

INFLUENCE OF ADOLESCENTS HIGH-RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents high-risk sexual behaviour and its associated unpalatable outcome is a dare consequence to human development, growth and maturation. The paper examined the influence of adolescent high-risk sexual behaviour among secondary schools students in Port Harcourt metropolis. The sample consisted of 200 senior secondary school students randomly selected from 5 schools in Port Harcourt. A survey research design was adopted. The researcher adopted 20 item structured questionnaire titled Adolescent high-risk sexual behaviour (AHSBQ), validated by the experts was used to elicit information from the respondents based on the five point likert scale. Two hypothesis were tested at 0.05 alpha level and were all rejected. A descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data such as mean and standard deviation, chi-square and t-test. The results revealed that adolescents are involved in high-risk sexual behaviour. Male adolescents (boys) are highly prone to risky sexual act than the female folk (girls) due to their high psycho-sexual urge “libido”. Based on the results, some recommendations were made among others are adolescents who were already sexually active should be encouraged to use safer practices and how to handle sexual pressure scenarios.

Keywords: Adolescents, high-risk, sexual behaviour, physical and psychological changes.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence as one of the most important stages in life has been defined as the transitional phase of human growth and development, a stage between the childhood and adulthood where a juvenile individual matures to an adult. This period has been identified to consist of dramatic transformations accompanied by several physiological, sexual behavioural, emotional and psychological changes; depressions, anxiety, restlessness and other obsessions are reasonably observable during adolescence (Omoegun, 1998).

This transition stage, between the ages of 10 to 19 by World Health Organization (WHQ), 13 to 19 (US) and 12 to 21 (Brown, Berrier & Russel, 2000), put the adolescent in a dilemma of how to adhere to the societal expectations. Thus, they are confronted with numerous developmental and adjustments challenges, whereby sex issues are the most prominent challenge (Omoegun, 1998).

During this stage the adolescents are very curious about the opposite sex and sexual craze is highly developed which often leads to several undesirable challenges. Olugbenger, Adebimpe &

Abodunrin (2009) assert that, majority of these teenagers over express their sexual desires; engage in a spectrum of sexual behaviours ranging from fantasy and self-stimulation to various forms of intercourse. These groups of individuals are often known to be adventurous and sometimes engage in lesbianism, homosexuality, and sexual orgies because they want to experiment. It was observed that the early-maturing adolescents engage in early sexual experimentation than the later-maturing adolescents. They confront their emerging sexuality at younger ages than their peers do, and are more likely to be pursued by older peers in social settings because they appear physically older than their chronological age.

Moreover, risk for early sexual experimentation is associated with other high-risk behaviours in adolescence, including sexual abuse, drug and alcohol use, and emotional adjustment. Peer pressure to engage in adult-like activities can encourage adolescents to engage in various levels of sexual experimentation. Adolescents who engage in sexual experimentation are at increased risk for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDs, pregnancy and abortions. Teenage mothers suffer a lot of complications during delivery which in most cases result in high morbidity and mortality for both mother and infants.

High-risk sexual behaviour was defined by the number of partners with whom adolescents had intercourse without condom, since having multiple sex partners without using condoms put adolescents at risk. So many factors are contributory to this risk behaviour, which among others are the negative media images, the internet, which promote lustful, irresponsible sexual behaviour. Again, the risky sexual behaviour are often complicated by high school dropout, parental abuse, battering, social stigmatization, child abandonment and child abuse among others. Several studies showed that increased use of alcohol and drugs at younger ages was related to subsequent riskier sexual activity and delinquent behaviour. Adolescence, a period of “stress and storm” is the transition phase between childhood and adulthood. The most turbulent stage of human development because it is characterized by physical and physiological changes (Omoegun, 1998).

Puente & Zabaleta (2011) report that the period of adolescence coincides with a surge of sexual interest which results from such factors as, physical body change, hormonal increase, increase in social emphasis on sex and the adolescent’s necessary rehearsal for adult roles. These changes propel the intense preoccupation with sexual exploration and experimentation. These sex-crazed and hormone driven individuals get involved in a lot of high-risk sexual behaviour which are detrimental to them, their families and the society.

Engagement in sexual behaviour is considered to be a high-risk behaviour for youths because of the potential physical and socio-emotional risks they present. Adolescents may not be aware of the social and emotional implications of sexual activity, and majority do not use safe sexual practices. High-risk sexual behaviour was defined by some number of partners with whom adolescents had intercourse without condom, which puts adolescents at risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to Charine Glen-Spyron (2009), responsible sexual behaviour such as: delaying initiation of sexual intercourse, choosing caring and respectful partners, increased the use of condoms, and using effective contraception among others are important public health issue which should be disseminated to these adolescents.

In a survey carried out by De Guzman & Bosch (2005) reported that, among those who engaged in sex, only 63% report having used a condom during their last intercourse and 17% report using alternative methods of birth control. It is important to note that involvement in unprotected sex exacerbates risks because of its resultant effect of STIs and unwanted pregnancy. These scholars assert that approximately half of the 19 million new STI cases diagnosed per year are of youth ages 15-19; and 13% of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses are of youth ages 13-24. On the other hand, psychosexual development is a critical developmental process during adolescence Pollac (2004). The youth of today are constantly bombarded with high rise of sexual tendency through films, advertising, music, motion, pictures, television and the internet. The American media tells adolescents that sex is romantic, exciting and titillating without ever showing the real life consequences of spontaneous and irresponsible sexual behaviour, (Awake, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

The most turbulent state of human development is agreeably the adolescent stage. Among their numerous delinquent behaviours are their involvements in all forms of indiscriminate sexual escapades leading to their exposure to infections such as sexual transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and unwanted pregnancies, abortions or deaths. These adolescents are sex-crazed, hormone driven individuals whose sexuality has been viewed negatively as inappropriate and troublesome rather than normal and healthy. The prevalence of their risky sexual behaviours among others has increased drastically in recent times. They are found in different areas of the country around the streets in secluded places at night engaging in sexual activities. This menace is becoming increasingly prevalent in our society and its effects are detrimental to the adolescent's health and psychological wellbeing as it affects the society. This condition if not controlled may lead to complete breakdown of the moral value of the society as it permeates the entire nation.

Unfortunately, these adolescents do not know and appreciate the possible complications and consequences that may result from pre-marital sex. Yet they represent an important segment of the society that should be handled with care because they are the future leaders. This study therefore is imperative.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of adolescents high-risk sexual behaviour among secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Research Questions

1. Do adolescents exhibit high risk sexual behaviour?
2. Is there any significant difference in high risk sexual behaviour of male and that of female adolescents?

Research Hypotheses

1. Adolescents do not exhibit high risk sexual behaviour.

2. There is no significant difference in high risk sexual behaviour of male and that of female adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research method was adopted to carry out this study. This is because a survey questionnaire was used to elicit information from the participants. This study was carried out in Port Harcourt metropolis five selected secondary schools three public and two private schools were used for the study. The population for this study comprised all the adolescent 9,565 students in Port Harcourt metropolis between the ages of 13-20. A sample of two hundred students was randomly selected from five schools in Port Harcourt. 100 male and 100 female adolescent students. Twenty item questionnaire on adolescents high risk sexual behaviour (AHRSBQ) was designed and validated by the experts in educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, University of Port Harcourt and was used for the study. To elicit genuine responses, the twenty item questions were based on the participant's active sexual life. It was a five-point likert scale based on strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

The researcher administered the questionnaire to the participants (adolescent students) with the help of research assistance. Mean standard deviation, chi-square and t-test statistics were implored for the data analysis.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

Table 1: Chi-square (X^2) of Adolescents who do not exhibit high risks sexual behaviour

| | Yes | No | Total |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Males | 70 | 30 | 100 |
| Females | 80 | 20 | 100 |
| Total Number | 150 | 50 | 200 |

Chi-square analysis of relationship between adolescence who exhibit high risk sexual behaviour and those who do not.

| Sex | Observed | Expected | X^{2-cal} | X^{2-crit} |
|---------|----------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| Males | 100 | 67 | 87.37 | 3.641 |
| Females | 100 | 33 | | |

Calculated chi-square of 87.37 is greater than chi-critical of 3.641 at 0.05 level of significant. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

From the table above the X^2 calculated (87.37) is greater than the X^2 -critical (3.641). This shows that the null hypothesis is rejected which means that adolescents whether male or female are involved in high risk sexual behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in high risk sexual behaviour of male and female adolescents in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Table 2: T-test analysis of males/females adolescent and high risk sexual behaviour.

| | n | m | sd | tcal | t-crit | df | alpha |
|---------|-----|----|------|------|--------|-----|-------|
| Males | 100 | 67 | 10.3 | 8.8 | 1.635 | 198 | 0.05 |
| Females | 100 | 56 | 8.2 | | | | |

From the table above, t-cal (8.8) is greater than the t-critical (1.635) at df 198 and at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis is hereby rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the high risks sexual behaviour of males and that of females. It also proves that adolescent males are more involved in sexual risky behaviours than females.

FINDINGS

From the result obtained in testing hypothesis one, it is pertinent to say that adolescents as a result of the active sex hormones due to puberty are usually very sexually active or rather sex-crazed and would always want to exploit the world of sex without interference from the older adult. This is in line with Osarenren (1996) who stipulated that at adolescence the presence of sex hormones constitute a very strong and powerful stimulant and reinforce for sexual desire and craving. Also Adedimeji (2003) mentioned that Adolescents are taking enough precautionary measure in spite of current efforts to reduce the rate of infections. Many adolescents are apprehensive of the risk posed by their sexual behaviour.

Findings from hypothesis two shows that males are more prone to high risk sexual behaviour because their libido is generally greater than that of females and continues even to old age while that of females diminishes as they get older. This made Hoffman (1998), Kirby (2001) and Dryfoss (2007) state that interventions that use attitude change to change behaviour may be more effective among females than among males. Osarenren (1998) also stated that young men have very strong passion about sex and they try to satisfy themselves quite indiscriminately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on the findings of the study, there is need to create awareness of the consequences of high-risk sexual behaviours as it affects the adolescents in secondary schools.
- The sex crazed adolescents especially male folk (boys) require the assistance of well-meaning adults, counseling psychologists, social workers, teachers, parents and stake holders who are genuinely committed to their successful development.
- There is urgent need for counseling services to be in secondary schools because adolescents attitude towards sex has a significant influence on the danger and spread of STIs especially HIV/AIDS.
- It is a known facts that adolescents receive most of their information about sexuality from peers, which often lead to misinformation. They need structured formal and informal learning environment with age-appropriate programmes to address issues of sexuality.
- Adolescents represents a time of fundamental change, therefore adolescent leaders should be used for preventive interventions and coping strategies about sex because they are the future leaders of tomorrow.
- Adolescents who were already sexually active should be encouraged to use safer practices and how to handle sexual pressure scenarios.

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