

## Reasons for Increase in Adolescence Sexual Activities in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the reasons for increase in adolescence sexual activities in Nigeria. The research design was a descriptive survey type. The population for the study comprised of all parents and counsellors who are married sandwich students in their undergraduate studies of the University of Ado-Ekiti and their lecturers. The sample consist of 127 students and 23 counsellors who are married parents and who had children. The research instrument was a self construct are tagged Sexuality and Parents Questionnaire (SAPQ). The questionnaires were validated using face and content validity procedures. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.80. The instrument was administered by the research and 4 research assistants. The analysis of the general questions was done through the use of frequency counts and percentages while the Hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The analyses revealed that a high percentage at parents and counsellors agree that youths do not adhere to the idea of “no sex guide”, that teenage sex has become a way of life and that the role which sex play in the lives of youths and the influence of social forces contribute greatly to the non adherence of “no to sex guide among youths. There was a significant difference in the reason for non adherence of youths to the idea of no sex guide, there was a significant difference in the ways suggested for curbing premarital sexual behaviour by counsellors and parents. The analyses shows that majority of the respondents claimed the provision of sexuality education can curb premarital sex while parental guidance at early age could also assist in curbing premarital sex. Based on these findings it was recommended that sexuality education should be provided on the media, at school so as to assist adolescent to make informed about sexual issues so that they can adhere to “no sex guide” on sexual behaviour until they become more matured to handle sexual issues.

**Key words:** Adolescence, sexual activities, SAPQ, premartial sex, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescent’s sexuality has been a major concern for adults, most especially their parents, teachers, psychologists, sociologists, as well as counsellors. During adolescence young people strengthen their gender identities and begin clarifying their sexual orientations and identities as they experience more adult like erotic feelings and experiment further with sexual behaviours (Delamate and Friedrich, 2002). Most adolescents experience an increased level of sexual interest and the need for frequent sexual gratification, however, there are some or others who experience very little in the way of sexual; needs. It has been reported that today’s adolescents experiment with sexual activities at younger ages than once was the case. Kelly (2004) reported that 80% of people in the United States have intercourse by the time they reach the age of 20.

Davids and Darling (1993) indicated that when adolescents engage in sex, their first motive or desire might just be to relieve biological drives. These emotional needs such as the desire to receive affection, ease loneliness, express anger or escape boredom, gain

acceptance, confirm masculinity or femininity may also be some of their motive for having sex. This shows sex may also become a means of satisfying non-sexual needs. There are also other aims of sexual behaviour. Adolescents may indulge in sex to express physical desire, as an expression of affection, love or use sex a vehicle for expressing and obtain love. Sex can also function as a form of communication, through sex, one expresses affection. When a woman refuses to sleep with her husband, she is using sex to communicate a message e.g., I am hungry. Similarly, promiscuous sexual activity may communicate messages such as “I am lonely”. Sex can be used for practical gain. Prostitution is the most flagrant example of the use of sex for practical gain. Sexual favours are exchanged for other services between spouses and friends.

Adolescent girls may indulge is promiscuous but joyless sexual encounter to maintain popularity and acceptance by their peers. Underneath such behaviour is a defense against loneliness, which is effective at best for a brief period and must be frantically repeated and sustained (Katchderian and Lunde, 1975).

Our society continues to send very powerful and contradictory messages to young people regarding sexuality. Even though the media are saturated with message encouraging sex, educational efforts directed at teenagers are increasingly emphasizing the idea of refraining from sexual activity. Researchers have found out that remaining sexually abstinent is a great challenge to contemporary teens and that no single message, value stance, or approach will help all adolescents who wish to abstain from sex actually achieve that goal (Blinn-Pike, 1999).

African and Asian cultures have been experiencing marked contrasts between traditional sexual values and more permissive sexual attitudes in adolescents today. African adolescents continue to face mixed signals regarding their sexual behaviours. In some societies, there is encouragement to postpone sexual activity. In others, virginity is not seen as a virtue and in fact it may be considered a sign of unsociableness or ill health. Even so, many families still want their daughters to be virgins when they marry. It seems western influences is playing a role in exposing youths to sexual themes in the media and this has led to the breakdown of some traditional restrictions on adolescents sexual behaviour (Francoeur, 2000a). Satellite dishes have brought western television to various countries, this has led to the need to redefine gender roles and sexual attitudes while people struggle to maintain some core traditional value such as chastity (Davis and Davis, 1995).

Premarital sex refers to having sexual experience before marriage. There is high rate of pre-marital sex among adolescents and youths in the present day Nigeria. The problem of high coital sexual intercourse and the high frequency of penetrative sexual conduct seem to be eating deeper and deeper in Nigeria. There is substantial evidence among teens today that sexual involvement is happening at younger ages even than before. First sexual intercourse among teenagers today is nearly twice as likely to occur prior to marriage as it was 35 years ago. By age 19, over 80% of teens have experienced first sexual intercourse at age 16 (Durex, 2001).

The age at which adolescents and youths have their first sexual experience and the fading sex value regarding the sexual norms accepted by the Nigerian society has now become an issue of great concern among counsellors, parents and the Yoruba community of Nigeria.

The ideal preventive measure against premarital sex or HIV/AIDS infection is sexual abstinence, most culture particularly in Africa and religious organisation, prescribe virginity before marriage. However, Owuamanam (2002) claimed it is difficult in convincing young people to

accept "no to sex guide on sexual behaviour because the instruction does not take into consideration the role which sex has to play in the lives of youths, secondly, the emerging biological characteristics as well as other social influences on youths sexuality make it difficult for youths to suppress their sexual urge. "Say no to sex guide" is a preventive technique which can protect someone against AIDS among adolescents or individuals who have sex. This is an ideal preventive measure against AIDS. Most culture, particularly African culture encourages sexual abstinence before marriage. As reported by Owuamanam (2002) sexual abstinence may be necessary in partnership when individual spouse is infected with HIV or keep other partners. However, if sexual abstinence is not possible, the alternative to penetrative sex refers to as safe sex strategies can also be used. Safe sex strategies are decisions which people take to modify their sexual behaviour in order to reduce the risk of AIDS infection.

Vargia (2001) reported that most studies exploring sexual and reproductive health of African youths suggest many teens are ill informed and that their knowledge about sex and reproductive issues are either incorrect or incomplete. The primary source of information for majority of young persons is friend of the same sex and independent reading. Blake (2001) and River (2002) reported that when parents particularly mothers, disapprove of premarital sex, are willing to discuss sexuality and birth control, adolescents tend to postpone sexual activity longer and have less sex frequently. When it comes to the risk of adolescent sex, it is crucial to remember that adolescents assume an attitude for invulnerability, which makes them to believe that negative consequences will not happen. Even reports showing increased use of condom continue to show that teenage do not adequately assess the risk of HIV infection and in fact participate in high-risk sexual activities. Long time studies of condom use among youths show condom use declines in frequency with the age of relationship. Condom use is likely to be higher at the beginning of sexual relationship and then diminishes overtime.

Suggestions have been given for reasons why individuals engage in premarital sex in Nigerians. The reasons include the exposure of youths to tempting situation, promoted by the mass media, cinema, night club, parties and dances these days (Kaiser Foundation, 2004; Brown *et al.*, 2002).

The fact that adults in the past supervised the sexual life of their children and the fact that they no longer do it nowadays might be a reason for increase in premarital sexual behaviour in Nigeria (Owuamanam, 1995). Other reasons for increase in premarital sex in Nigeria include urge for materialism in Nigeria, the pressing need for

money or poverty which might have led to sexual association between teenagers and rich parents who also have numerous sexual partners. The need to experiment with unusual behaviour because of the intensive sexual drive during adolescence due to high rate of sexual development taking place in the biological as well as behavioural level was also given as a reason why youths want to satisfy passion fast. This may also be the reason why they do not want to delay sexual gratification (Akinboye, 1984).

Youths involvement in watching of erotic films might further stimulate their sexual urge. According to Masters and Johnson (1979) the Watching of films or pictures of the nude members of the opposite sex, people engaged in sexual acts, verbal and musical description of sexual behaviour and demographic materials, which are sexually arousing, could act on the sexual script of youths. These sexual scripts, which are further influenced by the irrational thoughts, inherited by culture or day-to-day interactions from peer may be the reason why youths deviate from the norms and value of sexual chastity before marriage (Akanle, 2005).

**Statement of the problem:** Premarital sex according to Akinboye (1984) refers to having sexual experience before marriage. It seems attitudes towards non-marital sex are clearly more permissive than they once were among the population of Nigerian youths. Evidence from researchers such as Akanle (2005) and Durex (2001) suggests that young women and men are starting to have sex at earlier ages and with greater frequency than in the recent past.

Today, the cultural regulations regarding premarital sex are no longer adhered to. The ideal virginal marriage or virginity at marriage no longer exist in Nigeria. Renne (1993) observed that, not only is virginity at marriage no longer perceived as sexually desirable in Southern Nigeria, it is now perceived as socially backward and antisocial. In most Nigerian societies, premarital sexual experimentation was culturally prohibited. Among many ethnic groups, puberty rites were performed to mark a girl's entry into physical maturity, a bride's virginity was tested on the first night she was taken into her husband's house, using a blood stained white cloth spread on the bed for the purpose was the proof of the bride's virginity (Anarfi and Awunsabo, 1993; Achebe, 1978).

Premarital sex used to be covert. Nowadays, it seems the traditional value among Nigerians especially the Yorubas for sanctity of sex and sex for procreation has been overthrown in favour of liberal sex. Nowadays, it is observed that young girls and boys relate and have penetrated sexual relations before marriage. It seems the sexual behavioural practices of South-west youths and

adolescents look like that of a group of individual whose sexual behaviour deviates from the society's norms and values.

Owuamanam (1995) stated that in the past, adults supervised the sexual life of their children and that the involvement of young ones in premarital sexual activities has increased since the Nigerian civil war. There had been changes in Nigeria educational system since the civil war. The age at which Nigerian youths have their first sexual experience and the increasing rate of their involvement in sexual activity give a concern to all Nigerians. The result of premarital sex has been high rate of sexually transmitted diseases, illegal abortions, premature death, unplanned marriage and prostitution. However, inspite of all these problems, no provision has been made in the Nigerian educational system for sexuality education. The problem of this study was to find a lasting solution to the reason for high increase in pre-marital sex among Southwest youths. In addressing this problem, the following general questions were raised: Could the involvement of young ones in premarital sexual activities have increased because nobody gives them sexuality education?

#### **General questions:**

- Do youths adhere to the idea of no sex guide?
- Do parents and counsellors agree that teenage sex has become a way of life?
- Why do youths not adhere to the idea of no sex guide?"
- What are the ways suggested for curbing premarital sex.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was designed along the line of a descriptive survey research. Survey research according to Keliager (1973) studies large and small population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. Survey attempt to answer such questions as, what variable, should be measured? What kind of sample would be drawn? Who would be questioned and how often? On this note, the population for this study comprised of all parents who are married sandwich students who are in their undergraduate studies of the University of Ado-Ekiti and their lectures. The sample consisted of 127 student 23 counsellors. Those students were these who had had children and are parents. The counsellors consist of trained counsellors in their final year of studies.

The sample was selected using simple random and purposeful sampling techniques. The instrument used

was a questionnaire tagged Sexuality and Parents Questionnaire (SAPQ). The questionnaire was in two sections. Section one was demographic. It sought personal data and information about sex, status age of the respondents, marital status. Section two contained questions on the issue of how parents perceive the issue of teenage sex. The instruments were validated using face and content validity procedures. Three experts determined the face value and the appropriateness of the instrument in measuring up what was studied. The experts checked the extent to which the items could actually elicit the intended responses concerned with the issues of premarital sex. A test retest method of establishing reliability was used. The instrument has reliability coefficient of 0.80. The researcher and four research assistants did the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents. The copies of the questionnaire were collected after the administration of the instrument. The data generated were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and the appropriate statistical techniques such as chi-square.

**Hypotheses:**

- There is no significant difference in the responses of counsellors and parents concerning reasons why teenage sex has become a way of life among youths.
- There is no significant difference in the ways suggested for curbing premarital sexual behaviour by counsellors and parents.
- There is no significant difference in the reason for non-adherence of youths to no sex guide as suggested by counsellors and parents.

**RESULTS**

**Question 1:** Do youths adhere to the idea of no sex guide? In answering this question, data on responses of respondents concerned with whether youths adhere to the idea of “no sex guide” was used. Frequency counts and percentage were used in analyzing the data. The result of finding is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows 105 (70%) responded that youths do not adhere to the idea of “no sex guide” while 38 (25.3%) responded by saying youths adhere to the idea of “no sex guide”. From the findings, it is clear that parents and counsellors believe and have noted that youths do not adhere to the idea of no sex guide, a higher percentage of respondents agree that youths do not adhere to the idea of “no sex guide”.

**Question 2:** Do parents and counsellors agree that teenage sex has become a way of life?

**Table 1:** Frequency counts and percentages of adherence to “no sex guide”

	Yes		No	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Do youths adhere to the ‘idea of “no sex guide”?’	38	25.3	105	70

**Table 2:** Frequency counts and percentages of responses on whether teenage sex has become a way of life

	Yes		No	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Has teenage sex became a way of life?	125	83.3	25	16.7

**Table 3:** Frequency counts of percentages of reasons for non-adherence to no sex guide

	Freq.	(%)
Role of sex is not taken into consideration in youths life.	52	34.7
Emerging biological characteristics on youths sexuality make suppression of sexual urge different.	32	21.3
Social influence	35	23.3
Impossible to avoid sex	31	20.7

In analyzing this questions responses of parents and counsellors concerned with their view about whether teenage sex has become a way of life was used. Frequency counts and percentages were used in analysing the data. The result of findings is shown on Table 2.

Table 2 shows 125 (83.3%) agrees that teenage sex has become a way of life while 25 (16.7%) agrees that teenage sex has not become a way of life. From this analysis, majority of Nigerians agree that teenage sex has become a way of life among youths.

**Question 3:** Why do youths not adhere to the idea of no sex guide?

In analysing this question, respondents’ responses concerned with reasons why youths do not adhere to the idea of no sex guide were used. These were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The result is shown on Table 3.

Table 3 shows that 52 (34.7) claimed that youths do not adhere to “no sex guide” because the instruction of “no sex guide” does not take into consideration the role which sex play in the lives of youths. 35 (23.3%) claimed the effect of social influence on sexuality of youths makes it difficult for them to suppress their sexual urge 31 (20.7%) believe it is impossible to avoid sex, because nudity proactive language and complex sexual theme in the public media, hence this make the idea of no sex guide impossible. Thirty two (21.3%) claimed that the emerging biological characteristics on youths sexuality makes it difficult for them to suppress their sexual urge. From the above, it is clear that majority agrees that the role which sex play in the lives of youths and the influence of social forces contribute greatly to the non-adherence of “no sex guide” to youths.

**Question 4:** What are the ways suggested for Curbing Premarital Sexual Behaviour.

In analyzing this question, responses of counsellors and parents concerned with the suggested ways of curbing premarital sexual behaviour was used. The data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The result of the analyzing is shown on Table 4.

Table 4 shows as many as 49 (32.7%) claimed that exposing youths to sexuality education can curb premarital sex while 48 (32%) claimed that parental guidance at early age could prevent premarital sex while 24 (16%) claimed that moral instruction could curb premarital sex while 11 (7.5%) claimed exposing adolescent to the knowledge of the consequences of premarital sex could help while 8(5.3%) claimed that premarital sex could be curbed by teaching sexuality education in schools. Five (3.3%) claimed adequate sex counselling can curb premarital sex 3(2%) claimed the role playing by parents in showing good example could curb premarital sex. Two (1.3%) claim that role premarital sex could be curbed by occupying the mind of the students with games to keep them busy in schools. From the above majority of respondent believe sexuality education on radio, parental guidance at early age and through moral instruction in schools could be the best methods for curbing premarital sex.

**Hypothesis testing**

**Research question**

**Question 1:** There is no significant difference in the responses of counsellors and parents concerning reasons why teenage sex has become a way of life among youths.

In analyzing this hypothesis, chi-square was used. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 5.

Since X cal is greater than X table, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, hence there is a significant difference in the response of counselors and parents concerning reasons why teenage sex has become a way of life among youths.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the ways suggested for curbing premarital sexual behaviour by counsellors and parents.

In analyzing this hypothesis, chi-square was used. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 6.

Since X cal is greater than X table, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, hence there is a significant differences in the ways suggested for curbing premarital sexual behavior by counsellors and parents

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the reason for non-adherence of youths to the idea of “no sex guide” (Table 7).

Table 4: Frequency and percentage showing ways of curbing premarital sex

Suggest ways of curbing premarital sexual behaviour	Freq.	(%)
Sexuality education on radio	49	32.7
Parental guidance at early age	48	32
Teaching sexuality education in school	8	5.3
Through moral instruction	24	16
Occupying the mind of student through games	2	1.3
Rule playing by parents	3	2
Exposing adolescent to knowledge of consequence of premarital sex	17	7.3
Adequate sex counselling	5	3.3

Table 5: Chi-square of difference in responses of counsellors and parents concerned with reasons why teenage sex has become a way of life

	Cown	Pare	Df	X <sup>2</sup> cal	X <sup>2</sup> tab
Exposive to tempting films	15	97	9	8.16	2.10
Phasing out of boarding in schools.	-	7			
African value	-	2			
Non-condemnation of premarital sex	1	6			
Lack of parental guidance	2	5			
Lack of sexuality education in school	3	3			
Urge for materials	1	2			
Intensive sex drive	-	1			
Group pressure	1	-			
Use of premarital sex to test fertility	-	4			
Total	23	127			

Table 6: Chi-square of difference in response of ways for curbing premarital sex by counsellors and parents

	Counsellor	Parents	df	X-cal	X-tab
Sex education on radio	7	42	7	4%	2.10
Parental guide at early age	7	41			
Through moral instruction	3	2			
Through games	-	2			
Role playing by parents	-	3			
Knowledge of danger of premarital sex	2	9			
Sex concealing	2	3			
Total	23	127			

Table 7: Chi-square of difference in the reason of non adherence to no sex guide as suggest by parents and counsellors

	Counsellor	Parents	Df	X-cal	X-tab
Role which sex play in teenage's life not taken into consideration.	8	44	3	12.94	2.10
Emerging biological characteristics	-	32			
Social influence	11	24			
Impossible avoid sex	4	27			
Total	23	127			

X cal is greater than X table, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected hence there is a significant difference in the reason for non adherence of youths to the idea of “no sex guide”.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study shows that a higher percentage of respondents agree that youths do not adhere to the idea of “no sex guide”. This finding agrees without of Blinn-Pike (1999) who reported that researchers have found out that remaining sexually abstinent is a great challenge of contemporary teens and that no single message, value stance or approach will help all adolescents who wish to abstain from sex actually achieve

that goal. The finding is also supported by that of Kelly (2004) who observed that 80% of people in United States have intercourse by the time they reach the age of 20 and that adolescents experiment with sexual activities at younger ages, than once was the case. Also Friedrich (2002) observed that most adolescent experience an increased level of sexual interest and the need for frequent sexual gratification. Youth may not adhere to the idea of "no sex guide because of various reasons, this is because the idea of "no sex guide does not take into consideration the role which sex play in the lives of youths, secondly, the emerging biological characteristics as well as other social influences on youths sexuality make it difficult for youths to suppress their sexual urge.

The finding of this study shows that most parents and counsellors agree that teenage sex has become a way of life in Nigeria. This findings is supported by that of Durex (2001) who reported that today teens sexual involvement is happening at younger ages ever before, first sexual intercourse among teenagers today in nearly twice as likely to occur prior to marriage as it was 35years ago. By age 19, over 80% of teens have experienced first sexual intercourse at age 16. Teenage sex might have become a way of life because most parents have neglected the role of provision of sexuality education to their children. The primary source of information for majority of young people are friends of the same sex or independent reading, furthermore the exposure of youths to tempting situations, promoted by the mass media, cinema night clubs, parties and dances these days might also suggest why individuals engage in sex as a way of life. Other reasons for premarital sex in Nigeria may be the pressing need for money or poverty, which might have led to sexual association between teenagers and rich people who also have numerous partners.

The findings of this study shows that majority of people agree that the non adherence to "No sex guide" is due to the fact that people seem not to be objective by considering the role which sex play in the lives of youths while the influence of social forces also play a part in making it difficult for youths to adhere to the idea of "no sex guide." This finding is supported by Owuamanam (2002) who claimed it is difficult for youths to adhere to "No sex guide on sexual behaviour because the instruction does not take into consideration the role which sex play in the lives of youths. The findings of this research is not surprising because researchers have indicated that sex could serve needs such as ease loneliness, express anger and communicate non sexual needs. Sex could also be used for practical gain such as in prostitution. Hence, this may be the underlying reason while youths find it difficult to adhere to the instruction of no sex guide on sexual behaviour.

The finding of this research shows that majority of respondents favour the provision of sexuality education to youths on the radio as the most important means of curbing premarital sex among youths. This result is supported by Vargia (2001) who reported that teens are ill informed and that their knowledge about sex and reproductive issue are either incomplete or incorrect and hence youths need sexuality education.

The finding of this research is not surprising because every parents who understand that youths lack sexuality cannot expect them to make wise choice concerning their sexual behaviour when sexuality education is lacking, hence people favour the provision of sexuality education which they believe would be of use and may curb premarital sex.

The findings of this research shows there is a significant difference in the view of counsellors and parents concerning the reason why teenage sex has become a way of life among youths. This finding agrees with that of Owuamanam (1995) who reported that most parents are misinformed and painfully uncertain about what they truly believe to be acceptable sexual behaviour and reason why teenage sex has become a way of life. This result is not surprising at all because counsellors are specialist in sex issues, their perception about the reasons why teenage sex has become a way of life is expected to be more genuine than that of parents who do not have the needed information about sexuality.

The finding of this study shows there is a significant difference in the ways suggested for curbing premarital sex by counsellors and parents. The findings of this study agrees with that of Blin-Pike (1999) who observed that the society send very powerful contradicting message, about curbing of premarital sex to teenagers regarding sexuality. In spite of the fact that the media is saturated with messages, which encourage sex, educational efforts directed at teenagers are increasingly emphasizing the idea of retraining from sex. However, researchers have found that remaining sexual abstinent is a great challenge to all adolescents. The findings of this study also agrees with Owuamanam (2004) who reported that most culture believe the ideal measure against premarital sex is abstinence or virginity before marriage, however Owuamanam as a researcher opined that it is difficult to convenience young people to accept "No sex guide" on sexual behaviour. The findings of this study is not surprising because the people who are not informed about sexual issues do not understand the role which sex play in the lives of youths and the effects of the pronounced bodily changes as well as the social influence on youths sexuality.

The finding of this research shows that there is an significant difference in the reason for non adherence of

youths to the idea of “no to sex guide”. The finding of this study is supported by the findings of Clark and Wiederman (2000) who reported that reasons for non-adherence to “no sex guide” on sexual behaviour varies among youths. Psychologist observed various reasons such as lack parental guidance, biological characteristics and the role which sex play in youths life. Hence, the result of difference in the view of counsellors and parents should be expected.

### CONCLUSION

The finding of this research has made the research to conclude that the non adherence to the “no sex guide” on sexual behaviour among youths is a result of lack of sexuality education in schools even when the society send very powerful contradictory messages to young ones about sex. Furthermore, a lot of factors such as the role which sex play in the lives of youths could be one of those reasons while sex have become a way of life among teenagers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that parents should begin sexuality education at home, during the early years. Sexuality education needs to be provided for adolescents while in school, through the media so as to assist them in making wise useful and informed decision about their sexual life. These would enhance youths to be able to adhere in the “no sex guide” until they become matured to marry.

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