

## Premarital Sex, HIV and Use of Condom among Youths in Nigeria

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### Abstract

In the recent past, discussing about sex among children and youths was frowned at by traditional norms and as such sexual discuss and behavior were approached with great respect. Things are actually falling apart with the increasing number of young people that engage in premarital sex. Due to lack of experience and sex education, many young people are becoming increasingly exposed to the risk of HIV infection. In the light of the above, this study discussed premarital sex, HIV and use of condom among youths in Nigeria. Data for this study came from 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey and other secondary data. The survey revealed that only 18.5% of young women that had sex in the 12 months preceding the survey used condom. Out of 3306 never-married sexually active men and women, 1728 representing 52% live in urban areas and 43% of them did not use condom during sexual intercourse in the 12 months preceding the survey. The study concludes by recommending that to achieve reduction of HIV/AIDS prevalence among Nigerian youths, effort must be directed towards educating youths on the importance of condom use sexual intercourse.

**Keywords:** Condom use; HIV; Nigeria; Premarital sex; Youth

### Introduction

In recent years HIV/AIDS has become a topical discuss in Nigeria. As of 1999, an estimated 5.1-5.4% of Nigerians were HIV positive [1]; and in 2006 6.1 million people out of 140 million Nigerians were already infected [2]. In a survey conducted by National HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey-Plus [3], HIV/AIDS prevalence in Nigeria was put at 3.4%; showing a significant improvement from 1999. However, it is important to note that HIV prevalence rate which grew from 1.8% in 1991 to 5.8% in 2001 declined by merely 2.4% in 10 years despite the huge funding from the federal government, donor agencies and the organized private sector [4].

Though HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Nigeria is on the decline, youths and young adults in Nigeria are particularly vulnerable to the disease; with young women at higher risk than young men. Recent estimates indicate that the annual number of new infections in the country has been on a steady decline, decreasing from 288,870 in 2009 to 283,589 in 2010 and then slightly again to 274,367 in 2011. Similarly, it decreased to 239,706 in 2012 and eventually 220,394 in 2013 [3]. However, the total number of new infections in females continued to surpass that of the males.

Among young people aged 15-24, the estimated number of new HIV infections showed similar trends with new infections in females surpassing that of males. The number of new HIV infections dropped from 74,783 in 2009 to 72,814 in 2010 and 70,0992 in 2011. A further drop occurred with new infections estimated at 59,739 in 2012 and 54662 in 2013 respectively [3]. However, while HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Nigeria generally continue to decline; the same cannot be said for young people between the ages of 15-19 years. According to 2012 NARHS plus survey, while HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of those between the ages of 15-24 remain at 3.2%, there have been significant increase from 1.7% in 2007 to 2.9% in 2012 in the 15-19 years age group. This shows that 15-19 age bracket HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is yet to

reverse. In the light of the increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence among youths Nigeria, this research was propelled to discuss condom use among youths as HIV/AIDS preventive method.

### Literature

#### Premarital sex and HIV/AIDS among youths in Nigeria

In the recent past, discuss about sex among children and youths was frowned at by traditional norms and as such sexual discuss and behavior were approached with great respect. Among children and youths, love, sex and marriage was seen as repugnant and forbidden; there were limited open expression of opinions and views on such topics. There was a cultural prohibition of premarital sexual experience; established moral code guided individual members on the social behaviours [5]. Social punishments like songs of contempt and degradation meted out at marriage, to brides that lost their virginity before the marriage night, made most girls refrain from premarital sex experiences. They strove to maintain the good name of their families [6]; and thereby premarital sex was limited and almost not heard of as the traditional society built enough deterrence for such behaviour.

Things have actually fallen apart. Though Nigeria traditional religion abhors premarital sex, the advent of Christianity strengthened the restrictive attitude. Schools were built by churches with the aim of bringing up the young in the ways of God. But presently due to globalization and information technology, the situation has changed. Premarital sex which was once a social taboo in most Nigerian ethnic cultures is now becoming a normal phenomenon with increasing unlimited access to the internet and the global world even in most remote parts of the country. The attitudes of modern youths towards premarital sexual activities have become more liberal and permissive than what it was in the past [7]. This sexual revolution, as the trend is often called, is in fact, one of the most striking features of Western sociocultural milieu today [5].

The growing wave of westernization in Nigeria is affecting directly or indirectly every aspect of life in the country. Youths are especially more susceptible to the assimilation of western way of life due to increasing access to the internet. The result is access to information and way of life once viewed as indecent or prohibited by Nigeria traditional culture such as nudity and premarital sex. The impact of alien ideas and cultures, mass communication and conditions of urban life on the behaviour and attitude of Nigerian adolescents cannot be over emphasized [5]. The effect is changing cultural, value reorientation, internalization, adoption and practice of what they see and read on the internet and as such, sexual discuss which used to be frowned at among adolescents and youths is now a common practice; thus resulting to early sexual experience by majority of Nigerian youths.

Out of 140 million Nigerians, 32.0% are youths with nearly half (48.6%) of adolescents aged 15-19 sexually active [8]. About 1 in 5 of sexually active females and 1 in 12 sexually active males had already engaged in sexual intercourse by the age of 15 [9]. In a survey conducted by National Agency for the Control of Aids, the percentage of young men and women aged 15-24 who have had sexual intercourse before the age of 15 increased from 9.8% in the year 2005 to 11.9% in the year 2007. The figure in the year 2012 accelerated to 15.5%; indicating continues increase in the number of young people who engage in early sex. The result of the above is clear when compared to the percentage of HIV among young people aged 15-24 [5]. According to National Agency for the Control of Aids (NACA), the percentage of young people aged 15-24 who are living with HIV declined from 4.3% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2008. As of the year 2010, the figure remained 4.2% revealing that though HIV prevalence in Nigeria decreased from 5.8 as of 2001 to 3.4 in 2012 the decrease was not significantly observed among youths aged 15-24 years. This shows that the age group need to be targeted if significant continued decline of HIV prevalence at all age brackets in Nigeria will be achieved [5].

### Premarital sex and use of condom among youths in Nigeria

Young people are becoming increasingly exposed to the risk of sexually transmitted infections. According to the 2008 HIV/Syphilis sentinel survey in Nigeria, 3.3% of young people aged 15-19 years were infected [10]. Primary prevention especially abstinence, remains one of the most realistic interventions for reducing further spread of the virus. However sexual abstinence as a prevention strategy among youths remains low and has yielded poor result [11]; thus the need for adoption of condom. Therefore restrictions on condom promotion in Nigeria have hampered efforts to promote this form of sexually transmitted infection prevention method.

According to The Nigerian HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan (HEAP), there is increasing lack of support of youth to use protective measures such as condom to prevent the transmission of HIV/ADIS in Nigeria [12]. In 2001, a radio advertisement was suspended by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) for promoting messages suggesting that it is acceptable to engage in premarital sex as long as a condom is used [13]. Also, In 2006 APCON started to enforce stricter regulations on condom advertisements that might encourage 'indecentcy' [14]. Yet there are increasing evidence of youth exposure to sexually transmitted infections [15,16]. Makinwa in his study on sexual behavior and use of condom among youths noted increasing level of youth risky sexual interactions with high-risk groups in urban areas [17]. This risky sexual behavior of young people includes having multiple sexual partners and unprotected sexual activities [18,19];

especially when it is in exchange for money. Few unmarried young people use condom at sexual debut, while those that use it do so inconsistently [20,21].

A survey of youths between the ages of 10-24 years titled 'Condom use amongst out of school youth in a local government area in Nigeria' revealed that those who had ever had sexual intercourse were 74.9%. Of these, 56.5% used no protection while 29.0% used condoms. Up to 78.6% have had sex within the preceding 12 months with 38.9% condom use. The major reason they gave for not using condom is that it reduces sexual enjoyment. Those who believed a single unprotected sexual exposure may result in HIV infection reported more condom use than those who believed otherwise. Those who had prior discussion with their partners on HIV/AIDS reported more condom use compared to those who had not. Also, those who had sexual intercourse occurring as a spontaneous event reported less condom use compared to those who have previously discussed about the possibility of having sex [22]. These support the result of NACA on the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS of young people between the ages of 15-19 years from 1.7% in 2007 to 2.9% in 2012 [5].

### Methods

The data for this study came from the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). The sampling frame used for the 2013 NDHS was the 2006 Population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria conducted in 2006, provided by the National Population Commission (NPC). The survey provided information on premarital sexual intercourse and condom use among youths between the ages of 15- 24 years in Nigeria. The sample size was 3314 [8]. Questionnaire was administered and was analyzed using percentage table.

### Results

The period between initiation of sexual intercourse and marriage is often a time of sexual experimentation. Table 1 presents information on premarital sexual intercourse and condom use among never-married youth age 15-24 in Nigeria.

Sixty-eight percent of never-married young women have never had sexual intercourse, while 26% had sexual intercourse during the 12 months preceding the survey. Among never-married, sexually active young women, 56% did not use condom during their last sexual intercourse. Among never-married young men, 72% have never had sexual intercourse, while 22% had sexual intercourse during the 12 months preceding the survey. Overall, 42% of never-married, sexually active young men did not use condom during their last sexual intercourse. Condom use is highest in the South East zone (57%) and lowest in the North East (28%). Among both young women and young men, condom use increases with increasing education and wealth. For example, 69% of sexually active, never-married young men with more than a secondary education used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse, as compared with 15% of young men with no education.

Among sexually active never-married men and women, 66% that are between the ages of 15-17 years had sexual intercourse without condom during the 12 months preceding the survey. While 57% of sexually active never-married men and women who reside in the urban area had sexual intercourse using condom during the 12 months preceding the survey, 59% of sexually active never-married men and women who reside in the rural area revealed that they did not use

condom during sexual intercourse in the 12 months preceding the survey.

	Percentage of male and female respondents who have never had sexual intercourse	Percentage of male and female who had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months	Number of never married Respondents	Percentage of male and female respondents who used a condom at last sexual intercourse	Number of never married respondents who had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months
Sex					
Male	71.5	22.2	6027	57.9	1339
Female	68.2	25.5	7744	43.6	1975
Age					
15-17	89.5	7.8	6109	33.4	479
18-19	66.9	26.1	2972	45.5	777
20-22	50.5	38.7	3342	27.6	2451
23-24	32.8	56.6	1347	58.3	763
Knows condom source					
Yes	56.7	34.9	8511	53	2969
No	90.5	6.6	5258	18.5	346
Residence					
Urban	60.1	23.8	7198	56.8	1715
Rural	70.1	24.4	6573	41.38	1600
Zone					
North Central	67.9	25.3	2138	55.1	541
North East	82.8	12.8	1579	28.4	202
North West	92.4	5.9	3162	45.8	188
South East	59.8	28	2050	56.5	574
South South	48.8	44	2346	45.6	1033
South West	61.4	31.2	2496	51.4	778
Education					
No education	93.3	4.9	1485	14.6	73
Primary	75.4	19.1	1431	30	273
Secondary	68.3	25.1	9741	48.3	2441
More than secondary	42.2	47.4	1113	69.1	528

**Table 1:** Premarital sexual intercourse and condom use during premarital sexual intercourse among youth.

## Discussion

Discuss on premarital sex and use of condom among youths is necessary in order to provide information on planning, implementation and monitoring of programs designed to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. A common finding in some of the studies on condom use is the low or inconsistent use of condoms amongst youths [20,21]. Available

information from 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) shows that number of sexually active young women who do not use condom during sexual intercourse is still high. The survey revealed that more than 66% of sexually active women had sexual intercourse without condom during the 12 months preceding the study. That of men though relatively low at 42% shows that young people are yet to imbibe the culture of protecting themselves from

contacting sexually transmitted diseases. A survey conducted by NACA revealed some of the reasons why young people engage in sex without condom to include: use of condom reduces sexual enjoyment, lack of prior discussion with partner, spontaneous sexual intercourse etc. [5]. Increasing rise in number of young people that engage in premarital sex especially without condom could provide explanation to result of 2012 NARHS plus survey which revealed that while HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of those between the ages of 15-24 remain at 3.2%, there have been significant increase from 1.7% in 2007 to 2.9% in 2012 in the 15-19 years age group. The reason for increasing prevalence on HIV among youth due to lack of use of condom may be connected to African culture. Elders are not expected to engage in sexual discuss with young people. Therefore, most young people lack sexual education and may not understand the reason and need for the use of condom during sexual intercourse.

Out of 3306 never-married sexually active men and women, 1728 representing 52% live in urban areas and 43% of them did not use condom during sexual intercourse in the 12 months preceding the survey [8]. This high rate of premarital sexual intercourse among youths in urban areas has been noted by Makinwa in his study on sexual behavior and use of condom among youths [17]. He went ahead to reveal that these youths in urban areas engage in sexual risky behaviors that expose them to sexually transmitted diseases. This risky sexual behavior of young people includes having multiple sexual partners and unprotected sexual activities [18,19]. With the increasing societal neglect of African culture and values that strictly frown at premarital sex, young people especially in urban areas engage in all kinds of sexual activities including child prostitution that expose them to contacting sexually transmitted diseases. The situation is exacerbate because the decision to use or not to use condom are usually made by their partners; and more severe among women going by the result of 2013 NDHS which revealed that only 18.5% of women that had sex in the 12 months preceding the survey used condom.

## Conclusion

This study discussed the actual situation of young people as it relates to use of condom and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases especially HIV/AIDS. Going by prevailing decay of norms and values that prohibit premarital sexual intercourse, HIV/AIDS prevalence has been on the increase among young people in Nigeria. This study raised some of the issues that could be responsible for the increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence among Nigeria youths to include: African culture that abhor sexual discuss with young people and thus elude them the needed sexual education, lack of use of condom by youths, increasing rise of premarital sex etc. The study concludes by recommending that to achieve reduction of HIV/AIDS prevalence among Nigerian youths, effort must be directed towards educating youths on the importance of condom use sexual intercourse.

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