

A Qualitative Analysis of Determinants of Premarital Sex among Students in Selected Secondary Schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

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Abstract. Several studies have reported the existence of premarital sex among secondary school students in Nigeria. Although several quantitative studies in Nigeria have identified some of the determinants of premarital sex, only few have systematically examine from the students perspective what are their motivation for engaging in premarital sex. Specifically therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the factors which influence the initiation of premarital sex among secondary school students in Kaduna State. Using the qualitative approach, this study collected data from 16 focus group discussions held among unmarried 16 – 19 year-old secondary school students. Some of the factors identified include, transactional sex, the influence of western culture and media, non-adherence to religious injunctions, proof of affection or love for boy or girl friend as well as the influence of friends or peers. Arising from the findings of this study it is recommended that parents should strive to teach their children some important aspects of their culture especially that which concerns morality and chastity as a means of curbing the negative influence of western culture on adolescents' sexual behaviour.

Keywords: Determinants, premarital sex, Students, Secondary School,

1. Introduction

Premarital sex in the context of this study refers to penetrative vaginal or sexual intercourse performed between two unmarried opposite sex people. The increasing involvement of in-school adolescents globally in premarital sexual activity and the consequences associated with such behaviour has drawn the attention of the international community and scholars to this problem especially after the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the

1980s(Aganaba, 2000). Several studies have documented high and increasing premarital sexual activities among in-and out of school adolescents (Demographic Health Survey, 2012; Adeoye, Ola and Aliu 2012). For instance, a study conducted by Bermudez, Buela-Casal and Teva's(2011) in Spain revealed that kissing, petting and premarital sexual intercourse are not only common among students in high school but they tend to initiate such behaviour at relatively early age of 10 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, many studies have similarly reported the prevalence of premarital sex among secondary or high school students. According to the Global School Based Student Health Survey conducted among students in Senior High Schools in Ghana in 2008, it revealed that 21.7% of students had initiated heterosexual intercourse, while 48.2% stated that they are involved in intimate romantic relationship with the opposite sex(Owusu,2008).

Several studies in Nigeria have also documented the prevalence of different forms of premarital sex among secondary school students in different parts of Nigeria. For example, a study conducted by Ola and Oludare in Ekiti State South-West Nigeria, revealed that 21.0 % of the 779 students who participated in the study have had penetrative sexual intercourse with the opposite sex (Ola and Oludare, 2008). Evidence from studies particularly in the past two decades or so has also revealed that most secondary school students in Kaduna State engaged in premarital sexual activities. For instance, a study conducted by La'ah (2010) in Kachia, it was found that 70% of the 862 in-school and out-of-school female adolescents indicated that they have had sexual intercourse with the opposite sex.

The prevalence of premarital sexual activities among in-school adolescents has been attributed to a plethora of factors. These factors according to Adeoye, Ola and Aliu (2012) range from social, economic, cultural and political conditions to those that characterize the living situation of an individual adolescent, including family situation with respect to education and income. Owuamanam and Bankole (2013) mentioned that the intense sexual urge or drive experienced by most adolescents which is as a result of the sexual development taking place in the biological as well as behavioural level and the absence of proper parental supervision of their children's life were also given as reasons for the increasing involvement of adolescents in various forms of sexual behaviours. Furthermore, other studies have identified peer group pressure exposure to social and traditional media including unhindered access to phonographic materials as well as derivation of economic or material benefits as some of the factors influencing the decision to engage in premarital sex (La'ah, 2010 and Bermudez, Buella-Casal and Teva, 2011; Ankomah, Mamman-Daura, Omoregie and Ayanti, 2012; Ybarra, Strasburger and Mitchell, 2014; Amos and Inuwa, 2018).

Evidences from other similar studies have shown that the increasing involvement of adolescents in premarital sexual relationship tend to have an adverse consequences among those who engage in the practice. For instance, Musa's study in Maiduguri revealed that of the 286 respondents interviewed, 68% mentioned unwanted pregnancy, loss of respect, 57%, sexually transmitted infection, 93%, and regret 43% as some of the causes of premarital sex (Pespress, 2010). In Ethiopia, Tekletsadik, Shaweno and Daka (2014) reported that out of those who had premarital sexual intercourse 15.3% of the women faced unwanted pregnancy and those with unwanted pregnancy, while 82% had induced abortions. Similarly, 20.9% reported symptoms of sexually transmitted infections such as vaginal discharge, 14.3%, genital ulcer and 1.1% inguinal swelling. The steady increase in adolescents' sexual activities is also evident in the high HIV prevalence rate among young people who are less than 24 years of age. In Kaduna State for instance, it is estimated that more than one third (38.4 %) of the 462,000 HIV positive persons in State are within the age bracket of 15 to 24 years (Kaduna State Agency for the Control of AIDS, 2010). In view of the negative consequences of premarital sex on the reproductive health of adolescent and their overall socio-economic well-being, the need arises to identify the social conditions underlying the involvement of in-school adolescents in premarital sexual relationship.

Although several quantitative studies have identified correlates and determinants of premarital sex (Pespress, 2010; Lokshmi, Gupta and Kumar (2007), there are also some qualitative studies which have similarly examine the causes of premarital sex. For instance, Ghaffari, have investigated individual related factors which influences the initiation of premarital sexual intercourse among Iranian adolescents (Ghaffari, Gharghani, Mehrabi, Ramezankhani, and Movahed, (2016) Similarly a nationwide survey conducted by Ankomah, Mamman-Daura, Omoregie and Anyanti (2011) examined the reasons for engaging in early sexual initiation among adolescents in Nigeria. Furthermore, an earlier study by Agaha, Van-Rossen, and Ankomah, by (2006) investigated the economics, the power dynamics and gender relations of sexuality in Southwestern Nigeria

It is however pertinent to point out, that while some qualitative studies have provided details accounts of the reason why adolescents engage in premarital sex and other related sexual behavior, only few, if any have specifically examine from the students perspective what are their motivation for engaging in premarital sex. Besides, the bulk of the research aimed at identifying the causes of premarital sex in Nigeria were largely quantitative in nature only a few were conducted using the qualitative approach Ankomah, Mamman-Daura, Omoregie and Anyanti (2011). Similarly, unlike other qualitative studies which were limited to only specific ethnic group, towns, cities other and social groups, this study sought to deepen our understand of causes of premarital sex by studying adolescents from different ethnic, religious, and socio-cultural background. Furthermore, while most of qualitative studies that investigated the reason surrounding the initiation of premarital sex were conducted in Southern Nigeria, there seem to be a dearth of qualitative information on the motivation for premarital sex among in-school adolescents especially in North-Central Nigeria.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative information on the reasons for adolescents' involvement in premarital sex is needed for the formulation of appropriate rules and regulations in secondary schools which will help regulate the sexual activities of students in the school environment. Above all, information derived from the study will help in the formulation of HIV programmes that will reduce the vulnerability of adolescent to HIV infections and other reproductive health challenges. Specifically therefore, the objective of this paper is to explore the key factors influencing the initiation of premarital sex among secondary school students in Kaduna State using the qualitative approach.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted in Kaduna State which is located in the mid-central area of Northern Nigeria. With an estimated population of 6.1 million, the state has the third largest population in the country (2006 population census). The State consists of many ethnic groups. The prominent ones are Hausa, Fulani, Adara, Bajju, Atyap, Ninzo, Kurama among others.

The study population consisted of Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) students. Attention was focused on this category of students because they are more matured and are likely to be experienced enough to discuss sex-related issues than those in junior classes. The study was conducted in 12 secondary schools, with one school each selected from 12 LGAs out of the 23 LGAs in the state. The schools and LGAs were purposely selected to reflect the socio-cultural and ethno-religious diversity of the state. The schools selected differed in terms of the ownership structure, (private or public), sex composition, and type of school (Day or Boarding). On the whole 4 boys' only schools, 4 girls only schools and 4 mixed schools were selected. While 6 of the schools are publicly owned the remaining six are privately owned.

2.1 Selection of Discussants

To select the participants for the FGDs, the researcher paid an initial visit to all the selected schools. Considering the age and sensitive nature of the study permission of the principals were sought and obtained. The researcher then visited the students in their respective classrooms. In each of the classroom visited the researcher interacted with the students and explains to them the purpose of the study. After which the students were given a six items questionnaire to fill. The items on the questionnaire include, age, gender, ethnic group, whether currently in a relationship with the opposite sex, how many opposite sex friends to you presently have and have you ever had sex. The objective of administering the abridged questionnaire is essentially to identify sexually experienced students. This was important because only sexually experienced were required to participate in the FGDs. Based on the response of the screening, those who had initiated premarital sex were identified. Among those identified, the researcher then asked the class monitor of each class to recommend two students each whose academic performance are above average and who are equally outspoken. Those who were so recommended were then screened and selected to participate in the focus group discussion. Using this method, two students each, whose ages are between

16 to 19 years, were selected from SSSI; SSSII and SSSIII. However, in co-educational schools separate FGDs were conducted for boys and girls. Like it was done in single sex schools, two male and two female students were selected from the three Year Groups in co-educational schools. The reason for conducting separate FGDs for male and female adolescents is because of the need to know independently the gender differences on the issues of study. Thus, each FGD group consisted of six participants from each of the 12 studied schools. Overall, a total of sixteen (16) FGDs were conducted for the study; eight in single sex schools, while the other eight were conducted in co-educational institutions.

2.2 The Structure of the FGDs

Each focus group membership consisted of six participants drawn from SSSI, SSSII and SSSIII. This mix of students from different classes makes for varied, interesting and sustained discussion. The FGDs were held in classrooms. It was ensured that all the venues where the discussions were held are convenient to the participants. All the discussions were held in English language, Pidgin English or Hausa Language as the case may be. Each discussion lasted for about 60 minutes with refreshment provided to the participants in the course of the discussions.

Focus group discussions were led by the researcher and note-taker for all the male groups. While a female postgraduate student from the department of Sociology who was trained by the researcher on focus group methodology and a female note taker led the discussions with all female groups. As a prelude to the discussion, the moderators for both the male and female groups provided a general introduction to the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and permission from the discussants was sought for the use of tape recorder. The discussions for both groups were guided by the interview guide. The discussions were tape-recorded, and later transcribed and translated prior to analysis. The translations were checked by a second person to ensure accuracy and also that important information was not left out.

3. Results

3.1 Characteristics of Participants

The participants who took part in the study were unmarried males and female senior secondary schools students aged 15-19 years. A total number of 96 in-school adolescents (48 males and 48 female) participated. The participants who took part in the

study came from different ethnic background. Although the Hausa had a slight majority, there were other ethnic groups like Adara, Bajju, Ninzo, Kurama, Atyap, and other minority ethnic groups from the middle belt and Southern Nigeria. The participants were a mixture of Christians' and Muslims.

3.2 Social Determinants of Premarital Sexual Intercourse

The study identified several factors or social conditions which motivates the involvement of in-school adolescents in premarital sex. These reasons are explained as follows.

3.3 Transactional Sex

Discussants who took part in the FGDs conducted in the different schools in the study area generally confirm the existence of transactional sex among secondary school students but they however maintain that only few female students engage in the practice. While some discussants say that they know a few students in their schools who engage in the practice, others claim to have knowledge of their school mates' involvement in transactional sex through gossips as well as from discussion with other students. A female discussant in SSS III from a boarding single sex school in Giwa, described the existence of transactional sex among students thus:

I know a few girls in our school who engage in sex with their boyfriends primarily for monetary reasons. There are two of my close friends in school whom I know very well. Most of the financial needs of these girls are taken care of by their boyfriends. These boys are not planning to marry these girls they are just lovers. These girls regularly have sex with their boyfriends. At weekends these girls use to sneak out of school and pass the night in their boyfriends' houses. From the money they get from their boyfriends they buy very expensive clothes and fine shoes. Not long ago one of the girls who is just about 16 years old became pregnant and the boyfriend gave her some money to remove the pregnancy. Although not all girls who have sex with their boyfriends do so for the sake of money, there are a few however who are money conscious and so they engage in sexual intercourse mainly for monetary consideration. From what I have heard and seen some girls in our school, not very many female students practice transactional sex.

This statement is an indication that a few secondary school students engage in transactional sex indicating

that the practice is not very popular or widespread among students.

3.4 The Influence of Western Culture

Although most discussants in the FGDs did not state the extent to which western culture has motivated students' involvement in premarital sex they however agree that it significantly influences the initiation of premarital sex among students and other category of adolescents. Majority of discussants also pointed out that they largely come into contact with western culture through the mass media. They maintain that while the media, particularly television, educates young people on a number of issues, it also teaches them other bad things including "how to perform that thing". A female discussant in SSS II from a day private school in Kwoi aptly described the influence of western culture on premarital sexual initiation as follows:

Exposure to television has taught most of us a lot of good and bad things. These days' lots of western movies and programmes we watch on TV show pictures of naked men and women kissing, romancing or even having sexual intercourse. Anytime you watch such films you tend to become sexually aroused and feel like doing it. However there are some good programs also you will watch that will help you so much.

Other discussants in the FGDs stated that some of the movies or programmes they watch on Television, particularly those that show nudity or women who dress seductively it usually triggers their sexual urge. They claim that exposure to such movies and programmes make it very difficult for them to control their sexual drives. The uncontrollable urge experienced might encourage them to seek for outlet where they can satisfy the urge. A male discussant in SSS I from a private boarding school in Fadan-Karshi stated that:

A lot of western culture is learned from the mass media. Young people like me tend to copy virtually all forms of western lifestyle including western type of romantic relationships. What I'm saying is that even if one tries to abstain from sex, by watching programmes which show nudity or real sexual acts one finds it difficult to abstain from premarital sex.

The statement of the two discussants from Kwoi and Fadan-Karshi revealed that exposure to western culture has only but a limited influence on the initiation of premarital sex. However both statements tend to suggest that watching movies or programmes with explicit sexual content can motivate sexual experimentation among young people.

3.5 Non-adherence to religious injunctions

However discussants who took part in some of the FGDs conducted tend to also share the view that non-adherence to religious teachings has contributed to the prevalence of premarital sexual relationships. Some of the discussants maintain that many young people attend religious activities but hardly do they practice what they have learnt. They pointed out that some young people who attend such events merely do so to look for new boy or girlfriends. An SSS III male discussant from a boarding co-educational school in Makarfi and a leader of a Christian religious group in his school sums up the issue thus: *In this our generation things have really changed. Most young people attend church not because they want to live a true Christian life. They see the church as a social gathering where they can come and sing and also catch some fun. Some use fellowships and church activities as avenues to look for boys or girlfriends. Most of these kinds of people usually engage in immoral acts such as kissing, hugging and even sexual intercourse. A lot of these things are happening because most young people do not take religion seriously and they do not make any effort to abide or adhere to the religious teachings they receive.*

The opinion expressed by this discussant shows that many students tend to see religion as a social gathering where people go to make acquaintances rather than learning the appropriate moral values which will regulate their social life including their sexual behaviour.

3.6 Prove of affection or love to boy or girl friend

Some discussants who took part in the FGDs conducted in some of the schools also agreed that the need to prove how much they love their boyfriends has motivated some girls to consent to sexual demands from their boyfriends. Although they did not disclose the extent to which students engage in this practice they however agreed that the practice exist. A few discussants insisted that the fear of losing their boyfriends tends to compel some girls to succumb to sexual demands from their boyfriends. Some of the discussants in the FGDs stated that some of the female students had sex for the first time because they felt that allowing their boyfriends to have sex with them is the best way of expressing how much they love their partner. To some of the participants there could be no love without sex, and the fear of losing a boy or girlfriend motivated them to initiate sexual intercourse. A female student in SSS

I in a day secondary school in Sabon-Gari who participated in the FGD session stated that:

If a girl likes a man, anything he asked her, she will do it, she will have no resistance, because she loves him. If he demands for sex she will give, if he asks for money if she has it, she will give him. The reason for her submission is the fear of losing the partner, so she accepts.

The opinion held by this discussant demonstrates that some girls can do anything within their powers to ensure that they maintain or keep their boyfriends or their relationships at whatever cost.

3.7 The influence of friends/ peers

The findings from the quantitative data is also supported by the information gathered from the FGDs. Majority of informants mentioned peer pressure as one of the causes of premarital sex in their respective schools. They reported that adolescents engage in premarital sex because of pressures from the friends they relate with. They asserted that the kind of friends young people relate with can significantly influence their behavior. Some of them argued that if friends are fond of talking about sex, any time he is in their midst the tendency is that he would be encouraged to have sex himself.

Discussants during the FGDs pointed to friends as the main pressure on them to engage in first sex. Pressure to conform was mentioned as very critical. They observed that young people were likely to be influenced by their peers to engage in early sex. The pressure could take the form of subtle name calling to physical harassment. An SS II male discussant from a mixed day school from Kaduna narrated his experience as follows:

There was this day I visited my male friend in their house. I met him with his girlfriend and her girlfriend who accompanied her to see him. My friend subsequently introduced me to his girlfriend's friend. Since then we became very intimate. One day she invited me to their house. When I got there I notice that her parents and siblings were not at home. After entertaining me with a bottle of Coke and biscuits, she moved over from her seat and came over and sat down close to me on the crouch. Before I knew what was happening she started touching and caressing me. We hugged and romance each other for a long time but we did not have sex. When I later inform my friend who introduce me to her about what happened, he was not happy with me. He called me a bush boy and insulted me for not having the courage to have sexual intercourse with the girl. After the abuses and insults he however encouraged me and told me what

to do if such an opportunity ever presents itself again. About a month or so after the first encounter the girl invited me to her house again, like the other time nobody was at home. I was prepared this time, so that day I had sex with her. I did not really want to, but did it just to prove to my friend that I am man enough.

Even though this practice is not very frequent, some female discussants stated that they initiated premarital sex with the opposite sex primarily because they wanted to avoid being called names by their sexually experienced friends. A female discussant in SSS I from a mixed boarding school in Makarfi stated that:

I really did not plan to have sexual intercourse as at the time I had my first experience. It was the pressure from friends. They kept calling me names like Sister Mary, Angel, Jesus sister, etc. When the pressure became unbearable I had to succumb, just to avoid the name calling.

Some male discussants also reported how some of their male friends have encouraged them, among other things, offering advice about language and appropriate tricks and skills to use in seducing girls. A male discussant who is in SSS II from public boarding school in Kagoro stated that:

'There is this girl in my school that I love so much. When I told my friends about the love I have for her they taught me how to approach her. We I met her and told her that I love her she accepted. After two weeks of dating I asked to have sex with her. But she told me she was a virgin. When I told my friends about her response they told me that all girls use to say that. They however encouraged me to keep trying. I kept trying until one night during prep I invited her to an uncompleted building and we did it [had sex]'

These statements from both the FGDs clearly indicate that the pressure exerted by peers do significantly influences the initiation of sexual intercourse among some secondary school students in the study area.

4. Conclusion

It is evident from the findings of this study that addressing adolescents' involvement in premarital sexual relationship may not be easy because it is largely linked to exposure to western culture and the need for economic survival. Moreover, the exposure to western culture and the economic deprivations suffered by most young people have evolved over time and have become part and parcel of their social life. For instance, the inability of the state and

relevant stakeholders institutionalize mechanism to regulate the exposure of young people to western culture and media will continue to have a significant influence on adolescents' involvement in premarital sexual relationship. What is more, the existence of widespread poverty in the country will continue to provide fertile ground for transactional sex to thrive. For adolescents especially female, who are born and brought up in poor homes premarital sexual intercourse might be resorted to by many as a means of addressing their pressing socio-economic needs.

5. Recommendations

To address the negative influence of western culture on the premarital sexual relationship of adolescents' it is recommended that parents should strive to teach their children some important aspects of their culture, especially that which concerns morality and chastity. The traditional practice which encourages young people to abstain from premarital sex and other forms of unapproved sexual relationship till marriage should be inculcated in young people.

More importantly, parents should take very keen interests on the activities of their adolescent children. They should monitor their activities very closely and know who their friends are and their family background. As observed by Isiugo-Abanihe and Oyediran (2004), parents should not abdicate their responsibilities of properly bringing up their children to some surrogate parents or become too preoccupied with their professions and other pursuits of daily existence. Above all, parents should regulate the type of films and programs their children watch and also monitor and censor their use of social media.

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