate greater willingness to disclose a particular sexual topic. The revised sexual self disclosure scale (SSDSR) range from a low reliability coefficient of .59 to a high of .91 (average = .81). A cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient of .97 was also recorded for this

scale in this study. The revised SSDS was however used for this study. The scale, developed by Snell (1989), consist of 72 items that form 24 three items subscale. Research participants responses ranges from (1) I would be slightly willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner to (4) I would be completely willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner.

### Procedure for data collection

The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents after seeking their permission to do so. Most of the respondents were found in the lecture rooms at the University of Ado-Ekiti campus. The researchers also personally retrieved the questionnaires from the respondents and thanked them for their participation. In all, two hundred and sixteen of the questionnaires were retrieved and only one hundred and seventy two (172) of the questionnaires were appropriately filled.

### Results

The results of the analyses of data collected are presented below.

Table 4.1 above revealed that sexual self esteem is not significant factor affecting sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria [ $F(1) 164= .311$ ;  $P>.05$ ]. Thus hypothesis one which stated that sexual self esteem will significantly affect sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents is rejected.

From the table also, it is found out that sexual self assertiveness significantly affects sexual self disclosure. [ $F(1) 164 = 16.594$ ;  $P<.05$ ]. Thus hypothesis two which stated that there will be a significant effect of sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure of heterosexual adolescents is accepted.

From table 1.0 above also, it is revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure [ $F(1)164=.456$ ;  $P>.05$ ]. Thus, hypothesis three which stated that there will be a significant interaction effect of sexual self assertiveness and sexual self esteem on sexual self disclosure is rejected.

Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 1.1 above revealed that there is no significant relationship between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness. However, a significant relationship exists, between sexual self assertiveness and sexual self disclosure. [ $r(168) = .383$   $p<.01$ ].

### Discussion

Hypothesis one revealed that sexual self esteem did not significantly affect sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents in Nigeria. This finding contradicts the research outcome of Mennard and Offman (2009) in which the researchers found out that there was a positive relationship between sexual self - esteem and sexual self disclosure. They found out that the higher the sexual self - esteem of an individual, the higher their sexual self disclosure and vice versa.

In a related study using homogenous female population, it has been suggested that a positive link exists between global self - esteem and communication between partners. Individuals who showed high global self-esteem reported greater sexual communication (Ferroni & Taffe, 1997). Women who enjoyed good communication with their partner about sexual needs were found to have higher global self-esteem and be less depressed than those women who did not. They were also more likely than the others to be happy with their relationships with their partners, to engage in sexual interaction with their partners more frequently, and to report sexual intercourse as enjoyable. It might follow that women with higher global self esteem would also report other positive aspects of their sexuality.

Hypothesis two revealed that sexual self assertiveness significantly affects sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents. Previous perspectives, proposed that self-disclosure and intimacy of relationship are synonymous, and that self disclosure can function as an indicator of intimacy in interpersonal relations (Jourard, 1971). According to the penetration model by Altman & Taylor (1973), individuals will be more likely to self-disclose sexual information to intimate partners.

Hypothesis three revealed that there was no interaction effect of sexual self assertiveness and sexual self – esteem on sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents. This contradicted the research finding of Oattes and Offman (2007) who found an association between sexual self esteem, sexual self assertiveness and sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents in a community sample. In a related study Mennard and Offman (2009) found a partial mediation effect where by individuals who experience greater sexual self – esteem also demonstrate higher levels of sexual self assertiveness, which leads to greater sexual satisfaction.

Hypothesis four revealed that there was no significant relationship between sexual self – esteem and sexual self assertiveness. This finding contradicts the findings of some authors in related researches. For example Oattes and Offman (2007) found out that there was an association between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness.

Also Mennard and Offman (2009) found a partial relationship between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness. Variations in findings here may therefore be attributed to the sample used in terms of their cultural variations and consequent differential cognitive and personality developments.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that sexual self esteem do not significantly influence sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents. Also, sexual self assertiveness significantly influence sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescents.

It was also revealed that there is no interaction effect of sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness on sexual self disclosure among heterosexual adolescent in Nigeria. Sexual self assertiveness and sexual self esteem means recognizing the warning signs of inappropriate sexual advances and potentially controlling abusive relationships and having the sense of empowerment and the skills to say no. It means having the right to receive a comprehensive education about sexuality, one that bolsters all necessary skills.

And for those who choose to be sexually active, it means having the right to protect themselves against the risk of pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Unquestionably, being sexually assertive is a difficult and complicated skill to acquire particularly for teenagers.

But in today's world, young people's lives may depend on it. Thus, sexual education in schools curricular is imperative to help teach skills about sex navigation and sexuality generally and to build a virile society of appreciated moral values.

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Table 1.0

**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) table showing the main and interaction effects of sexual self assertiveness and sexual self esteem on sexual self disclosure.**

Source	Type III some of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Esteem grp	845.429	1	845.429	.311	>.05
Assertv. Grp	45177.492	1	45177.492	16.594	<.05
Esteem * Assertiv. grp	1240.924	1	1240.924	.456	>.05
Error	446483.634	164	2722.461		
Corrected Total	493592851	167			

Table 1.1

**Correlation table showing relationship between sexual self esteem and sexual self assertiveness**

		How long	Sexual Self Esteem	Sexual Self Assertiveness	Sexual Self Disclosure
How long	Pearson correlation sig (1-tailed) N	161			
Sexual Self Esteem	Pearson correlation sig (1-tailed) N	.047 .278 161	171		
Sexual Self Assertiveness	Pearson Correlation sig. (1-tailed) N	.049 .271 158	-.060 .221 168		
Sexual Self Disclosure	Pearson correlation sig (1-tailed) N	.193(**) .007 161	.005 .475 171	.383(**) .000 168	171
Corrected Total		493592851	167		