

**AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF SEXUALIZATION THROUGH MEDIA CONTENTS
ON THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

BY

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY**

OCTOBER, 2025.

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR
OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

OCTOBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

I, Ihaza-Osahon Edith Ebehirewhen, hereby declare that this project titled “An Evaluation of the Effects of Sexualization through Media Contents on the Personality Development of Students of the University of Benin” is my original work and is based on a study undertaken by me in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty Of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo. All sources of information, data, and materials used in the preparation of this work have been duly acknowledged through appropriate references.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project is carried out by **Ihaza-Osahon Edith Ebehirewhen ART2100953** under my supervision. This project is to be submitted to the department of Mass Communication, University of Benin.

Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo
Project Supervisor & Head of Department

Date

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for His guidance, strength, wisdom and grace during the period of this study, and for seeing me through the completion of my four years in the University of Benin.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of early sexualization through media contents on the personality development of Nigerian youths, using students of the University of Benin as a case study. The research investigated how exposure to sexualized media influences key aspects of personality, including self-esteem, body image, mode of dressing, and gender perception. The study adopted the survey research design, and data were collected through the administration of questionnaires across different faculties and campuses using a multi-stage sampling technique. A total of 398 respondents were selected from a population of 77,000 students. Findings revealed that students are frequently exposed to sexualized media contents through television, music videos, films, social media, and online platforms. The study discovered that such exposure significantly affects their self-concept, social behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Specifically, prolonged exposure contributes to self-objectification, low self-esteem, and unrealistic beauty standards, thereby shaping attitudes toward gender roles and sexuality. The study concluded that early exposure to sexualized media has a profound influence on the personality development of youths. It recommended that media regulatory bodies enforce stricter guidelines on sexual content, parents and

educators promote media literacy, and students exercise discretion in media consumption. The findings contribute to the growing discourse on media influence and provide a framework for policy interventions aimed at fostering healthy youth development in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The media has undoubtedly become an indispensable part of modern life, having significant influence on individuals, particularly young people. In Nigeria, the media landscape has evolved rapidly with widespread access to television, radio, Internet and social media.

While the media offers numerous benefits, such as education, information and entertainment, it also poses risks, particularly in relation to the sexualisation of students and the behavioural patterns that develop their personality. Sexualized media contents has debatably shaped students perception of sex thereby subjecting them to behave in a subconscious way based on the knowledge from such sexualised media contents. The more aware young people are of sexualisation the more their personality is affected in areas of self-discovery, relationships and social life.

Sexualization refers to the act of portraying someone or something in a sexual way. This can happen through the use of images, language, or behavior. Sexualization can occur in a variety of contexts, including media, advertising, and even everyday interactions. Sexualization is the process by which people or things come to be viewed as sexual. This projection of sexuality, also known as sexual objectification, is the perception of people as sexual objects and the evaluation of them in terms of sexuality. This is seen in modern culture through beauty pageants and the ever increasing use of sex in advertising such as the use of bikini-clad models to sell cars and motorcycles or muscled handsome men to sell cleaning products. When someone is sexualized, it can reduce them to a sexual object, ignoring their other characteristics and abilities. Sexualization can have harmful effects, contributing to body image issues, low self-esteem, and a lack of confidence. In addition, sexualization can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and gender roles, causing behavioral and personality development.

Sexualisation refers to the process, by which individuals are exposed to sexual content, attitudes, and behaviours which can lead to the premature development of sexualized attitudes

and behaviours. The media is a significant contributor to sexualisation, as it often presents sexualized images, lyrics, and storylines that can shape youths' perception of sex, relationships, and themselves. The media plays a significant role in shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviours of young people. Sexualisation is viewed as a person's value which comes only from their sexual appeal or behaviour or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics (American psychological association, 2007). However, a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness with being 'sexy'. Young individuals suffer from the effects of exposure to sexualised media contents and it is evidently seen in their personality development. Researchers have it that sexuality is inappropriately imposed on a person. This study will examine the influence of sexualised media and media contents on students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the media has become a ubiquitous part of everyday life, with many young people spending hours watching television, browsing the internet, and engaging with social media. However, there is a growing concern the media's portrayal of sex and sexuality is contributing to the sexualisation of young individuals particularly students. Research has shown that exposure to sexualized media contents can have a profound impact on young people's developing sense of self and their understanding of relationships and sexuality. Early sexualisation can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and increased risk-taking behaviours. In Nigeria, the situation is further complicated by cultural and societal norms that often emphasise traditional values and modesty. Conversely, the increasing influence of the western media and cultural values is leading to a shift

in these norms particularly among young people. The media's portrayal of sex and sexuality is contributing to the premature introduction of adult sex themes and behaviours to young people, which can have negative consequences for their developing sense of self and their understanding of relationships and sexuality. Students that are exposed to sexualized contents through the media or their practices tend to build constructs of what sex is and it should be as a result of their orientation and this is leading to personality disorder, beauty standards and sexual objectification. Sexualised content boils down to sexual awareness amongst students forming a sub-conscious sexual behaviour. Therefore, this research aims at examining the effect of sexualisation through media contents on the personality development of students.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is for discovering the following;

1. To ascertain the extent at which students are exposed to sexualised media contents.
2. To discover the media through which students are exposed to sexualized contents.
3. To find out the implications of sexualised media contents on personality development of students.

1.4 Research Questions

At this point therefore, the questions that this study seeks to answer are;

1. What extents are students exposed to sexualized media contents?
2. What media are students exposed to sexualized contents?
3. What are the implications of sexualised media consumption on personality development of students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Every research work is been embarked upon for a purpose or purposes. In this light this study would be of great importance in the field of psychology and the personality development of individuals. This study will contribute to the existing body of literature on the effects of sexualisation on young people's development, with a specific focus on students. This study is important because it will contribute to the existing body of literature on the effects of sexualisation on young people's development, with a specific focus on students. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policy makers, educators, and healthcare professionals working with young people especially students, informing the development of policies and programs aimed at promoting healthy youth development.

This study's findings may have implications for media regulation in Nigeria, highlighting the need for stricter guidelines around the portrayal of sexual content in media aimed at young people. By investigating the effects of sexualisation through media contents on the personality development of students, this study aims to make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of this important issue and provide insights that can inform policy, practise, and parenting.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is meant to evaluate the effects of sexualisation through media contents on the personality development of the students of the University of Benin using students of the University of Benin from both the Ugbowo and Ekehuan campus as case study. The University of Benin was chosen as the scope of study because a large number of her students have access and are exposed to media contents which could influence their behaviour. That aside, the school

environment is an appropriate place to observe the effects of sexualisation through media contents on students personality due to its demography of people there and its proximity to its researcher.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Effect: the result or outcome of a cause

Evaluation: refers to an assessment or determination of the value of a variable or expression

Media contents: refers to information, messages, or experiences conveyed through various media channels

Personality development: refers to the process by which an individual's personality is formed and evolves over time

Sexualisation: process of viewing people, especially women and girls, primarily through the lens of sexuality and sexual appeal.

Student: this refers to a person enrolled at a university who studies or learns about a particular subject.

University: institution of higher education where subjects are studied and researched in depth and degrees are offered.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the conceptual review of necessary literature beginning from historical review, past works related to this research work and the theoretical framework of the study with a view to make available mere knowledge and insightful findings.

2.1 Historical Review

2.1.1 History of Sexualisation

The history of sexualisation can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where sexuality was associated with power and acquisition of wealth and status. Children were not sexualized in the same way as adults during the time of Greece. For example the practice of pederasty, in which an older man would form a relationship with a younger man or boy which was common during those times. However it is important to note that this practice was not seen as sexual in nature, but rather as a way to mentor and educate the younger man. While some practices may seem sexualised in the modern world today, they were not viewed in the same way during the ancient times.

In the middle ages, sexualisation viewed differently and in fact scholars such as Michel Foucault and John Boswell have argued that during this time, sexuality was seen as a threat to order and was therefore controlled and regulated by the church. Sexuality was divided into two categories; procreative and non-procreative. Procreative sex is between a married man and a woman for the purpose of procreation, was seen as acceptable, while non-procreative sex such as sex outside marriage or same sex relationships, was considered sinful and punishable by the church. Children during the middle ages were not directly exposed to sexualisation. However, they were indirectly exposed to ideas about sexuality through the church and societal norms.

In the 19th century, the industrial revolution led to a shift in gender roles and the idea of ‘new woman’ emerged, who was more independent and sexualized. The feminist movement of the 19th century, sometimes called “first wave movement,” was a time where women began to challenge traditional gender roles and advocate for their rights. As a part of this movement,

women began to question the role of sexuality in the society. Many believed that sexuality should be seen as a personal or private matter, and that women should have the right to control their own bodies and sexuality. This view was in contrast to the traditional view that sexuality should be regulated by the church and state (Wikipedia 2021).

However, in the 20th century, views on sexuality and sexualisation began to change dramatically. The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s challenged traditional gender roles and questioned the idea that sexuality should be regulated by the church or state. As a result, sexuality became increasingly seen as a personal choice, rather than something that should be controlled by others. Sexualisation also became more visible in the media with sexualized images becoming more common in advertising and entertainment. Evidently, the 20th century was a turning point in the way that sexualisation was viewed and understood. This was due to the number of factors, including the impact of feminist movement, growth of the mass media and the sexual revolution of 1960s and 1970s. During this time, there was a significant shift in attitude towards sexuality with greater acceptance of diversity and individual choice. This led to greater visibility sexualised content in the media, and a greater awareness of the influence of this content on children. It also led greater efforts to protect children from harmful or inappropriate contents. In the 20th century, children became exposed to sexualised content in the media at a much younger age than in previous generations. This content could have both positive and negative effects on children's development. On the one hand, children may have become more aware of different sexual identities. On the other hand, there was concern that children were being

exposed to sexualised content that was inappropriate for their age and could have a negative impact on their development.

Conclusively, in the present world, in the 21st century, the stand on sexualisation has become more complex and nuanced. On the one hand, there is still a strong view that sexualised content can be harmful to children. However, there is also a growing recognition that sexualisation can be a positive and empowering force for children.

2.1.2 History of Personality Development

The history of personality development is complex and spans multiple fields, including psychology, biology and sociology. One of the earliest ideas about personality development came from Sigmund Freud, who believed that that personality was shaped by early childhood experiences. This idea was later expanded upon by psychologists such as Erik Erikson, who proposed a theory of eight stages of personality development, later the cognitive approach to personality development, pioneered by Jean Piaget, placed a greater emphasis on the role of thinking and reasoning in personality development. In the 21st century, the field of personality development continues to evolve and grow, incorporating new theories and approaches. Personality development revolutionised due to the first idea of Sigmund Freud. Freud believed that psychological disorders and particularly the experience of anxiety, occur when there is conflict or imbalance among the motivations of the ID, EGO and SUPEREGO (*everyday social psychology 1 pg 42*). Gradually the Freudian theory was so popular that it led to a number of followers, including many of Freud's own students, who developed, modified and expanded his theories. Taken together these approaches are known as Neo-Freudian theories which are those

theories based on the Freudian principles that emphasise the role of the unconscious and early experience in shaping personality but place less evidence on sexuality as the primary motivating force in personality and are more optimistic concerning the prospects for personality growth and change in personality in adults. Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937) was a follower of the Sigmund Freud theory who developed his own interpretation of the Freudian theory. Adler believed that psychological disorders begin in early childhood. He argued that children who are either overly nurtured or overly neglected by their parents are later likely to develop an inferiority complex.

2.2 Conceptual review

2.2.1 The Media

According to McQuail (2010), media are the channels or vehicles through which messages are transmitted, stored, or retrieved. They are the means by which information, ideas, and cultural values are disseminated to the public. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) further explained the media as the technological and institutional structures that provide the channels through which messages are transmitted to the public.

Media also refer to the various forms of communication that use technology to transmit and disseminate information, entertainment and ideas to a wide audience. (Buerger 2014).

These definitions however highlight the aspects of the media as channels or vehicles for message transmission, technological and institutional structures, communication forms that use technology and channels for communicating information, ideas, and cultural values to the public. Media refers to the various channels or tools used to communicate information, ideas or messages to a wide audience. Media can be classified into two main categories; traditional

media-print media (newspapers, magazines, books), broadcast media (radio, television), and outdoor media (billboards, posters) and the new media-digital media, mobile devices and other digital platforms. The media platforms various functions such as; information dissemination, education, entertainment, socialization, feedback mechanism, accountability etc. The media serve as a strong mass communication tool.

2.2.2 Concept of Sexualisation

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), sexualisation occurs when individuals are regarded as sex objects and evaluated in terms of their physical characteristics and sexiness.

Sexualisation is a complex and multidimensional process that involves multiple levels of society, including families, schools, and the media (Jessica Ringrose). Sexualisation is often gendered, meaning that it reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. It is not just about sexual imagery, but also about the ways in which sexual values and beliefs are promoted and normalized. Jessica Ringrose believes that sexualization can have negative consequences for young people, but that it is also possible to resist and challenge it. Most research focus on how young people themselves understand and negotiate sexualization.

Sexualization can be defined as the process of viewing or treating someone or something in a sexualized way. This can be done through images, words, or behaviors. The process of sexualization often involves reducing a person or object to a set of sexual characteristics or attributes, ignoring or devaluing other aspects of their identity. When done to a person, it can be seen as objectifying or dehumanizing. It can also have harmful effects on the individual,

including self-objectification and body dissatisfaction. In terms of critical analysis, sexualization can be viewed as a form of oppression or exploitation, or as a way to reinforce existing power structures.

Sexualization refers to portraying individuals primarily as sexual objects for other's gratification, where value is placed solely on appearance or sexual appeal (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007). Media platforms such as television, films, music videos, social media and advertisements are major contributors to this trend. The media often promotes hypersexualized images, especially of women, which reinforces stereotypical gender roles and beauty standards (Ward, 2002).

The portrayal of such content influences societal norms and expectations, particularly among young adults. Adolescents and students are consistently exposed to music lyrics, movies and social media posts that depicts sexual behavior, body objectification and appearance-based validation (López-Guimerá et al, 2010).

Sexualization can play a significant role in the personality development of children. In particular, it can influence the way that children view themselves and others, and the way that they relate to their own sexuality. For example, children who are exposed to sexualized media may develop an unrealistic or unhealthy body image, and may feel pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards. They may also internalize negative messages about their own sexuality, and may feel shame or guilt around their own sexual desires. Furthermore, sexualization can influence the way that children interact with and relate to others, and may lead to unhealthy relationships or sexual behaviors.

I. Cognitive Development

“Early exposure to sexual content can interfere with children’s cognitive understanding of age-appropriate sexual concepts (Asekun-Olarinmoye et al., 2014).” Premature exposure to sexual content may affect a child’s ability to understand age-appropriate concepts, potentially impacting their cognitive development.

II. Emotional Development

“Exposure to sexualized images and lyrics is associated with body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem among adolescents (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Papageorgiou et al., 2022; Social Media Use study, University of Nigeria, 2024).” Children may experience confusion, anxiety, or shame, affecting their emotional well-being and potentially leading to issues like low self-esteem or body image concerns.

III. Social Development

“Nigerian studies have reported links between media exposure and risky sexual behaviors, sexting, and shifts in relationship norms (Asekun-Olarinmoye et al., 2014; Ayinmoro, 2020; Olawade et al., 2024).” Sexualized media alters peer norms and boundary-setting, eroding healthy social interaction patterns among young people. Inappropriate sexualization can impact how children form relationships and interact with peers. It may lead to difficulties in establishing healthy boundaries and navigating social situations.

IV. Body Image and Self-Esteem

“Sexualized media and idealized images are strongly associated with body dissatisfaction and reduced self-esteem among youth (Grabe, S., Ward et al (2008)”. Exposure to unrealistic body standards or sexualized ideals may contribute to negative body image and low self-esteem, as children compare themselves to these ideals.

V. Relationship Perspectives

“Evidence suggests early exposure to adult sexual content can distort adolescents’ expectations about intimacy and relationships, contributing to risky behaviors and skewed relational scripts (Olawade et al. (2024)”. This explains that early exposure to adult relationships may result in distorted views on intimacy and relationships, potentially influencing how they approach these aspects as they grow older.

VI. Impact on Behavior:

Exposure often translates into behavioral imitation—such as sexting, sexualized speech, or risky sexual acts (Asekun Olarinmoye et al. (2014)”. Children might mimic inappropriate behaviors they observe, affecting their overall behavior and attitudes towards others.

2.2.3 Sexual objectification

Objectification occurs when individuals are seen and treated as things rather than people. Nussbaum (1995) [1] theorized that objectification entails several characteristics, arguably the most crucial one being instrumentality, where people are reduced to things serving others’ ends.

Treating workers as interchangeable functional tools to reach companies' goals or using women's sexualized body parts in the media to please the observer, for example, are forms of objectification, the former representing a specific type of working objectification.

Sexual objectification is a complex and multifaceted concept. Essentially, sexual objectification occurs when a person is seen or treated as a sexual object rather than as a person with agency and autonomy. This can happen in a number of different ways, such as when people are depicted in a sexualized way in the media, or when they are objectified through physical or verbal harassment. Sexual objectification can have a number of negative consequences, including body shame, low self-esteem, and mental health problems. It can also lead to sexual violence and other forms of gender-stereotypes.

When it comes to Sexual Objectification, individuals' bodies, appearance, or sexual functions are separated from their person for the use and consumption of others, as if their bodies (or sexual body parts) could represent their entire person. According to Objectification Theory, expressions of Sexual Objectification comprise both extreme (e.g. sexual harassment and violence) and more subtle acts (e.g. gazes and body evaluations) that are found to be part of women's daily experiences.

Research has examined Sexual Objectification in different ways, for example, exposing subjects to sexualized images of women (versus clothed women), or promoting a focus upon women's physical appearance rather than their personalities. Furthermore, over the years several measures of Sexual Objectification have been developed to capture a wide range of facets of the phenomenon.

Sexual Objectification and dehumanization — perceiving humans as less fully human or less human than others. In both these processes, people are perceived in ways that are basically inaccurate. Nussbaum (1995) argued that, in romantic relationships, SO may be undertaken in a context of mutual respect and, therefore, be benign, while it becomes problematic when the partner's humanity is reduced or denied, hence, theoretically positing a distinction between the two concepts.

2.2.4 Sexualized Media and Media Content

Sexualized media and media content that youths are exposed to can vary widely. The media landscape has grown vastly as different forms of media in the technological era are the most used by youths. As the traditional media evolves there is a wide range of youth consumption of information causing both positive and negative impacts. However, the growth of the new media is tied to a risk of sexualized media content on youth. Various sexualized media with sexualized media content includes:

1. **Music Videos:** Many music videos feature sexualized imagery, explicit lyrics and dance moves. This, however can cause youth to want to practice this sexualized dance moves. An exposed youth can use sexualized lyrics as in language which can lead to sexting or sexual addiction thereby forming a hyper sexuality disorder personality.
2. **Movies and TV shows:** some movies and Tv shows contain sexualized content, including nudity, sex scenes and suggestive dialogue. Reality tv shows like 'The Bachelor', 'Keeping up with the Kardashians' and 'Big Brother Naija' often feature sexualized content and drama. The behavior of a young person who has been exposed to

this sexualized media has subconsciously developed a personality linked to the sexualized content of the shows.

3. **Magazines and advertising:** some magazines and advertisements feature sexualized images and messaging. This content register a wrong perception about relationship set and body image in the mind of youths.
4. **Video games:** Some video games contain sexualized content, including characters, dialogue and gameplay.
5. **Social media and online content:** social media platforms, online videos, and websites can expose youths to sexualized content, including explicit images, videos and live streams. Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram can expose you to sexualized content including dance videos, lip-syncing and suggestive images. TikTok trends such as twerking videos can have high impact on youths who sees them as they would want to engage in such trend to feel among. However, the sexualized lifestyle of people on social media can lead to low self-esteem, insecurity or inferiority complex of young people who are exposed to such content as regards their personality. Youth may be exposed to online pornography, either intentionally or unintentionally which can have negative effect on their mental and emotional well-being.
6. **YouTube:** some YouTube videos, especially those focused on beauty, fashion ad lifestyle can feature sexualized contents. YouTube vlogs often lead to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and peer pressure of youths who watch or follow them as they tend to create high beauty standards.

2.2.5 Personality development

Personality development encompasses the dynamic construction and deconstruction of integrative characteristics that distinguish an individual in terms of interpersonal behavioral traits. Personality development is ever-changing and subject to contextual factors and life-altering experiences. Personality development is also dimensional in description and subjective in nature. That is, personality development can be seen as a continuum varying in degrees of intensity and change. It is subjective in nature because its conceptualization is rooted in social norms of expected behavior, self-expression, and personal growth. The dominant viewpoint in personality psychology indicates that personality emerges early and continues to develop across one's lifespan. Adult personality traits are believed to have a basis in infant temperament, meaning that individual differences in disposition and behavior appear early in life, potentially before language of conscious self-representation develop. The Five Factor Model of personality maps onto the dimensions of childhood temperament. This suggests that individual differences in levels of the corresponding personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) are present from young ages.

Personality development refers to the continuous process through which individuals form and refine patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that define their uniqueness (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2009). It is shaped by both internal dispositions (such as temperament and cognition) and external influences (such as family, peers, culture, and media). For university students, personality development is particularly critical, as this stage of life involves identity formation, experimentation, and adaptation to new social environments. Media consumption,

especially sexualized media, has become one of the most powerful external forces shaping personality during this period. The way students process, interpret, and internalize media content directly impacts their self-concept, relationships, and worldview.

Personality development can be understood along several dimensions that align with this study's research objectives:

i. Body Image

Personality development involves how individuals perceive and evaluate their physical appearance. Sexualized media often presents unrealistic beauty ideals that can affect students' body image. Overexposure may lead to dissatisfaction, pressure to conform, or the adoption of hypersexualized appearances as part of their identity (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008).

ii. Self-Esteem

A major component of personality is self-worth and confidence. Exposure to media portrayals that prioritize sexual attractiveness can lower students' self-esteem if they feel they do not meet such standards. Conversely, some students may find empowerment through sexualized representations, making media a double-edged influence (Papageorgiou et al., 2022).

iii. Mode of Dressing

Personality also reflects in outward expressions such as fashion and style. Students often imitate the dressing patterns of media figures they admire. Sexualized media content can normalize provocative dressing, which students may adopt as part of their evolving self-expression (Ayinmoro, 2020).

iv. Gender Stereotyping

Personality development includes internalizing social roles and gender expectations. Media often reinforces stereotypical portrayals of men as dominant and women as sexual objects. Such portrayals can influence students' gender identities, expectations in relationships, and attitudes toward equality (Ward, 2016).

v. Communication Style

How individuals express themselves is also part of personality. Students may adopt slang, gestures, or sexualized speech patterns influenced by music lyrics, movies, or online trends. This form of imitation reflects how media consumption can shape not just internal attitudes but outward communication behaviors (Bandura, 2001).

From a theoretical lens, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) explains how students learn behaviors and norms by observing and modeling media figures. Similarly, objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) helps explain how repeated exposure to sexualized media encourages self-objectification, thereby shaping aspects of personality such as self-esteem and body image.

Conclusively, personality development is a multidimensional process that extends beyond internal growth to include the influence of social and media environments. In the context of

Nigerian university students, sexualized media plays a pivotal role in shaping identity, values, and behaviors across body image, self-esteem, dressing, gender roles, and communication styles; dimensions that form the basis of this study.

2.2.6 Sexualization and Personality Development

The relationship between sexualization and personality development is complex, but research has shown that there is a significant link between the two. One study found that children who are exposed to sexualized content in the media are more likely to have negative self-perceptions, including lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and lower feelings of overall well-being. The study also found that youths who were exposed to sexualized content were more likely to internalize unhealthy gender stereotypes. Additionally, young people who were exposed to sexualized content were more likely to have negative attitudes towards girls and women, and they were also more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior. Personality traits demonstrate moderate levels of continuity, smaller but still significant normative or mean-level changes, and individual differences in change, often late into the life course. This pattern is influenced by genetic, environmental, transactional, and stochastic factors. Hence, Sexualization is one of the factors that can alter personality development especially in the early stage. Early sexualization can lead to a young person becoming a sexist as exposure to sexualized media content can lead to objectification of women and girls, contributing to a culture of sexism and misogyny. Sexualized media content may shape young people's perception of sex in the wrong way causing them to act on such content they have consumed. An individual's personality is subject to perception, believes, or experience of such an individual. Therefore there is a link between the

perception or idea of sex and an individual's personality. Most movie shows, which portray or feature unrealistic sex scenes create a wrong idea and view of sex in the minds of young individuals causing them to act upon those scenes they have been exposed to. This in turn has made quite a number of sexually-active youths in the society today. Sexualized media content can significantly impact a young individual's personality development, particularly during adolescence and early adulthood.

Some of the ways sexualization can impact an individual's personality are;

- Self-objectification where individuals view themselves as objects for others pleasure, rather than whole persons with thoughts, feelings, and agency.
- Unrealistic expectations and comparisons where it has presented unrealistic beauty , body and relationship standards leading to negative self-comparisons and decreased self-esteem.
- Sexualized relationships where it has lead to the belief that sexual relationships are the primary or only meaningful way to connect with others.
- Aggressive and dominant attitudes toward others which are adopted through such contents in personal relationships.
- Decreased empathy and intimacy in personal relationships , as individuals may become desensitized to the emotional needs and boundaries of others.

2.2.7 Media Content and Youth Exposure

The relationship between the media and youth exposure is a significant concern as it has both positive and negative effects on young people. Media is a powerful socializing agent that

shapes perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The increasing consumption of media content by university students exposes them to sexualized images and messages that may influence their personality traits, moral reasoning, and behavior. Platforms such as Tiktok, Instagram, YouTube and streaming services often prioritise content that portrays hyper sexualized images which can subtly condition viewer's understanding of relationships, gender roles and self-image. Youth exposure to media content is widespread with adolescents spending an average of 7-10 hours per day consuming media. This exposure can shape their:

1. **Values and attitudes:** Media content can influence their beliefs, values, and attitudes towards themselves, others and society.
2. **Behavior and actions:** media contents can encourage and discourage certain behaviors such as; aggression, substance use or sexual activity.
3. **Emotional and mental well-being:** media content can impact that emotional and mental health, including their self-esteem, anxiety and depression.

However exposure to certain types of media content can have negative effect on youths including:

1. **Aggression and violence:** Exposure to violent media content can increase aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
2. **Sexualization and objectification:** Exposure to sexualized media content can lead to the objectification of women and girls, contributing to a culture of sexism and misogyny.
3. **Body image concerns and low self-esteem:** Exposure to media content that promotes unrealistic beauty standards can lead to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

4. **Desensitization and decreased empathy:** Exposure to violent or disturbing media content can desensitize youths to the suffering of others, leading to decreased empathy and compassion.

Youths at different ages and developmental stages may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of media content thereby altering their personality as regards the violent, sexualized or otherwise problematic contents they are exposed to. The issue of lack of proper regulation or control of youth media consumption makes them more susceptible to the negative effect of such media content. Youth with pre-existing mental health conditions, trauma or other vulnerabilities tend to be more affected.

2.3 Opinion review

2.3.1 Effects of sexualized media on children's self esteem

According to Dr. Murnen, the negative effects of sexualized media on children's self-esteem include body dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety. Children who are exposed to sexualized media often internalize the unrealistic and highly sexualized body image portrayed in the media, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Dr. Murnen's research has also found that children who are exposed to sexualized media are more likely to engage in negative comparison, in which they compare themselves to others and focus on perceived flaws in their appearance. Additionally, exposure to sexualized media can lead to decreased body satisfaction and an increased.

Another Professor of psychology, Dr Slater in his research found that sexualized media can have a negative impact on children's self-esteem by reinforcing gender stereotypes. In

particular, Dr. Slater has found that children who are exposed to sexualized media may develop beliefs that there are rigid, stereotypical gender roles that they are expected to conform to. Children may also develop the belief that their worth is based on their physical appearance, rather than their personal qualities or achievements. Additionally, Dr. Slater's research has found that sexualized media can lead to feelings of self-objectification, in which children view themselves as objects to be evaluated and judged based on their physical appearance.

2.3.2 Cultural and Social Influence of Sexualization

Cultural influence is a concept that is used in a variety of fields, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology. In psychology, cultural influence refers to the ways in which the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a culture can affect the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals within that culture. This can include both direct and indirect influences, such as the ways in which a culture shapes the way individuals think about themselves and others, as well as the explicit and implicit rules and norms that govern behavior. Scholars have also identified a number of different dimensions of cultural influence, including power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity.

There are a number of cultural influences that can impact the relationship between sexualization and personality development. One important cultural influence is the gender norms and expectations that are prevalent in a given society. In societies where traditional gender roles are highly valued, sexualization may be more likely to have negative effects on children's self-esteem and personality development. Additionally, the level of media exposure in a given society can also play a role in the impact of sexualized media on children. In societies where children are

exposed to more sexualized media, the negative effects of this exposure may be more pronounced. Finally, To give a more specific example, differences in the cultural context of the United States and Japan. In the United States, there is a strong emphasis on individualism and independence, while in Japan, collectivism and conformity are highly valued. In a society like the United States, where individualism is highly valued, the effects of sexualized media may be more pronounced, as children may feel pressured to conform to a particular appearance or behavior in order to fit in with their peers. On the other hand, in a society like Japan, where conformity is highly valued, children may be less likely to internalize the messages of sexualized media.

2.3.3. Impact of Sexualization on Children Gender Roles

Carol Martin, a professor of psychology at the University of Washington. In her research, Martin has found that sexualization can have a significant impact on children's gender role attitudes and gender stereotypes. For example, children who are exposed to sexualized images of women are more likely to hold traditional gender stereotypes, such as the belief that women are less competent than men. She has also found that sexualization can lead to more gender-stereotyped perceptions of childhood, such as the belief that boys should be active and aggressive, while girls should be passive and submissive.

According to Carol Martin, children who were exposed to sexualized images of women tended to view women as less competent and less intelligent, and they were also more likely to believe that women should be subservient to men. This is likely due to the fact that these images portray women as sexual objects rather than as individuals with agency and competence.

Additionally, children who were exposed to more gender-stereotyped images of childhood tended to view boys and girls as more different from each other, and they were also more likely to believe that gender roles are fixed.

2.4 Review on Empirical Studies

Several researchers have conducted empirical research and studies that are relevant to this present study. This section reviews the works of such scholars as they relate to this current study. The empirical works reviewed are:

L Monique Ward (2016).The Journal of Sex Research 53 (4-5), 560-577, 2016

Ward (2016) conducted a comprehensive review on the influence of sexualization in mainstream media. The study synthesized 135 empirical investigations published between 1995 and 2015, focusing on the effects of sexually objectifying portrayals of women. Findings revealed consistent evidence that exposure both experimental and everyday, was associated with body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, sexist beliefs, adversarial sexual attitudes, and tolerance of sexual violence. Additionally, exposure reduced perceptions of women's competence, morality, and humanity. This study is relevant to the present research as it demonstrates that frequent exposure to sexualized media content has significant implications for personality development, particularly in shaping self-esteem, body image, and gender perceptions among young audiences.

Fasoli, Durante, Mari, Zogmaister, & Volpato (2018) shades of Sexualization

This study examined the distinction between sexualization and sexual objectification in mass media. Across two studies, participants judged male and female models portrayed with

varying levels of sexualization: non-revealing, merely revealing, and sexualized revealing. Results showed that higher levels of sexualization increased perceptions of both men and women as sexual objects. However, competence and attractiveness were judged differently depending on gender: male competence decreased with more sexualization, whereas female models were judged equally incompetent across revealing categories but more sexually attractive when portrayed in a sexualized revealing manner. These findings highlight how sexualized portrayals influence not only objectification but also perceptions of gender roles and identity. This connects to the present study as it underscores how exposure to sexualized content can affect students' perceptions of themselves and others, thereby influencing personality development in terms of body image, dressing style, and gender stereotyping.

Other Relevant Studies

Several other studies have also highlighted the role of media in shaping personality and perceptions. For instance, Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008) found that exposure to sexualized media was linked to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders, while Aubrey (2006) demonstrated that sexual objectification in media correlates with lowered self-esteem among female viewers. These findings collectively reinforce the argument that sexualized media significantly contributes to personality development during formative years, particularly among university students.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Asemah (2017), a theory is a collection of presumptions, accepted facts, or assumptions that aims to offer a logical or cervical explanation of the cause and effect (casual)

relationships between a collection of observed phenomenon. McQuail (1987) explain that theories are collections of concepts with varying statuses and origins that can explain or interpret certain phenomena. Hence, this study is anchored on the Social cognitive theory, Cognitive developmental and humanistic theory.

Social learning Theory (Albert Bandura)

Bandura (1977) asserts that people learn social behaviors through observation, limitation and modeling.

- **Observation;** people learn by observing others, including their behaviors, attitudes and outcomes.
- **Limitation:** people imitate the behaviors they observe, especially if they see others being reinforced or rewarded for those behaviors.
- **Modelling:** people learn from models who can be individuals groups or even media characters
- **Reinforcement:** People learn by associating behaviors with consequences such as rewards or punishments.
- **Self-efficacy:** people's beliefs about their ability to perform a behavior influence their motivation to learn and adopt that behavior.

According to this theory, the media provides a vast array of models for students to observe, many of which emphasize sexualized behaviors. These media characters, celebrities, and influencers serve as models for youth, influencing their attitudes, behaviors and values. Youths also observe media content and imitate the behaviors, attitudes and language they see.

This theory explains that media content can reinforce certain behaviors by depicting positive consequences and results. As students repeatedly watch such content, they may adopt similar attitudes and behavior, believing them to be normal or expected (Brown & Bobowski, 2011). This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it identifies the media as models that influence attitudes or a person's personality in general. It explains complex behaviors such as sexual behavior which is one of the key aspects in this research.

Cultivation Theory (George Gerbner)

Gerbner's cultivation theory persists that prolonged exposure to television and other media forms gradually shapes viewers' perceptions of reality (Gerbner et al. 2002). For students, constant exposure to sexualized media can create a distorted worldview where sexual objectification and hypersexual behavior are perceived as standards social norms. It explains how exposure to media content can shape people's perceptions of reality, influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. It further explains that media exposure cultivates or shapes people's perceptions of reality especially regarding social issue, norms and values. Under this theory, media content presents a mainstream or dominant view of reality, which can influence people's personality.

This theory is relevant in this study in the sense that it explain that media contents shapes youth's perceptions of reality especially their view of social topics such as sex and relationships.

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

Objectification theory explains how media sexualization leads individuals, especially women, to view themselves from an outsider's perspective, resulting in self-objectification. This

can manifest as body shame, appearance anxiety and diminished cognitive functioning (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). For students, this process can negatively impact self-esteem and personality development.

2.6. Summary of the chapter

This chapter focused on the history of sexualization and personality development. Also a conceptual review to understand the viewpoints of scholars in relation to this research topic. Additionally, focused on sexual objectification, effects of sexualized media contents and media roles in young individuals' sexualization. It also included the review of empirical studies and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the method of data collection, particularly the design, the population, the sample size, sampling technique, instrument of data collection, validity and reliability of the instrument as well as the method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the survey design, which was used to determine the effects of sexualisation through media contents on the personality development of University of Benin students. Survey in its literal form means to examine a group of items. It is an activity that is aimed at discovering the stand, position of a particular people on a subject matter. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, Okpanachi (2012), a survey is an indepth investigation that looks for descriptive features of a phenomenon through the use of questionnaires or interviews. Bhaskaran (n d) explains that data from a group of respondents is gathered via survey research, which is also a quantitative research technique. Similarly, Asemah et al (2012) emphasize that a survey is a type of research design where the goal is to draw broad conclusions about human behaviour from observation made within a sampled population. Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p.179) cited in Asemah et al (2012), noted that survey requires a very careful planning and execution as the researcher who embarks on survey research or uses the survey research approach must consider a lot of decisions and problems. This research design will be accurate for the study.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study was gotten from the University of Benin desk. The population of this study is 77000. This is the total number of students currently studying at the University.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study is 398 . The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n= sample size

N= total population

e= sampling error

^= raise to power of

Thus:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

$$n = 77000 / (1 + 77000(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 77000 / (1 + 77000(0.0025))$$

$$n = 77000 / (1 + 192.5)$$

$$n = 77000 / 193.5$$

$$n = 397$$

$$n = 398$$

3.4 Sampling Technique

In this study, the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to ensure fair representation of students across the University of Benin. The first stage involved dividing the university into its main campuses. From each campus, a number of faculties were selected to ensure coverage of both science-based and arts-based disciplines. At the second stage, departments were randomly chosen within the selected faculties. Finally, respondents were

drawn from the selected departments using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling methods.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only undergraduate students within the age bracket of 16–30 years were selected, as they represent the most active consumers of media. Within this group, the simple random sampling technique was applied in distributing and collecting the questionnaire to avoid bias and give every eligible student an equal chance of being selected.

In total, 398 students participated in the study, and they were proportionally distributed across the selected campuses, faculties, and departments of the University of Benin. This approach provided a sample that was large, diverse, and representative of the population, thereby enhancing the reliability of the findings.

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument to be used in collecting data from respondents is questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research tool that consists of a list of inquiries or other “prompts” meant to gather information from a group of participants. At the core of any survey research project is the written questionnaire, Anonymous (n d).

Asemah et al (2012) explains a questionnaire to be a structured form, either written or printed, consists of a formalised set of questions designed to collect information on some subject from one or more respondents. In other words, it a means of data collection where respondents are asked to provide answers to certain questions in a research work. In this case, the

questionnaire was constructed based on the fact that there was a need to collect data from many anonymous respondents. Questionnaires provides standardisation (Bourke et al. 2016).

Questions on a questionnaire can be in either of two forms. There could either be structured or unstructured. When a questionnaire is structured, it means that the respondent are provided with option to choose from while in an unstructured questionnaire, the respondents are not limited to options as here are no options provided, they provide answers to questions in their own words.

This research work will be using a structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

According to Okwechime (2011, p.59), validity is a vital quality of any measuring instrument in research. The validity of a measurement tool is the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. Before approving the instrument as legitimate, the project supervisor will ensure it meets all the requirements to validate the instrument and it's standard.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

The instrument for this research work was deemed to be very reliable seeing that it is the most suitable method of collecting data from participants of this study, and it will be highly effective in fulfilling the objective of the study. Moreso, a pilot study was conducted and 10-15 questionnaires were issued to respondents for a test.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary sources were used by the researcher for the investigation. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents both in person and online for the primary data source.

Across the demographic and psychographic sections of the questionnaire, pertinent questions were included. On the other hand, the secondary source of data was gathered by means of online and library research, general textbooks, pertinent works completed by prior research, articles and notes.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through questionnaires would be analysed using simple percentage and frequency tables. Frequency distribution table is a method employed to analyse data gotten from different groups to make them meaningful and easier to understand, which are also used to achieve a purpose. The percentages were obtained by placing number of responses per question, per column over the total number of respondents and multiplying by 100. That is:

$$\frac{X}{Y} * 100$$

$$Y = 1$$

Where X is the number of responses per column.

Y is the total number of the respondents (questionnaire recovered)

100 is the percentage.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: The gender to which the respondents belong

Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Male	148	37%
Female	250	63%

Total	398	100%
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Source: Field survey (2025).

Table 1 reveals both males and females were involved in the study. However, from the data presented above, female respondents sampled two hundred and fifty (250) representing (63%) participated more in the study as compared to the male respondents.

Table 2: The age bracket of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage%
15-20	82	21%
21-30	285	71%
31-40	31	8%
40 and above	0	0%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 2 reveals that out of a total number of 398 respondents sampled, 285 respondents representing (71%) of the sampled population are between the age bracket of 20-30 years. However, the analysis of the above data entails that the majority of the respondents are youths (age bracket of 20-30).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage%
Christianity	352	88%
Islamic	46	12%
Others	0	0%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows that respondents that took part in this study were Christians and Muslims.

But then Christians contributed to more of the study as 12% of participants were Muslims

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by level of educational qualification Educational qualification

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage%
Undergraduate	315	79%
First degree	62	16%
Master	12	3%
PHD	9	2%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4 shows that respondents that took part in the study were of different levels of educational qualification. However undergraduates contributed a larger fraction as the respondents of the study. Followed by the first degree holders, then Master students. The PHD students were the lesser participants of the study.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage%
Single	347	87%
Married	51	13%
Divorced	0	0%
Widowed	0	0%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 5 shows that respondents who participated in the survey study were either single or married. But then a majority of the respondents who participated were single (87%), while a lesser fraction of the respondents (13%) were married.

Table 6: Frequency of students' media consumption (e.g news, movies, social media, music videos etc)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Daily	375	94%
Occasionally	17	4%
Rarely	6	2%
Never	0	0%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

This table reveals that majority of the respondents regularly consume media contents

Table 7: Media/ Media platforms frequently used by students that expose them to sexualized contents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter X, Snapchat)	223	56%
Print media (newspapers, magazines)	21	5%
Broadcast media (TV, radio)	37	9%
Streaming platforms (Spotify, Netflix, YouTube)	106	27%
Advertisement(billboards, commercials etc)	11	3%

Total	398	100%
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 7 shows that social media is the dominant source of sexualized content, consistent with global youth media trends.

Table 8: Frequency of students encountering sexualized contents (eg nudity, provocative dressing, sexual themes etc)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Very often	84	21%
Often	238	60%
Rarely	55	14%
Never	21	5%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 8 reveals that vast majority of students frequently encounter sexualized content, indicating that exposure is regular and unavoidable

Table 9: Forms of sexualized contents students most frequently see

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Nudity, provocative dressing	147	37%
Explicit music lyrics, images, videos	93	23%
Sexual themes, objectification	17	4%
Sex scenes in movies	65	16%
Sexualized advertisement	17	4%
Suggestive dance/ poses	35	9%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 9 implies that Visual sexualization (nudity, fashion, provocative dressing) is the most common form, shaping students' perceptions of attractiveness and behavior.

Table 10: Influence of sexualized contents on body image and self-esteem

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly Agree	150	38%
Agree	128	32%
Undecided	60	15%
Disagree	40	10%
Strongly disagree	20	5%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 10 highlights that majority of the respondents recognize that media impacts their self-worth and body perception, key aspects of personality development.

Table 11: Influence of sexualized contents on students' mode of dressing

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly Agree	107	27%
Agree	159	40%
Undecided	60	15%
Disagree	47	12%
Strongly disagree	25	6%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 11 reveals that majority of the respondents agree that sexualized media strongly shapes students' fashion choices and external identity expression.

Table 12: Sexualized media effects on peer relationships

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	98	25%
Agree	216	54%
Undecided	44	11%

Strongly disagree	17	4%
Disagree	23	6%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The table above shows 216 respondents representing (54%) agreed that sexualized contents affect their peer relationships. Therefore, peer dynamics are shaped by sexualized media, with pressure to conform affecting friendships and social interactions.

Table 13: Pressure on students to look or behave in certain ways due to sexual contents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	349	99%
No	45	11%
Maybe	4	1%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The data in the table 13 reveals that students are being pressured to look and behave in certain ways due to sexual contents.

Table 14: Students perception on sexual themes, objectification and gender stereotypes

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	204	51%
Agree	112	28%
Undecided	23	6%
Disagree	35	9%
Strongly disagree	24	6%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 14 confirmed that media reinforces gender stereotypes. This implies that media contributes to rigid gender roles objectifying women and reinforcing hyper- masculinity.

Table 15: Adoption of provocative and vulgar language as a result of exposure to sexualized contents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	210	53%
No	100	25%
Maybe	88	22%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 15 reveals that majority of respondents admitted to adopting vulgar language, showing media's effects on students' communication and social expression.

Table 16: Extent sexualized contents have influenced students' personality

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Very high	120	30%
High	155	39%
Undecided	60	15%
Low	40	10%
Very low	23	6%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The data in this table 16 explains that most students feel sexualized media has a strong influence on their personality development.

Table 17: Perceived long term effects of sexualized media on personality development

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	348	87%
No	11	3%

Maybe	39	10%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

In the above table students largely recognize that exposure has long term implication potentially shaping long life behaviors, attitudes and values.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the extent at which students of the University of Benin are exposed to sexualized media contents?

In order to provide answers to the research question, data presented by tables 6,7,8 and 9 will be used. These tables show exposure patterns of students towards sexualized media contents.

The results from the study reveal that students of the University of Benin are highly exposed to sexualized media contents across multiple platforms. Table 6 which reveals the frequency of exposure show that a majority of respondents indicated very high levels of exposure, while only a small percentage reported low or very low exposure. However, the high level of media consumption could expose students to risk of sexualized contents on various media platforms they regularly engage with. This hypothetically suggests that sexualized content has become a normal part of students' daily media consumption. Moreover, it indicates that students are familiar with and are highly exposed to media contents due to daily consumption of such contents. Also, table 7 focused on the platforms where students are most exposed. The data showed that social media (TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube) ranked highest, followed by music videos/lyrics and movies/TV shows. Advertisements and print media were the least reported. This finding is consistent with existing research which shows that digital media is the

primary driver of youth exposure to sexualized content. Social media platforms are reportedly primary sources of sexualized contents. The nature of social media platforms (widespread, accessibility, no regulation, user-generated content etc.) makes students subjectable to risks of sexualized contents. Social media platforms such as Snapchat expose students to sexting and sexual themes. Also, Twitter X is a platform that has risks of contents on sexual objectification and gender stereotyping contents. Explicit images and videos on TikTok are usually suggestive and provocative creating unrealistic standards which affects the body image and self-esteem of those that are exposed to such content.

Table 8 examined how often students encounter sexualized content while using media. The analysis revealed that most students reported encountering such content very often or often, particularly on social media platforms. This indicates that exposure is not accidental but frequent and recurring, which may increase the likelihood of internalizing such content. This explains that with the high level of user generated content on social media platforms, students are frequently exposed to sexualized contents.

Table 9 on the forms of sexualized content, revealed that nudity and provocative dressing (37%) explicit music lyrics, images and videos (23%) and sex scenes (16%) were the most frequently seen, while sexualized adverts with 17(4%) on broadcast were least reported. This highlights how visual and entertainment media dominate in shaping students' exposure. It ascertain that sexualized contents on social media are mostly seen. These sexualized contents confirm the role of fashion and entertainment in shaping sexual norms.

Overall, the findings strongly suggest that UNIBEN students are regularly and significantly exposed to sexualized media content, particularly through digital and entertainment platforms. The implication is that sexualized content is now embedded in the media landscape students consume daily, making it difficult for them to avoid or critically filter such content.

This supports Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1976), which argues that long-term exposure to media content shapes viewers' perceptions of reality. In this context, students' high exposure may normalize sexualized behavior and attitudes as part of everyday life.

Research Question 2: What media are students being exposed to sexualized media?

Table 7 and 9 provide relevant data to answer this research question. To find out the media students are being exposed to sexualized contents, table 7 revealed that social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, YouTube, and Snapchat were reported as the most common sources of exposure, accounting for 213 (54%) responses. This is expected, as students spend a significant portion of their daily time on these platforms, where sexualized images, themes, gender stereotypes, provocative dressing, unrealistic beauty standards, dances, and challenges circulate widely. Streaming platforms (such as Netflix, Spotify, YouTube, audio mack etc.) also featured prominently with 116(29%) responses, exposing students to sexualized portrayals through sex scenes, suggestive dialogues, nudity, romanticized plots, sexual themes and music videos and lyrics that glamorize sexual behavior. Broadcast(TV and radio), advertisements (billboards, commercials, and online ads) and print media (magazines and newspapers) were also mentioned but to a lesser degree. This suggests that while traditional

media still plays a role, students' primary sources of exposure are interactive and visual-based platforms.

The responses from Table 9 further confirmed the dominance of these platforms, as 147 (37%) students reported being most frequently exposed to nudity/ provocative dressing, 93 (23%) of students exposed to explicit lyrics/ videos, revealing clothing, and 65 (16%) sex scenes in movies. These are content types that circulate heavily on social media, music, and movie platforms, reinforcing the idea that entertainment-driven media are the central transmitters of sexualized content.

Therefore, findings show that UNIBEN students are primarily exposed to sexualized content via social media, music, and movies/TV platforms, while exposure through advertisements and print media remains relatively low. This aligns with global research on youth media use, which highlights that digital platforms are the most influential media channels in shaping sexual norms and behaviors among young people.

The findings also support the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that students actively choose media that entertains, informs, or validates their identities. In this case, their frequent use of social media and music platforms inadvertently increases their exposure to sexualized content.

Research Question 3: What are the implications of sexualized contents on personality development of students of the University of Benin?

To identify the answers to this question, tables 10,11,12,13,14,15, 16 and 17 will be used to determine the implications of sexualized media content on the personality development of students of the University of Benin.

Table 10 reveals 150 (38%) majority of respondents strongly agreed that exposure to sexualized has affected how they view their body image and self-esteem. These are personality traits; fragments that form their personality. Personality development is affected deeply by these traits that have been influenced by sexualized media contents. This suggests that students often compare themselves with unrealistic portrayals in the media, thereby leading to dissatisfaction with their physical appearance and an increased likelihood of body shaming or pressure to conform to sexualized standards of beauty. Conversely, the self esteem of students are affected. Self-esteem refers to self-worth and self-confidence. The implication is that due to such contents, many students may develop feelings of inadequacy or insecurity when they cannot match the lifestyles, looks or sexual appeal presented in the media content. This automatically negates their academic performance, social interactions and mental health.

Also, in table 11 responses to mode of dressing showed that 159(40%) of respondents strongly agreed that exposure to sexualized contents affect their dressing styles. This implies that students feel pressured to dress in certain ways that meet the beauty standards they see on the media. Internalized media influence translates into outward behavioral expression. Students admitted that their choice of clothing is significantly affected by what they see in music videos, movies and on social media. This demonstrates how personality development is not about self-perception but also about outward adaptation to perceived social standards.

Table 12 also explains that students with majority of 216(56%) agree that sexualized contents have sharpened their perception on sexual and peer relationships. Implication is that these sexualized contents have sharpened the general view and ideology regarding topics like sex and relationships. In the view of this, students have sexual expectations in their relationships because of what they have probably seen in the media and the idea they are forced to have about what sex should be this is tied to their personality development. The media play a role in shaping students personality, therefore exposure to sexualized media would have a negative effect on students perception of relationships and influence their relationships.

Table 13 examined the pressure of students caused by exposure to sexualized contents. Majority of students with 349(88%) responses, admit that they feel pressurized to act in certain ways prior the sexualized contents they see.

Table 14 unpacks how gender stereotyping happens and why it matters for students' personality growth. The findings of this study indicate that 204 (51%) of students largely agreed that sexualized contents, such as sexual themes and sexual objectification, contribute to gender stereotyping.

Specifically, the responses show that media often portrays women as objects of beauty and sexuality, emphasizing physical appearance, submissiveness, and attractiveness as their primary value. Conversely, men are frequently represented as dominant, aggressive, or sexually driven, reinforcing the idea that masculinity is tied to control and sexual conquest. The students' acknowledgment of this influence suggests that media plays a strong role in shaping perceptions of what it means to be "male" or "female" in contemporary society. This finding has direct

implications for personality development. Gender stereotypes can limit the freedom of students to explore their identities beyond restrictive roles. For instance, female students who internalize objectification may feel pressured to prioritize beauty over intellect, while male students may feel compelled to adopt aggressive or hyper-masculine behaviors in order to meet societal expectations. In both cases, students' self-expression and development are constrained by these media-induced stereotypes. These results are in line with previous research showing that sexual objectification in media perpetuates gender inequality, by normalizing the treatment of women as objects for male pleasure and reinforcing harmful assumptions about male dominance. The findings also support Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which posits that media representations reinforce cultural beliefs about the roles appropriate for each gender. Similarly, Cultivation Theory suggests that consistent exposure to these portrayals can shape students' long-term beliefs and expectations about gender.

While Table 15 examines students' language through the sexualized contents they engage with, 210(53 %) of students agree that they have adopted sexualized language such as provocative and vulgar due to exposure of such contents. The contents they have been exposed to, register mentally and this makes students act subconsciously based on what they see or hear. The character they exhibit as such as their communication patterns and social interactions are influenced as a result of sexualized content they have been exposed to. Table 16 indicates that the extent at which sexualized contents have influenced students' personality is very high with 120(30%) of students. This indicates that students' personality can be is tied to high level of exposure to sexualized media contents. Table 17 shows that sexualized media contents has long

– term effects on students’ personality development. 216 (54%) of students strongly agree that sexualized contents could have negative long term effects on their personality development. These negative long term effects are aggression, depression, insecurity and the rest that can influence the personality of students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research work set out to examine the effects of sexualized media content on the personality development of students of the University of Benin. Sexualization is seen as attribution of sexual characters to a person or an object therefore this study sought to explain the effects of sexualization on personality development of students through the media contents they consume. During the course of this study, sexualized media contents and personality development were crux points. Based on critical research conducted, it can be deduced that media contents is very critical in shaping perception of sexualization thereby having implications on personality. It can also be concluded that students' personality development could be tied to exposure to sexualized media contents. However, it can also be concluded that students of the University of Benin are very well exposed to sexualized media contents which have impacted their personality development.

This work used a descriptive survey as a research method, while questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. A total of 398 respondents participated in the survey and data gathered were presented and analyzed with simple frequency and percentage tables to answer the research questions raised in the course of the study.

Based on accurate analysis of data gotten from research, it was discovered that,

1. Personality development is tied to perception of sexualization and exposure to media contents shapes such perception.
2. Exposure to sexualized media contents is on the high side with students using media with high risks of sexuality regularly.

3. Social media (56%) and streaming platforms (27%) were identified as major sources of sexualized media contents.
4. Students are constantly interacting with sexualized images, lyrics, and themes in their everyday media use as the most common forms of sexualization reported were nudity and provocative dressing (37%), explicit music lyrics and videos (23%), and sex scenes in movies (16%).
5. Sexualized content significantly affects students' personality development as regards, body image, self-esteem, mode of dressing and peer relationships.
6. Sexualized media has profound and lasting implications on the developmental outcomes of young people in the university environment.

5.2 Conclusions

This study on the evaluation of the effects of Sexualization through media contents on the personality development of students of the University of Benin has clearly demonstrated that students of the University of Benin are highly exposed to sexualized media content, primarily through social media and streaming platforms. This exposure significantly influences their personality traits such as body image, self-esteem, mode of dressing, language use, and peer relationships. The study also revealed that sexualized media contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and creates pressure on students to conform to unrealistic and provocative standards of behavior.

Overall, the research concludes that sexualized media content negatively impacts the personality development of students, creating pressures to conform to unrealistic standards,

encouraging vulgar language, shaping dressing patterns, and reinforcing stereotypes. These influences extend beyond immediate behavior, as students also acknowledged the possibility of long-term effects on their values, attitudes, and social identity.

It is therefore concluded that sexualized media content plays a negative role in shaping the personality development of students by distorting their self-perceptions, encouraging superficial values, and fostering behavioral changes that may conflict with cultural and moral expectations.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the discoveries of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Parental and Guardian Guidance:** Parents and guardians should be more intentional in guiding young people on responsible media consumption. Open discussions about the influence of sexualized content can help reduce its negative impact on personality development.
2. **Policy Regulation of Media Content:** Government agencies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should strengthen policies to regulate the type of sexualized content aired on broadcast and streaming platforms, especially during peak youth viewing hours.
3. **Personal Responsibility and Self-Regulation:** Students themselves must adopt responsible media habits by setting boundaries for the kind of content they consume. Peer groups can also play a role by discouraging the normalization of vulgar language, provocative dressing, and stereotypes.

4. Further Research: Future studies should extend beyond the University of Benin to include other universities in Nigeria, so as to provide a broader understanding of the impact of sexualized media on youth personality development across diverse contexts.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

Dear Respondent,

I am, Ihaza-Osahon Edith Ebehirewhen, a final year student of the University of Benin, in the department of Mass Communication.

I am conducting a research study on “The Effects of Sexualized Media Content on the Personality Development of Students of the University of Benin.” The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather your honest opinions to help complete this research. Please note that all information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Yours faithfully,

Ihaza-Osahon Edith Ebehirewhen
Researcher

QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly tick (✓) the option that best applies to you

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age Bracket:

☐ 15–20 ☐ 21–30 ☐ 31–40 ☐ 40 and above

3. Religion:

☐ Christianity ☐ Islam ☐ Others (please specify) _____

4. Educational Qualification:

☐ Undergraduate ☐ First Degree ☐ Master's ☐ Ph.D

5. Marital Status:

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

SECTION B: Exposure to Sexualized Media Content

6. How often do you consume media (e.g., news, movies, music videos, social media, etc.)?

☐ Daily ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

7. Which media platform exposes you most to sexualized content?

☐ Social Media (TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, Snapchat, etc.) ☐ Print Media (newspapers, magazines) ☐ Broadcast Media (TV, Radio) ☐ Streaming Platforms (Netflix, YouTube, Spotify, etc.) ☐ Advertisements (billboards, commercials, etc.)

8. How often do you encounter sexualized content (e.g., nudity, provocative dressing, sexual themes)?

☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

9. What forms of sexualized content do you most frequently see? ☐ Nudity / Provocative

Dressing ☐ Explicit Music Lyrics, Images or Videos ☐ Sexual Themes or Objectification ☐

Sex Scenes in Movies ☐ Sexualized Advertisements ☐ Suggestive Dance or Poses

SECTION C: Influence of Sexualized Media on Personality Development

10. Exposure to sexualized media has influenced how you view your body image and self-esteem

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. Exposure to sexualized contents has influenced your mode of dressing.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ undecided ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

12. Sexualized media has affected your attitude towards relationships

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ undecided ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

13. You feel pressured to look or behave in certain ways because of sexualized content.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ undecided ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

14. Sexualized content such as sexual themes and objectification promotes gender stereotypes (e.g., women as objects, men as dominant).

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ undecided ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

15. You have adopted vulgar/provocative language due to sexualized contents

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ maybe

16. To what extent has sexualized media contents affected your personality traits

☐ very high ☐ high ☐ undecided ☐ low ☐ very low

17. Exposure to sexualized media has long-term effects such as aggression/ insecurity your personality. ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ maybe