

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG YOUTHS AS PERCEIVED BY LECTURERS OF UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The age of first sex has significantly reduced generally in the modern society, particularly Nigeria. Youths often dare the consequences of premarital sex to fulfil sexual desire which in most cases have dire effects on their health, education and social lives. This study investigated possible causes of premarital sex among youths as perceived by lecturers of University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The descriptive survey method was used for the study while a total of 160 respondents were purposively selected. The t-test statistical analysis was used to test the stated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The measure of central tendency statistics was adopted to determine answers to the research questions. The results revealed that, personal reason was the most perceived reason for premarital sex among youths while inadequate knowledge of reproductive health was perceived as the most important specific factor. Respondents were similar in their perception based on gender and academic ranks. It was recommended that counsellors and health educators should endeavour to provide adequate information to youths on reproductive health and appropriate relationship with friends.

Keywords: Premarital Sex, Health, Social, Youth, Perception

Introduction

Premarital sex is the involvement in sexual intercourse by persons who have not engaged in marital vow or culturally recognized as having been enrolled in marriage institution. Although marriage rites take different forms depending on cultural permissiveness, nevertheless the major thrust is the acceptance by the society. In most cases, premarital sex is not always a problem to individuals who are sexually matured since they may view it as a natural response to a natural stimulus. However, premarital sex is morally unacceptable in almost every human society that regards marriage as the legitimate requirement for sexual permissiveness, and especially among youths who are considered vulnerable to health – related problems.

Both Christianity and Islam (the major religions in Nigeria) vehemently oppose premarital sex and thus prescribed specific punishment for culprits. Sometimes, premarital sex is rebranded as fornication because of its implication. In Islam, the Holy Quran chapter 24 verse 2 prescribed that a man or woman caught in the act of fornication (sex before marriage, that is, premarital sex) should be flogged with a hundred stripes in the public and that no one should have compassion for the victim. In addition, Quran chapter 17 verse 32 says: “*Nor come nigh to it (premarital sex) for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil...*” These Quran verses point to the fact that Islam opposes premarital sex.

In Christianity, the Holy Bible states that: “... *the marriage bed should be kept pure, for God will judge... all the sexually immoral*” (Heb.13:4). In this context, keeping the marriage bed holy suggests abstinence from sex before marriage while sexually immoral refers to any unacceptable sexual acts particularly premarital sex. Thus, it is also clear that Christian faithfuls are prohibited from engaging in sex before marriage (premarital sex).

The traditional practice which made premarital sex abominable paved way with the advent of civilization across the globe. In particular, the emergence of the so-called “sex liberation” in the Western world in 1960s and 1970s significantly legitimized the acceptance of sexual behaviours, including premarital sex, outside marriage (Abraham & Kumar, 1999). The modern society thus appears to be more permissive in many ways because premarital sex has become an ‘ordinary’ activity that permeates the adolescent group in particular and the entire human existence. According to Arumala (2005), the prevalence of premarital sex among adolescents is evidenced in the magnitude of unwanted (teenage) pregnancies, abortions, high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and death resorting from sexual activities among youths age group 13 to 21 years old. Scott (2006) corroborates this when he stated that, throughout the world; most young people have had sex before they reach 19 years of age (the adolescence and

pre-marriage age) without engaging in marital vow. He went further to identify some other ones who engage in so-called “sexually alternatives” such as fondling their sex organs (masturbation).

Gelana (2009) stated that in Ethiopia, 60% of pregnancies which emanated from premarital sex are unwanted or unintended and thus endanger the life of the expectant youth who become mothers by accident. In a study of Kenya’s population, Kiragu and Zabin (1993) reported that a lot of Kenyan youth engage in premarital sex and the behaviour is on the increase. The proportion of young people who are sexually experienced by age 15 and 18 years old in Nigeria in 2008 showed significant variations between male and female. Where 5.7% male of age 15 have had sex the female population was 15.7%. At age 18, the statistics showed that 25.6% of males have had sex but the females’ proportion was 49.3%, which is remarkably higher than their male counterparts (Adeyemi, 2013). The reasons for the variation could be numerous ranging from biological (maturation), social, cultural to psychological.

Many factors account for premarital sex, youthful age itself is a stage of human life that is characterized by accelerated development in different parts of the body. In particular, the unprecedented growth and development of sex organs and the attendant heightened emotion as correlate are enough significant factors that may predispose youth to premarital sex. Different studies identified different factors that may dispose young persons to premarital sex. In Thailand and Philippines, family structure was associated with premarital sex; youths living with single parent have higher rate of premarital sexual activities than those living with both parents (Stewart, Sebastiani & Lopez, 2001). In Turkey, Mechet (2006) identified mother’s education, age, ethnicity and employment status as the most important predictors of attitudes of young women toward premarital sex. One may deduce from the two studies mentioned that home background is a common factor that dispose youths to premarital sex.

In support of this, Durojaiye (1972) did observe that in Africa homes, parents are not fully equipped to answer questions on sexual matters adequately; even those who attempt to pass on faulty information to their children. Thus, insufficient sex education from home throws youths into confusion which often results to personal search and in the process become prey to adults who could take advantage and defile the innocent young females especially. Other factors associated with premarital sex include influence of media, peer pressure, insatiable lust for money, cultural influence, sexual harassment, curiosity, poor school discipline, location of school, religious teachings and literacy (Kiragu & Zabin, 1993; Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Ajiboye, 2006; Adegoke, 2013).

There are numerous sexual behaviours that can make the youth susceptible to practicing premarital sex. A category of such behaviour is autoeroticism in which an adolescent attempts to gratify his/her sexual urge by carrying out the activities by self and on self. Among such acts are sexual fantasy (a mental exercise involving imagining, mapping, desiring and navigating, in abstract, into sexual pleasure), masturbation (the manual stimulation of one's own genital for sexual pleasure), and erotic dreams (an unconscious state especially during sleep when one experiences sensual feeling). Other sexual behaviours that could dispose adolescent to premarital sex include pornographic viewing, kissing and touching (frotteurism).

There is no doubt the fact that premarital sex has dire effect on youths. Barker and Rich (1992) identified teenage pregnancy as a major consequence of premarital sex. No wonder, Gyepi-Garbrah (2005) inferred that premarital sex is one of the reproductive health problems witnessed among youth as a result of daily increase of teenage pregnancy with its attendant consequences. Hutterth and Hayes (1997) reported that young girls between ages 14 and 20 in Dakar sold sex with seven or eight clients per night and 40% did not know anything about condoms. This suggests double tragedies for the girls because they may incur unwanted pregnancy and get infected with STDs. These two dire consequences could become a springboard for other challenges such as school drop out, poor health conditions, and permanent deformity, which may resort from sexual activities. Other consequences are stigmatization, isolation, self-guilt, poor self-concept, negative self-image, teenage motherhood, single – parenting to mention a few.

Statement of the Problem

It is seemingly apparent that many Nigerian researchers and observers are of the opinion that the traditional values are changing rapidly and for the worse (Ezeh, 2001 and Arumala, 2005). An area in which the decline of traditional value is loud and obvious is the issue of sexuality. It appears the society has accepted premarital sex as a legitimate practice since emphasis has shifted from virginity till marriage. Yet, the consequences of premarital sex among youths are still pronounced in the society. Previous studies (Kiragu & Zabin, 1993; Douglas & Richard, 1994; and Arumala, 2005) have focused much on strategies for reducing risky behaviour and perception of parents on prevalence of premarital sex among youths. The present study deemed it fit to investigate perception of University lecturers on possible causes of premarital sex among youths. Thus, the study was limited to University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- (i) What particular category of factors predicts premarital sex among youths?
- (ii) What specific factors significantly predict premarital sex among youths?

Research Hypotheses

- (i) There is no significant different in the perception of lecturers on possible causes of premarital sex among youths based on gender.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers on possible causes of premarital sex among youths based on rank.

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was adopted to find out the perception of lecturers on possible causes of premarital sex among in-school adolescents. The population for the study comprised all lecturers (academic staff) of the University of Ilorin. However, a sample of 160 respondents was used for the study. The non-probability sampling procedures (the purposive and the stratified sampling techniques) were adopted to select the respondents across the variables of gender and rank. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The research instrument used for the study has two sections (A and B). Section A contains items on demographic characteristics while section B sought the perception of respondents on possible causes of premarital sex among in-school adolescents. Having subjected the instrument to the test re-test method reliability a correlation co-efficient of 0.71 was obtained. The questionnaires were administered to the respondent after which the data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistics and t-test statistics. The 0.05 alpha level of significance was adopted.

Results

The results are discussed below.

Socio-demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Rank

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	107	66.87
Female	53	33.13
Total	160	100.0
Rank		
Lecturer I and below	126	78.75
Senior Lecturer and Above	34	21.25
Total	160	100.0

The results in table 1 revealed that there were more males (66.97%) respondents than females (33.13%). Lecturers between Graduate Assistant and Lecturer I rank constitute (78.75%) of the respondents while the remaining (21.25%) were those between senior lecturer and professor.

Table 2 presents the rank order of possible causes of premarital sex among youths in the perception of the respondents.

Table 2: Rank order of responses to the items on possible causes of premarital sex among youths

Categories of Predictors	Means Scores	Rank
Personal reasons	13.09	1 st
Peer group influence	11.43	2 nd
Family – related	11.04	3 rd
Psychological factors	9.14	4 th

The results in table 2 revealed that among the categories of causes of premarital sex, personal reasons ranked first while peer group influence ranked second. Family-related and psychological factors were ranked third and fourth respectively. This is an indication that the respondents perceived personal reasons as the major factor for premarital sex among in school adolescents. This finding might not be unconnected with the fact that youths could engage in premarital sex as a result of curiosity, which was earlier mentioned by Kiragu and Zabin (1993).

Table 3: Rank order of items on causes of premarital sex

Items	Mean	Rank
Inadequate knowledge of reproductive health	2.71	1 st
pressure from friends	2.67	2 nd
Curiosity	2.56	3 rd
Desire for physical pleasure	2.41	4 th
Imitation of friends sexual behaviour	2.38	5 th
Lack of self – control	2.27	6 th
Response to emotional breakdown	2.25	7 th
Poor home training	2.24	8 th
Loneliness	2.22	9 th
Desire to always satisfy friends	2.20	10 th
Response to sexually urge	2.19	11 th
Participation in risky sexual behaviour of peers	2.17	12 th
Socio-economic status of parents	2.16	13 th
Autocratic parenting style	2.15	14 th
Non-challant attitude of parents	2.13	15 th
Insatiable desire for money	2.12	16 th
Parent – child communication pattern	2.10	17 th
Desire to express affection	2.08	18 th
Desire to satisfy emotional feeling	2.06	19 th
Need to respond to sexual urge	2.05	20 th

On the specific items on the questionnaire, inadequate knowledge of reproductive health, pressure from friends' and curiosity ranked first, second and third respectively. Thus, these three items were the significantly perceived specific factors predicting premarital sex among youths. This is in agreement with the assertion of Wight, Williamson and Henderson (2006) that lack of satisfactory information on sexuality was grossly responsible for teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers on causes of premarital sex among youths based on gender.*

Table 4: The t-test showing the perception of male and female respondents

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Male	107	53.68	3.41	158	1.87	1.96
Female	53	51.42	3.73			

The result in table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.87 is less than the critical value of 1.96 an indication that the calculated value falls within the acceptance region and as a result the stated null hypothesis was accepted. There is therefore no significant difference in the perception of lecturers on the causes of premarital sex among in school adolescents based on gender.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers on causes of premarital sex among in school adolescents based rank.*

Table 5: The t-test showing the perception of rank respondents

Rank	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Lecturer I and Below	126	62.74	2.88	158	1.55	1.96
Senior lecturer and Above	34	61.51	3.64			

The result in table 5 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.55 is less than the critical value of 1.96 an indication that the calculated value falls within the acceptance region and as a result the stated null hypothesis was accepted. There is therefore no significant difference in the perception of lecturers on the causes of premarital sex among in school adolescents based on academic ranks.

Discussion of Findings

It is evident from this study that personal reasons are perceived to be the major factors determinants of premarital sex among youths and youths

lack adequate knowledge of reproductive health. This may suggest that, there is inadequate emphasis on sex education in schools and homes. Wight, Williamson and Henderson (2006) inferred that lack of satisfactory information on sexuality was grossly responsible for teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe. Equally, pressure from friends and curiosity were specific factors that ranked significantly high by the respondents. Sambisa *et al* (2008) stated that advice from friends was responsible for adolescents' involvement in unprotected sex in Zimbabwe while Kiragu and Zabin (1993) blamed premarital sex on personal adventure and exploration of youths as a result of poor information on reproductive health.

The study indicated that there were no significant differences in the perception of respondents based on gender and academic ranks. Thus, lecturers irrespective of their gender and academic ranks perceived factors predicting premarital sex among youths in the same way. This is in agreement with the assertion of Ajiboye (2006) that gender does not always differentiate people's perception and attitude.

Recommendations

- Counsellors should constantly be in contact with the youths to educate them on sexuality and how best to manage their sexual feelings without necessarily engaging in premarital sex. Counsellors should help to enlighten adolescents on healthy peer friendship to discourage bad influence.
- Health educators should rise to the challenge of organizing enlightenment activities in schools in order to provide adequate reproductive health information to students and parents.
- Also, parents should endeavour to provide the necessary materials for their children in order to discourage commercial (premarital) sex among in-school adolescents. Parents should ensure that useful pieces of information on sexuality are provided for adolescents at home in order to guide against being influenced by destructive information from friends and media.

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