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Outcome of Growth and Developmental Challenges on the Behavioral Dispositions of In-School Christian Adolescents in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the outcome of growth and developmental challenges on the behavioral dispositions of in-school Christian adolescents in Nigeria. The study randomly sampled 222 respondents in Township of Kogi State, Nigeria. Six research questions and one null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Instrument used for data collection was questionnaire, which has 41 questionnaire items, and it covered the areas of physical, emotional, social, moral, cognitive growth and development, and the possible challenges that they could pose. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the null hypothesis was through the use of t-test. The findings of the study among others were that the in-school Christian adolescents have healthy physical, emotional, social and moral growth and development in spite of the challenges that accompany. But they however scored low in the area of cognitive growth and developments. Based on these, recommendations and implications for further studies were made.

Keywords: Challenges, Growth, development, Christian, adolescents, behavioral disposition

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The term “adolescence” was derived from the Latin word “adolescere” that means “to grow into maturity” (Sylva, 2008; Unachukwu & Ebenebe, 2009). By definition, adolescence could refer to the growth and developmental periods that are in between childhood and adulthood. It refers to the period where the emerging individual who has left the childhood stage is yet to be referred to as an adult both functionally and characteristically (Omede & Odiba, 2001). Adolescence has traditionally been viewed as beginning with the onset of puberty, a rapid spurt in physical growth accompanied by sexual maturation, and as ending when individuals assume the responsibilities associated with adult life-marriage, entry into the work force, and so on (Baron & Misra, 2014). Correspondingly, adolescents could be termed as teenagers even though the scope may be wider in this paper to include all young adults as may be pointed out later. The individual that had left childhood stage and is yet to become an adult is the one referred to as an adolescent. The age is not universally agreed upon as factors that determine inclusion such as culture, religion, family and economic independence, education or training vary differently across and within cultures. In Nigeria, however, as from age 18, an individual begins to enjoy adult privileges such as marriage, franchise, employment, conviction and jail terms, could obtain driver’s license, keep and operate bank accounts among others. It will therefore be correct, by constitutional provisions, to sandwich the adolescent period in Nigeria between ten (10) and eighteen (18) years.

Even at this, many people between ages eighteen (18) and twenty five (25) years in Nigeria are still not detached from their parents in many ways. This is why the scope of adolescence is expanded in this paper to include those children who are still directly dependent on their parents for life supports, particularly those who are still in schools, colleges and universities and who are not less than ten (10) years of age and are Christians. The Christian adolescents are those who have realized that they are sinners and who at a point in life had given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ and now submit themselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit. These Christian adolescents are found in churches, not only on Sundays but also duly participate in mid-week church services such as prayer meetings and bible studies. And being Christian adolescents do not exempt them from the challenges that accompany physical, social, emotional as well as intellectual or cognitive growth and development that could make them amenable to maladjusted behaviors.

The marked difference between the Christian adolescents and other adolescents is in their belief. The former have anchored their lives on Jesus who guides and directs their paths. There are many theories of human growth and development that are propounded by psychologists that accommodate adolescence period. But this work is limited only to three, namely: Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive or intellectual development, Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual theory and the psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson. Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development identified four stages and one of these stages-formal operation-(age 11 years and above) (Omede and Odiba, 2001, Mangal, 2002 and LumenCandela, undated) correspond to the period of adolescence. This theory identified five characteristics indicators of adolescent cognitive development as follows: formal operations, hypothetico-deductive reasoning, propositional thoughts, the imaginary audience and the personal fable (Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center, 2017). Each of these stages is capable of impacting the adolescents either positively and or negatively. The personal fable as Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center (2017) and Leaf group (2017) noted can lead to some devastating consequences as youth may take dangerous risks because they overestimate their abilities as well as thinking that they are invulnerable. This could be why many youths are lured into gangs and armed bandits, cultism, suicide bombing as well as serving as thugs during elections and the bitter consequences of death, and incarcerations behind the prison

bars. This personal fable could as well generate feelings of inferiority, sadness, frustration, and loneliness that if persisted could make youths to become depressed and hopeless leading them into drug use, unsafe sexual activity or even suicide (Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center, 2017).

The Freudian theory of psychosexual development identified five stages of development to include oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. The last stage which is the genital correspond to the stage of adolescence (12 years and above). At this stage, there is the reawakening of the sexual impulse that was hitherto latent. The reproductive organs have become matured and more functional. The libidinal energy is said to be directed heterosexually (Omede and Odiba, 2001). Many adolescents are reported to have mismanaged their libidinal energy by engaging in premarital sex and other negative energy attractive efforts such as fighting and bullying as well as cultism and the consequences that follow.

Inherent in the psychosocial stages of Erik Erickson is the search for identity by the adolescent. The fifth stage which is that of identity versus role confusion (12-18 years) corresponds to the stage of adolescence. Adolescents, in searching for self, try out different identities and roles such as clothing styles (Leaf group, 2017). The task of adolescent at this stage is the definition of his/her identity as he/she seeks answers to questions such as, “Who am I?”, “What do I want to do with my life?” (Lumen Candela, undated). Ability to be able to overcome these questions or not would determine what becomes of the individual at adulthood.

These theories, like other theories of development, are not without their limitations but they have provided the basis for this work. The theories do not ensure healthy development for the individual adolescent magically. They have both positive and negative outcomes (Feldman, 2011), or behavioral dispositions depending on the encounter the individual has with the challenges at this stage.

The challenges of growth and development are enormous for the adolescents. Adolescence is termed a “growth spurt” (Baron and Misra, 2014, Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center, 2017, & Stanford Children’s Health, 2018). These challenges come from the physical, social, emotional, cognitive as well as moral. Growth at this stage according to Graber (2016) is striking. The period is critical and crucial to the adolescent and is sometimes marked by turbulence and confusion. Many psychologists including Hall (1904) and Erikson (1963) referred to this period as that of “stress and storm.” Miller (2015) asserted that this period is chaotic and overwhelming in both the scope and number of normal developmental challenges facing them. According to Counselling Connection (2010), it is a time that is both exciting and daunting to the adolescent. During this period, there are growth spurts that create bigger bodies to manage (Pickhardt, 2010). It is a time of penis enlargement, appearance of pubic hairs, as well as nocturnal emissions (Stanford Children’s Health, 2018) for the boys while the girls experience maturation in the size and functions of the vagina, uterus and ovaries, enlargement of the buttocks, breasts, face as well as that of height and size, appearance of pubic and armpit hairs and menarche (the first menstruation). These changes have their behavioral implications on the individual child.

In addition to social, biological and intellectual implications or challenges that confront adolescents, Unachukwu and Ebenebe (2009), noted that it is a period of emotional intensity, restlessness and instability and these according to them accounts for why adolescents are difficult to deal with. Dobson (1999) noted increased heterosexual relationship. And this is

associated with teenage pregnancies, abortions, and risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STI). In fact, Time Magazines cited by Dobson (1999), said that teenage pregnancies increased by 800 percent between 1940 and 1982 and that the trend indicated that 40 percent of all 14-year-old girls gets pregnant at least once before they are twenty (20) years old. Earlier, Sorensen (1973) revealed that fifty-nine (59) percent of boys and forty-five (45) percent of the girls between ages thirteen (13) and nineteen (19) had experienced sexual intercourse. Today's adolescents are worse off. Immorality is fast becoming an acceptable way of life. There seemed to be no more respite for sexual sanctity as many adolescents and youths compromise their virginities and see virginity as old fashioned.

Increased violence due to developmental issues, gang membership, and access to weapons, substance use, and poverty characterize many adolescents in addition (Sylva, 2008). Conflict with friends and families, and also matters that relate to choice of career, religion and social expectations as well as desire for independence combine to heighten adolescent's emotion. The Christian adolescent, being an adolescent is also bombarded with these growth challenges. That he/she is a Christian does not exclude him or her from experiencing increase in the size and functions of the sex organs (penis, scrotum, ovum, ovaries and vagina), wet dreams (male adolescents), menstruation (female adolescents), enlargement of the breast and buttocks (female adolescents), growth of hairs, heterosexual relationships and attractions as well as some advanced cognitive operations and the likelihood of a deviation like early and late maturations and their attendant social and psychological as well as behavioral implications or challenges.

Behavioral disposition is used in this context to mean the likely behaviors adolescents could exhibit as they face the challenges of growth and development. According to Hornby (2000) disposition is the tendency to behave in a particular way. And because this stage witnesses the emergence of sexuality (Miller, 2015, NCBI, Resources, 2015), reproductive organs get matured and more functional (Omede and Odiba, 2001), adolescents have the tendency to behave in a particular way. At this period, according to Mom Junction (2017), adolescents experience their first kiss and intimate dance with their "boy friend" or "girl friend" and high libido could predispose them toward heterosexual relationship. If sexual arousal, experimentation, and formation of sexual identity as noted by Education.com (2010) are more pronounced during this period, the question then is how the adolescent will manage this sexual urge. Will he/she be driven into sexual promiscuity or not?

Again due to peer pressure, some adolescents could be lured into immorality, armed robbery, cultism, substance abuse and various other crimes. If emotions of anger are not properly managed or controlled, adolescents could be violent, argumentative and get easily provoked to unleash mayhem. At this stage too, adolescents seek independence from their parents and this could expose them to dangerous crimes and oppositional behaviors. They question parent's rules, are argumentative and stand up for what they believe is right (Mom Junction, 2017). Cognitively, children at this stage, can reason a priori, scientifically and logically. They get to know the meaning of concepts such as injustice, oppression, marginalization, democracy and this could make them to be oppositional too and seek violently to right what they think is wrong in the society. Hence, they are easily drafted into riots and demonstrations at the snap of the fingers.

In addition, role confusion as enunciated by Erik Erikson, personal fables of Jean Piaget's theory of intellectual development (Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center, 2017 & Leaf group, 2017) and the inability to resolve conflicts at the oral, anal, and phallic stages of

the psychosexual development of the adolescents could prone them to antisocial behaviors. Adolescence, according to Mom Junction (2017) is a vulnerable time when kids can develop unhealthy habits that grow into problem in their adult life. Common behavior issues that Mom Junction (2017) pointed out included among others, physical confrontation, listening to loud music, trying new things and taking risks, peer pressure and formation of habits hard to break, hanging out with problem kids and adapting to a dangerous lifestyle, lying, changes in dressing, hairstyle and fashion, substance abuse, dating, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, addiction to cyberspace, bullying, aggression and violence.

Statement of the problem

As noted at the background, adolescence is a growth spurt that comes with enormous challenges that could predispose the adolescent individual to maladjusted behaviors. Many studies have reported the involvement of adolescents or youths in various crimes and the consequences that they have on the society. The in-school Christian adolescent like every other adolescents pass through this stage of growth and development and is as well bombarded by the challenges that accompany this stage. But what will be the outcome of these growth and developmental characteristics and the challenges that follow them on the Christian adolescents? Will the outcome differ for the in-school Christian adolescents? Expectedly, the Christian adolescents by their beliefs in Jesus Christ and exposure to Christian teachings and tenets are to view these changes as normality and go through this period without compromising their Christian testimony and heritage. A Christian in-school adolescent is a supposedly transformed individual who is not to be misled by these growth challenges into violence, sexual promiscuity, cultism, as well as armed robbery and kidnapping that many adolescents and youths are at the vanguards today in Nigeria. Impliedly, the in-school Christian adolescents should pass through these growth challenges positively with little or no stress and storm. But can this assumption be a truism?

Therefore, the specific objectives of this study were to find out the outcome of the challenges of:

1. Physical growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents in in Ankpa, township
2. Emotional growth and development on the behaviors of in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township
3. Social growth and development on the behaviors of in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township
4. Moral growth and development on the behaviors of in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township
5. Cognitive growth and development on the behaviors of in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township
6. Growth and development on the behaviors of the male and female in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance thus: HO1: The mean scores of respondents on an instrument that measures the outcome of the challenges of growth and development on the behavioral dispositions of male and female in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township will not differ significantly.

This study examined the outcome of growth and developmental challenges on the behavioral disposition of in-school Christian adolescents and it is of benefit to adolescents particularly, the Christian adolescents, parents, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, government and the

society in general as well as other researchers. To the adolescents, the findings of this study will help to reform their lives, encourage them to live uprightly and shun behaviors that are likely to ruin their future. There is power in the Christian faith to transform and make adolescents not to kowtow to life challenges that could predispose them to sin. In addition, the findings of this study will be of importance to parents of adolescents as it will alert them more to their parental responsibilities. Many parents need to be informed about the challenges of growth facing their adolescents and the need for them to guide them more properly to humanize them. A child that is left alone will not only trouble the society but will also bring shame to his parents.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a responsibility to her members including the adolescents. There is power in the word of God to reform and transform. This transformation would take place not so much when the pastor or church leadership disciplines erring members physically by placing sanctions but when they preach the undiluted word of God and live what they preach or teach. This study will bring to the knowledge of pastors much works that they still need to do in discipleship. It should be a thing of deep concern for armed robbers, prostitutes, thugs, abortionists, drunkards and abusers of substances and drugs to remain comfortably in the church without conviction to repentance.

From the findings of this study, government would have to re-emphasize the inclusion and teachings of religious and moral education as one of the core subjects in all the levels of educational institutions in Nigeria. Any nation that abhors God ruins her destiny. Trading religious education for Arabic studies which the Federal Government of President Buhari of Nigeria wanted to do through the Minister of Education, would have been suicidal in a nation that many of her citizens are acting godless. The society would again benefit from this study if the adolescents experience healthy growth and live morally upright. If adolescents shun armed robbery, immorality, substance abuse and live to promote the nation's economy by contributing their quotas, the society would become better undoubtedly.

Finally, the findings of this research would benefit other researchers wishing to carry out studies that might be related to this or the same but with focus on the in-school Muslims adolescents in the same geographical or different locations or state. This study will provide guidance and assistance to them.

Methodology

This study employed descriptive research design to verify the outcome of growth and developmental challenges on the behavioral dispositions of in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa. Specifically, the study was a survey. Survey, according to Ali (1996) is a descriptive study that seeks to document and describe what exists or the present status of existence or absence of what is been investigated. The study was conducted in Ankpa, the headquarters of Ankpa Local Government Area, Kogi state, Nigeria. Six churches namely, Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria (CEFNI), United Evangelical Church (UEC), Reformed Ever Church (REC), St. Paul's Anglican Church, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and Christ Apostolic Church were used for data collection. These churches were chosen because of their positions as orthodox churches with defined and methodological way of keeping worship service. In addition, youths in these churches are known to actively participate in activities organized by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the body that

harmonizes, regulates and represents the entire Christian body in the chapter before the government.

A sample of two hundred and twenty two (222) in-school Christian adolescents stratified into 106 males and 116 females was used to answer the research questions that were posed. This sample of 222 was composed using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The selection of the six (6) churches was purposive (orthodox) while from each of the six churches the population of the in-school adolescents was stratified into male and female and through simple random sampling technique 106 males and 116 female respondents were selected. This gave the total sample of 222 in-school Christian adolescents. The instrument used for data collection was a forty one (41) question item questionnaire for the respondents constructed by the researcher. The questions were on the five areas of growth and development and the possible negative challenges that they could pose to the in-school Christian adolescents. The instrument was designed on a four-point likert type of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

Mean and standard deviation statistical tools were used to analyze the objectives while t-test was used to analyze the only hypothesis formulated. Because it was on a four-point scale, any mean score of 2.5 and above showed high outcome and was taken as negative because the questions on the instruments were negatively skewed while a mean score of below 2.5 indicated low outcome and therefore considered positive and not of serious consequence.

Results

Table 1: challenges of physical growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents

S/No	Possible challenges of physical growth and development	- X	SD	Decision
1	I'm not happy with my current height. I would have preferred to be taller or shorter	2.1	1.06	Rejected
2	I'm not happy with the size of my penis (boys)/ breast (girls). It's too big or too small	1.5	0.75	„
3	I hate my body odor as a result of sweat and so I occasionally use perfumes and armpit roll on	1.7	0.89	„
4	I would have loved to be fairer or darker in complexion than I'm now	1.6	0.78	„
5	I ' m f a t , I ' m w a t c h i n g m y w e i g h t	1.7	0.90	„
6	I always get attracted to opposite sex mates involuntarily	2.0	0.93	„
7	I get restless each time I think about the opposite sex mate	1.9	0.83	„
8	I struggle always to keep my sexual feeling in check	2.1	0.96	„
9	I sometimes masturbate to satisfy my sexual desires	1.7	0.90	„
10	I sometimes watch pornography to get relieved sexually	1.7	0.84	„
11	I'm not as handsome/beautiful as I would have loved to be	1.7	0.83	„
12	I r e a l l y d o n ' t l i k e m y s e x	1.5	0.77	„
Grand mean/SD		1.8	0.88	

Source: Field survey, 2018, N = 222

The result of the analyses on table 1 shows that the outcome of the challenges that accompany physical growth and development on the behaviors of in-school Christian adolescents in Nigeria, is not negative but positive($X = 1.8 < 2.5$). What this implies is that, the in-school Christian adolescents sampled for this study are reported to be happy with all the components of physical growth and development such as their heights, their color pigmentation, the size of their body organs (reproductive organs) as well as being in proper check of their sexual desires as well as controlling their attractions to the opposite sex mates.

Table 2: outcome of the challenges of emotional growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents

S/No	Possible challenges of emotional growth and development	- X	SD	Decision
13	My mood changes so easily and I don't like it	2.6	1.00	Accepted
14	I'm always restless, always on the move	2.3	0.93	Rejected
15	I'm always afraid of how my tomorrow will be	2.3	1.00	„
16	I sometimes hate many things around me	2.5	0.99	Accepted
17	When I'm angry, I can be destructive	2.4	1.09	Rejected
18	I quarrel with people always	1.7	0.83	„
19	I always get angry when people misunderstand me	2.6	0.99	Accepted
20	I disagree with my parents on many issues such as the way I dress, among others	2.0	0.86	Rejected
Grand mean/SD		2.3	0.96	

Source: Field survey, 2018, N = 222

Table 2 shows that the outcome of the challenges of emotional growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents is positive. The respondents have healthy emotional growth and development ($X = 2.3 < 2.5$). The respondents reported that they are not restless, not afraid of their future, are in control of their anger and manage disagreements positively. But the respondents however, accepted that their moods change occasionally ($X = 2.6$), that they sometimes hate things around them ($X = 2.5$) and also get angry when they are misunderstood ($X = 2.6$).

Table 3: Outcome of the challenges of social growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents

S/NO	Possible challenges of social growth and development	- X	SD	Decision
21	My friends influence me more than my parents	1.9	0.83	Rejected
22	My friends influence me more than my teachers	2.1	0.88	„
23	My friends influence me more than my pastors	1.9	0.87	„
24	I discuss sexuality more freely with my friends than my parents	2.5	1.08	Accepted
25	I had done many things I never wanted to do to please my friends	2.0	0.90	Rejected
26	My friends determine my dress patterns	1.7	0.85	„
27	My hair style is as we agree as friends	1.8	0.90	„
28	Some of my friends abuse drugs and other substances	2.0	1.00	„
29	I have had experience of sex before	1.6	0.93	„
30	I'm only being careful not to be lured by friends to join bad gangs	2.8	1.14	Accepted
31	Sometimes I watch and discuss pornography with my friends	1.7	0.90	Rejected
Grand mean/SD		2.0	0.93	

Source: Field survey, 2018; N = 222

The behavioral dispositions of the in-school Christian adolescents to the challenges of social growth and development is positive ($X = 2.0 < 2.5$). What this means is that the respondents are reported to have healthy social growth and development. The in-school Christian adolescents reported that their parents, teachers and pastors influence them more than their friends on many matters such as dress pattern, hair styles, drugs and substance intake. They however, accepted that they discuss sexuality more freely with their friends than their parents ($X = 2.5$), and that they are aware of bad gangs but are being careful not to be lured into them by friends ($X = 2.8$). These two items (24 and 30) however, portend a looming danger.

Table 4: Outcome of the challenges of moral growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents

S/NO	Possible challenges of social growth and development	- X	SD	Decision
32	I tell lies occasionally to avoid punishment	2.5	0.98	Accepted
33	Cheating to pass examinations is common with us adolescents	2.8	1.10	„
34	I disobey school rules and regulations sometimes	2.3	0.99	Rejected
35	I don't respect elders who don't respect me	2.0	0.92	„
Grand mean/SD		2.4	0.99	

Source: Field survey, 2018; N = 222

Table 4 shows that the in-school Christian adolescents, have healthy moral growth and development in spite of the challenges that they could be amenable to ($X\ 2.4 < 2.5$). This judgment is however, not very pleasing as slightly below fifty (50) percent of them have moral challenges because they accepted to lying occasionally to avoid punishments as well as that they cheat in examinations and sometimes, disobey school rules and regulations.

Table 5: Outcome of the challenges of cognitive growth and development on the behavior of in-school Christian adolescents

S/NO	Challenges of cognitive growth and development	= X	SD	Decision
36	I'm always at logger-heads with people that can't reason with me	2.4	0.97	Rejected
37	I sometimes challenge some adult practices I think that are not correct	2.7	0.97	Accepted
38	I don't always give up on matters that I think I'm right	2.8	1.06	„
39	I think I always have superior argument over others	2.4	0.96	Rejected
40	I'm curious about many things and people think I'm always too inquisitive	2.6	0.99	Accepted
41	I know I find faults with people and this sets them against me	2.4	0.94	Rejected
Grand mean/SD		2.6	0.98	

Source: Field survey, 2018; N = 222

The analyses on table 5 shows the outcome of the challenges of cognitive growth and development on the behavioral dispositions of in-school Christian adolescents is negative ($X = 2.6 > 2.5$). The respondents accepted that they sometimes challenge some adult practices that they think are not correct ($X = 2.7$), don't always give up on matters that they think they are right ($X = 2.8$) and that they are curious about many things to a fault ($X = 2.6$). But they however, rejected being at logger-heads with people that can't reason with them and that they don't see themselves as having more superior argument over others.

Table 6: Outcome of the challenges of growth and development on the behavior of male and female in-school Christian adolescents

S/NO	Challenges of growth and development	Male (N= 106)		Female (N=116)	
		- X	SD	- X	SD
1	I'm not happy with my current height. I would have preferred to be taller or shorter	2.2	1.09	1.9	1.03
2	I'm not happy with the size of my penis (boys)/ breast (girls). It's too big or too small	1.5	0.76	1.4	0.74
3	I hate my body odor as a result of sweat and so I occasionally use perfumes and armpit roll on	1.7	0.88	1.7	0.89
4	I would have loved to be fairer or darker in complexion than I'm now	1.7	0.87	1.5	0.68
5	I'm fat, I'm watching my weight	1.5	0.83	1.8	0.97

6	I always get attracted to opposite sex mates involuntarily	2.1	0.90	1.8	0.96
7	I get restless each time I think about the opposite sex mate	2.1	0.85	1.7	0.81
8	I struggle always to keep my sexual feeling in check	2.2	0.96	1.9	0.95
9	I sometimes masturbate to satisfy my sexual desires	1.7	0.96	1.6	0.83
10	I sometimes watch pornography to get relieved sexually	1.8	0.93	1.5	0.75
11	I'm not as handsome/beautiful as I would have loved to be	1.7	0.85	1.6	0.81
12	I really don't like my sex	1.4	0.70	1.5	0.84
13	My mood changes so easily and I don't like it	2.4	0.98	2.7	1.02
14	I'm always restless, always on the move	2.3	0.92	2.2	0.93
15	I'm always afraid of how my tomorrow will be	2.5	1.07	2.1	0.94
16	I sometimes hate many things around me	2.5	0.98	2.4	1.00
17	When I'm angry, I can be destructive	2.4	1.07	2.3	1.11
18	I quarrel with people always	1.7	0.77	1.7	0.89
19	I always get angry when people misunderstand me	2.5	0.94	2.6	1.04
20	I disagree with my parents on many issues such as the way I dress, among others	1.9	0.91	2.1	0.80
21	My friends influence me more than my parents	2.1	0.92	1.7	0.74
22	My friends influence me more than my teachers	2.3	0.96	1.9	0.79
23	My friends influence me more than my pastors	2.2	1.02	1.6	0.72
24	I discuss sexuality more freely with my friends than my parents	2.7	1.01	2.3	1.14
25	I had done many things I never wanted to do to please my friends	2.2	0.88	1.8	0.91
26	My friends determine my dress patterns	1.8	0.94	1.6	0.76
27	My hair style is as we agree as friends	1.9	0.98	1.6	0.81
28	Some of my friends abuse drugs and other substances	2.2	1.07	1.8	0.93
29	I have had experience of sex before	1.7	1.01	1.5	0.84
30	I'm only being careful not to be lured by friends to join bad gangs	2.8	1.13	2.7	1.14
31	Sometimes I watch and discuss pornography with my friends	1.8	0.92	1.6	0.87
32	I tell lies occasionally to avoid punishments	2.6	1.03	2.3	0.92
33	Cheating to pass examinations is common even with us Christian adolescents	2.8	0.94	2.8	1.16
34	I disobey school rules and regulations sometimes	2.4	1.00	2.2	0.98
35	I don't respect elders who don't respect me	2.1	0.94	1.8	0.89
36	I'm always at logger-heads with people that can't reason with me	2.4	0.91	2.4	1.03
37	I sometimes challenge some adult practices I think that are not correct	2.8	0.88	2.5	1.05
38	I don't always give up on matters that I think I'm right	2.8	0.99	2.8	1.12
39	I think I always have superior argument over others	2.5	0.82	2.2	1.10
40	I'm curious about many things and people think I'm always too inquisitive	2.6	0.96	2.5	1.02
41	I know I find faults with people and this sets them against me	2.5	0.90	2.2	0.98
Grand mean/SD		2.2	0.94	2.0	0.92

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 6 reported the analyses of the challenges of physical growth and development on the behavioral dispositions of the male and female respondents. The analyses revealed that both the male and female in-school Christian adolescents responded positively to the challenges. They have healthy growth and development. The male grand mean outcome of $X = 2.2$ and the female grand mean outcome of $X = 2.0$ were below the criterion mean of $X = 2.5$.

Table 7: *T-test result on the outcome of the challenges of growth and development on the male and female in-school Christian adolescents*

Group	N	- X	SD	DF	t. cal	t. crit	P
Male	106	2.2	0.94	220	0.051	1.97	< 0.05
Female	116	2.0	0.92				

Table 7 shows the result of the null hypothesis that was formulated. From the table, the stated null hypothesis was accepted as the calculated t was smaller than the critical t at the probability level of 0.05. Impliedly, the outcome of the challenges of growth and development on the behaviors of both the male and female in-school Christian adolescents is significantly different.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with and reinforce what Christianity teaches. However, some findings of this study disagreed with popular opinions and other research results about today’s adolescents globally and particularly, the Nigeria adolescents. For instance, Hall (1904) and Erikson (1963) referred to adolescence as the period of “stress and storm.” It is a time that is both exciting and daunting to the adolescent (Counselling Connection, 2010). During this period, there are growth spurts that create bigger bodies for the adolescent to manage (Pickhardt, 2010). But Christian adolescents, as this study pointed out, are in control of the challenges that physical, emotional, moral and social growth and development pose to them.

For instance, the Christian adolescents said they are not restless, not afraid of their tomorrow, satisfied with their physical growth and development such as height, body size, as well as the size of their reproductive organs. In addition, the analysis revealed that they are happy with their sex, color pigmentations and that they are in control of their anger among others. Even though, this period of adolescence is believed to be that of emotional intensity, restlessness and instability (Unachukwu and Ebenebe, 2009), the Christian adolescents pass through these emotional trauma with little stress and frustrations and this is what is supposed to be because of teachings in the bible-the word of God-that adequately prepare Christians for these challenges ahead of time. Biblical teachings on why we should not worry about everyday life as well as not to worry about tomorrow, why we need to appreciate God for our growth and development are explicit for example, in Mathew 6: 25-34 and Psalms 139:14.

Worrying about tomorrow, as well as about certain things adolescents find less satisfying about their body organs could be distressful and could lead them to be oppositional, frustrated, aggressive and destructive and these maladjusted behaviors characterize many contemporary Nigeria adolescents. In addition, Dobson (1999) noted increased heterosexual relationship during this period of adolescence. And that this period is associated with teenage pregnancies, abortions, and risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STI). In fact, Time Magazines cited by Dobson (1999), said that teenage pregnancies increased by 800 percent between 1940 and 1982 and that the trend indicated that 40 percent of all 14-year-old girls gets pregnant at least once before they are twenty (20) years old. Earlier, Sorensen (1973) revealed that fifty-nine (59) percent of boys and forty-five (45) percent of the girls between ages thirteen (13) and nineteen (19) had experienced sexual intercourse.

These statistics could be intimidating and should call for serious concern as one will be afraid of what the future could hold for the contemporary adolescents. But the picture is not so much black as it’s being painted because of some exceptionality with the Christian adolescents as discovered by this study. The Christian adolescents that responded to this

study denied having had sexual intercourse prior, regulate their sexual feelings and attractions to the opposite sex mate as well as keeping away from pornographic pictures and videos. In as much as one cannot doubt increasing promiscuity among today's adolescents, respites could be found among Christian adolescents who are instructed to 'Flee sexual lust or immorality'. According to the Holy Bible (New Living Translation-NLT) in the book of 1 Corinthians 6.18, believers in Christ are told to "Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body." Similarly, Ephesians 5:3-6, Colossians 3:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 2 Timothy 2:22 warned against sexual sin and other forms of impurities and the judgment of God on the sexually immoral.

The word of God forbids pre-marital and extra-marital sex so much that violators are disciplined physically by the leadership of the church and the individual is expected to confess to God and to man where need be. In some local churches, would-be couples that are heard to have had pre-marital sex are denied Christian wedding in addition to being excommunicated or suspended from communion service as deterrents to others.

In addition, the adolescents of our time according to Sylva (2008) are noted for violence due to developmental issues, gang membership, and access to weapons, substance use, and poverty. Conflict with friends and families, and also matters that relate to choice of career, religion and social expectations as well as desire for independence combine to heighten adolescent's emotions generally. The result of this study however noted that the Christian adolescents restrain from gangsters, are not violent, do not abuse drugs and substance use and they have respect for parents and elders. The Christian adolescents are supposed to be exceptionally different from other adolescents and this supposition was what this study revealed. This is because according to the Holy Bible (New Living Translation), in 2 Corinthians 5:17 a Christian is a new creation," What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same any more, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!" Therefore, a Christian is not supposed to be overcome with evil but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). He/she is salt and light as noted by Mathew 5:13-14. Christians are to show the light of love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness and goodness among others to the world around them. Doing the contrary is living as an anti-Christ. The word of God which is the bible that Christians use teaches respect for elders (Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20) and constituted authorities (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-3, Titus 3:1), opposes violence, gang membership and drugs (Ephesians 5:11; Colossians 3:6-10, Proverbs 1:10-16). In addition, peer pressure if it is not a push toward goodness but evil, it is not suppose to have effect on any Christian adolescent and is no wonder that the adolescents accepted that their parents, teachers and pastors or religious leaders influence them more than their friends (items 21, 22 and 23).

In spite of the fact that the in-school Christian adolescents in Ankpa, township have healthy or positive growth and development, in the area of cognitive growth and development, they are reported to have problem. The result of the analyses portend that these Christian adolescents are intellectually proud. They sometimes challenge some adult practices they think are not correct, insist on their rights and curious about many things and as a result, many people misunderstand them. In addition, the fact that these adolescents discuss sexuality more freely with their friends than their parents ($X = 2.5$, item 24) and that they accepted the existence of bad gangs and the possibility of being lured to join ($X = 2.8$, item 30) as well as that they accepted telling lies occasionally to avoid punishments ($X = 2.5$, item 32) suggest that they need adjustments in these areas.

Although the male and the female adolescents did not differ significantly on their grand means, they however, differed on 6 items (that is, item 15, 16, 24, 32, 39 and 41). While the male adolescents accepted that they are afraid of their tomorrow, hate many things around them, discuss sexuality more freely with their friends, tell lies occasionally, and think that their arguments are always more superior to that of others and that they find fault with people, the female respondents scored low on these items. These perhaps could be one of the reasons why male adolescents tend to be more violent and maladjusted than the female adolescents.

Conclusion

Growth and development are notable to have greater influence during adolescence. The challenges that accompany this period are both ways-negative and positive-depending on the individual concerned and the orientation available to him or her. But many adolescents seem to be misusing opportunities that are available to them at this period of growth and development. But this is not supposed to be for the Christian adolescent because of his/her new found faith. The Christian adolescent lives like Jesus Christ- the sinless Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. They don't strive ultimately to become like their other friends as they would want to become like Jesus. Any peer pressure that is negative should not have influence on the Christian adolescent since they are not their ultimate model. And becoming like Jesus means living in love, respect, peace and faith (Galatians 5:22). In short it means living godly and goodly. Living Christ-like, is Christianity and not because one goes to church. Many Christ-less people are in churches today and this explains why the world seems domiciled in the church in this contemporary time.

Born again adolescents are therefore, inhibited from behaviors and actions that will not bring glory to God. Expectedly, they are to restrain from violence, immorality, armed robbery, cultism, stealing and cheating as well as lying and shedding of innocent blood among others. But regrettably, all these and more are what many contemporary adolescents particularly in Nigeria are noted for now. But the Christian adolescent is exceptionally different as the results of this study had shown. If Christians identify their identity as citizens of Christ's kingdom, they will live differently here on earth (Bright, 2000).

Recommendations

The results of this study showed that even in the church, there are some adolescents that are maladjusted. To some, the outcome of the challenges of growth and development gravitate them toward negative behaviors. The in-school Christian adolescents who are in this category are however, in the minority. Even then, they still need to be helped as suggested below:

- Church leaders especially pastors should continue to teach and preach the undiluted gospel truth. This is because, the results of the study showed that greater percentage of the respondents have healthy behaviors in spite of the challenges posed by growth and development. This healthy growth and development may be due to their new found life in Jesus Christ as well as the teachings in the bible and some beliefs in their new found faith that adequately equip them with relevant principles and strategies to overcome life challenges. In addition, the relentless teaching of the word of God without compromise is likely to confront and bring to repentance the riotous adolescents hibernating in the church.
- Church leaders, Christian parents and Christian teachers should reinforce what these adolescents learn in the church when they are with them at home and in the school by being good role models of what Christianity is and teaches. This is capable of making Christian instructions and lessons taught to sink more deeply and make more

meanings to the in-school Christian adolescents for healthier growth and development.

- Christian parents should develop closer intimacy with their in-school Christian adolescents particularly, the male ones. A situation where larger percentage of them are freer to discuss sexuality more with their friends than their parents is not healthy as they could be misinformed and ignorantly deceived into immorality.
- In addition, Christian teachers in schools (school fellowships) and pastors (churches) should create awareness on sexuality education periodically to sanitize them of wrong teachings from friends as well as feeding them with the correct knowledge on the subject matter.
- Christian parents, Christian teachers and Christian religious leaders need to keep their adolescent children under surveillance to avoid being lured into bad gangs. The respondents expressed this fear. Through love, care and concern, parents should know who is befriending their adolescent children, where and why they go out and return late. This is necessary because some adolescents could go for robbery, illicit parties; visit their boy or girl friends all in the name of night vigils and other church programs.
- The Christian adolescents should be taught with more serious emphasis in churches and school fellowships that Christianity does not exclude certain aspects of their behavior. They should be told with seriousness that sin is sin, no matter the nature or size. Lying to avoid punishments and cheating in order to pass examinations as alluded to by the male Christian adolescents in this study are sinful and therefore, should be alien to Christianity. Christianity emphasizes honesty, loyalty, obedience, truthfulness and hard work. Lying, cheating and laziness are abhorred by Christians and even the society. These and other evils are not to be named among Christians including the in-school Christian adolescents.

Limitation of study

The geographical scope of this study was its limitation. The study was carried out among the in-school Christian adolescents in urban setting. For a more effective generalization of results the study would have been extended to the in-school Christian adolescents in the rural areas of the Local Government. Secondly, the content scope was too wide. Looking only at the challenges of physical growth and development would have sufficed for this paper and would have been more thorough. Because, it combined many variables-physical, social, emotional, cognitive and moral-the study was bereft of depth. Finally, the study would have been extended to include in-school Muslim adolescents to more effectively ascertain if religion could have strong impact in the making of healthy adolescents. These limitations notwithstanding, the relevance of this work is not in doubt as it has helped to push forward the frontier of knowledge in adolescent psychology. More so, the limitations have provided reasons for further research to either extend or improve on this work. Despite the limitations, the paper still contributes enormously to knowledge.

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