

Assessment of Effect of Peer Pressure and Mass Media on Secondary School Students Involvement in Premarital Sex in Anambra State of Nigeria

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Abstract: Pre-marital sex among secondary school adolescents has been identified to be on the increase worldwide. Adolescents are susceptible to peer pressure. This study was conducted to determine the effect of peer group pressure and mass media on the prevalence of pre-marital sex among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State of Nigeria. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. Data were collected using a pre-tested structured, self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were selected using a multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection in the study was the Secondary Student Sex Variables Questionnaire (SSSVQ) which was constructed by the researchers. Students who had medium extent exposure to mass media or more (\geq ME) were 3 times or less (\leq LE) [or: 3.153, (CI: 2.270-4.380)]. Respondents who had medium extent exposure to peer pressure or more (\geq ME) were twice more likely to engage in pre-marital sex than those who had low extent exposure or less (\leq LE) [or: 2.240, (CI: 1.601-3.134), $p = 0.030$]. This study revealed that the prevalence of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Anambra State was high. It is concluded that the peer pressure and exposure to mass media influenced pre-marital sex and it was recommended that family health education should be intensified in secondary schools to enable the students understand problems of pre-marital sex.

Key words: Peer pressure, mass media, pre-marital sex, secondary school students.

1. Introduction

The process of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. Besides physical and sexual maturation, these experiences include movement toward social and economic independence, and development of identity, the acquisition of skills needed to carry out adult relationships and role, and the capacity for abstract reasoning. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences. Many adolescents face pressure to use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and

to initiate sexual relationships at earlier ages, putting themselves at high risk for intentional and unintentional injuries, unintended pregnancies, and infection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) [1]. Many also experience a wild range of adjustment and mental health problems. Behaviour patterns that are established during this process, such as drug use or non-use and sexual risk taking or protection, can have long-lasting positive and negative effects on future health and well-being. As a result, during this process, adults have unique opportunities to influence young people.

In Ethiopia, the prevalence of pre-marital sex among adolescents was 42.7%. In Kenya the prevalence of pre-marital sex among adolescents was 14.9% [1]. In Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Anochie & Ikpeme [2]

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reported a prevalence of 25.7%. In Plateau State, Nigeria, a study conducted in two south-eastern states in Nigeria (Enugu and Anambra) reported a prevalence of 40% [3].

Adolescence is the period between 13-19 years of age. This is the group that is mostly seen in our secondary schools, hence the group under study. During this stage, he/she experiences not only physical growth but also other body changes, like emotional, psychological, social, mental changes and growth [4]. The WHO agreed that adolescents are seen within age groups of 10-19 years [5]. The physical attributes at this stage of life include noticeable growth spurt, development of reproductive organs, appearance of secondary sex characteristics, marked voice changes, broadening shoulders and hips.

Premarital sex among adolescents has been occurring in both developed and developing countries of the world. Premarital sex was considered particularly unacceptable in predominantly Muslim nations such as Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan and Egypt, each having over 90% disapproval, while people in the Western European countries were the most accepting with Spain, Germany and France expressing less than 10% disapproval. Premarital sexual activity among adolescent is higher in Sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions. According to Ref. [6], 45% of females and 73% of males aged less than 19 years have had sexual intercourse. Though most African traditions discourage it, some cultures encourage it. It is reported that in Nigeria by 1990, 0.9% of the adolescents were involved in premarital sex, but not among secondary school adolescents.

The implications of premarital sex for both boys and girls were found to have serious effects. The boys are exposed to early fatherhood, which could imply end academic career or vocational training, poverty and being encumbered with the burden of providing for the mother and the unplanned child. The female adolescents can experience unplanned unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion that can lead to infertility

or even death in extreme cases, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections, dangers of dropping out of school, early and unplanned marriage which can lead to lifelong unhappiness, increased risk of pregnancy induced hypertension anaemia, obstructed labour and death [7, 8]. The foetus is prone to be delivered preterm, small for date and risk of prenatal death, among others.

The study aimed at identifying the influence of peer pressure and mass media on the secondary school students' involvement in premarital sex. The findings from this study would bring light effect of peer pressure and mass media as variables that predispose adolescents to premarital sex in Anambra State, the result of the study will also be useful to education policy makers as it has the potentials of providing information that will assist them in formulating reproductive and sexual health policies that would help students develop healthy and responsible sexual behaviour in the society.

2. Methodology

The research design adopted in this study is cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The area of this study is Anambra State of Nigeria. The State comprises of 21 LGAs, 3 senatorial zones, 6 education zones and 177 communities, with the capital at Awka. The state has a population of about 4,055,048 according to 2006 census with 405,504 as children and 1,013,762 as adolescents [9]. The target population of the study comprises of unmarried secondary school students in Anambra. There are 428 secondary schools in the State. The estimated population of students in all the schools was 226,106 [10]. These 226,106 secondary school students formed the population for the study. The spread of the target population was based on education zone, location, category of school, type of school and sex.

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Ministry of Education Awka and permission from all

the Principals of secondary school whose students participated in the study. The students were also requested to give individual consent after explaining the nature of the study.

The study sample consisted of 955 students drawn from the study population. This sample size was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table [11]. In the Krejcie and Morgan Sample size table, populations of 100,000 require a minimum sample size of 384. There are 226,106 secondary students in Anambra State. So in applied the formula:

$$384/100,000 \times 226,106 = 868$$

The calculated minimum sample size was 868.

Multi-staged sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. In the first stage, the schools were listed based on the existing six (6) education zones in Anambra State which are Aguata, Akwa, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha zones. Convenience sampling method was used to select three education zones namely Akwa, Nnewi and Ogidi zones.

In the selected schools, students were stratified into classes and by this process one class/stream of JSS 111 and one class/stream of SS 1-3 were selected from each of the single gender boys, single gender girls and co-educational secondary schools. The sample for the study consisted of respondents made up of 152 girls from single gender secondary school and 260 girls from co-educational secondary schools giving a total of 412 girls. The same principle was employed for the boys and 190 were selected from single gender schools and 353 from co-educational schools giving a total of 543 boys, and a grand total of 955 secondary school adolescents.

The instrument used for data collection in the study was the Secondary School Students Sex Variables Questionnaire (SSSVQ) which was constructed by the researcher. The instrument has two sections. Section A sought information from the respondents about extent of peer influence and exposure to mass media. Section B contains items designed to measure the

respondents' degree of involvement in premarital sex. The response options were as indicated in the Likert scale as follows: very high extent; moderate extent; little extent. It also covered the prevalence of pre-marital sex among adolescents.

Two experts in Nursing Science, two experts in measurement and evaluation, and one expert from community medicine validated the instrument. The instrument was pre-tested on 20 secondary school adolescents (respondents) from an educational zone not included in the study but has same characteristics set up as the area of study. To establish the reliability of the instrument, split-half method was employed. The correlation coefficient obtained was 0.73. Spearman Brown co-relation was applied and the correlation obtained was 0.97. A correlation of 0.97 demonstrated that the instrument was reliable. Data collection was generally done during school recreation to avoid interruption of school programme. On the agreed date for each school, the subjects were assembled and the researcher after introducing self-informed them of the purpose of the study. With the help of the principal and class teachers in each school, the instrument was administered to the subjects and collected on the spot giving 100% response rate. Opportunities were provided for questions to be asked before students settled down to complete the instrument.

Data were collated and entered into the computer by a statistician. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Version 20 software for data analysis. Frequencies and percentages were determined. Appropriate tests of statistical significance such as Chi-square test and logistic regression were applied to test for associations. Statistical significance was set at 0.05.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the effect of peer pressure on pre-marital sex. Out of the 636 respondents that have had pre-marital sex, 232 (36.5%) have VHE of peer pressure, 213 (33.5%) had HE to peer pressure, 82

(12.9%) had ME to peer pressure, 61 (9.6%) has LE to peer pressure, while 48 (7.5%) had VLE exposure to peer pressure. This difference was statistically significant ($X^2 = 3.748$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.038$). This shows that peer pressure had effect on pre-marital sex.

Table 2 shows the effect of exposure to mass media on pre-marital sex. Out of the 636 respondents that have had pre-marital sex, 200 (31.4%) had VHE exposure, 150 (23.6%) had exposure, 150 (23.6%) had ME exposure, 115 (18.1%) had LE exposure, and 21 (3.3%) had VLE exposure. This difference was statistically significant ($X^2 = 4.051$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.041$). This shows that exposure to mass media had an effect on pre-marital sex.

4. Discussion

In this study peer pressure was found to increase the likelihood of engaging in pre-marital sex. The respondents who had medium extent or more peer pressure were twice more likely to engage in pre-marital sex [or: 2.240, (95% CI: 1.601-3.134), $p = 0.030$].

Peer pressure is hardly avoidable among secondary school adolescents because according to Nzeagwu [12], the shift from parental influence to peer pressure is almost inevitable because that period of transition from parental shelter to that of peer presents a period of vulnerability for the adolescent. The need to be accepted by peer and belongingness might exert a strong motivation to engage in sexual activities particularly when such peers were those that engage in such life style. A similar postulation was found that adolescence is a period of affection and strong emotional relationship; thus, the need for affection and emotional relationship could motivate the adolescent into initiating sexual activity. This situation was worse for girls who have poor relationship with their parents and for those whose follow adolescent partners viewed sexual act as a demonstration of a girl's love. Marriage is highly valued in African and most adolescent girls in interaction with their peers were preoccupied with finding whom to marry. In order to attain the enviable position of "main" girlfriend and

Table1 The effect of peer pressure on pre-marital sex.

Peer pressure	Pre-marital sex			X^2	df	p-value
	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)			
VHE	232 (36.5)	18 (5.6)	250 (26.2)	3.748	4	0.038
HE	213 (33.5)	13 (4.1)	226 (23.7)			
ME	82 (12.9)	130 (40.8)	212 (22.2)			
LE	61 (9.6)	73 (22.9)	134 (14.0)			
VLE	48 (7.5)	85 (26.6)	133 (13.9)			
Total	636 (100.0)	319 (100.0)	955 (100.00)			

VHE = very high extent, HE = high extent, ME = moderate extent, LE = low extent, VLE = very low extent.

Table 2 Effect of exposure to mass media pre-marital sex.

Extent of exposure mass media	Pre-marital sex			X^2	df	p-value
	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)			
VHE	200 (31.4)	43 (13.5)	243 (25.4)	4.051	4	0.041
HE	150 (23.6)	8 (2.5)	159 (16.6)			
ME	150 (23.6)	7 (2.2)	157 (16.4)			
LE	115 (18.1)	69 (21.6)	184 (19.3)			
VLE	21 (3.3)	192 (60.2)	213 (22.3)			
Total	636 (100.0)	319 (100.0)	955 (100.00)			

with the threat of displacement by other girls, a teenage girl might be pressurized to engage in sexual activities in order to prevent the partner from seeking other sexual outlets. The girl might have no choice but to submit to the sexual demands of the boyfriend who threaten to abandon her if she refused to comply with the sexual demands. On the other hand, among the boys, the desire to have sex could be encouraged by the African social environment, which is polygamous in nature. Therefore, in the early stages, boys were encouraged by their peers to seek sexual variety and most unmarried males kept several girlfriends at the same time. Through the employment of both positive and negative sanctions or by altering the individual's assessment of risk, peer groups can affect the individual's ability to objectively assess the relative costs and benefits of engaging in sexual activity, thus increasing the tendency to be involved in premarital sex. Moreover, according to Baker [13], because most adolescents found talking about sex with parents and adults family members uncomfortable or impossible, peers often seemed to constitute the reference group for transmitting information about sexual activity.

Exposure to mass media was found in this study to significantly affect the involvement of secondary school adolescents in premarital sex. Those who had medium extent or more exposure mass media were 3 times more likely to engage in pre-marital sex [or: 3.153, (95% CI: 2.270-4.380), $p = 0.000$]. This is in agreement with Comstock [14] who argued that mass media was such a strong socializing agent that they should be given status as a social agent competing with parents, teachers and other agents in that they should be given status as a social agent competing with parents, teachers and other agents in providing models for emulation and furnishing information that influenced the adolescents' belief, values and expectations. He added that adolescents' behaviour can have been influenced by access to mass media. Comstock [14] opined that the negative effects of mass media might culminate to making adolescents

vulnerable to premarital sex when they were exposed to erotic and pornographic information. Furthermore, because the mass media provided information to the adolescents, they serve as models for behaviours acquired. That being the case, the mass media could either reinforce the efforts of parents and schools or weaken them. Comstock [14] postulated that there was little development in the last twenty-five years that had had greater impact on children and adolescents than the television. Many adolescents, he argued, spend more time in front of the television set than they do with their parents, although television was only one aspect of the mass media. Moreover, Comstock [14] stated that a 1995 poll of children aged ten to sixteen years of age in USA showed that children recognised that what they saw on television encouraged them to take part in sexual activities too soon. More than two-third said that they influenced by television, 77% said that television showed too much sex before marriage and 62% said that sex on television and in movies influenced their peer to have sexual relationships when they were too young. These findings are pointers to the fact that television set the baseline standard for the entire entertainment industry. Most homes have television set and the average household watched 7 hours 15 minutes of television. This then accounts for increased premarital sex among adolescents in Nigeria than it was before because of changes in the society, especially the adoption of western culture and education. They attributed this to exposure of adolescents to mass media such as television, pornographic books, movies, pictures, home videos and sexually loaded advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and more recently the internet. Similarly the bad influence of mass media on adolescents' involvement in premarital sex is further corroborated by Verma [15], who in a study of 61 students from India observed that international television viewers in India were more likely to support greater sexual freedom. Hence, Escobar-Charles, et al., [16], Smith [17] and PPFA [18] concluded by saying

that access to mass media whether print or electronics might likely have an impact on the sexual attitude and behaviour of the adolescents.

5. Conclusion

The prevalence of pre-marital sex among the respondents was 66%. It was found that the likelihood of pre-marital sex among the respondents was increased by exposure to mass media and peer pressure.

6. Recommendations

(1) Nurses who are in charge of school health clinics should counsel the adolescents on the dangers of pre-marital sex and also provide them with skills to be able to take the right decisions.

(2) Parents and guardians should re-examine and sharpen their parenting skills with a view to instilling the desired strong moral and disciplinary attitudes in the youths.

(3) Family planning should be embraced by parents in order to determine or control the number of children they can comfortably carter for.

(4) There is an urgent need to control what adolescents watch, read and listen to in the mass media. This media censorship must be enforced in all places including homes and schools where children and adolescents are found. This strategy will surely reduce the incidence of premarital sex among this morally vulnerable group.

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