

Sexual Behaviour and Contraceptive Usage of Secondary School Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Objective To determine the prevalence and pattern of sexual activity as well as the contraceptive practices among the selected secondary school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Methods A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among the selected senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria, following a stratified multistage random sampling technique.

Results There were 695 respondents out of which the females constituted 51% and the males were 49%. Less than one third (28.3%) of the respondents have had previous sexual exposure at the time of the study. The median age of sexual debut among the sexually exposed was 15 years in both the males and the females. Bivariate analysis of sociodemographic characteristics of respondents with previous sexual exposure showed that, sex, religion, father's and mother's educational background and level of class were statistically significant ($P < 0.001$). Further analysis using logistic regression model revealed that male respondents were 3 times more likely than females (95% CI 1.92–4.56) to have had sexual experience while those whose mother had tertiary educational background were less likely to have had previous sexual experience compared to those with secondary and lower educational background (OR = 1.76, 95% CI 1.11–2.77). Of all the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents considered with the age of sexual partners using bivariate analysis showed that only level of class was significant ($P = 0.018$). Less than half of the sexually active males (44.2%) were using modern method (male condom) of contraception, while 54.4% of the sexually active females were using different types of modern methods.

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Conclusion *It is quite obvious that risky sexual behaviors are in practice among the secondary school students studied and by extension in the country. It therefore means that reproductive health issues especially concerning the adolescents will have to be openly discussed by all with our youths while abstinence/chastity should be cherished.*

Key words: adolescents; sexual health; contraceptive usage

Adolescent (10–19 years) represent a transition from childhood to adulthood with features such as secondary sexual growth, changes in hormonal milieu, emotional, cognitive and psychosocial development^[1]. They constitute about 20% of the world's population with 85% of them in developing countries^[2]. Adolescents are usually adventurous in all spheres of human endeavors including sexual practices. Reports have shown that many adolescents engage in risky sexual activity without contraceptive protection and most had their debut via a subtle coercion by their partner. Studies within Africa including Nigeria have demonstrated increasing rate of premarital sex and decline in age of sexual debut among adolescents against the much cherished moral/cultural values^[3,4]. Unfortunately, while contraceptive awareness is quite high, the utilization is still very low and most of the family planning services in Nigeria do not cater for adolescent rather, effort are concentrated on married couples^[5-7]. Lack of these services including comprehensive sexuality education make adolescents vulnerable to various complications like sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion^[5].

The study aimed at determining the prevalence and pattern of sexual activity as well as the contraceptive practices among the selected secondary school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Materials & Methods

Materials

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among the selected public senior secondary school students in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state and also the largest city in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ibadan is located in the south-western region of Nigeria. The ancient city has 11 local government councils – five are intra-city while the rest six are at the outskirts.

A stratified multistage random sampling technique was used to select 4 schools (2 within the metropolis & 2 outside the metropolis) from among the 11 local government areas in Ibadan metropolis. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ministry of Education with the supervisory role over the secondary schools in Oyo State.

Methods

At each of the study sites, all the senior secondary students were gathered into their school hall at once to prevent information diffusion about the study. They were all informed together about the purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality. As part of the measures, all the school teachers were disallowed from staying within the hall. Those that declined to participate were asked to leave the hall and were excluded from the study. Thereafter, a systematic random sampling technique was employed to recruit among those that consented. A starting number between 1 and 5 was randomly selected using a ballot method. Then, every 5th students was recruited. Thereafter, a self-administered structured questionnaire (open and closed ended) was given to each recruited students. The information obtained included sociodemographic characteristics, sexual behaviour (age of sexual debut, number of sexual partners, sexual knowledge and so on) and contraceptive usage. The students were again reassured of confidentiality of their responses. The study was conducted between March and August 2005.

Statistical analysis

The data collected were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 software and this was validated to prevent error. Bivariate analysis was performed using Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests while multivariate analysis was done using logistic regression model. The level of statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$. Graphs were made using Microsoft excel software.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics

There were 695 respondents that completed the questionnaires out of which the females constituted 51% and the males were 49%. The rest of the socio-demographic characteristics are as shown in Table 1.

Most of the students learnt about sexuality education from friends and media (both print and electronic), while just about 10% learnt from their schools teachers and their parents. (Figure 1).

Less than one third (28.3%) of the respondents have had previous sexual exposure at the time of the study. The median age of sexual debut among the sexually exposed was 15years in both the males and the females.

Most of them claimed that the first sexual act was unplanned, though with a higher percentage among the females. Both groups have engaged in different kinds of sexual act, these include penetrating vaginal, oral and anal intercourse, and also a significant number have more than one sexual partner (Table 2).

Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=695)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
10-14	179	25.8
15-19	516	74.2
Sex		
Female	354	51.0
Male	341	49.0
Class		
SSI	232	33.4
SS2	411	59.2
SS3	52	7.4
Religion		
Christianity	446	64.2
Islam	243	34.9
Others	6	0.9
Tribe		
Yoruba	653	93.9
Igbo	25	3.6
Hausa	8	1.2
Others	9	1.3
Family		
Monogamous	481	69.2
Polygamous	214	30.8

SS1-3: Senior Secondary School 1-3

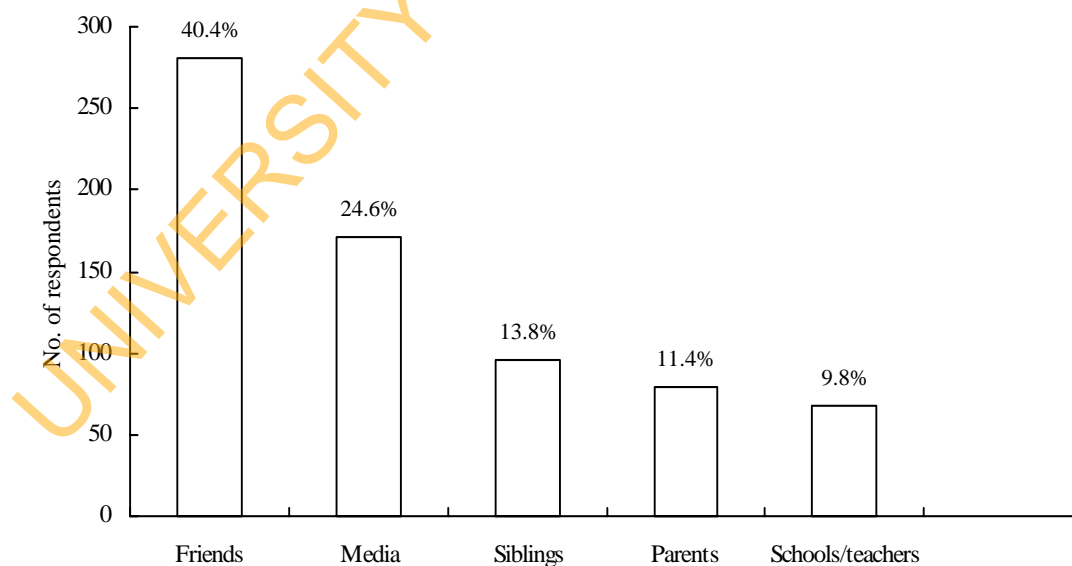


Figure 1 Medium of learning about sexuality education

Table 2 Selected pattern of sexually experienced respondents (n=197)

Variable	Males (%) (n=129)	Females (%) (n=68)
First sexual act		
Planned	45.5	22.8
Unplanned	54.5	77.2
Mesian age at sexual debut	15 years	15 years
Methods of sex		
Vagina	95.5	98.5
Oral	52.8	47.2
Anal	22.6	15.2
* Multiple responses		
No. of sexual partner		
One	50.6	60.9
Two	30.4	11.1
Three	15.3	20.4
Four and above	3.7	7.6
Age of partners		
Older	16.6	16.9
Same bracket	58.9	52.6
Younger	24.5	30.5
Concented sexual act		
Consented		77.4
Forced/Coercive		22.6

Further analysis of sexual behaviour and different characters

On bivariate analysis of sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, sex, religion, father's and mother's educational background and level of class were significantly associated with previous sexual experience of the respondents ($P < 0.001$), but, type of family and age group were not significantly related (Table 3).

Further analysis using logistic regression model to identify independent predictor among the significant variables showed that male respondents were 3 times more likely than females (95% CI 1.92–4.56) to have had previous sexual experience. Also, respondents whose mother had tertiary educational background were less likely to have had previous sexual experience compared to those with secondary and lower educational background ($OR = 1.76$ 95% CI 1.11–2.77) (Table 4).

Of all the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents considered with the age of their sexual partners using bivariate analysis showed that only level of class was significant ($P = 0.018$). There was higher proportion of SS2 that had sexual partner of the same age while the SS3 had higher proportion of older and younger sexual partners (Table 5).

Table 3 Socio-demographic characteristics and sexual experience

Variables	Previous Sex		χ^2	P
	Yes (%)	No (%)		
Sex				
Male	18.9	81.1	26.43	0.000*
Female	37.2	62.8		
Religion				
Islam	31.8	68.2	6.302	0.000*#
Christianity	25.8	74.2		
Traditional	80.0	120.0		
Type of family				
Monogamous	29.0	71.0	6.302	0.178
Polygamous	28.9	71.1		
Father's Education				
None	28.9	71.1	138.41	0.000*
Primary	32.6	67.4		
Secondary	34.7	65.3		
Tertiary	23.9	76.1		
Mother's Education				
None	30.0	70.0	168.93	0.000*
Primary	25.0	75.0		
Secondary	34.9	65.1		
Tertiary	24.6	75.4		
Age group				
10–14	27.3	72.7	0.202	0.904
15–19	28.7	71.3		
Class				
SS1	26.9	73.1	135.779	0.000*
SS2	27.0	73.0		
SS3	40.0	60.0		

*: Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

#: Fisher's exact test

Table 4 Result of a logistic model fitted for previous sexual experience

Variable	Odds ratio	95% CI	P
Sex			
Male	3.0	1.92–4.56	0.000*
Female (rc)	1.0	–	
Mother's Education			
Tertiary (rc)	1.0	–	0.016*
Secondary	1.76	1.11–2.77	
None	0.80	0.34–1.92	
Primary	0.57	0.24–1.36	

Rc=reference category

*: Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

Table 5 Bivariate analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics and Age of partner

Variables	Age of partner			χ^2	P
	Older (%)	Same(%)	Younger(%)		
Sex					
Male	9.0	50.6	32.6	10.706	0.098
Female	29.8	36.2	25.5		
Religion					
Islam	17.1	46.1	26.3	0.687 [#]	
Christianity	19.1	44.3	31.3		
Traditional	-	50.0	50.0		
Type of family					
Monogamous	16.4	44.0	35.1	10.354	0.111
Polygamous	21.7	46.7	18.3		
Father's Education					
None	23.1	69.2	7.7	9.904	0.624
Primary	13.3	53.3	26.7		
Secondary	16.7	41.0	35.9		
Tertiary	18.4	44.8	27.6		
Mother's Education					
None	13.3	46.7	40.0	12.893	0.377
Primary	18.2	63.6	18.2		
Secondary	10.5	44.7	36.8		
Tertiary	25.3	42.1	23.1		
Age group					
10-14	20.0	40.0	37.8	3.750	0.292
15-19	17.3	46.7	27.3		
Class					
SS1	21.0	45.2	19.4	20.00	0.018 [*]
SS2	13.4	49.1	33.0		
SS3	35.4	25.0	40.0		

#: Fisher exact probability;

* : Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

The study also showed that 62% of the respondents were aware of contraceptive methods, with 59.6% among the female and 64.5% among the male respondents.

However, less than half of the sexually active males (44.2%) were using modern method (male condom) of contraception, while 54.4% of the sexually active females were using different types of modern methods. (Figure 2). These included condom by male partner (54.1%), Pills (21.6%), injectables (5.4%), IUCD (5.4%), and emergency contraception (13.5%). Reasons stated by the respondents for not using any method of contraception included no prior preparation at the time of intercourse, as well as partners' objection.

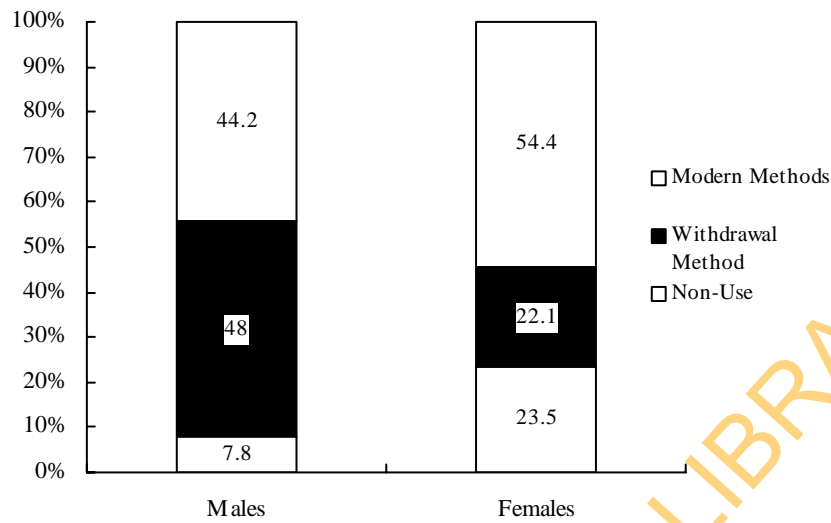


Figure 2 Contraceptive usage among sexually active respondents

Discussion

The socio-demographic characteristics of students studied were comparable to previous studies performed in Nigeria^[4].

Most of the respondents are from monogamous family setting. This appears to have some protective effect on the number of students who experiment with sexual activity.

In this study, 28.3% of respondents had had sexual experience. This figure is far lower than the result obtained from earlier studies, where a higher figure of about 77% in Port-Harcourt, Nigeria was reported^[8]. It was suggested then that the increased sexual activity among in-school adolescents in Port Harcourt might be due to rapid urbanization of the city as Nigeria's crude oil operations expand, couple with the poor socio-economic condition of the indigenous adolescents.

Male respondents were more sexually active than their female counterpart, though they share similar age of sexual debut. This observation is similar to other studies in Africa^[4, 8, 9]. Most of the sexually active respondents in this study admitted that their first exposure was unplanned (77.2%), and by extension unprotected. This observation is in agreement with other studies. Therefore, these adolescents are likely to be more prone to unwanted/teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortion complications, sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, especially in the light of engaging in different sexual acts and having multiple sexual partners.

The sociodemographic profiles that were found to positively predict the likelihood of previous sexual experience were sex and mother's educational background. The finding of

male respondent to be three times more likely to have had sexual exposure is in tandem with similar study by Oladepo, *et al*^[10,11]. He suggested then that male adolescent are more likely to be explorative and engages in other social behaviour such as drinking of alcohol and smoking that may act as catalyst.

Mothers are generally viewed as the primary teacher of their children and as such seen as role model. There is the possibility of mothers with tertiary education to have discussed sexuality education and associated dangers of premarital sex with their children compared to those without education. It is therefore not surprising from the result of this study that revealed that respondents whose mothers have tertiary education are less likely to have had sexual exposure when compared to those with lesser education. However, further operational research will be necessary to explain further.

Of all the factors considered that may influence the choice of sexual partner by the respondents, only the class level was found to be significant. Contrary to the earlier observation that most adolescents engage in sexual activity with older partners^[8], we observed in this study that this was not absolute. Rather, our findings revealed that in-school adolescents have sexual partner that are either younger, of their age or older. The level of class may be a circumstantial outcome because; respondents were not equally recruited on the class category. This finding will need to be further tested to ascertain the level of its significance.

Most respondents got their information about sexual issue from their school-mates/friends. These people are not likely to be properly informed about correct adolescent reproductive issue. This is similar to observation from other studies^[4,5,7,9]. This is made worse by the fact that teachings on adolescent reproductive health issues are not encouraged by the government and religious leaders in the secondary schools.

While contraceptive awareness is high its usage is still low especially among the sexually active respondents. This is similar to observation from other studies^[5,8]. The implication of this is increase tendency to unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion as well as increase risk of sexually transmitted infection.

Conclusion

It is quite obvious from this study that risky sexual behaviors are in practice among the secondary school students studied and by extension in the country. Therefore, it means that reproductive health issues especially concerning the adolescents will have to be openly discussed by all with our youths while abstinence/chastity should be cherished.

It is also recommended that government, parents and other stakeholders (teachers, counselors, community/religious leaders, Non-governmental organizations etc) should be more proactive in adoption of comprehensive sexuality education right from primary school level.

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