

Issues Relating to Sexual Activities among Female Undergraduates: A Case study of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Ogun State

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Abstract

The study investigated sexual activities (SA) and their perceived effect on the educational and psychosocial development (PD) of female teenagers in Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB). The sample was made up of 110 first year female students (in 100 level). Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that majority of respondents were between 15 and 20 years (89%) and many are Christians by religion (74%). Very few of the respondents experienced kissing, caressing, rape, masturbation, and watching of pornography. Majority of respondents (91%) gave their consent. Positive and negative influencers of SA were identified. The perceived effect of engaging in sexual activities on the education of the respondents is the difficulty in comprehending in class, while feelings of depression and guilt were the effects of SA on PD. In conclusion, engagement in SA was with approval and different factors influenced the activity. Based on the findings, teenagers should be educated on the economic benefits of sexual activity as early as possible during admission process into tertiary education.

Keywords: sexual activity, education, teenagers, psychosocial, sexual activity influencers

Introduction

Children are individuals within the zero to eighteen years. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) categorised a child as any individual under 18 years. The teenage years is characterised with many developmental tasks related to sexuality as they seek to form romantic relationships

and sexual identities (Auslander, Rosenthal and Blythe, 2005). Teenagers strive to make multiple choices in different domains of life trajectory such as academic, emotional, social, and sexual among others. However, the female-child is more prone to vulnerability when they are at risk of exposure to sex or sexual related activity.

Situations around the globe indicate that engagement in sexual activity continues to be on the increase among high and tertiary school students who are majorly in their early, middle or late adolescents groups. For instance, in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control, Prevention (2009) and Martinez, Copen and Abma (2011 in *Advocates for Youths* 2012) found out that 46% of all high school age students as well as 62% of high school seniors are sexually active, with about 6 % having had sex before 13 years. Also, Kann, (2016) reported that 41% of secondary school students had been exposed to sexual activity and in all 30% are sexually active in the United States.

Nigeria is a society that discourages any form of sexual practices especially among female gender. One major contemporary social problem in the globe is the rampage of sexual activity and practices young females. A society that perceives children as passive and not active beings increases their vulnerability.

Different factors impede on sexual activity of females. The significance of culture in sexual activity and practices cannot be overemphasised. Some of these beliefs are tied to prejudice and misconceptions (Osagiobare, Oronsaye and Ekwakara, 2015). Kabir, Iliyasu, Abubakar, and Kabi (2004) opined that sexual activity was associated with various factors including religiosity, perceived parental attitudes towards sex, living arrangements, and school characteristics among teenagers in Kano, Nigeria. Enzuladu, Van de Kwaak, Zwanikken and Zoakak (2017) found that teenagers in school were mostly influenced to engage in sexual activity by

pleasure love and peer pressure while those out of school were influenced by forceful and transactional sex.

Advocate for Youths (2012) describes the socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, educational aspirations, life experiences and family structure influencing teenagers. Auslander, Rosenthal and Blythe (2005) found out that biological, psychosocial, and sociocultural factors can influence teenagers' sexual practices and activity. NASW (2001) and Fraser (1997) opine that peer group influences teenagers' development, decision making and attitudes towards sex. In fact, the yardstick for teenagers' identity formation and establishment of social relationships among peers is sexual development (Darroch et-al, 2001; Guilamo - Ramos, 2009; Moilanen, 2010 in *Advocates for Youths* 2012). It means that girls that abstained from sex did so because their friends abstained. However, *Advocate for Youths* (1997) asserts that teenage girls having abstinent friends, personal beliefs and perception of parents' negative reactions towards sex desist and resist sexual activity. Onset of early exposure to sexual activity, predispose teenagers to high risk of sexually transmitted infections (Kabir, Iliyasu, Abubakar, and Kabi, 2004).

Due to lack of sexual consent towards the female figure, sexual abuse and violence are common in such cases. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2006) defines sexual abuse as any unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. The Pandora's Project (2016), identified sexual abuse and violence acts such as touching of any part of the body

when clothed or unclothed; encouraging sexual activity like masturbation; penetration acts including penetration of the mouth; intentional engagement in sexual activity before a child; watching pornography or creating pornography and; encouraging females to engage in prostitution. Finkelhor, (2006) in his studies carried out in the United States revealed the following heart-breaking statistics that during a one year period in the United States, over the course of their lifetime, 28% of U.S youth ages 14-17 had been sexually victimize Sexual activity due to sexual abuse was reported among majority of adults' women than men especially teenagers from unhappy families, cohabiting individuals, single parents, and inadequate sex education (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis and Smith, 1990; Vaillant-Morel *et-al*, 2016).

Education as a process provides the knowledge, skills, values (cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviours) and attitudes required to enable an individual perform or function adequately and contribute significantly to the society. Offorma (2008) refers specifically to the functional education that can assist the female child to develop her physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual, political and economic aspects of life. Alabi, Bahah and Alabi (2014) identified factors which have direct and indirect impact on their educational opportunities and potentials. Drawing from other scholars' contributions, the main factors include: family abuse and domestic violence, sexual abuse, rejection and neglect, genital mutilation, forced and early marriage, victimization and suspicion of witchcraft, homicides, inducement to prostitution. The scholars

concluded that the quality and degree of participation of the females in the society is tied significantly to the quality of her education.

Moreover, lack of accessibility to educational opportunities limits the growth and survival of the females. Also, socio-cultural factors militate against female students' access to education (Offorma, 2009). Okeke *et al*, (2008), Alabi and Alabi, (2012) also itemised that child labour, poverty, lack of sponsorship, bereavement, truancy, broken home among others are major contributors to inability of the girl child to assess education for their personal development. Among the Americans, the priority placed on the status and value of male gender role discourages and hinders a supportive environment for women educational attainments (Khang, 2010). In addition, early marriages for ages 14-18 girls (Timm 1994, Park and Chi, 1999) leading to early parenthood and withdrawal from high school (Lee, 2007) have accounted for a common cultural practice that retards the educational attainments of the girl-children.

According to Erikson (1950, 1958), the teenage age, stage five of the eight stages of psychosocial development is characterised by identity versus role confusion. It implies that teenagers explore as a grown up through the help of peers, influences, and groups. The search for identity can be achieved otherwise withdrawal from others may set in. The theory emphasised how experience and behaviour can be influenced by nurture and experience.

It is a known phenomenon that sexual activity continues to be rampant in secondary and tertiary without excluding

primary institutions. Statistics on the active participation of the female gender is in dearth, probably due to the sacredness of sex in the society.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of the study was to investigate the issues relating to sexual activities of female undergraduates of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). Specifically, the study:

- identified types of sexual activity,
- determined if consent was sought before sexual engagement,
- identified factors that influence sexual activities
- perceived effects of sexual activities on the education and psychosocial development of female teenagers in Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta.

Methodology

Design and area of the study: The study adopted a survey research design. It sought information from teenagers in Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) **Population for the study:** The study population consisted of female teenagers in hundred level in Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta.

Samples for the study: A random sampling technique was used in selecting 112 undergraduate female students attending Communication and General Studies (CGNS) 103 from 22 departments. One inclusion criterion was that girls between the ages of 15 and 20 years were involved.

Instrument for data collection: The instrument for data collection was a

structural questionnaire comprising of four sections: the first section elicited information on the demographic characteristics; the second section focused on the types of sexual practices prevalent among respondents; the third focused on seeking of consent before engaging in sexual activity; fourth focused on the factors causing the engagement in sexual activity; the fifth section focused on the effects of sexual practices on educational attainment; while the last section, focused on the effect of psychosocial developments of respondents using a 5-point Likert scale. The mean of 2.50 was used for deciding the level of acceptance. The questionnaire items were generated based on the information gathered from the reviewed literatures.

Data collection and analysis: Two postgraduate students from the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta and University of Ibadan were employed as research assistants in the administration of questionnaire to the 100 level girls. The research assistants were tutored on the rules and regulations guiding the administration of the questionnaire and that they were instructed to give only to girls who were willing to complete and return it immediately to reduce misplacements and ensure good returns. The data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

The analytic sample comprised of 110 female teenagers; 89.1% of them were within 15 - 20 years old, majority had SSCE as their educational level (96.1%) and about 74.6% were Christians. The

table also shows that majority (73.6%) were from monogamy families while 17.3% were from polygamy and single family.

Findings of the study

Table 1: Distribution showing the types of sexual activities prevalent among the respondents

Variable	EF (%)	NEF (%)
1 Kissing	33 (25.6)	96 (74.4)
2 Raped	12 (9.3)	117 (90.7)
3 Caressing	13 (10.1)	116 (89.9)
4 Masturbation	8 (6.2)	121 (93.8)
5 Incest	2 (1.6)	127 (98.4)
6 Hunting	5 (3.9)	124 (96.1)
7 Watch pornography	7 (5.4)	122 (94.1)

% = percentage; EF - Experienced Frequency; NEF=Not Experienced Frequency

Table 1 shows that one-quarter (25.6%) of the teenagers have experienced kissing, caressing (10.1%) and rape (9.3%). The table also shows that 6.2% of teenagers have experienced masturbation while 5.4% watch pornography.

Table 2: Distribution showing whether or not Respondents Consent before Engaging in Sexual Activity

Sexual consent	Frequency (%)
Yes	117 (90.7)
No	12 (9.3)

Table 2 shows that before female teenagers engage in sex, majority (90.7%) of the respondents consent was sought while the consent of 9.3% was not sought.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Respondents Engagement in Sexual Activities

Factors Influencing Sexual Activity	Yes Frequency (%)	No Frequency (%)	Rank
Parental neglect	78 (60.4)	51 (39.5)	2 nd
Night partying	72 (55.8)	57 (44.2)	7 th
Movies	74 (57.4)	55 (42.6)	5 th
Peer influence	93 (72.1)	36 (27.6)	1 st
School activity (Essay competition, Sports, Fashion)	24 (18.6)	105 (81.4)	10 th
Personal Desire	76 (59.0)	53 (41.1)	4 th
Finance	74 (57.4)	55 (42.6)	5 th
Culture	21 (10.9)	108 (83.8)	11 th
Gifts/presents/ awards	44 (34.1)	85 (65.9)	8 th
Parental involvement / support	37 (28.7)	92 (71.4)	9 th
Poverty	78 (60.4)	51 (39.5)	2 nd

Table 3 shows that peer influence (72.1%), parental neglect (60.4%), and poverty (60.4%), and personal desire (59.0%) as major factors influencing their engagement in sexual activity. Also, over half of teenagers (57.4%) concurrently reported that movies and finances

influenced their sexual activity. It can also be seen from the table that night partying is another factor for sexual activity for over half (55.8%) teenagers. However, for majority of the teenagers, culture (83.8%), school activity (81.4%) parental involvements /support (71.4%) and

gifts/presents/awards (65.9%) did not influence or encourage them to be involved in sexual activity.

Table 4: Perceived Effects of Sexual Activity on Education of Respondents

S/N	Effects of Sexual Activity on Education	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	My experience of sexual abuse does not encourage me to speak confidently in classroom	2.36	1.47	Rejected
2	I find it difficult to ask questions in class	2.46	1.44	Rejected
3	I get distracted when I am reading	2.80	1.45	Accepted
4	Irregularity in school is because I must be with my sexual partner when not convenient for me	1.91	1.28	Rejected
5	It is difficult to comprehend in class because of wandering thoughts	2.81	1.46	Accepted
6	I can become passive or unproductive in school due to my sexual involvement	2.55	1.47	Accepted
7	I easily get distracted with school work	2.58	1.38	Accepted
8	My exposure to sex does not disturb my academic progress	2.59	1.51	Accepted
9	I can cope with sex and education at the same time	2.28	1.33	Rejected
10	I hardly participate in sports (activity) in school	2.57	1.41	Accepted
11	I may dropped out of school with the way am going about	1.87	1.28	Rejected
12	Others	1.67	0.52	Rejected

Table 4 shows that out of twelve items, six were accepted as perceived effects of sexual activity on the educational attainment of teenagers with mean rating of 2.50 while the other items had a mean rating less than 2.00. This implies that the engagement is sexual activity affect the education of teenagers.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Teenagers on the Effect of Sexual Activity on Psychosocial Development

S/N	Effect of Sexual Activity on Psychosocial Development	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	My exposure to sex does not allow me interact with the opposite sex in the classroom	2.12	1.40	Disagreed
2	I stay away from opposite sex, because of the fear of not being abused	2.87	1.59	Agreed
3	I am emotionally disturbed	2.78	1.51	Agreed
4	Thoughts of engaging in sex depresses me	3.09	1.50	Agreed
5	I feel guilty each time I remember my past experiences relating with men sexually	2.90	1.62	Agreed
6	I isolate myself generally	2.44	1.29	Disagreed
7	It is difficult for me to trust anybody	3.36	1.50	Agreed
8	Sexual abuse has traumatized me	2.31	1.46	Disagreed
9	I feel like committing suicide	1.77	1.19	Disagreed
10	I refuse to tell people of my sexual experience because of stigmatisation	2.67	1.57	Agreed
11	I feel powerless with the opposite sex	2.42	1.49	Disagreed
12.	Others - fear of harassment, depression	2.00	0.71	Disagreed

Table 5 shows that six out of twelve items were agreed upon to be the effect of sexual activity on the psychosocial development of teenagers as their means are above 2.5 and above.

Discussion

The result of this study indicated that kissing, caressing, rape, masturbation and watching of pornography were the sexual activity experienced by female teenagers. In spite of the known phenomenon that sexual activity before marriage is against the Nigeria culture pre-marital sex. This is in line with the sexual activity identified by Pandora's Project (2016) to include masturbation, watching pornography. Specifically, kissing was the major sexual activity reported by one-quarter of the teenagers (25.4%). This could be a reflection of the state of teenagers finding it difficult to open-up their sexual activity. Research has shown that the globally, the spread of HIV has increased through kissing. Findings have shown that saliva and serum are unlikely to transmit HIV infection (Barr, et-al, 1992). For instance, infections such as STIs, chikungunya virus can be transmitted through passionate kissing, oral sex, among others (Barr, et-al, 1992). It is interesting to note that female teenagers masturbate, although the percentage seems insignificant. This implies that while some female teenagers cannot have sex with the opposite sex, they engage in sexual activity by arousing themselves.

It is worth noting that majority (90.7%) female teenagers gave their consent to the sexual activity. It shows that during teenager years, majority of teenage females tend to explore the pleasure of

sexual activity, thus sexual abuse may not be common among them. This implies that there was no sexual assault or abuse among majority of them and was common only among few of the teenagers (9.3%) whose consent were not sought before engaging in sexual activity. Such activity may not be far-fetched to be rape. The few whose consent were not sought before sexual activity could have experienced sexual abuse or assault. Envuladu, Van de Kwaak, Zwanikken and Zoakak (2017) found that teenagers in school were mostly influenced to engage in sexual activity by pleasure love and peer pressure while those out of school were influenced by forceful and transactional sex.

Furthermore, positive and negative influencers were discovered as factors influencing teenagers engaging in sexual activity. The positive influencers - factors encouraging sexual activity include peer influence, parental neglect, poverty, personal desire and night partying. This corroborates the findings of Fraser (1997), NASW (2001), Auslander, Rosenthal and Blythe (2005), and Advocate for Youths (2012), that sexual activity among teenagers are influenced by peer group influences, socio-economic status, life experiences and family structure biological, psychosocial, and sociocultural factors. This finding is in line with Envuladu, Van de Kwaak, Zwanikken and Zoakak (2017) found that teenagers in school were mostly influenced to engage in sexual activity by pleasure love and peer pressure while those out of school were influenced by forceful and transactional sex. Apparently culture, parental involvement, school activity and

gifts culture, school activity and support does not influence or encourage sexual activity. These can be called as negative influencers, i.e. factors that does not influence teenagers' engagement in sexual activity. This implies that negative influencers can be explored to curb sex among teenagers. For instance, Nigerian society, being a collectivistic society structure of African setting may stigmatised a teenager's openness as against the individualistic society or western culture. The implication of this with regards to culture is the fact that the society in which teenagers live can determines the extent to which they engage in sexual activity.

Thus, Nigerian culture being a collectivistic type, does not promote illegitimate sexual activity for an unmarried person and could be a reason why teenagers cannot openly discuss their sexual activity and practices; when compared to individualistic society that promotes independence and freedom of sexual activity and practices among young people. Thus, collectivistic culture can help curb sexual activity among young people.

The result of the analysis of research question four revealed that teenagers were able to identify with the fact that the find it difficult to comprehend in class, easily get distracted with school work, distraction while reading, academic progress is affected, easily get distracted and becoming passive to school work as effect of engaging in sexual activity on their education. The implication of this is that engagement in sexual activity pose a threat to the educational attainment of teenagers.

Irregularity in the education of teenagers is certain in the next few years of the educational pursuit due to their involvement in sexual activity. This is because teenagers are currently in their first year of programme and first semester precisely without any result to show their performance.

The effect of sexual activity on the psychosocial development of teenagers revealed that trust was a major issue. This corroborates the first stage of psychosocial development of trust versus mistrust (Erickson, 1958). The implication of this is that, early exposure to sexual activity could lead to abuse and affect teenagers' ability to trust others. Exposure to sexual activity has made it difficult for teenagers to trust anybody. The reason could be that some of these teenagers might have become disappointed in the individuals they trusted.

Other effects of engaging in sexual activity on female teenagers include feeling depressed, feel guilty when they remember relating with men sexually, stay away from opposite sex because of being abuses, emotionally disturbed and refuse to tell people of their sexual experience due to stigmatisation.

Conclusion

Adolescence is a critical stage of development that needs not to be overlooked. While teenagers gain autonomy from parents and guidance, they explore and engage in sexual activity. Thus, pursuit of autonomy in different aspects of their developments is evident. Teenage years is characterised by the need to explore their body and environment. From the findings, it can be concluded that sexual activity is a common phenomenon

among teenagers although, majority could not openly identify with the activity. Thus, sexual abuse or assault only occurs among few of them. Teenagers have the desire to explore their sexual identity by engaging in voluntary sexual activity. The study was able to identify positive influencers of sexual activity (peers, parental neglect, and poverty and personal desires) as well as negative influencers (culture, school activity, parental involvement, and gifts) among teenagers. Negative influencers seem to discourage sexual activity while the positive influencers encourages sexual activity in females. Sexual activity has minimal effect on the education of female teenagers. Psychosocial development of teenagers is being affected due to engagement in sexual activity resulting in psychosocial crises such as mistrust, sense of guilt and depression. The implication of this is that the social identity of teenagers may likely be impaired.

Recommendations

1. The counselling unit of the university should give new students orientation on issues relating to sexual activities.
2. The university health centres should organise health and sex talk during resumption of intake of new students.
3. Other stakeholders such as the religious, government and families identifying with the sexual needs of teenagers and adolescents should pragmatically involve at their different levels by creating a forum where issues could be discussed.

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