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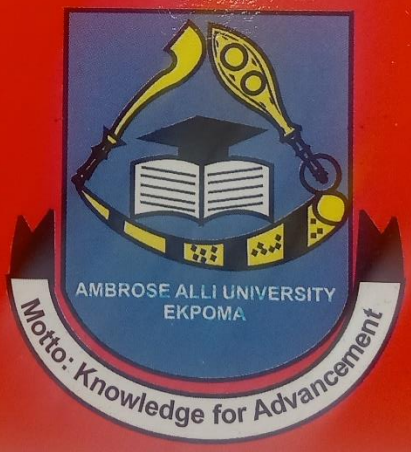

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Virginity Among Youths: Implication for Sexual Health and Marital Counselling

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Abstract

Sexual immoralities have become the order of the day. Girls no longer cherish chastity and the dignity of womanhood is gradually fading away. Men have lost control over their emotions. It is obvious that the youths today do not see premarital sex as an immoral act and does not take virginity as dignity and worth cherishing. This definitely implies that they are involved in premarital sexual behaviours with its attendant risky behaviours/ consequences. Thus, this paper dealt with the value of chastity and psychological import of the unmarried remaining chaste till marriage; since marriage is one of the goals of most persons in the society. This paper discussed also the dating behaviour of today's youth and noted that the dating avenue is the primary predisposing factor for youth's involvement in premarital sex and associated shortcomings. The effects of premarital sex are spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational in nature. This invariably has lots of implications for sexual health and marital counseling bearing in mind the avalanche of research findings on the impact of premarital sex, risky sexual behaviours and personality maladjustment on an individual total wellbeing.

Keywords: Virginity, Youths, Sexual Health and Marital Counselling

Introduction

Virginity is the condition all people are afflicted with through the action of being born. Therefore, every individual who has passed through birth was once a virgin. Virginity is the state of a person who has never engages in sexual intercourse. The word virgin comes from the Latin word *virgro* which literally means *maiden.* Although in the later usage of the word virgin means *uninitiated* or *untouched.* The traditional view is that virginity is only lost through vaginal penetration by the penis, weather consensual or non-consensual. The act of masturbation (personal or mutual masturbation), breast stimulation, genital stimulation, oral sex, anal sex and non-penetrative sex (penile-vaginal sex) do not result to loss of virginity in traditional view. An individual who engage in such acts with no history of penile-vaginal penetration is often regarded as "technically virgin" (Blank, 2008; Plummer, 2002). The concept of technically virginity through sexual behaviour is popular among youth. Oral sex is most common among the female youth who fellate their boy-friends to preserve their virginity but also maintain sexual intimacy with them.

Male Virginity

The first time a male has sexual intercourse, he losts his virginity and once it is lost, it is lost forever. In traditional thinking, male virginity does not exist. Many medical doctors are also of the opinion that male virginity does not exist but Dr Khumalo said, by simple looking at man's knee you can tell whether he is a virgin or not. He added that young boys also have hymen white lacy skin on the foreskin. If the fore skin on the penis slips away easily, it means that the hymen is gone. If the foreskin is sore and hard to move then it means he is still a virgin or a certain vein on the penis is also checked if it can still be seen, it means he is either a virgin or that he has never slept with a virgin. However, all these proof have been criticize by other doctors that by masturbation or washing the penis thoroughly a man can loss the virginity if Dr Khumalo proof is right. While it is agreeable to many doctors that male virginity is hard to test, the conclusion seems definite; it is extremely hard to tell whether a man is a virgin.

Female Virginity

Traditionally, the presence of hymen at the virginal opening is virginity. The opening of the vagina is cover by a thin tissue membrane called hymen. The hymen has no known function typically has perforation in it that allow menstrual flow pass from the body at puberty (Master, Johnson & Kolodny, 1988). In many cultures, it is so important that unmarried female be a virgin that such a female will refrain from inserting object into her virginal such as tampon, menstrual cup, dildo or undergoing some medical examination, so as not to damage the hymen. Nowadays, young women who masturbate by inserting object like candle, dildo, finger, vibrators which destroys their hymen claim to be "technically virgin" since they have not engage in penile-virginal sex. Essentially, it is necessary to note that hymen may be broken or stretched at an early age by various exercise, horse riding etc., while some women are born with partial or none hymen at all.

Homosexual on the other hand differ in their definition of virginity. Some gay individual's regard penile-anal penetration as loss of virginity, while lesbians refer to oral sex, or fingering as loss of virginity. While other homosexual individuals assert that the term

virginity is meaningless to them because of the prevalence of the traditional definition.

Virginity Test

Virginity testing has become a relatively new trend in many countries especially those that are highly concerned with women honour. Virginity testing is seen as a way to curb women's sexual activity before marriage and keeping them 'pure' until then. A virginity test is the practice and process of determining whether a female person is a virgin i.e. whether she has never engaged in sexual intercourse. A form of virginity test involves testing for laxity of virginal muscle with fingers; that is, the two-finger test (TFT). A doctor performs the test by inserting a finger into the female vaginal to check the level of vaginal laxity, which is used to determine if she is "habituated to sexual intercourse (McNeil & Donald, 2010). The reasons for virginity test include, suspiciously of adultery, sex between minors, lack of bleeding at consummation of marriage, HIV/AIDS epidemic, sexual transmitted diseases etc (George, 2008). Requiring a female to undergo a virginity test is widely seen as harmful especially when it is performed on behalf of the government. The practice is seen as sexist, perpetuating the notion that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is acceptable for men, but not for women and suggesting that women sexual activity should be subject to public knowledge and criticism, while men should not (Adel, 2012).

Virginity Auction

A virginity auction is claimed auction often publicized online, where a person seeks to sell her virginity to the highest bidder. The winning bidder has the right to be the first to have intercourse with the person. Recently, youth go online in other to sell their virginity without caring who will be the buyer. In some cases, the seller reports that she needs money for their medical bill or school tuition. Others pledges that some portion will be given to charity, or emphasizes the social questions involve in selling one's virginity (Gordon, 2010).

As many young ladies are no more ashamed of been disvirgined at early age, some female who have been sexually active or that their hymen has been damaged may undergo a surgical procedure called *hymenorrhaphy or hymenonplast* to repair or replace her hymen and cause virginal bleeding in the next intercourse as proof of virginity. This is called Neo virginity (Masters et al, 1988) some called themselves born again virgin

Virginity Pledges

As many youths are engaging in sexual activities at early age, some still pledge abstinence till they are married. These pledges may be as a result of religious belief, promise to parent, partners or oneself. These sets of youth try as much as possible to deviate from any activity that lead to sexual arousal despite the pressure and peer group influence and the nonchalant attitude of the society that now believe that virginity is not a dignity, but lack of opportunity. However, some of our youth who pledge abstinence till marriage still practice 'technically virgin' i.e. engage in sexual activities that do not include Penile-virginal penetration.

Premarital Sex

More than a decade ago, Abogunrin (2002) carried out a study that involves 800 girls in Ilorin

and it was found that the youngest age at first sexual intercourse is 11 years. This might have reduced to 8years at present as modern youth seem to value sexual activities more than their counterpart of the past years (Adegboyega, 2010). Youth are sexually active at an age he/she is not in any way ready for marriage (Oniye, 2012). About 30 years ago Owuamanam (1988) was of the opinion that Nigeria adolescents no longer adhere to "Cultural regulation" regarding sex. And despite cultural sanctions, virginity at marriage of both male and female partners traditionally regarded as a virtue is fast eroding (Owuamanam, 1982). In the World presently, the age of puberty is falling, the age of first sexual encounter is reducing and age at marriage is rising (Adegboyega, 2010).

Premarital sexual behaviour is a sexual interaction before an individual got married, since marriage is the goal of each and every person in the society (Abdul Kareem, 2013). Historically, premarital sex is considered as a taboo in many cultures and as a sin in numerous religions, but it has become more commonly accepted in developed countries in the last few decades. Youth are now following the slogan "Virginity Is not a Dignity, but lack of opportunity."

Causes of Premarital Sex

Dating is primarily the cause of premarital sex. All in the name of dating; youth engage in kissing, embracing, fondling, cohabiting or other activities that lead to sexual arousal. Youth are tempted to have sex when they are getting to close or secluded with their partner in dating. Although, other element could cause premarital sex, it all begins with dating. Researchers such as Owuamanam (1982); Abogunrin (2002); Adegboyega (2010); Adewale (2010), Stephanie (2012) and Abdul Kareem (2013) have listed several causes of premarital sex, in this paper we categorized them into three; Family cause, Social cause and Personal cause.Most parents cause the premarital sex of their children engage in by shying away from giving the required education to their children. Since parents of such children have failed in their responsibilities the children would learn the wrong thing from outsiders. Children of broken home are easy victims of such situation.

Social causes include, peer group pressure, environmental influence, electronic media, books and magazines, drugs and alcoholism, sexual abuse, contraceptives, indecent dressing among others. Peer group influence has been ranked the highest social cause of premarital sex (Adewale, 2010). Youth want to 'feel among', and tends to fall in to pressure from friends with less caring of the consequences.Among the personal causes of premarital sex are curiosity, greed for money, wealth position, and materialism. Other personal causes include indiscipline, idleness, and loneliness.

Effect of premarital sex

The effects of premarital sex are numerous and cut across so many areas of the victims live. The act itself in most cultures (for example in most parts of Nigeria) is considered immoral as its consequences may lead to other immoral behaviours and also breaking of the laws of the land. It is not unlikely, that where the culture frowns at it, the youth after premarital sex may have sense of guilt, shame and regret. The effects of premarital sex can be categorized into four: spiritual effects, sexual/ physical effects, emotional effects and relational effects.

Spiritual effect of premarital sex starts immediately the act has been done. Almost all religion (if not all) are against premarital sex and this makes youth feel they have sinned against God. They felt spiritual decline and these may even lead to disobedient to other religious law since they have sinned before.

The sexual/physical effects are unwanted pregnancy, abortion, poverty through early marriage, stigma and disgrace as well as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). The STDs include Vasco Virginal Fistula (VVF), Trichonomoniasis, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Chacroid, Herpes, Syphilis, Genital warts, HIV/AIDS and so on.

Premarital sex affects youths emotionally. It leads to resentment and frustrations, loss of dream, devalue sex, regrets, guilt, emotional baggage, worry about STDs, loss of self-respect, low self-esteem, depression, unwanted pregnancy and children, poverty and so on. Premarital sex leaves individual empty and searching for real love.

Relational effects includes mistrust, ruined relationship, fear of commitment, false intimacy, difficulty in evaluating future spouse, feeling of betrayal, tendency to cheat after marriage and lack of bonding through sex in marriage. When youth engage in their first premarital sex, they may end up feeling unfulfilled or dissatisfied with the consequence that they may be tempted to have sexual intercourse with different partners in the hope that they would find satisfaction, yet they have unsatisfied sexual experience and it increases their sexual exploitation.

Religious view on virginity and premarital sex

In Islam, sexual behaviour among individuals who are not married to one another is calledZina. Zina is an unlawful act under the religion of Islam and disvirginity before marriage is discouraged totally as Muslims has being warned in the Holy Qur'an "And come not near to unlawful sex (adultery and fornication). Verily, it transgresses its limit: A great sin and an evil way that leads one to hell unless Allah forgives him" (Q17 vs 32). The punishments for fornicators are also mentioned in Q24 vs 2 "the fornicatress and fornicators flog each of them with a hundred (100) strips…" Giving the severity of punishment for premarital sex, the Qur'an requires solid proof beyond a shadow of a doubt before convicting an individual. There must be testimony of four reliable male Muslim witnesses all whom must have witnessed the actual intercourse at the same time.

In Christianity, premarital sex is also not allowed and virgin till marriage is highly encouraged. The bible says "flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body but the sexual immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). However, the bible does not prescribe any punishment for those who engage in sexual immorality but leave the matter to God to judge.

Furthermore, African Traditional Religion frown at premarital sex and has serious sanctions for perpetrators of extramarital affairs to the extent that consequence could involve ultimate death of the perpetrators. Similarly, the religion emphasises the imperativeness of personal hygiene and maintenance of sexual health and being sexually faithful as a means of ensuring marital harmony. The implication of this viewpoint lies in the fact that, individuals (especially youths) who engage in premarital sex risk exposure to all consequences inherent in such act and administration of appropriate sanction when caught or if found guilty against

the laid down rules and regulations of the society. In some instances the gods of African traditional Religion stipulates that certain rites are specifically to be handled by youths or individuals who are sexually faithful given their age and marital status.

Implications for Sexual Health and Marital Counselling

Sexual health and marital counselling are two sides of the same coin for which the providers of marital counselling would have lots of role to play. In other words, involvement of youths in premarital sex/lack of respect for virginity practice invariably create certain challenges for marital counsellors in terms of dealing with inherent health/physical effects and other effects of their sexual escapades. Early exposure of unmarried youths to sexual activities (with attendant loss of virginity) predisposes them to incidence of multiple sex partners, sexual experimentation, use of drug and or its abuse, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, which because of its legal status in Nigeria could be procured from quacks. The implications of these are that the youths who lost their virginity earlier before marriage are prone to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), with its attendant complications. Similarly, such youths are likely to be tempted into sexual adventures in their attempt to achieve (the seemingly elusive) sexual satisfaction from one's partner at all times and under all conditions. Furthermore, such youths might be lured into drug use and abuse in order to attain sexual agility owing to desire to satisfy the sexual demand or expectations of their partners thereby exposing themselves to danger of drug addiction and sexual experimentation.

However, incidence of premarital sex or sexual related problems highlighted above could impact negatively on couples' marital satisfaction bearing in mind the place of sex in marital satisfaction or role expectation. According to Oniye (2008), sex colours marriage from top to bottom and a marriage devoid of sexual satisfaction is perceived to be unsuccessful because sex is like cement that glue couple together in marriage. It has been observed also that, sexual satisfaction in marriage is a function of so many factors like emotional attachment, perceived cordiality among the couple, tenderness, spousal responsiveness and affection. Ironically, these factors may not be readily available to dating youths who may be tempted to confuse lust for love, sexual expression for sincere affection and sexual gratification at youthful stage of life for indicator of lifelong marital responsiveness. The implications of these for marital counselling are enormous one of which tendency to place undue emphasis on sexual gratification as yardstick for marital satisfaction. This could be misleading, in line with the submission of Yahaya (2008), many couples failed to attain marital satisfaction in their marriage due to the unrealistic expectations they had about marriage including spouse's ability to provide all round sexual satisfaction at all times and under all conditions. Apart from this, such youths may unconsciously infect their partners with Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the process of exchanging sexual expression. This one way or the other, could impact gravely on the marital happiness of the couple owing to the negative impact of Sexually Transmitted Diseases on the physical or health of the unborn babies or newborns. The general implication of this for the marital counsellor is that he would have to incorporate sexuality education and counselling into the counselling services to be provided as a way of proactively guarding against sexual health-related problem in marriage. The marital counsellor would be have to equip himself with knowledge about sexual

characteristics of youths in order to appreciate the motivating factor behind their behaviour if he is to fully grasp the nature of their sexual expression. Marital counselling would not be complete without the counsellor paying due attention to the impact of drug use and abuse, sexual experimentation and risky sexual behaviour.

Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that youths involvement in premarital sexual activities leading to early loss of virginity would predispose them to lots of sexual and marital challenges such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases, drug use and abuse, sexual experimentation, mistrust, destruction of marital harmony among others. It implies therefore, that marital counsellors would have to rise to the challenge by incorporating sexuality education and counselling into their marital counselling programme.

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