

Patterns Of Contraceptive Use Among Female Undergraduates In The University Of Ibadan, Nigeria

E Cadmus, E Owoaje

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine pattern of contraceptives use among female undergraduates in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among female undergraduates resident on campus using self administered questionnaires. Overall, 425 female undergraduates between the ages of 15 and 30 years were interviewed. Only 28.7% of the respondents were sexually active and mean age at sexual debut was 19 years \pm 2.31 years. About 63.9% of the sexually active respondents had ever used some form of contraceptives mainly the condom and pills. Only (26.7%) of the sexually active respondents used a contraceptive at their last sexual encounter and contraceptive use was significantly higher ($p < .05$) among the older females. Contraceptive use among the sexually active female undergraduates of the University of Ibadan was not optimal although knowledge of various methods was high. Appropriate interventions are needed to encourage contraceptive use among sexually active female undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, young people are beginning sexual activity at younger ages than previous generations with variations among many countries and regions⁽¹⁻³⁾.

The risks related to sexual activity and unwanted pregnancy are among the most serious health risks that young people face and can jeopardize not only physical health but also long-term emotional, economic, and social well-being. The other reproductive health risks that young people face include Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) including HIV and unintended pregnancy often leading to unsafe abortion and its complications⁽⁴⁾. Generally, sexually active young adults are less likely to use contraception than adults, even within marriage⁽⁵⁾. Researchers have documented that many reported unplanned pregnancies occur within a year after first sexual intercourse which is often unprotected⁽⁶⁾. The value of the effective use of contraceptive methods in preventing unwanted pregnancy has been documented in various studies and the high level of contraceptive awareness and low level of its usage has also been established^(7,8).

Young women in the university environment being away from home for the first time become free to experiment sexually especially without any parental supervision in addition, the coercion from older students and the liberal atmosphere of the university further encourage this

experimentation which may lead to unwanted pregnancies and the predicament of dealing with the ensuing problems.

This study was conducted to determine the sexual behaviour, knowledge and use of contraceptives and to examine the influences of socio-demographic factors on sexual behaviour of female undergraduates in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

METHODS

STUDY AREA

The study was carried out in the University of Ibadan located in the South Western part of Nigeria; the University of Ibadan was founded in 1948 as Nigeria's first tertiary educational institution.

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study of female undergraduates resident in the halls on campus irrespective of marital status, socioeconomic and religious background. Information on socio-demographic characteristics, sexual behaviour and knowledge of contraceptives and use was obtained using a self administered semi structured questionnaire which had been pre-tested and administered by trained field workers.

Verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondent before questionnaire was administered. Data analysis was

done with SPSS version 14.0 software. Frequencies were generated and Chi-square test was used to check for associations between categorical variables. Level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Four hundred and twenty-five respondents were interviewed. The majority 414 (97.4%) were single and 242 (56.9%) were aged between 20-24 years. There were 376 (88.5%) Christians and 44 (10.4%) Muslims.

Figure 1

Table 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS (N=425)

(%)	Number	Socio-demographic Characteristics
		Age (years)
28.2	120	<20
56.9	242	20-24
14.8	63	≥25
		Marital Status
97.4	414	Never married/Single
1.6	7	Married
0.7	3	Cohabiting
0.2	1	Widowed
		Family Type
83.3	354	Monogamous
16.7	71	Polygamous
		Religion
88.5	376	Christianity
10.4	44	Islam
0.2	1	Traditional/Others

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND REPORTED USE OF CONTRACEPTIVES.

One hundred and twenty two (28.7%) of the respondents had ever had sexual intercourse. The mean age at sexual debut

was 19 years ± 2.3 years and most (%) had their sexual debut between ages 20-24 years.

With regards to the prevalence of contraceptive use, 78 (63.9%) of the sexually active respondents had ever used some form of contraceptive however, only 30 (26.7%) of the sexually active respondents were currently using some form of contraceptive.

Figure 2

Table 2: REPORTED USE OF CONTRACEPTIVES AMONG SEXUALLY ACTIVE RESPONDENT'S.

(N=122)		Reported use of contraceptives
		%
		Ever used contraceptives
63.9	78	Yes
36.1	44	No
		Contraceptive use at last intercourse
26.7	30	Yes
82.1	92	No
		Number of lifetime sexual partners
50.8	62	1
24.6	30	2
24.6	30	≥3

Condoms 68 (87.2%) were the most commonly used methods of contraceptives, followed by the oral contraceptives 11 (15.4%) and the emergency contraceptives. Other methods of contraception in mentioned include the use of foaming tablets 1 (1.3%) and native concoctions 2(2.6%).

The knowledge of the effective methods of contraception among the respondents who had ever had sexual intercourse is shown below. Sixty-one (50.0%) perceived condoms as the most effective method of contraception whereas 58 (47.5%) regarded abstinence as being most effective. Only 7(5.7%) respondents perceived emergency contraception as being effective.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTRACEPTIVE USE

Nineteen (61.2%) of the sexually active respondents over 25 years old had ever used a contraceptive during intercourse while 49 (53.8%) of those less than 25 years had ever used a form of contraceptive. The older the sexually active respondents were, the higher the chance they had used some form of contraceptive ($X^2=31.34$ $p=0.00$).

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.

Generally, the proportion of students who had ever had sexual intercourse increased with age and was statistically significant ($p<0.001$). A significantly higher proportion, 28 (39.4%) of respondents from polygamous homes had ever had sexual intercourse compared with 94 (26.6%) of females from monogamous families ($p<0.001$). Twenty- four (39.3%) of females who had either parent dead had ever had sex while 22 (37.3%) of those with parents living apart were sexually active and this was statistically significant ($X^2=7.64$, $P=0.02$).

Figure 3

Table 3: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR (n=425)

p value	X^2	Ever had sex		Characteristics
		Yes n(%)	No n (%)	
<0.001	29.18			Age
		105(87.5)	15(12.5)	<20 years
		166(68.6)	76(31.4)	20-24 years
		32(50.8)	31(49.2)	>=25 years
0.03	4.79	260(73.4)	94(26.6)	Family type
		43(60.6)	28(39.4)	Monogamous Polygamous
0.02	7.635	229(75.1)	76(24.9)	Marital status of parents
		37(60.7)	24(39.3)	Living together
		37(62.5)	22(37.3)	Father or mother dead
				Living apart/divorced

DISCUSSION

Almost one-third of the respondents reported having ever had sexual intercourse. This finding is lower than rates reported in some other studies in Nigeria which reported higher rates of sexual activity among female undergraduates⁽⁹⁻¹²⁾. In a study conducted in the University of Lagos, it was reported that more than half of the respondents were sexually active⁽¹²⁾. This may be due to the fact that Lagos is a highly modern city and as such the youth are more sexually exposed and it is also possible that respondents might have underreported sexual activity in our study. Mean age at sexual debut in this study was 19 years; this is higher than other studies conducted in Nigeria, and other West African countries where mean age at sexual debut was estimated to be about 16.6 years⁽¹³⁾. However the mean age in a study carried out among young female undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra by Adinma et al revealed a higher mean age at sexual debut of 21.8 years

⁽¹⁰⁾. Also sexual activity is more common among females from polygamous families a finding similar to what was documented by Slap et al ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Regarding contraceptive use, three quarters of the sexually active respondents had ever used a contraceptive. This is slightly higher than that reported among female undergraduates in the University of Benin which revealed that only a third of these had ever practiced contraception ⁽¹⁵⁾. The high incidence of contraceptive use in this study may be because of the high educational level and single marital status of the respondents which have been found to have strong influences on the use of contraceptives ^(9, 12, 16). Condoms were observed to be the main method of contraceptive used in the study and this is similar to findings of other studies where the most commonly known, ever used, and currently used contraceptive was condom ^(11, 16, 17). Overall, about a quarter of respondents in the study knew about emergency contraception. This is lower than what was reported by Aziken et al where almost 60% of the respondents knew about emergency contraception ⁽¹⁵⁾. The study carried out by Ebuehi et al. among undergraduates in Lagos reported that slightly over two thirds of the respondents were aware of emergency contraception ⁽¹²⁾.

CONCLUSION

This study has yielded insight into the patterns of contraceptive use among female undergraduates in the University of Ibadan. Even though the mean age at sexual debut was found to be higher among the students than in the general populace current use of contraceptive is still low. There is need to institute interventions to improve contraceptive uptake in this group of individuals.

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Author Information

Eniola. O . Cadmus, (MB;BS,MPH)

Department of Community Medicine, University College Hospital

Eme T. Owoaje, (MB;BS,FWACP)

Department of Community Medicine, University College Hospital