



Dating Practices and Patterns of Disclosure among in-School Adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Dating relationships are central to adolescents' lives. Dating and romance are major topics of adolescents' conversations and are linked to both positive and negative emotions. This study examined dating patterns, dating disclosure and parent's awareness in Ibadan metropolis using a mixed method design and found that adolescents are confronted with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed dilemmas in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure. Previous unsolicited sexual experiences and the media were influential in facilitating dating intentions. Gender and age were dominant factors in the disclosure and dating patterns of the adolescents with more females than males involved in dating, and older adolescents (ages 17-19) disclosing more about their dating relationships to peers than those between 14 and 16 years of age. This research also established that when parents were suspicious of their adolescents' involvement in dating because parents were apprehensive of adolescents' ability to manage dating relationships, most adolescents distorted the information they divulged.

Key Words: Dating relationships disclosure; parent-adolescent relations; cross-generational communication

Résumé

Les relations amoureuses occupent une partie centrale de la vie des adolescents. Le flirt et la romance sont souvent chez les adolescents les principaux sujets de conversations et sont d'ailleurs liés à des émotions tant positives que négatives. Cette étude analyse les tendances des relations amoureuses, dans quelle mesure le secret est partagé avec d'autres et les parents, dans la métropole d'Ibadan. Elle fait usage d'une combinaison de méthodes qui a permis de conclure que les adolescents sont confrontés à des dilemmes d'ordre culturel, religieux, conjoncturel, et à d'autres qu'ils s'imposent eux-mêmes, car ils se demandent où situer la frontière entre le privé et le public. Les expériences sexuelles antérieures non sollicitées et les media ont servi d'importants catalyseurs au désir de sortir avec

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quelqu'un. Le genre et l'âge ont été des facteurs déterminants dans les tendances dégagées, montrant qu'il ya plus de filles impliquées dans le jeu de la romance que de garçons, et que les adolescents plus âgés (17-19 ans) sont enclins à partager plus avec leurs pairs sur leurs relations amoureuses que les 14-16 ans. Cette étude a aussi permis d'établir que lorsque les parents soupçonnent leurs enfants adolescents d'avoir une relation amoureuse, car doutant de leur capacité à gérer leurs histoires amoureuses, la plupart de ces adolescents ne disent pas exactement la vérité sur le sujet.

Introduction

Dating relationships are issues over which both parents and adolescents claim jurisdiction (Smetana 2008). Many adolescents consider dating relations as personal issues (Daddis & Randolph 2010) and often construct boundaries delineating between issues that are legitimately subject to parental authority and those that should be within their own jurisdiction (Daddis & Randolph 2010; Sullivan et al., 2010). Adolescents disclose less to their parents about their romantic experiences and sex than they do regarding other aspects of their lives (Smetana, Villalobos, Rogge, & Tasopoulos-Chan 2010) and are more likely to talk about their intimate relationships with peers than with parents (Cosedine, Sabag-Cohen, & Krisvoshekova 2007; Smetana et al., 2010). With reference to gender, adolescent girls disclose more personal issues to their mothers than boys do (Daddis & Randolph 2010; Smetana et al., 2010).

Recent research has highlighted the importance of understanding the context of disclosure and non-disclosure of adolescent dating relationships (Daddis & Randolph (2010). Kerr and Stattin (2000) argue that adolescents who are more disclosing view their parents as more trusting of them. When it comes to romantic involvement among adolescents many parents consider it their duty to counsel and guide their children because the parents regard themselves as more experienced especially having gone through the same psycho-social stages in life themselves (Whatley & Henken 2000). In the Communication Privacy Management theory, Petronio (2002) argues that a delicate process exists in the coordination of disclosure and concealment people perform continually in their relationships with others. As adolescents increase in age and experience, intrusions into their everyday life become more guided in their interactions with their parents, friends and others (Daddis 2008). As active social actors, adolescents may sift the information they give their parents by telling them what they want them to know and keep the remaining information to themselves.

Communication and trust building in adolescent-parent interaction occurs within a web of many factors and contexts including the different degrees of knowledge that parents have about their adolescents (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx & Goosens 2006), cohesion (Papini, Clark, Farmer

& Micka 1990), relationship enjoyment (Laird, Petit, Bates, & Dodge 2003) and trust (Daddis & Randolph 2010). These factors are not self-exhaustive but do point to the bi-directional nature of adolescent-parent trust and their influence in negotiating the boundaries of privacy and disclosure. The process of building and sustaining adolescent-parent trust is a continuum and multi-dimensional in orientation and practice (Petronio & Durham 2008). To investigate the dilemma revolving dating disclosure between adolescents and their parents, an understanding of the rule-based management system underlying this negotiation was sought in this study using a mixed method design. Research on the personal domain has consistently demonstrated that with increasing age, adolescents are more likely to assert personal authority, drawing boundaries between issues that are considered to be within their own and their parents' authority (Smetana & Asquith 1994). It is unclear, however, how this expansion of the personal domain is expressed in adolescents' interpretations of more complex issues such as romantic involvement. A qualitative study on dating experiences and relationships among urban African American adolescents showed that differences in parents and peers norms, attitudes and values could create conflict and tensions for adolescents in negotiating dating activities (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Parenting norms and values in a number of African communities tend towards autocracy with contestable prerogatives at the home front. Within this regulated context, discourses on sexuality are shrouded with terms meant to restrict children's knowledge (Izugbara 2008). A presumption may be that early exposure to sexuality knowledge could stimulate interest in early sexual activities. This presumption is compounded further by the increasing digital divide between adolescents and their parents in many parts of Africa. In a country like Nigeria increased access to information and media models of dating relationships, has made adolescents more likely to take up conflicting values capable of influencing their decisions regarding dating relationships. Given the challenges families face with the array of privacy concerns and prerogative negotiations, this study explores the meaning of dating, patterns, experiences of adolescents and how they navigate privacy boundaries in the disclosure or non-disclosure of their dating relationships to their parents. With insights from Regmi, van Teijlingen Simkhada and Acharya (2011), dating in this study was defined as a meeting between adolescent boy and girl or with adults for romantic and sexual purposes. It could be a chance meeting, leading to a short-term relationship, or planned meeting, which explores and develops into a longer-term partnership. The study also examined parents' dispositions and rationale for developing interests in their adolescent dating relationships. This was with a view to appreciating the dilemma adolescents and parents encounter in resolving dating disclosure or non-

disclosures challenges within a cultural framework. This understanding complements an existing body of knowledge focused on reducing communication tensions at the home front as well as preparing adolescents for dating and sexual practices that will promote their sexual health.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA). There are 11 LGAs in Ibadan; five are in the metropolis with the remaining six in the rural areas. Ibadan North LGA is one of the five metropolitan LGAs in Ibadan. Based on the 2006 National Population census figure, Ibadan has an estimated population of 3,570,000. Ibadan is the capital city of Oyo State located in Southwest Nigeria. It is one of the third largest cities in West Africa. There are a number of private and public primary and tertiary institutions in the city. At the tertiary level, the foremost are the University of Ibadan and Ibadan Polytechnic.

Based on the exploratory nature of the study, a mixed complementary method consisting of semi-structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion (FGD) was employed in generating relevant data on adolescent (14–19 years old) dating relationships and disclosure or non-disclosure to their parents. The qualitative data were collected to enhance the quantitative findings from the survey.

Respondents in the quantitative strand were recruited using purposive stratified sampling approach. The sampling frames consist of all adolescents (15–19 years) in secondary schools and parents residing in the Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA). At the initial stage, a list of all government-approved secondary schools in the LGA was obtained from the Local Education Authority. Within Ibadan North LGA, Bodija was purposively selected as one of the communities within the metropolis that has a high proportion of private and public secondary schools. Within this location, three schools were randomly selected from the private and public secondary schools for a relative representation of adolescents from different socio-economic backgrounds. In total, six schools were selected. Only adolescents in the senior secondary school level between 14 and 19 years of age were invited for participation. Despite the efforts to ensure relative representation of adolescents from different socio-economic backgrounds, adolescents in publicly owned secondary schools were 15 per cent higher. This may be associated with the inability of many parents to afford the high school fees private schools charge in Nigeria. In total, 450 adolescents that met the study criteria voluntarily participated in the survey.

In the qualitative strand, only adolescents (14–19 years) that had a boy/girl friend were invited for participation in the focus group discussion. An

average of three adolescents with such experience was invited from each of the six schools covered in the survey. From the six schools, 10 female and 12 male adolescents volunteered to participate. To reduce a possible influence of interviewer's gender bias, same sex researchers conducted the FGDs with the adolescents (Regmi, van Teijlingen, Simkhada & Acharya 2011). Four undergraduate students with relevant fieldwork experiences were recruited, briefed on the study objectives, and trained with the FGD guide. Two weeks after the completion of the survey, a list of parents' addresses with the support of the school authorities, was obtained from willing adolescents that participated in the survey. With the help of two teachers from the selected schools, thirty parents were invited for voluntarily participation in the study. Only 16 out of the invited parents participated in the interviews. After repeated visits by the researcher and the field assistants, 14 parents (4 mothers and 10 fathers) could not be interviewed due to their busy schedules. Only one eligible parent was interviewed per household.

Three research instruments consisting of a questionnaire, an in-depth interview, and a focus group discussion guide were adopted to explore the social context of disclosure or lack of it between parents and their adolescents. Based on insights from the literature, a two-page questionnaire was developed to examine the dating patterns of the adolescents and investigate the views adolescents have on factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not to disclose their dating relationships to their parents. Three psychologists and a sociologist with an interest in adolescent sexuality assessed the content validity of the questionnaire. Prior to the main study, a pre-test of the instrument was undertaken among 50 adolescents (14–19 years) in selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife. This was to check whether the questionnaire was understandable and pragmatic. The questionnaire included three sections. The first comprised questions that elicited respondents' biographical information, that is, age, parents' occupation, living arrangements and type of marriage. The second section comprised questions on dating patterns, factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not, parents' involvement in their adolescent dating relationships and the degree of information adolescents are willing to divulge to their parents on their dates. The questionnaire was self administered to adolescents (14–19 years) at the senior secondary level in each secondary school. To encourage valid responses and complete anonymity, a box was provided in each class where the questionnaires were administered without interference from their teachers and fellow students. After completing the questionnaires, respondents dropped the completed questionnaires in the box.

In the qualitative phase, additional insights into some of the responses elicited from the survey were sought through two focus group discussion

session with adolescents (14–19 years) and in-depth interviews with 16 parents. Qualitative methods have been useful in investigating sexual health issues among adolescents and parents' disposition towards sex education in Nigeria (Izugbara 2004, 2008). The focus group discussion provided an opportunity for the adolescents to discuss their dating experiences and the characteristics they look for in a boy/girl before entering into romantic relationships. Questions on how much adolescents disclose issues concerning their intimate relationships to their parents and their common dating patterns were asked. In addition, participants were asked to deliberate on communication challenges between adolescents and parents in disclosing dating relationships. The interviews with the parents were focussed on parents' positions and interest in their adolescents' dating relationships and examine the factors or situations that would facilitate parents' interest in their adolescents' dating relationships.

The focus group discussions with adolescents were conducted in English at preferred locations suggested by the participants. The in-depth interviews with the 14 parents were also conducted in English at locations suggested by the interviewees. All the interviews were recorded through audiotape. The focus group discussions lasted for an average of an hour and twenty minutes, while the in-depth interviews lasted for an average of forty-nine minutes.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16. The analysis was based on 416 valid questionnaires found among the 450 that were self-administered. Percentages were used to describe the demographic and socioeconomic situation of the adolescents, the dating patterns of the adolescents, and the views of adolescents on factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not to disclose their dating relationships to their parents. The findings are presented in forms of both discussions and tables.

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the audio-taped interviews and the field notes were used to verify the transcribed texts, ensuring that they were correctly transcribed to preserve the meaning of the participants' words. The transcripts were read several times and emerging themes listed. Overlapping themes were noted, refined and used in focussing the coding (Ryan & Bernard 2003). Focussed coding entails the search for particular code categories derived from the literature, research experience and other related sources of knowledge acquisition (Patton 1990). Extracts were obtained from both the FGDs and in-depth interviews. A triangulation approach was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Approval from the school authorities was received. The study objectives were communicated to all the participants. All those who participated were recruited voluntarily. They were informed of the confidentiality of their identity and their rights to withdraw at any point from the study (Itlas 2006). Written informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

Results

Respondents' Profiles

The mean age of the survey respondents between 14–16 years of age was 15.2 years and that of respondents between 17–19 years of age was 17.5 years. A high proportion (65%) of the respondents was in a dating relationship. More female adolescents (76.3%) than males were involved in dating. More female adolescents (42.5%) preferred dating young people aged 21–24 years than their male counterparts (0.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variables	Female N =219	Male N =197
Age of Respondent		
14–16	87(39.7)	76(38.6)
17–19	132(60.3)	121(61.4)
Living arrangement		
With both parents	177(80.8)	158(80.2)
With father alone	7(3.2)	11(5.6)
With mother alone	21(9.6)	19(9.6)
With relatives	14(6.4)	9(4.6)
Online social network member		
Yes	179(82)	101(51)
Currently dating someone		
Yes	167(76.3)	103(52.3)
Age of dating partner (years)		
14–16	21(12.6)	64(62.1)
17–20	48(28.7)	38(36.9)
21–24	71(42.5)	1(0.9)
25–28	22(13.2)	-
+29	5(3.0)	-

Source: Focus Group Discussants and Interviewees Profiles

Twenty-two (10 females and 12 males) discussants featured in the FGDs. All the discussants were currently dating at least one person. The average age of the female adolescent was 15.8 years and that of the male was 17.2 years. Twenty among the FGD participants have their profiles on facebook, an online social network site. Sixteen parents participated in the in-depth interviewees. Nine mothers and seven fathers featured in the interviewees. The average age of the mothers was 42.3 years and that of the fathers was 49.1 years. Four of the fathers were in polygamous marriages. Only one among the mothers was in a polygamous marriage. All the interviewees had up to secondary level of education. Four out of the fathers had up to tertiary education at different levels. Only three of the mothers had up to tertiary education.

First Sexual Experience and Disclosure Dilemma

An analysis of the context that provides adolescents with dating opportunities revealed a number of factors. Some of the factors include peer pressure, media models of dating relationships, and previous unsolicited sexual initiations. Participants in the FGDs argued that the context of first sexual experience could have lasting impacts on dating intentions and disclosure negotiation. The participants described the experiences of some adolescents that had been initiated into early sex by family members and close adults. In view of this, some of the adolescent females argued that this represents a breach of trust and deviations from what the society preaches. The participants described the occurrence of child sexual abuse and the silence on it as worrisome. Victims and their significant others often prefer silence in handling known cases of child sexual abuse. Participants described such disposition as unhealthy as it affects adolescents' emotions and their confidence in others.

How will you inform your parents? I have a friend whose uncle abused her sexually when she was 12 years old. Now her parents are reporting this girl to the same uncle that she has a boy friend. What do you expect from her? (FGD adolescent female).

Some of us have had our genitals touched sexually by older girls in our neighbourhoods and in some cases they had asked us to touch their breasts without informing others. These experiences are still very fresh (FGD adolescent male).

From the above accounts, initiation into sexual relations might have prepared some of the participants for early dating and rationale for disclosure or non-disclosure of dating relationships. Participants' reference to trust breaching could affect disclosure or non-disclosure between parents and their adolescents.

Dating Dispositions and Patterns

Dating was normal and fashionable among the adolescents. The interest in forming partnerships with opposite sex in school is expected due to unsupervised interactions with peers especially outside school activities, which could increase the development of emotions. A high proportion of the adolescents described dating as a common phenomenon among their peers (Table 2). Among the respondents, dating entailed sharing love, feelings, pleasures, and problems. However, in response to the statement 'dating entails sharing love through sex', more females were quick to rescind the position than their male counterparts were.

Similarly, in the FGD, positions on what a boyfriend or girlfriend means ranged from 'having a boy to care for me', to 'having a girl I can have fun with'. Different terminologies were also used in describing girls and boys that have boy/girl friends and those that do not. Girls with boyfriends especially those with multiple boyfriends were described as 'omo to wake up' (popular girls) and adolescent males with girlfriends as 'bigger boys'. The drive to feel important among peers creates tension and competition for attraction especially through physical appearance. The jostling among attractive girls increases the number of choices to be made and the difficulty in making right choices or refusing many requests. Multiple dating was reported more among adolescent females between 17 and 19 years of age (Table 3).

In the qualitative strand, the FGD discussants argued that girls are culturally expected to make themselves available and as attractive commodities to the boys and men with the necessary emotional and material resources. Against this backdrop, the discussants argued that it was easier for girls than boys to have multiple dates as girls have more 'options'. A ripple effect is the conscious awareness of masculine hegemony and the competition over female adolescents as commodities among male adolescents. The perception of adolescent females as attractive commodities that should be wooed by males or older boys that are better positioned than adolescent males was captured in the words of some of the participants:

You have to be a very big boy to have girl friends because you have to compete with university boys and unmarried young working men (FGD, adolescent male aged 17).

In addition, age preference in dating was cited as a favoured option for the females as adolescent males prefer younger girls while girls go for older boys.

Who will go with those small boys? They lack what it takes to care for a girl. They are also interested in just sleeping with you [sexual intercourse] and the moment they succeed they go for another girl (FGD, adolescent female aged 19).

Table 2: Adolescent Dating Disposition and Patterns

Variables	Female(n=167)		Male(n=103)	
	14-16yrs	17-19yrs	14-16yrs	17-19yrs
I have a close friend that has a boy/girl friend	63(29)	104(47)	31(30)	72(70)
Are you into any intimate relationship presently	60(36)	107(64)	26(25)	77(75)
I have more than one boy/girl friend	15(9)	53(32)	9(9)	31(16)
Dating entails sharing love, feelings, pleasures and problems	43(26)	100(60)	21(20)	72(70)
Dating entails sharing love through sex	12(7)	33(20)	25(24)	75(73)
My parents will be disappointed in me when they know that I have a boy/girl friend	60(36)	104(62)	25(24)	74(72)
I have been dating a boy/girl friend for over a year without my parents' awareness	60(36)	106(63)	26(25)	75(73)

The interviews with parents also supported the position that adolescent females are the focus of several social actors as they receive advances from males both young and old. The commodification of the female adolescents was further depicted by portraying the inability of adolescent males as being poor in material and emotional resources in competing with older boys and men that are better positioned. In contrast, the adolescent females are socially positioned to accept the advances of the highest bidder.

There are a lot of men, older men now, that are interested in these young girls of secondary school age, and most of them are very wealthy. In a situation where the girl's parents are poor, she doesn't even think twice about it, she just goes for it' (Mother of an adolescent aged 42).

Another mother said:

Girls of these days are very greedy and covetous; they don't follow boys of their own age anymore. Especially those that enter the university early after their secondary school education, they now prefer men that are old enough to be their fathers (Mother of an adolescent aged 49).

Dating Context and Disclosure Challenges

In the adolescent stage, the consciousness that adolescent dating is not encouraged by the society and parents in particular came with diverse strategies as both adolescent males and females struggle to keep their dating secret until the occurrence of challenges or tensions that are self evident. Younger adolescent males often employ indirect measures in soliciting relationships with adolescent females. A striking approach is the use of material goods and academic prowess in securing a date with adolescent females. The use of short medium messages (SMS) aided with the availability of the Global system for Mobile Telecommunication in Nigeria was widely reported as a means to declaring intentions. As noted by some of the participants, the use of SMS was combined with frequent free mid-night calls provided by some of the Telecommunication operators in Nigeria:

Sending a girl love text messages may go a long way in securing a relationship (FGD, adolescent male aged 16).

A friend of mine started a relationship with a guy she met on Facebook (an online social network site). At the initial stage, it was just ordinary friendship and they have been seeing each other since then (FGD, adolescent female aged 17).

If these girls can have more than one boyfriend, I can have like three of them at a time (FGD adolescent male aged 17).

The participants also argued that with a promise of helping them to pass their school leaving certificate examination, a number of female adolescents date their teachers and fellow students. With this common understanding,

adolescent males that are intelligent often attract more girls than those who are not. In all the scenarios narrated, all the participants argued that dating often happens without their parents' awareness in order to avoid the loss of the benefits that go with being a 'good' boy or girl.

In the event that parents become suspicious of their adolescents' dating involvement, the adolescents often employ denial and distortions when providing any information that would otherwise make them look bad or recalcitrant. The tendency to use denial and to distort information was also attributed to religious beliefs and the need to appear as a 'good' child. A number of the adolescents interviewed argued that over the years their parents have not relented in forcing them into active involvement in religious activities that they have come to terms with. Here are some examples:

When such issues are brought up for discussion, you just have to form as if you have never heard of it and appear innocent (FGD adolescent female aged 17).

On three occasions, I have found love text messages on my adolescent girl's mobile phone and she denied ever knowing the senders. I even tried calling the line but immediately one of the boys heard my voice he dropped the phone and switched off (Mother of an adolescent aged 47).

Girls will only tell you about their date when they are in a fix. May be when they are pregnant or being threatened by a boy or their teacher (Mother of an adolescent aged 42).

On a few occasions, the participants argued that some adolescent females might provide information on a boy that was pestering them for a relationship. However, if it was a relationship of interest, they preferred remaining silent as most parents would frown at them being in a relationship. To avoid this, boys and girls would prefer self-care measures even when things are going out of hand especially in a relationship of interest. The male participants argued that most adolescents would prefer informing their parents later in the future if the relationship survives into a long-term one. However, the reality is that most of the adolescents complained of constant conflicts and tensions in their dating relationships and the difficulty in informing their parents.

Age, Masculinity and Femininity in Disclosure or Non-disclosure of Dating Relationships

As could be expected, a number of adolescents are concerned about their parents' knowledge of their dates, indicating adolescents' consciousness of societal and parental disapproval of adolescent dating. With this common understanding among adolescents, there will be unwillingness in divulging information about their dating relationships to their parents or people that

may oppose such an activity (Sullivan et al., 2010). In some circumstances, adolescent females between 17–19 years of age were more willing to disclose their dating relationships to their parents than their male counterparts (Table 3). Younger adolescent females (14–16 years) were also less willing to tell their parents anything about their dating relationships. Adolescent males were more willing to share their dating information with their peers than their female counterparts were (Table 3).

Findings from the two FGDs also revealed that boys do not open up to their parents on dating issues. They argued that boys view dating as very personal. The male participants argued that boys often avoid talking with their parents on matters that bring up such issues because boys like to ‘be in control of their affairs’.

A boy that goes about ‘kissing and telling his parents’ is not fit to be in a relationship, big boys don’t talk to their parents about girls, small boys do that and they shouldn’t even be in any relationship (Adolescent male aged 18).

The participants also argued that girls are more willing to share their dating experiences because most of the times they get confused due to the number of advances they receive. This may prompt them to talk to someone older, especially their mothers (depending on the existing relationship between them) so as to know the right step to take.

My mum does not believe I should send any guy off, she just counsels me on what to do so that I don’t find myself in any bad situation, I tell her stuff and she listens well, because we are very close. While my brother is also close to her, he hardly opens up about his dates (FGD Adolescent female aged 16).

Another female adolescent said,

As you grow older, you become bold enough to own up to these relationships, you feel old enough to talk more comfortably with your parents about them (FGD Adolescent female aged 18).

Buttressing the position of some of the female adolescents, a father argued that:

Girls are more willing to disclose because females are weak hearted. If a girl gets pregnant, she would eventually open up, but boys believe they can handle everything on their own. Even when they impregnate a girl, they prefer to cover it up before anyone knows about it. Boys are strong-willed and have a very strong sense of responsibility (Interview with a father of an adolescent aged 50).

The tension and conflict resolution of challenges in intimate relationships have psychological consequences for the adolescents. Often these issues

Table 3: Gender, age, and voluntary disclosure

Variables	Female		Male	
	14-16yrs (n=107)	17-19yrs (n=26)	14-16yrs	17-19yrs (n=77)
(n=60)				
At the moment, how much information are you willing to give your parents about your boy/girl friend				
Everything	21(35%)	46(43%)	2(8%)	24(31%)
None	39(65%)	83(57%)	24(92%)	53(69%)
At the moment, how much information are you willing to give your close friends about your boy/girl friend				
Everything	33(55%)	48(45%)	19(73%)	61(79%)
None	27(45%)	59(55%)	7(27%)	16(21%)

are kept among close peers and are hardly discussed with adults or parents as noted in the following excerpt from the FGD with adolescent males:

I will never forget the day I was jilted by my first love. I wept profusely and became ill. At home, nobody knew what went wrong except my very close friend. I lost interest in helping my father in his shop (FGD adolescent male aged 18).

The required knowledge for safe negotiation of tensions and conflicts in adolescent dating cannot be easily accessed. Neither parents nor the society support dating in adolescence. Within this unfriendly setting, some of the adolescents preferred comparing notes with their peers and searching the Internet, which is increasingly becoming accessible to adolescents in urban areas in Nigeria. Moreover, with the availability of Internet access through mobile phones, browsing has become relatively affordable. Thirteen participants in the two FGDs narrated the relevance of online social network sites in sharing and accessing suggestions from other members when confronted with dating tensions and conflict resolution. Here is what one said:

How will I ask my parents? In the first instance, they see me as a nice girl without a boyfriend. So what would I tell them? Facebook is there, in such challenges, I pose a question that appears general and within few minutes, different suggestions will be provided which I can decide to accept or reject (FGD adolescent female aged 17).

Parents' Positions and Interest in Adolescents Dating Relationships

Ten out of the interviewees were of the opinion that no adolescent should be in any intimate relationship because they are still too young and lacked the needed experience and maturity to manage intimate relationship challenges. The conception of dating as an adult terrain led some of the parents to describe adolescents that have boy/girl friends as unserious and irresponsible:

Any adolescent that is in any intimate relationship lacks proper training and lacks focus in life (Clergy and a father of an adolescent, aged 51).

Two other parents argued that:

I train my children properly, so they cannot enter into any intimate relationship at their tender age (Mother of an adolescent aged 46).

When you train your child in God's way, they would not deviate and start following boys or girls (Mother of an adolescent aged 41).

However, more than two thirds (11) of the parents were anxious and worried over the kind of friends their children keep and their general freedom to associate with the opposite sex. Seven among this category of parents were also sceptical of their children's ability to maintain sanctity in such relationships. When a mother was asked if she had ever questioned her adolescents about

their association with the opposite sex, she said, 'Of course! Girls of nowadays are bad and might influence my boys negatively, so I question them regularly to know the state of things, but you see most times they hide the truth until things get out of hand'. As a way out of the fears of what becomes the fate of their adolescents in the future, some of the parents suggested regular discussion and faith in God as shown in these extracts:

When you relate well with your children and talk properly with them, you would know what is going on and know if there is any problem; this would enable you know how best to tackle such problems (Mother of an adolescent aged 46).

When you talk to them about sex, you know their level of knowledge on the subject, and you would know what areas you should concentrate on (Father of an adolescent aged 47).

With the high prevalence of flirting among adolescents, it appears to me that some of them are possessed with evil spirits. Deliverance through prayers will work better (A Clergy and father of an adolescent, aged 51).

The increasing prevalence of unsupervised interactions among adolescents was described as a situation that demands concrete efforts from the society and parents in particular. Some of the parents argued that adolescents have different mediums of interaction that are outside the purview of parents especially with the increasing economic challenges that takes most parents out of their homes. A number of the parents argued that as adolescents advance in age, there was need for more supervision. As adolescent females grow older, they attract the attention of members of the opposite sex. One of the major concerns in this regard is the fear of unintended pregnancy especially for the adolescent females:

I am most times afraid because these children associate with one another too freely. This calls for concern for any parent that wants what is good for his/her children (Father of an adolescent aged 50).

At the senior secondary school level every parent must monitor their children especially the girls because at this stage, they experiment more and make mistakes that can mar their lives forever (Mother of an adolescent aged 48).

This last respondent cited examples of adolescents that have made such mistakes and are now regretting it. Some of the adolescents also narrated the mistakes of other adolescents in their previous dates. They argued that if their parents can listen better and get closer to them, they would be more interested in this delicate aspect of their lives. One of the participants expressed dismay in the poor or lack of trust between adolescents and their parents:

At times, you look so sad because a lot is going on and your parents do not even notice it, let alone proffer solutions (Adolescent female aged 16).

Some of the parents also desire trust and closeness with their adolescents but then regret the increasing difficulty in achieving this closeness. Parents advocated patience and prayers as a way of cultivating a desired level of closeness with their adolescent children while the adolescents believe in effective communication and extension of love towards them at all times.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study used a complementary mixed method approach in exploring adolescents' reasoning justifying disclosure and nondisclosure to their parents regarding romantic involvement. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data revealed dating as a common and fashionable practice among both female and male adolescents. However, disclosure of dating relationships was confronted with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed dilemmas in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure.

An important finding from the qualitative data analysed is the influence of multiple factors including previous unsolicited sexual initiations as platforms supporting early dating and restricted disclosure of dating relationships. More female adolescents than their male counterparts are at pressure as they go into dating for several reasons including material gains and the desire to pass their school examinations especially in their Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. A reinforcement of this pressure is the commodification of the female adolescents' body as a product that should be possessed by young and old leading adolescent males to compete with older boys and men in a bid to have a stake in the lives of adolescent females. An immediate implication is the practice of multiple dating especially among the female adolescents. This observation supports existing literature that shows that adolescent females attract more partners than their male counterparts (Madsen & Collins 2011). Dating pressures and the practice of secrecy in adolescent dating is consistent with the literature (for example, Connolly, Furman, & Konarski 2000; Cosedine, Sabag-Cohen, & Krisvoshekova 2007; Madsen & Collins 2011).

The secrecy shrouding adolescent dating impairs disclosure of dating to parents except when there are self-evident markers or perceived threats from others. Adolescent females disclosed more about their dating relationships than their male counterparts (Daddis & Randolph 2010; Sullivan et al., 2010). While this is consistent with the literature, a number of participants in the current study argued that it also varies with age and context as earlier argued by Smetana et al., (2010), and Daddis (2008). In this present research, older female adolescents were more prepared to disclose their dating relationships than younger female adolescents did especially in the occurrence of self-evident outcomes like pregnancy. In

this regard, female adolescents would more readily inform their mothers than their fathers due to cultural values and expectations that shape communication between parents and their children. Certain cultural beliefs also portray the good child as belonging to the father as is the case among the Yoruba people where this study was conducted, where the stigmatisation of unintended adolescent pregnancy is prevalent and mothers are culturally expected to provide support for their daughters for having failed in their proper upbringing (Oye-Adeniran, Adewole, Umoh et al., 2004). Available evidence shows that recipients of partial information on dating and sexuality are ill equipped in safe sexual negotiations (Izugbara 2004; Whatley & Henken 2000).

An emerging trend in the realm of dating and disclosure among adolescents is the Internet and the use of short medium messages (SMS) aided by the availability of the Global system for Mobile Telecommunication in Nigeria. This has added the contraction of relationships and a shift to the cyberspace for wider interactions and knowledge acquisition on sexuality and dating issues. This is consistent with the study by Oluwole (2009) on the practice of cyber gossips among adolescents in Nigeria, which shows that with the gradual shift to the cyberspace, there are multiple options for relationship building outside the home.

The pressure to conform publicly to parents' religious beliefs and subsequent positions on relationships was also cited as a context that shapes denial or information distortion especially among younger adolescents. The position taken by many adolescents was in sharp contrast with the knowledge and purpose of religious activities as perceived by their parents. However, because they were dependent upon their parents materially, the adolescents argued that they needed to conform to their parents' wishes until they grew older and felt more independent. Based on emerging evidence of increasing adolescent dating, a number of the adolescents interviewed were as concerned about their parents' knowledge of their dates as the parents were concerned about the future of their adolescents, especially their daughters. Often times, such fears were expressed around unintended pregnancies than other risks associated with multiple dating and unprotected sexual activities. In line with their religious beliefs, some of the parents called for prayers, faith in God and patience as potent measures of building better relationships with their adolescents and securing their future.

The negative disposition and description of adolescent dating by some of the parents indicate an adherence to traditional viewpoints that could mar the needed adolescent-parent trust and disclosure of dating relationships. The argument of some of these parents that adolescents are not yet ready for intimate relationship is consistent with the literature (Smetana 2008;

Izugbara 2008). However, a few of the parents argued for more interest in adolescent dating especially through constant and open communication. This later group of parents are gradually coming to terms with the need for holistic consideration of issues affecting adolescent sexuality in Nigeria. As Izugbara (2004) has shown, parents who communicate well with their children are always interested in the affairs of such children and know when there are problems that need to be resolved. At the moment, the increasing availability of Internet access and foreign media in many homes in Nigeria exposes many adolescents to more dating models and alternatives than was the case in the past. Large-scale studies interrogating cultural influences on dating disclosure and adolescent-parent trust building would go a long way in articulating clearly better ways of understanding a changing socio-cultural phenomenon. The present research has attempted to contribute to an understanding of the context and rationale for disclosure and non-disclosure of adolescent dating relationships. These issues can be explored further among a larger population and other major ethnic groups (Igbo and Hausa) in Nigeria to achieve a broader understanding of adolescent dating and disclosure challenges.

Adolescent dating and its confrontation with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed barriers in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure calls for more holistic measures at home and the society at large. With the increase in the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, sexual assaults, and emotional ill health associated with early sexual exposure and adolescent dating, participatory measures need to be taken to respond to these challenges. Establishing trust in adolescent-parent relations would facilitate the disclosure of privacy in dating activities as well as creating a sustainable response at the home front to the associated challenges with adolescent dating.

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