

Title: Condom use at first sex among unmarried sexually active young men in Nigeria: an assessment of ethnic variations

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Background/statement of problem:

Condom use during casual sex has been found out to be an effective way of preventing the transmission of HIV/AIDS among men and women generally and particularly among youths at the onset of pre-marital sex. Despite the fact that HIV prevalence is lower in Nigeria compared with many other countries in Africa, 2008 UNAIDS report estimated the carriers of HIV in Nigeria to be over 2.5 million; with an estimated figure of 170,000 deaths from AIDS in the year 2007.

Several studies have found early age at sexual debut to be associated with low use of protective measures and this has contributed to the widespread of HIV/AIDS and HIV infections globally (Audrey, 2004; Trisha et al, 2007). In Nigeria for instance, casual and unprotected sex among other factors have been identified as a medium of vast and widespread of HIV among youths aged 15 and 24 (NPC and ICF Macro, 2009). Consistent use of condom through the course of life has been linked with condom use at first sexual debut (Abma and McGill, 2007). Despite that several studies have examined factors associated with condom use at first sexual intercourse among young people, particular attention on ethnic differentials in condom use at first sex among young men is lacking. Understanding of factors associated with ethnic variations in condom use at first sexual initiation among men may suggest most effective ways of improving condom use at first sex within the context of prevailing cultural norms and values.

This study therefore seeks to examine ethnic variations in condom use at first sex among sexually active unmarried young men in Nigeria and factors associated with this.

Methods:

The data for the study was extracted from the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. Out of 6783 men interviewed in the male survey, the study employed information on samples of 1,618 unmarried sexually active male youths, aged 15-24 years for further analysis. The analysis was focused on youths who had sex in the two weeks preceding the survey. The main

independent variables included in the analysis were ethnicity, current age, age at first sexual debut, place of residence, wealth quintiles and employment status. The outcome variable was condom use at first sexual intercourse, measured as the proportion of sexually active male youths who used condom during their first sexual experience and it was dichotomized into “1” if condom was used and 0” if otherwise. The analysis involved three stages: univariate, bivariate (cross tabulations and chi-square test) and binary logistic regression analysis. Cross tabulations were used to examine pattern of relationships between independent factors and condom use at first sex. Two binary logistic regression models were simulated in the analysis; first was the independent effects of selected background characteristics on condom use, and second was the inclusion of ethnicity variable with other selected background characteristics in order to isolate the effect of ethnic origin on condom use at first sexual experience.

Preliminary findings:

Findings from the analysis showed that the level of condom use at first sexual intercourse was very low. About 2 out of every 10 sexually active males used condom at first sexual debut. Almost 70% of sexually active males initiated sex at age 15-17 years. This indicates a very low age at sexual initiation. Prevalence of sexual activity among unmarried youths was higher among rural youths (65.5%), secondary education completed (74.6%), and those in high wealth quintiles (57.3%). Youths from Hausa/Fulani ethnic origin reported low sexual activity (6.0%) with a mean age at first sexual debut of 16.5 years compared to youths from Yoruba (17.0 years) and Igbo (17.0 years). In the bivariate analysis, condom use at first sex (35.6%) was higher among youths in age group 21 years or more and the relationship was statistically significant ($p=0.000$). About 11% of sexually active males who had their first sexual debut before age 15 years reported ever used condom at first sex. The association between age at first sex, educational level and condom use at first sex revealed a positive relationship and it is significant. Urban youths (32.2%) more than rural youths (21.0%) reported to have used condom at first sex. Also, condom use at first sex varied significantly across Hausa/Fulani (19.0%), Igbo (39.3%) and Yoruba (31.0%) ethnic groups (figure 1). Findings from the first model of the multivariate analysis showed higher odds of reporting condom use among youths in age group 20 years or more ($OR=1.45$) compared to those age group 19 years or less. Similarly, sexually active male youths who initiated sex at age 20 years or more compared with those in age group 14 years or less were

almost thrice (OR=2.70; p=0.001) more likely to report condom use at first sex. Similarly, relative to youths with no education, those in tertiary education were more likely to report condom use at first sex (OR=14.7; p=0.0007). Generally, as level of education increases, the magnitude of the association with condom use at first sexual initiation increases. With respect to employment status, surprisingly youths who were working at the time of the survey were 15% less likely to have used condom at first sex. In the second model, after controlling for ethnicity, Yoruba were 1.60 times as likely as the Hausa/Fulani to use condom at first sexual initiation, although the outcomes for these categories were not statistically significant. Youths with tertiary education were 13.0 times as likely as those with no education to use condom at first sexual initiation.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is an evidence of differentials in condom use at first sexual debut among young men in Nigeria, with youths from Hausa/Fulani ethnic group suffering disproportionately from low use of condom at first sex. The study highlights the need for effective Information, Education and Counseling (IEC) programs for young men within the context of prevailing cultural values, in order to improve use of condom as a protective measure against HIV/AIDS and other infections.

Figure 1: Distribution of condom use at first sexual initiation by ethnicity

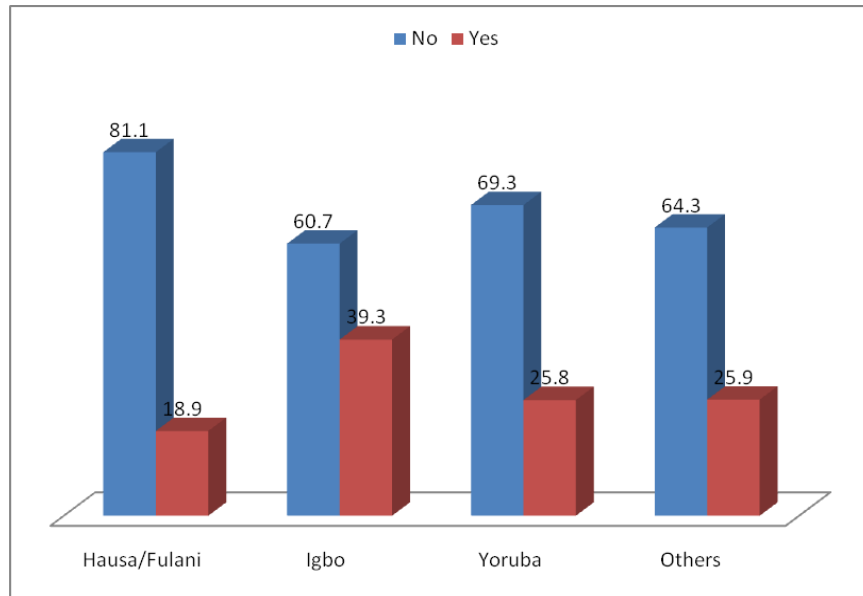


Figure 2: Distribution of condom use at first sexual initiation by age at first sexual initiation

