

A Study of the Sexual Behaviour of University Undergraduate Students in Southwestern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This study examined the sexual behaviour of the university undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria. It investigated the influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, religion and family background on the student sexual behaviour. The study is a survey. The population comprised the undergraduate students of three purposively selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria. From this a sample of 2106 students was selected by stratified random sampling technique. Sexual Behaviour Inventory (SBI) was used to elicit information from the students. Data were analysed using percentages, ANOVA and t-test. The results of the data analysis indicated that 54% of the students had steady boy/girl friends, 63% had had sexual intercourse, 43% had sexual intercourse with their lovers while 20% had sexual intercourse with «just somebody». Ninety per cent often engaged in hand holding, 39.5% in kissing, 58% in hugging and 52.5% in carressing. Student gender and family background had significant influences on the student sexual behaviour ($t = -3.46$, $p < .05$) and ($F = 2.44$, $p < .05$) but student age and student religion had no significant influence on student sexual behaviour, ($F = .939$, $p > .05$) and ($F = 1.88 > .05$).

INTRODUCTION

Sex being a universal term one would expect a great deal to be known about it. But this is not the case, partly because all societies regulate sexual activities. This control restricts both the observation of sexual behaviour and access to information about it. Sexual behaviour is considerably influenced in Nigeria by culture like in many other countries of the world. This perhaps explains why few decades ago, virginity of a girl until she got married was rewarded and various taboos were created round pre-marital sex. The trend is gradually changing and the incidence of adolescents and youths engaging in sexual intercourse is high and may constitute a problem (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1993).. Some effects of this type of behaviour include sexually transmitted infections (STI's), HIV, gynaecological problems, unwanted pregnancy and increase in the number of abandoned babies. This behaviour opined Isiugo-Abanihe (1993) is prevalent among students in secondary schools and higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and may be due to erosion of various custom and observances as well as factors associated with rapid urbanization and other factors such as family background, peer pressure, media influence, economic situations and educational background of parents (Akinleye and Onifade, 1996).

Several studies had revealed the sexual behaviour of adolescents and youths. A study of sexual activities of adolescents conducted by Owuamanam (1995) revealed that various activities are widely practiced among the Nigerian adolescents, such activities are kissing, breast/genital fondling, embracing Hand holding and sexual intercourse. Odewole (2000) and Omoteso (2003) also found similar activities among the undergraduate students they studied. Several attitude surveys had also revealed that the sexual attitude of adolescents is more liberal than that of adults (WHO, 1993, Owuamanam, 1995 and Odewole, 2000). WHO (1993) reported that 43% of girls and 67% boys aged between 14 and 19 years were sexually active. Franzkowiak (1990) identified sexuality as adolescent developmental task. In the studies of Ravi (1991), Carpenter (2000), Horan, Phillips and Hagan (2000), Koenig (2000), Remez (2000) and Sanders and Reinisch (2001) it was reported that young men surveyed were more likely than women to report sexual experience. Many women were not sexually active. In fact in only four countries out of 41 countries did more than one-half of 15-19 year old women reported any sex experience. Unuigbo and Ogbeide (1999) in their study on sexual behaviour and perception of AIDS among adolescent girls in Benin City, Nigeria found a female adolescent population that was sexually active.

The family background had also been found to have significant influence on young people's sexual behaviour. In many countries, young women lacking opportunities and from poor family background seek support from men trading sex and thus risk HIV infection and other STI's for security. Young women sometimes enter into relationship with older men called "sugar daddies" in sub-Saharan Africa who pay their school fees, buy them gifts and offer inducements (Meekers and Calve, 1997 and Luke, 2001). In South Africa, for example many young women have sexual relationships in exchange for favours, gifts and cash (Macphail and Campbell, 2001). A few studies reported similar arrangements between young men and older women as in Nigeria and Cameroon and South Africa where some young men have 'sugar mummies' (Meekers and Calves, 1997 and Scalway, 2001). Also, the study of Kuvlesky (1978) showed that the religion of parents did not have influence on the adolescents' sexual behaviour

The questions asked were: What are the patterns of sexual behaviour of university undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria and do age, gender, religion and family background have influence on the students' sexual behaviour?

METHODS

The population for this study consisted of all undergraduate students in the three purposively selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria. A sample of 2106 students was selected by stratified random sampling techniques using age, gender, religion and family background as strata. An instrument labelled "Sexual Behaviour Inventory" adapted from Oladepo and Brieger (1994) and Unuigbo and Ogbeide (1999) was used to elicit information from the subjects of this study. The inventory is made up of two sections. The first section consisted items such as the students' age, gender, religion and family background. The second section comprised parameters on different sexual activities practiced by university undergraduate students such as occurrence of sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners, frequency of sexual intercourse. The items included whether they had sex occasionally, once, twice, thrice or more per week, whether they had one partner, two, three or more and whether they had ever

had sexual intercourse or never. It also included whether they had sexual intercourse regularly, occasionally or never and if they engaged in any of these activities: kissing, hugging, necking, genital stimulations and so on.

The instrument was ascertained to be valid and reliable, test-retest reliability of the inventory was 0.75, which is significant at .05 level. The inventory has two responses "true for me" which was scored two and "not true for me" which was scored one. The highest score obtainable here was 110 and the lowest was 55. The higher the score the more sexual active the student is.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed the patterns of the university undergraduate students' sexual behaviour. From the percentage analysis of the data on patterns of the students' sexual behaviour (Table 1), 54% of the students had steady boy/girl friend. This result may not be very strange since most of these students are adolescents and youths and these periods are characterised by sexual interests and experimentation. As for the 46% who indicated that they did not have steady boy/girl friends, it might be that they had multiple partners or that they were constrained by their religious beliefs. Also, 59% preferred to stay with one partner, 46% felt it was better to have two partners at a time while 43% would rather have many partners. Furthermore, 63% of the students had had sexual intercourse, 37% had not had sexual intercourse, 43% indicated that they had their first sexual intercourse with their lovers while 20% had their own with "just somebody". Again, 63% had had sexual intercourse once, 15% had had sexual intercourse two to five times, 8% had had sexual intercourse about ten times, 45% more than ten times and 3% could not remember how many times they had had sex. These findings are in line with several studies on sexual behaviour (Ravi, 1999; Bogart, 2002; Carpenter, 2000; Koenig, 2000 and Odewole, 2000). The findings of these researchers showed that their subjects had had sexual intercourse by the time they were 19 years of age. The study also showed other sexual activities that the students engaged in, 90% often engaged in hand holding, 39.5% in kissing, 58% in hugging, 52.5% in caressing and 12% in fondling. These findings corroborate the findings of Owuamanam (1995) and Odewole (2000).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of patterns of student sexual behaviour

Items	True for Me %	Not True for Me %
I have at least a steady boy/girl friend	54 (1137)	46 (969)
I prefer to stay with one partner at a time	59 (1243)	41 (863)
It's better to have two partners at a time	46 (969)	54 (1137)
I would rather have three or more	43 (906)	57 (1200)
I have had sexual intercourse before	63 (1327)	37 (779)
I enjoy having sex regularly	20.5 (453)	79.5 (1653)
I have had sexual intercourse:		
Once	33 (695)	67 (1141)
Two to five times	15 (316)	85 (1790)
About ten times	8 (169)	92 (1987)
More than ten times	4 (84)	96 (2022)
I can't remember	3 (63)	97 (2043)
I find it difficult to say "No" to sexual advances	25 (527)	75 (1579)
My first intercourse was with:		
A lover	43 (906)	57 (1200)
Just somebody	20 (421)	80 (1685)
I often engage in:		
Holding hands	90 (1895)	10 (311)
Kissing	39.5 (832)	60.5 (1374)
Hugging	58 (1221)	42 (885)
Caressing	52.5 (1106)	47.5 (1000)
Fondling	12 (253)	88 (1953)

The study further revealed gender difference in the sexual behaviour of the students, $t = -3.46$ which is significant at .05 level (Table 2). This means that male students differ in their sexual behaviour from female students. This finding supports the popular belief in Nigeria that men are more sexually active than women and that when they are pressed, they may find it difficult to control themselves until the urge is satisfied and the tension is released. This finding is congruent with the findings of Ravi (1999), Bogart (2002), Carpenter (2000) and Sanders and Reinisch (2001). Age of the students did not have significant influence on the students' sexual behaviour, $F = .939$ (Table 3). This implies that the ways and manners a university undergraduate student in Southwestern Nigeria will approach a sexual matter does not depend

on his or her age. This finding is however surprising, the expectation is that those who are still in their adolescent and youthful years would differ considerably from the older students because the belief is that they are still youthful. But one common agreement among researchers is that sexual interests and behaviour increase significantly during adolescents and school years. Furthermore, the sexual attitudes of youths are more liberal than those of adults. This finding does not agree with the findings of many researchers like Sorensen, 1973, Odewole (2000) and Sanders and Reinisch (2001). Students' religion also did not have significant influence on the students' sexual behaviour, $F = 1.88$ (Table 4). This means the religious sect to which a student belongs does not influence his or her sexual behaviour. This finding confirms the

Table 2: Difference between student sexual behaviour and student gender

Subjects	N	X	SD	Df	T	P
Female	993	66.94	7.51	2104	-3.46*	<0.05
Male	1113	68.09	7.68			

Not significant ($p > 0.05$)

Table 3: Influence of student age on student sexual behaviour

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Between Groups	109.01	2	54.51	0.939	>0.05
Within Groups	122125	2103	58.07		
Total	122233	2105			

Not significant ($p > 0.05$)

Table 4: Influence of student religion on student sexual behaviour

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	P
Between Groups	327.87	3	109.28	1.88	>0.05
Within Groups	121905	2102	57.99		
Total	122233	2105			

Table 5: Influence of student family background on student sexual behaviour

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	282.92	2	141.46	2.44*	< 0.05
Within Groups	121960	2103	57.99		
Total	122233	2105			

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

findings of Kuvlesky (1978). This result is also very surprising because one would have expected religion to have influence on the students' sexual behaviour in view of the fact that almost all religions preach against sexual immorality. Finally, family background was found to have a significant influence on the students' sexual behaviour, $F = 3.76$ (Table 5). This means that the type of family a student is from determines his or her sexual behaviour. A student from poor family background may get himself or herself involved in illicit sexual affairs in order to get money for his or her daily upkeep. A student from rich family background may not get himself or herself involved in such acts in order to get financial help because his or her needs are being met by his or her parents. This finding upholds the findings of Akinleye and Onifade (1996) and Luke (2001).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings derived from this study, it is hereby recommended that sex education be made part and parcel of the university curriculum. Sex education will reduce the risks of potentially negative outcomes from sexual behaviour like unwanted pregnancy and infection with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. More Psychologists and Guidance and Counsellors should be made available in the universities so that they can guide the students on the way to control and modify their sexual behaviour.

Parents must give their children the right type of sex education. It is necessary for parents to have time for their children. They must share their experiences with them and most importantly provide for their needs. They must give them enough money so that they would not have to sell their bodies in order to get money.

Students can expend their energy on more valuable ventures. They can take up hobbies that will not make them think of sexual matters. For example, they can engage in sporting activities and other valuable social activities. In consequent, various university authorities should equip their institutions with adequate sporting equipments and social amenities.

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