

Premarital Sex among Youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise and its Implications



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Abstract

This study examines premarital sex from the aspect of its implications, highlighting the social factors and religious deficiencies that contributed to the premarital sexual activities of these youths, as well as the effects such untoward activity had on them and the society. Premised on the precaution - Adoption Process Model of Weinstein, as well as the use of sociological method, this is a method where the researchers study a number of individuals of different ages who have the same trait or characteristic of interest at a single time, or individuals or society are studied repeatedly over a specified period of time. The study was poised to meet the multiple challenges that youths are exposed to, factors that are capable of predisposing youths to premarital sex and the procedural precautions that are available to them. Results showed that the decision to initiate sexual activity that results to pregnancy and other related effects among these youths were influenced by many factors, including, peer pressure; social media; and inadequate sex education. As a result of the consequences, the youths experienced negative reactions from their families and community, and serious psychological and financial concerns about their prospects for future. A comprehensive community-based reproductive health program is called for with reliable sex education, cooperation from the mass media, and support from family and community members to salvage the situation is advocated. The social change implication of this study is to potentially lead to a decrease in premarital sex, social isolation, and poverty among youths-in Ezinihitte and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Premarital, Sex, Youths, Ezinihitte Mbaise, Implications

Introduction

Sex is a God given gift for marriage. It is a way of expression of love. It is meant for couple's recreation, strictly for procreation, pleasure, show casing attraction, compatibility and harmonious love affairs. According to Onwubiko, (2001, p.136) "God Himself invented sex, but for marriage

only...the only form of entertainment that God has ever created". The wrong use of sex (sex abuse), is what is highly prohibited.

Sexual relationship has become one of the most common relationships in our contemporary society. Hence, premarital sex as a cankerworm has eaten deep into the fabric of most youths. This is even worst among youths and teenagers, in view of this; Shearer (1983, p.12) asserts that:

43 percent of the boys and 31 percent of the girls in the US lose their virginity by age of 16. Teenage girls account for 18 percent of the sexually experienced women in the country, but are responsible for 46 percent of out-of-wedlock births and 31 percent of abortion.

Having sex before marriage has been taken for granted. To some youths, it is a way of displaying their maturity and proving that they have arrived, showing that they belong to the class that matters in the society.

Premarital sex is influenced and empowered by the spirit of immorality. No wonder it is gaining more ground and becoming order of the day, despite its adverse consequences. It is destroying our youths and our societal legacy.

Sexual activities among youths in Nigeria are not a new practice. However, it is assuming new and worrisome dimensions in recent times. Probably some of the overlooked consequences of premarital sexual activity are psychological, social, religious, emotional and educational. The basic human need for touch and physical affection is real, but even more important is the basic human need for a loving connection with others. Many people confuse their need for sexual expression with their need for love. If they attempt to connect with another person primarily through sex, chances are high and the relationship will eventually deteriorate and leave psychological damage in its wake. Many youths use sex as a way to create or substitute for the sense of connection they need.

Peer pressure instigates many of the myths and desires that may encourage experimenting in sex, without full knowledge of the consequences of the sexual act. Sex is a hot topic for discussion and something that almost everyone is curious about. Many social influences, primarily aimed at emphasizing physical appearance and erotica, have added to this sexual hype.

Premarital sex has been a threat to the lives of youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise L.G.A. It has negatively affected the educational, psychological, economic, social, moral and the religious life of the

people. Many girls are known to have lost their lives in the process of abortion when pregnancy-occurred. It is on this bases that this article investigates the causes and effects of premarital sex among youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise; more so suggest remedies to it.

Causes of Premarital Sex Among Youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise

i. Negative Media Influence: The negative media influences on Ezinihitte Mbaise youths today have been a major threat to morality. This media influence has led to the exploitation of many of Ezinihitte Mbaise boys and girls. The media focuses more and more upon the sensual. The attempt to make teens sexually attractive in various adverts packaged by some media houses is adversely exposing the young ones to untimely sexual intercourse. Some investigations and interviewees have proven that many of Ezinihitte Mbaise youths consented to premarital sex because they have seen their mates practice such in media, through cable TV, Pornographic magazines, pornographic video, internet, television, radio and various magazines.

ii. Broken Home: Broken homes are also a major cause of premarital sex among Ezinihitte Mbaise youths. Some couples are not helping issues, as they bring-up children in homes where there are absolute negligence of family and parental responsibilities.. Youths who found themselves in such homes would not want to have similar experience with their parents as they prefer premarital sex which usually resulted to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDs, Syphilis with other psychological and emotional problems. According to Kitembo et al (1977, p.133):

Hence, some parents promiscuous lifestyles have contributed a lot in encouraging the youths into immoral lifestyles, when a young one will see the mother bringing a strange man in their home to have sex with her or their father making love with another woman in his matrimonial bed. Such young one will be forced to practice with the parents.

iii. Peer Group Pressure: The majority of young people who become involved in premarital sex do so because of peer pressure. In a study on high-risk sexual behaviour in Tanzania, Ikamba and Quedraogo (2003) found that youths are forced into having sexual intercourse by peer pressure. Peer pressure in Ezinihitte Mbaise plays a role in initiating sexual activity, which frequently ends in adolescent pregnancies, psychological effects, academic problems, STDs and other negative effects. It is not matters of debate that some youths, who indulged in premarital sex are doing it to please their friends. They look at their peers and give in to the temptation, because Ifeoma affirmed that "everyone does it". As stressed by Samuel an interviewee, "Most of us youths in this community indulge in premarital sex in order to avoid being laughed at

and to receive affirmation from our peers”. In the end, premarital sex has become a kind of passport to acceptance in a particular age group. In most cases such illicit sex always results to other consequences.

iv. The Quest For Experience: There is mad desire for some young ones to acquire all the experience in the world within a space of time. They want to taste the experience of sexual intercourse in an unholy way. Some of them argue that they want to test the sexual compatibility of their spouses before marriage. Moreover, there is a growing trend among Ezinihitte Mbaise youths these days to think that it is old-fashioned if they do not experiment with sex before marriage. They think that it is part and parcel of modernity to engage in sex before marriage and want to familiarize themselves with matters concerning sex before they get married. “That is why the majority will opt to move in with their girlfriends or boyfriends”, says Ngele an interviewee. In view of this Peschke (1994, p.440) asserts, intercourse before marriage can never anticipate the conditions of conjugal love and neither therefore be a meaningful test of it.

v. Early Menarche: The earlier occurrence of menarche the earlier the biological possibility of conceiving. In Tanzania, Nasoro (2003) found that the age of menarche was between 13 and 15 years, and was associated with increased sexual activity, which put teenagers at risk of unwanted pregnancies and other negative effects.

In Ezinihitte Mbaise girls have become pregnant without the knowledge that, at the age of eleven (11) years they can be pregnant. According to Ngozi, “My friends told me that at the age of 12 years a girl is not expected to be pregnant except she is up to 15 years. But unfortunately I was impregnated at the age of thirteen years,” hence, due to inadequate knowledge of the time of their menarche, many have fallen victim of premarital pregnancy. A paper presented by Chimezie during TAC Obibi Amumara Youths Week on “Youth and their sexual life” proved that some girls matured for pregnancy as early as twelve years old.

vii. Socio-cultural and economic factors: Early dating provides a context for many sexual experiences. Unconventional psychosocial attitudes and some risk behaviour, such as early use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs; school problems; delinquency, and physical aggression are associated with earlier onset of adolescent sexual intercourse. Other factors include lower family incomes, less supervision, parental modelling, and more permissive attitudes in single-parent families. According to Blum (2000) Having sexually active siblings and friends is also strongly associated with earlier onset of sexual activity at a young age.

vii. Educational status: Women with less education are more likely to engage in premarital sex. Mandara et al (2003) confirm that in some countries in Sub-Saharan African, more women with less than seven years' education have a child before they are 18 than ones with seven or more years of education. In the USA, approximately 30% of young women who have less than a basic education (at least seven years) have a child before they are 18 compared to 5% of those who have at least twelve years of education.

According Remez, L (2000), the risk of premarital sex is greater among adolescents with no formal education than with those with secondary education. Moreover, a lack of parental guidance and appropriate sex education contributes to premarital sex among the youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise. As stated by an interviewee, "most of my friends usually tell us that if we do not have sex now that we are teens, it might be too difficult for us to conceive (be pregnant) when we get married". Those who normally fall victim of this type of false story are the uneducated ones.

ix. Rape and Sexual Violence: According to Gray Wagman et al (2004), among rural adolescents aged 15 to 19 in Uganda, both unwanted and mistimed pregnancies were more common among those who had been coerced than those who had not. Coerced sexual intercourse represents only one of the more extremes of sexual abuse.

More so, regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse in childhood (age below 15), Garcia-Moreno et al (2005) reveal that many victims have their first sexual experience as a product of coercion or force. This is of grave concern as the outcomes of sexual abuse include unwanted pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

Coercive sex and rape, are major factors in premarital sex among Ezinihitte Mbaise youths says Ngene in an oral interview. He further stresses a current event where a girl of 12 years old was raped in her house when her parents left and a neighbor came in through the fence and raped the girl, threatening to kill her if she tells her parents. It was confirmed that there were some part of the communities young girls cannot go alone at odd times because of the fear of rape. Hence, most of those involved in this act were young boys who were not education and addicted to hard drugs.

Moreso, some of the rapes recorded in Ezinihitte Mbaise had been attributed to indecent dressing of the girls. It was stressed by an interviewee that girls' revealing clothes has resulted to many rape acts recorded in the community, as some young men reports that they entice them with the wears they put on. Thus, it could be well understood that our young girls like modeling western. Youths

prefer wearing clothes that expose their private parts hence imitating what they see in TV, Magazines, etc.

ix Lack of Sex Education: Ngene stressed that our parents find it difficult to discuss sex related issues with their children because to them, “it is not our custom to talk about sex in the presence of children”. In so doing, they denied them the real information that would have guided the youths to abstain from premarital sex. Moreso, there is not item in the school curriculum that talks about sex education. Parents and schools are supposed to correctly guide youths to know more about sexual knowledge, which is the best method to avoid accidents caused by premarital sex. According to Samuel in an interview, “with the rapid development of society, youths that lack sex education tend to engage much in premarital sex due to their curiosity or the negative models provided by the media”.

Implications of Premarital Sex Among Youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise

i. Educational Effect: Researchers have posited that engaging in premarital sex can lead to poor academic performance. Majority of the discussants argued that engaging in premarital sex can affect academic performances of both boys and girls. In Ezinihitte Mbaise, among other communities many girls are expelled from school every year because of unintended pregnancy. Even when some of them are not forced to leave school, mockery from peers and shame may make it unbearable to continue schooling.

ii. Psychological Effect: Probably some of the most overlooked consequences of premarital sexual activity are psychological. The basic human need for touch and physical affection is real, but even more important is the basic human need for a loving connection with others. Many people confuse their need for sexual expression with their need for love.

According to observation by the researcher in Ezinihitte Mbaise community, psychological effects of these pregnancies can be severe. More than half of teenage pregnancies continue to re-procreate after the first pregnancy. In the same vein, Chioma Nwachukwu says in an interview that “My first experience of child birth out of wedlock destabilized my whole plans in life that I never knew when I fell into it and became pregnant the second time.”

iv. Regret: The findings from previous research work according to (www.teenslife_education.com.html) states that sex deviant acts can lead to regrets. The interviewees argued that most of the upper level students regret their premarital sexual acts practiced when they

were at lower academic levels. A level two female according to the research work explained that she regretted dating a final year student who took the best part of her life and dumped her for another girl. The same is also applicable to their male counterparts who regret engaging themselves in sexual acts while in school, hence lack concentration in academic activities.

The experience is almost the same in Ezinihitte Mbaise as a female interviewee said that, “I am young but I feel old whenever I remember the day I lost my virginity to a member of my community in one of my visitation to their house”.

iv. Unwanted Pregnancy: It is obvious that engaging in premarital sex can lead to unwanted pregnancy. Interviewees argued that there were cases where students dropped out of Secondary school in Ezinihitte Mbaise because of being pregnant or were caught in the attempt to abort the pregnancy. The practice of sharp-sharp sex was said to contribute for some unwanted pregnancies among students. Sharp-Sharp is carried out mostly in party venues and some of them are drunk and engage in sex without condom, and with non dating persons, as argued by most of the interviewees across groups. In the same vein, Chika stress that many girls have died in an attempt to abort their pregnancies, while some young boys have become unplanned fathers.

v. Abortion: Abortion is another prominent consequences attached to premarital sex. This has to do with the act of getting rid of the pregnancy. In his examination of complication arising from abortion, Oghenekevwe asserts that: “Complications of abortion can cause infection around the womb, severe bleeding from the womb and shock. Others are trauma to the pelvic organs (cut in the lower end of the womb), uterine perforation and damage to the bladder and intestine”.

These complications can lead to death and infertility in future. An interviewee explained how a young girl of 16 years old died in an attempt to abort an unwanted pregnancy which occurred as a result of premarital sex. He further said, that the girl continued after being warned by her friends not to abort the pregnancy, but because of the shame, she refused and died at the course of the abortion.

vi. Loss of Self Respect : It was a general observation, according to a study carryout by a student on “effect of premarital sex” Kalu (2012) posited that engaging in pre-marital sex leads to loss of self respect. A female discussant explained that when a person falls so low and allows himself/herself to be used as a sex object he/she will certainly lose self respect and personality in the eyes of both persons and the larger society. Loss of self respect also comes when a youth

happen to contacts STDs or was raped in the case of female students. Any female who engage in group sex, sharp-sharp sex or being watched by others while having sex usually suffer a loss of self-esteem. Girls who had abortion or got pregnant equally suffer from loss of self-esteem.

vii. Depression: Survey data from previous researchers revealed that most victims of rape, those who had unwanted pregnancies and those caught in acts of sodomy tend to be more depressed than others who engage in premarital sex. In Ezinihitte Mbaise a female interviewee believed that engaging in premarital sex can lead to depression. Some of the respondents indicated that depression as a result of premarital sex is particularly associated with girls who engage in sex for economic reasons. A girl said that engaging in sex for the sake of money is very depressing because in some cases one is treated like animal because they pay for it. The emotional stress of broken sexual relationships also causes depression. Young girls tend to invest more in a relationship that seem real at first, and then suffer deeper pain and hurt when the relationship comes to an end.

ix. Fear of Future Commitment

The majority of the interviewees said that engaging in premarital sex may lead to fear of future commitment to other relationships. Smooth sex relationship can turn bad. Sex can have another kind of emotional consequence. Onyinyechi rightly said that: “Premarital sex relationships can bring bitter experience in the attempt to form normal sex relationships. Emotions like anger, impatience, jealousy and selfishness surfaces particularly when one partner feels he/she has had enough of it”.

A male interviewee explained how his friend was dumped by a sugar Mummy and ever since, he kept his distance from women and even vowed not to get married. Other implications are sexually Transmitted Diseases, Loss of Family Support, Victims For Rituals, Unprepared (Shotgun) Wedding.

Measures on how to Minimize Premarital Sex among Youths in Ezinihitte Mbaise

i. Sex Education

Sex education is providing information or knowledge on sexual behaviour to people. This provision of knowledge will enable them make informed and responsible decisions about sexual behaviours at all stages of their lives. It has been suggested that sex education should begin at birth then pass through marriage to matured age. Unfortunately, most parents do not discuss sexuality

openly to the hearing of their children if at all it is discussed. Nwachukwu D.N (2000) states that: “Poor knowledge of sex education has been identified as a contributory factor predisposing teenagers, to premarital sex and was listed as one of the twenty four causes of teenage pregnancy”. With the introduction of sex education in the curriculum of the school system in Ezinihitte Mbaise and Nigeria at large, the rapid tendency of premarital sex will tend to reduce. More so, those who are opportune to be handling sex education should exercise self-restraint in the amount of information dished out to adolescents. Sufficient details about the structure and functions of the sex organs, pregnancy and its traumatic experiences, marriage and parenthood should be exposed to the teenagers.

ii. Total Abstinence: This means not engaging in sexual activities. It is the safest, simplest, and most effective method of preventing pregnancy, HIV/AIDs, STDs and all other effects of premarital sex. This method requires self control, assertiveness and ability to make decisions about abstaining from sex and sticking to the decision. Action Health Incorporation (2003) States that: There is no health risk for being abstinent. A person who has had sexual intercourse in the past may decide to abstain at any time in a relationship. Abstinence is the only method that is 100% safe in preventing pregnancy and STDs with other related effects.

iii. Parental Care/ Guidance

There are many steps parents and guidance can take as a solution to reduce the risk of premarital sex among youths before they have grown up or to delay them from becoming sexually active and encourage those having sex. Onomuodeke, M.A et al (2010) enumerated them as:

- **Talk with your children early and often about sex and be specific:** Kids have many questions about sex, and they often say that the source they most like to go to for answer is their parents. Start the conversation and make sure that it is honest, open and respectful.
- **Supervision and Monitoring:** There are many parents who do not know anything about their teenage children and have no control over them. This has made these youths to live at the mercy of their friends who give them wrong advice many atimes. If parents must have a respectful family, they must discuss to establish rules expected good behaviour, make sure they know what

their children are doing when they get home from school and when they go out with friends will help to maintain sanity in the children.

- **Know your children's friends and families.** Josephine Obiugeri stated in her project work that: “Peer group is an agency of education. Its influence on behaviours and development are most profound during the adolescence stage because the need for acceptance and approval are fundamental to adolescents”.

She went further to say that in order to fit into the peer group and receive the acceptance approval of members. One is expected to succumb to the standards and expectations of the group which may be good or bad. Friends have "strong influence on each other, so help your children become friends with kids whose families share your values”. Some parents of teens even arrange to meet with the parents of their children's friends to establish common rules and expectations. Welcome your children's friends into your home and talk to them openly about how to lead a good life.

iv. Community Laws/Practices

In the olden days, Ezinihitte Mbaise had a practice pertaining to young girls. These practices seriously check the virginity of young girls, which help them to maintain their virginity till the age of marriage. Michael Ugorji States that: “Under no circumstances should a girl conceive in her father’s house, and any girl who falls victim was severely punished. This practice restricted the young people from involving in premarital sex”.

The Ezinihitte Mbaise culture holds that any girl that has ever met with any man which results to deflowering was not allow to dance to the "Uzoiyi" where all the virgin girls in the community gather every year to sacrifice to the goddess in the little flowing lake opposite. The Eziukwu compound believing that the goddess will make them beautiful and fruitful in their marriage. There was also a fine of one fowl every year from any girl who involved in premarital sex for continuous sacrifice even when she is married.

v. Portraying the Consequences of Premarital Sex by Mass Media

One further thing that might diminish the high sexual risks that adolescents take is to have a consistent and healthful, portrayal of sex and its consequences in our media. This country has an obsession with sex in advertising and in entertainment. But the media usually does not show the negative consequences of having sex. Frequently, people on TV in the movies are depicted as having sex without consequences. The media also does a very poor job of showing kids how adults who are responsible act in situation in which they might engage in sex.

According to Chima “Do popular TV shows depict characters, actively saying that they probably ought not to have sex because pregnancy and other negative effects might ensure?” Pressure by parents on companies that sponsor these programs could be a big help in this area.

Recommendations

The discovery from this academic exercise show that the problem of immorality or moral decadence starts from the home. In Deut. 6:7 God told the Israelites to teach their children so that it will extend from one generation to the other. But when parents failed in their duty at home and compromise indiscipline in the home, the society is at risk of apostasy. “Charity it is said begins at home”. They should ensure that their children are taught or nurtured on the importance of morality, and also live exemplary life before the children, becoming a pacesetter in maintaining what is taught and tenet of their faith.

The church should make Sunday school exercise a place of teaching and learning encouraging everybody to participate. Train qualified teachers to be used in this school.

The primary, secondary and tertiary institutions should make moral education compulsory and encourage their students to attend. It should be handled by qualified teachers whose character is not questionable.

Religious leaders should avoid personal interests and ego and teach their followers mostly young people, virtues, the right values, morality, discipline and respect for human life. This will help to overcome sex violence that may arise in the society among the youths.

The Federal Ministry of Education should develop a curriculum on sex education for various levels of institutions. This will enable students to understand the dangers associated with early sex and prepare them on how to manage sexual urges.

Government and churches should monitor their constituencies and regularly organize workshops, seminars and conferences on sexual behaviour in the institution, community and the society in general. Government should come out with a policy that will provide scholarship to students on regular basis up to graduation. This will assist students and make them concentrate on their studies instead of going round and negotiating for sex for economic reasons.

Parents should teach their daughters to dress with appropriate dressing code. This will reduce sexual urge, rape and temptations that are in some instances facilitated by provocative and sexy dresses that some girls put on. In addition to the above recommendations, the parents and community could reduce the prevalence of premarital sex among the youths in the community, if:

The parents should step up to their responsibility as the custodian of the children under their care, and monitor the activities of peer groups, social clubs and review the policy regulating their conduct in the community.

Youths should be encourage by the school authorities to organize seminars, debates, symposia and other related activities to help them build their academic potentials and resist deviant activities. Parents should as a matter of responsibility, monitor and pay regular visits to their children in schools and provide them with basic materials that will make their stay comfortable.

More so, some voluntary organization in Nigeria such as the National Council of Women Society (NCWS), Women Aid Collective (WACO) and The Young Christian Association (YCA) should also address the problems that lead to premarital sex and proffer solutions to it.

Community leaders should place serious penalty on any youth found in the act or any girl confirm pregnant before marriage.

6.5 Conclusion

This conclusion is based on the findings of this research work. In Ezinihitte Mbaise community, it was observed that premarital sex carries social stigma in the community especially when the youths are caught. Consequently, many girls who engaged in abortion as a result of unwanted pregnancy from premarital sex could lose their lives and future procreation. Illiteracy or lower educational levels and ones it happens, such a youth will ever have a mark that hinders his/her progress in future. The youth may encounter physical damage in her body or even death in the process of trying to give birth. Good moral code should be established for youths and that they should wait until they are adult before they become sexually active. Illiteracy, poverty, psychological trauma, sexually transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDs were seen as big set back to the youths who fall victim of premarital sex in the community.

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