



ASSESSING THE SEXUAL HEALTH BEHAVIOUR OF TEENAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AMAC LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF FCT, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The study looked into the sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC Local Government Area of FCT. It looked at a number of reasons for students' engagement in illicit sexual behavior, part of which include: peer pressure, poor parenting, poverty, unrestrained access to social media through phone and laptops and host of others. It equally pointed out the consequences of unacceptable sexual health behavior of students which also include: unwanted pregnancy, risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, high possibility of dropping out of school and high economic burden. The study structured three research questions and one hypothesis. The proffered solutions were that parents should endeavor to devote more attention to their children particularly the ones at their formative ages of adolescence. It also recommended that unrestricted use of phones or internet should be corrected, also, efforts should be made towards ensuring that students whose self-esteem is low are encouraged so that there could be a paradigm shift. In addition, the schools should not take for granted the unacceptable behavioral tendencies of their students. If nipped in the bud, there would not be any need for battling with society problems.

Keywords: health, illicit, sexual, behaviour, student

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Sexual behavior focuses on the ways and manner in which people express the sexuality. It deals with the manner in which people demonstrate their desire. Sexual behavior means activities that two people engage in to satisfy their crave for sexual arousal. It also

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means that any behavior that deals with the one's yearn for sex is termed sexual behavior, this agrees with the assertion of (Brian, Umeononihu, Echendu, & Eke, 2016)

Sexual behavior has a lot to do with useful exuberance particularly at teenage level. These are students who are majorly in secondary schools, there is high prevalence of sexual activities amongst secondary school students, the prevalence of these activities commonly result in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) (Azuike, Iloghalu, Nwabueze, Emelumadu, Balogun, Azuike, Obi, Enwonwu, Ebulue, Obi, & Chikezie, 2015).

Azuike et al. (2015) further stated that a good number of students in secondary schools are in their teenage years, and at this stage of adolescent, they (students) experience several changes in their body especially their reproductive organs these changes however motivate them to experiment with sex. They are oftentimes discreet about the changes in their body, hence, the inability to share this experience with older people, particularly parents, leaves them vulnerable and open to social vices which could completely negatively affect their academics and career.

Sexual health behavior amongst teenage students who are mostly adolescents is a phenomenon that needs unalloyed attention. Adolescence is a transitions phase from teenage to adulthood. The World Health Organization defines adolescence as a period covering ages 10 to 19. At this phase of development, many changes take place, and these changes form the totality of an individual's behavior when he matures. Some of the noticeable changes in adolescence include: growth of sexual organs, changes in hormonal milieu or ambiance, emotional, cognitive and psychological development (Olukoya and Fergusson in Azuike, 2015).

People, who are today, addicted smokers, drunk, anger prone, sex workers all started during the adolescent phase of development. Jekielek, Brown, Marin and Lipman (2007) noted that drug use among students in secondary schools have become prevalent which has great impact on their mental and emotional health. Needless to also say that it affects their thought pattern and their general perception about life which they see from a very disorganized, cruel and unserious paradigm. This is corroborated by the report from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2008) which spotted the same thought pattern.

Sexual health behavior amongst teenage secondary school students could be termed risky because they are done without reference to the consequences attached to them, leaving the students to no recourse for their decisions. The risky sexual behavior has consequences such as: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion even stigmatization (Feyisetan, Pebley, in Azuike, 2015), (Barbin, Kemp, Obunge, in Azuike, 2015). These are some of the penalties for engaging in the unchecked sexual health behavior. Speaking of pregnancy, Baral in Achema, Emmanuel and Moses (2015) noted that teenage pregnancy continues to be a complex and challenging issue for families, health workers, educators, societies and government, these pregnancies lead to abortions with physiological and emotional complications.

Contrary to moral and national values in the country, illicit sexual behavior among secondary school students is on the rise as students from Junior Secondary Schools to the

senior level have develop feelings for themselves, such feelings are however not platonic, they are borne out of the desire to exhibit their adolescent tendencies. Students are found pairing themselves in twos both in private and public secondary schools, and there is little or nothing teachers can do to correct this trend as teachers, particularly in private schools are preferred to be sacrificed for any student even if the teacher is trying to make certain corrections about students. Adekunle (2014) pointed out teachers' lack of motivation in private schools in Ibadan. Students' immoral behavior can be adduced to little or no efforts made by schools and teachers in checking these behaviors.

The proliferation of illicit sexual health behavior among teenage secondary school students could complicate the problems of the nation at large. Students who by any reason get pregnant stand a slim chance of going back to school, as there is high rate of out-of-school children in the country at the moment. Hence worsening the illiteracy problem of the nation. Therefore, the high prevalence of sexual behavior among students should be checked with utmost necessity.

According to Sunmola, Dipeoluwa, and Babalola (2002), some of the reasons adduced to proliferation of illicit sexual health behavior include:

- a. **Lack of parental attention:** some of the students in secondary school in AMAC and Nigeria in general lack parental attention. Most parents are so much engrossed in their work to a point that they primarily neglect their duties. They are hardly around to attend to the social and emotional needs of the students. All they do is make provisions for their children's schools fees. This is the very reason for the alarming rate at which students misbehave and they seek attention where they can get it.
- b. **Social media:** most students in secondary schools have access to smart phones of varying kinds. These students who have not yet assumed the needed maturity to handle societal demands are exposed to so many updates on social media which is capable of confusing them. That is the reason why students experiment what they see on social media. It all starts with trying to imitate the appearance of people on social media, it then trickles down to the unguarded and unfiltered utterances which totally corrupts these students who are still in their adolescence stage.
- c. **Adoption of western culture:** the obsession to be like whites has negatively changed the mentality of students. They copy what they do, that is the more reason students have formed a character or behavior that is modeled after them. Part of this include illicit sexual behavior, drug abuse, revealing outlook to mention a few.
- d. **High rate of poverty:** due to the prevalence of poverty in the country, students, particularly the female ones have taken to immorality in order to make ends meet. The desire to be like others have informed their decision to be engaged in illicit sexual behavior.

Furthermore, Achema, Emmanuel and Moses (2015) adduced reasons for teenage pregnancy to poverty, poor parenting and effects of mass media. Speaking of poverty, because a bulk of the country's population lives below the poverty line, hence, majority of these teenagers come from poor homes. In order to create a sense of belonging for

themselves as a result of low self-esteem, they look for a way to mingle, leading to illicit sexual behavior. Also, poor parenting largely contributes teenage sexual behavior. For parents who see nothing wrong in watching movies that are beyond the level of their children, there tends to be a sense of carelessness on the part of the children. They see nothing wrong in actions that are not generally acceptable by the society. Some parents even go to the extent of hooking up their children, because they see as a trending affair.

In addition to that, lack of self-esteem informs the decision of teenage secondary school students to engage in illicit sexual behavior. Papalia, Olds & Feldman (2004) defines self-esteem as the judgment one makes regarding his or her overall self-worth. Once an adolescent finds it difficult to develop a proper self-esteem, it becomes difficult for him or her to cope with the pressure of the rampaging sexual pressure.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Sexual health behavior of students is a phenomenon that quite begs for the attention of all stakeholders in the education sector. It appears the stakeholders (parents, school management, government and students) have paid little or no importance on the consequences of wrong sexual orientation of teenage students who are at their formative stage.

To this end, it has been realized that students have been given the leeway to a very large extent to either directly or indirectly engage in sexual behaviors that are against the norms and values of our society, which attract untoward consequences.

Also, most students in both private and public secondary schools, see nothing wrong with having boyfriend or girlfriends. You see them around in schools, yet authorities have been found to do little about it. private school owners are more concerned about retaining students in order to keep the money flowing in. Hence, they tend to sweep under the carpet the unacceptable tendencies which the students exhibit, part of which include immoral sexual behavior.

Parents on the other hand appears to be unperturbed by the recent trend in the changes in sexual behavior. This could be adduced to unavailability of parents who are career men and women. They oftentimes leave their children at home for greater part of the day during holidays, leaving them to do whatsoever they like, it is from this that they (children) gathering some unnecessary things from movies they are not supposed to watch. Afterwards they attempt to put into practice what they have learnt.

Furthermore, students have unlimited access to the internet. What that means is that, if not properly monitored, they may be exposed to things they should not be exposed to, which results in unacceptable things. Also, they obsession for smart phones which teenagers have these days is unprecedented. This is a fundamental problem which is germane to the correction of sexual health behavior of teenage.

Therefore, this study unearths the sexual the sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT, with the intention to correct and reform the crashing social and educational values of the nation.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study aims to:

- 1) Ascertain the various sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT.
- 2) Identify the causes of the sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT.
- 3) Proffer solutions to the identified problems of sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in FCT LGA of FCT.

1.4 Research questions

- 1) What is the sexual health behavior exhibited by teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?
- 2) What are the causes of the sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?
- 3) What are the solutions to the problems of sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?

1.5 Significance of the study

This research work will be useful for all stakeholders in the education sector starting with the students, to the parents, then the school and the society in general.

It would be useful to students in the sense that, it would help them to guard against all forms of behavior that affect them academically and mentally. It would also help the students to have a paradigm shift about the need to exhibit sexual behavior before time. It will help them to have their minds re-routed towards productive things.

Furthermore, the study will be useful for parents, as it would help them discover the tendencies that are common to adolescence and how to correct them. It would also make them have a rethink about prioritizing career ahead of their children's wellbeing.

In the same vein, it would help school management of private schools to make education holistic, not attaching more importance to academics at the expense of others. It would help them to also have a change in the mindset of profit making by all means to creating value first of all.

Finally, it would help the government to place proper attention on values, through adequate funding of the education sector which would decongest schools, make more teachers to be available and more facilities to be available, thus making the students to be more committed to their academics.

1.6 Research design

The descriptive survey design was adopted. This design is considered appropriate because it is difficult for its variable to be manipulated and it is suitable in collection of samples.

1.7 Method of data analysis

This data was analysed using simple percentage. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages was used to answer the research questions.

2. Results

Research question one: What is the sexual health behavior exhibited by teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?

1. Have you been sexually active in the past (sexual activity refers to any type of genital contact or sexual stimulation between two persons but not sexual intercourse).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. If you are sexually active, how many partners do you have?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2-4
 - c. Others (specify)

3. Have you had sexual intercourse in the past?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Have you or one of your sexual partners ever become pregnant?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not that I am aware of

5. If you answered yes to the question above what decision did you or/and your partner make regarding the pregnancy?
 - a. Kept the baby
 - b. Abortion
 - c. Others (specify)

It can be deduced from the responses gathered from the respondents that, of the 300 respondents, 157 revealed that they have been sexually active in the past, while 143 claimed otherwise. For those who claimed that they have been sexually active in the past, 138 claimed that they only have one partner, while the other 19 claimed ticked 2 to 4.

Also, 115 of the respondents claimed that they have had sexual intercourse in the past. While the remaining 185 claimed that they have not had sexual intercourse in the past.

Furthermore, 97 claimed they were never pregnant before though they were engaged in sexual intercourse, meanwhile, 18 agreed that there were instances of pregnancies. However, none of the respondents claimed to be oblivious of the situation.

Of the 18 that accepted getting pregnant in the past, they nevertheless claimed that they got rid of the pregnancy. None kept the pregnancy.

Research question one: Please indicate on the scale of never to daily you engage in the following sexual behaviors.

Table 1: Level of Sexual Behaviors Engagement

S/N	Item	Never	Few times a year	Few times in life	Few times a month	Once a week	Few times a week	Daily
1	Kissing	44	0	14	19	0	6	74
2	Touching partner's breast or having your breast touched by your partner.	34	5	27	46	19	17	9
3	Stimulating your partner's sexual organ or having your sexual organ stimulated by your partner.	15	38	12	29	41	10	12
4	Sexual intercourse	13	47	16	23	39	14	5
5	How often do you use contraceptives?	4	17	23	20	3	45	45

It can be deduced from the table that of the 300 respondents, 44 (14.6%) claimed never to have kissed before, however none claimed they kiss few times a year. Meanwhile, 14 (4.6%) admitted having kissed a few times before, while 19 (6.3%) admitted to doing it few times a month. Nevertheless, none agreed to kissing once a week, moreover, 6 (3.8%) agreed to kissing few times a week and finally, 74 (24%) agreed to kissing every day.

Furthermore, 34 (11.3%) did not admit to touching partner's breast or having their breast touched. 5 respondents (1.67%) claimed they did it few times a year, meanwhile, 27 (9%) disclosed that they have only done that few times in their life. 46 (15.3%) revealed that they have done it few times a month. 19 (6.3%) agreed to doing that just once a week, also, 17 (5.6%) admitted to doing it few times a week and finally, 9 (3%) admitted to doing it daily.

In the same vein, 15 (5%) claimed they have never stimulated their partner's sexual organ nor have theirs stimulated before, while 38 (12.7) admitted to doing it few times a year, 12 (4%) revealed that they have only done it few times in their life. Also 29 (9.6%) agreed that they do it few times in a month, 41 (13.7%) claimed they do it once a week, also, 10 (3.3%) accepted to doing it few times a week. Finally, 12 (4%) agreed that they do it daily.

Furthermore, 13 (4.3%) respondents claimed never to have had sexual intercourse before, 47 (15%) agreed to doing it few times a year. Also, 16 (5.3%) agreed that they did it few times in the past years. Meanwhile 23 (7.6%) agreed that they do it few times a

month, also, 39 (13%) claimed they engage in it not more than once in a week, in addition, 14 (4.6%) agreed to having sexual intercourse few times a week. Conclusively, 5 (1.67%) claimed they do it daily.

In conclusion, 4 (1.33%) revealed that they have never used any contraceptives before, 17 (5.6%) asserted that they have used it few times a year. 17 (5.6%) declared that they have made use of it few times in recent years. 23 (7.6%) affirmed that they use it few times a month, 20 (6.7%) acknowledged that they make use of it about once a week, while 3 (1%) admitted that they make use of it few times a week, 45 (15%) agreed to using it daily.

Research question two: What are the causes of the sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?

Table 2: Cause of sexual health behavior of teenage

S/N	Item	Yes		No	
1	I am influenced by peer-pressure.	146	48.66%	154	51.3%
2	I find it difficult to control my sexual drive since I attained adolescence.	195	65%	105	35%
3	My father encourages me to have a partner.	86	29.66%	214	71.3%
4	My mother encourages me to have a partner.	74	24.6%	226	75.33%
5	I need someone to defend me or plead my cause, hence I resorted to having a boyfriend.	33	11%	267	89%
6	Social media informed my decision to have a boyfriend/girlfriend.	199	66.3%	101	33.67%
7	Music/foreign movies informed my decision to have a boyfriend.	167	55.67%	133	44.3%

It can be extrapolated from the table above that 146 (48.6%) spotted peer-pressure as a factor that causes sexual health behavior, while 154 (51.3%) kicked against this assertion. 195 (65%) claimed that they find it difficult to control their sexual drive, while the remaining 105 (35%) differed from this assertion. In addition, 86 (29.6%) alluded that their fathers are the major sources of influence in terms to having a partner, while 214 (71.3%) vehemently opposed this view.

Further on that, 74 (24.6%) claimed that their mothers back them to have a partner, while 227 (89%) strongly opposed this assertion. Also, 33 (11%) affirmed that they need someone to defend them that is why they chose to have a partner, while then remaining 267 (87%) disagreed.

However, 199 (66.3%) affirmed that social media informed their decision to have a partner, meanwhile, the remaining 101 (33.67%) disagreed. Finally, 167 (55.67%) claimed that foreign movies influenced their decision to have a partner while 133 (44.3%) disagreed with this stance.

Research question three: What are the solutions to the problems of sexual health behavior of teenage secondary school students in AMAC LGA of FCT?

Table 3: Solutions to the problems of sexual health behavior

S/N	Item	Yes		No	
1	Sex education should be included in secondary school's curriculum.	289	96.3%	11	3.7%
2	Parents should devote more time for their children.	298	99.3%	2	0.7%
3	Guidance and counselling department in secondary schools should be functional.	234	78%	66	22%
4	Students should be sensitized on the most effective use of social media.	228	76%	72	24%
5	Students should be helped to develop their self-esteem.	265	88.3%	35	11.7%

It can be extrapolated from the table that 289 (96.3%) proffered sex education as a problem of sexual health behavior of teenagers in secondary schools. While 11 (3.7%) did not buy this idea as according to them might have its own implications. Meanwhile 298 (99.3%) affirmed that parents should devote more time for their children, however 2 (0.7%) differed with this stance.

Furthermore, 234 (78%) claimed that guidance and counselling department should be functional while 66 (22%) did not see things from this perspective. 228 (76%) averred that students should be sensitized on the most effective use of social media while 72 (24%) disagreed with this stance.

Finally, 265 (88.3%) claimed that students should be helped to develop their self-esteem while 35 (11%) think it is not necessary.

3. Discussion

Results from the findings revealed that:

- 1) Majority of the respondents accepted they have been sexually active before as some even revealed that they have had sexual intercourse before. They have engaged in several sexual practices such as kissing, touching of partner's sexual organ and breast. Some even make use of contraceptives during sexual intercourse, some have gotten pregnant in the process and consequently the pregnancy was terminated. This is the common trend in secondary schools in AMAC as students see nothing wrong in their actions. Their minds are crowded by so many things that are incapable of adding to value to their lives. This is corroborated by the study of Ugoji (2014) who spotted the determinants of risky sexual behaviors among adolescents.
- 2) Secondly respondents unearthed the causes of illicit sexual behavior among teenage secondary school students, which include: peer pressure, inability to control their sex drive, undue pressure from parents to have a partner, quest to combat inferiority complex, social media and adult movies. These factors have contributed in no small measure in the ways in which teenagers engage in illicit sexual behavior. This is obvious in the ways in which students are sexually harassed, some go the extent of putting into practice what they have fed themselves with through social media and the like. This agrees with the assertion

of Okorie and Nkem (2014) who pointed out, among other factors peer pressure as one of the factors affecting sexual behavior of students.

- 3) Finally, the study proffered solutions to sexual health behavior among students in school. These include: sex education, proper parental care, functional guidance and counselling department in schools, sensitization of students on proper use of social media, and focus on building of self-esteem in students. This agrees with the assertion of Famutimi and Oyetunde (2014), who noted the essence of sex education in curbing sexual health crises among adolescents.

4. Conclusion

This study connects the sexual health behavior of students with the academic, social, economic and societal consequences it poses. It focused on the prevalent and unchecked sexual activities of teenage students in secondary schools in AMAC Local Government Council. It was able to conclude that, lack of parental attention, peer pressure, social medial influence, low self-esteem are factors responsible for illicit sexual behavior among teenage students. It also spotted some sexual behavior among students which include: kissing, stimulation of private sex organ, sexual intercourse which of course have led to unwanted pregnancies which was aborted. Finally, it suggested some solutions to these lingering problems which are: parental care, structured guidance and counselling department in the school, sex education and sensitization of students on proper use of social media.

4.1 Recommendation

- 1) Students should be properly monitored in order to prevent or eliminate the illicit sexual behaviors highlighted in the discussion above.
- 2) Peer pressure which stems from bullying or show of affluence should be checked. Also, parents and school authorities should check and control students' access to mobile devises and internet in general, their access should be restricted.
- 3) Proper sex education should be conducted in schools. It should be a norm in the school setting, hence there would be a reduction in the cases of illicit sexual behavior of teenage students.

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