

Psychosocial Determinants of Premarital Sexual Abstinence Among Senior High School Adolescents

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined psychosocial factors that influence adolescents in senior high school to abstain from premarital sex in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality of Ghana using the exploratory sequential mixed method design. Participants consisted of 341 subjects drawn from the two public senior high schools in the Municipality. Ten participants were selected through purposive sampling for the qualitative study while 331 respondents were selected for the quantitative study using stratified, quota and random sampling techniques. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data of the study, while standard multiple regression was used to analyse the quantitative data. The study revealed that some more initiatives are needed in the senior high schools to assist majority of students to abstain from premarital sex. The study also found out that collectively, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, home environment, religiosity and school environment, influence adolescents' intention to abstain from premarital sex. Nonetheless, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are psychosocial factors that better predict adolescents' intention to abstain from premarital sex. School authorities in collaboration with parents, must beef up sex education and assist adolescent students to develop necessary skills and attitudes to abstain from premarital sex.*

KEYWORDS: psychosocial, adolescents, senior high school, sexual, abstinence

INTRODUCTION

With nearly half of the world's population less than 25 years old, today's adolescents and young people constitute the largest subgroup of the world's population ever known in the history of humanity (World Bank Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals, 2017). Globally, there are over 1.8 billion adolescents and young people. They constitute one-quarter of the world's population with 90% living in developing countries where they tend to make up a large proportion of the population (National Agency for the Control of AIDS, 2016). In Ghana alone, they are 22.4 percent, making about 5.6 million of Ghana's population adolescents (Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2014).

While in many respects adolescents represent the future of today's generation, their lives have come under constant scrutiny, mainly due to their involvement in risky behaviours including those bordering on sexual and reproductive health (Gyimah, Kodzi, Emina, Adjei & Ezech, 2012). According to Tulloch and Kaufman (2013), adolescent sexuality has changed over the past 50 years, with adolescents now reaching physical maturity earlier and marrying later. Considering the rapid physical maturity of most adolescents in modern times, most of these young people are faced with strong social, peer and cultural pressure to engage in premarital sex (Teferra, Erena, & Kebede, 2015).

Researchers have observed that there is prevalence of premarital sexual practices among adolescents, which leads to high incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Eze, 2014). Today, many young people are exposed to a variety of media that influences their sexual attitudes and behaviours. Television, the internet, and the print media are some of the highly influential channels which can be part of the solution and part of the problem in sexual practices among adolescents (Shurie, 2015). According to Ajidahun (2013) modern civilization and sexual revolution have affected our Ghanaian traditional cultural background to the extent that today some young people do not value virginity. Some parents even encourage their young daughters and sons to have sexual partners. In recent times, most adolescents in Ghana are known to be sexually active and such adolescents believe their intimate friends are sexually active as well. They engage in all sorts of sexual behaviours that can be attributed to the rapid social, cultural and economic changes occurring at both the local and international levels (Asampong, Osafo, Bingenheimer & Ahiadeke, 2013).

Within a risk framework, adolescent sexuality is viewed as morally wrong, inherently deviant, and socially problematic. Individuals are expected to marry, and this marital relationship is presumed to be the normative and appropriate context for sexual behaviour. This clearly excludes teenage sex, which in modern industrial societies is almost always non-marital sex (Harden, 2014). In some African societies, this may invoke varying degrees of sanctions (including stigmatisation and banishment) against the culprits. Its prevalence is probably an indication that individuals are pursuing self-enhancing values as opposed to self-transcending values, usually espoused, and cherished by conventional societies (Konty, 2005).

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) comprises a major component of the global burden of sexual ill health. Although overlooked historically, international agencies are now focusing on improving ASRH and providing programmatic funding. Further, the International Millennium Development Goals included indicators to reduce pregnancy rates among 15–19-year-olds, increase HIV knowledge and reduce the spread of HIV among young people (Morris & Rushwan, 2015). Many governments have pursued strategies to address the specific sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) placed ASRH on the global policy agenda (Mbizvo & Zaidi, 2010). In response to young people's needs for information and skills to protect their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and lives, the global community has taken series of measures to establish a policy framework for such education (Haberland & Rogow, 2015).

Abstinence, one of the key actions recommended for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and early pregnancy among young people; has received much focus in HIV and reproductive health programmes (Kabiru & Ezeh, 2007). Abstinence for unmarried youth is an important pillar for the ABC (Abstain, Be Faithful and Condom use) model of HIV prevention. The dire need to protect adolescents from negative effects on their sexual and reproductive health, including contraction of STIs, has stimulated execution of sexual abstinence programmes for prevention of STIs, particularly HIV, and other detrimental outcomes such as teenage pregnancies (Winskel, Beres, Hill, Mbakwem & Obyerodhyambo, 2011).

Statistics show that majority of the Ghanaian adolescents are in school, that is junior high school and senior high school. This makes the school a critical platform for providing adolescent and youth-friendly health services (Ghana News Agency, 2016). However, the characteristics of adolescents who choose to abstain from sex until marriage and the reasons for abstaining are not much understood. Young people may choose to abstain from pre-marital sex for a variety of grounds including individual, faith factors and socio-cultural contexts. Different individuals in the target cohort may abstain for different reasons. Such differences, if they exist, are powerful information to guide the designing and execution of appropriate and acceptable programmes to advance adolescent sexual and reproductive health. According to Shurie (2015), these factors, if better understood, can significantly contribute to informing adolescent sexual health programming including HIV, STI and early pregnancy prevention.

Research Question

What psychosocial factors influence adolescents to abstain from premarital sex?

Research Hypothesis

H₀1: Psychosocial factors do not have a significant influence on adolescents' sexual intention in Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality

RESEARCH METHOD

Design

The study was conducted using the exploratory sequential design, underpinned by the pragmatic worldview. This design consists of two distinct phases: qualitative phase followed by quantitative (Creswell, 2014). In this design, a researcher first collects and analyses the qualitative (text) data. The quantitative (numeric) data are collected and analysed second in the sequence and help explain or elaborate on the qualitative results obtained in the first phase. The quantitative phase builds on the qualitative phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in the study (Teddlie & Tashakorri, 2003; Creswell, 2014). In exploratory sequential design, the emphasis is on the qualitative study whose findings are tested in the second phase, which is the quantitative study (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Population

The population for the study was thus the students, heads and counsellors of the two public senior high schools in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality: St. Martins Senior High School (SMARTS) and Nsawam Senior High School (NSASCO). At the time the study was conducted,

Form Three (3) students were about writing WASSCE. Hence, the accessible population consisted of only Form One (1) and Form Two (2) students from the two senior high schools which was a total of 2416 students.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size is the number of observations used for calculating the estimate of a given population (Smith, 2010). The sample size is an important feature of any empirical study in which the goal is to make inferences about a population from a sample. In practice, the sample size used in a study is determined based on the expense of data collection, and the need to have sufficient statistical power. For the qualitative phase, 6 students (3 from each school), two guidance and counselling coordinators (one from each school) and the heads of both schools were selected for the study, making ten (10) participants in all. According to Gratton and Jones (2004), in qualitative research, the sample size is not determined at the beginning of the study. Instead, the researcher aims to achieve what is referred to as 'saturation'. This refers to the stage in the fieldwork where any further data collection will not provide any different information from what the researcher already has. The researchers therefore had a total sample size of ten (10) participants at the end of the qualitative study considering the point of saturation.

The sample size for the quantitative study was derived from the target population using the Krejcie and Morgan table. From the table, with a population size of 2416, assuming a population proportion of 0.5 with a desired confidence level of 95%, the sample size was 331. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the study. A combination of purposive, proportionate stratified, stratified and random sampling techniques were used in the process of selecting the sample for the study. First, purposive sampling was used to sample the schools used in the study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Oliver, 2013). The Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality has two public senior high schools which were purposely selected since most of the adolescents in the community are enrolled in these schools. Purposive sampling technique was also used to sample the headteachers, guidance and counselling coordinators and six students for the qualitative study.

For the quantitative phase, quota sampling was used to determine the number of students to be selected in each school. Proportionate stratified sampling, which is another variety of non-probability sampling, divides the population group being studied into subgroups. Then based on proportions of the subgroups final sample, researchers are given number of units from each subgroup for their research (Henry, 1990). First, the population was divided into two subgroups, which were St. Martins Senior High School and Nsawam Senior High School. Then, the proportion of each of these subgroups in the population was determined. This same proportion was used in the sampling process, as the sample for each subgroup was selected based on these proportions. This sampling technique was used to ensure an equal representation of the population for the study.

Thirdly, stratified sampling technique was used to sample respondents in the various year groups in the schools. Stratified sampling is the procedure of partitioning the population into strata and then drawing sample independently from each stratum (Singh & Mangat, 1996). The study population was categorised into two strata namely: First Year Students and Second Year Students. The Third-Year students were not included in the study because, they were in the season of writing their final exams at the time that the study was conducted. This sampling technique was used to ensure that both first- and second-year adolescents were fairly represented in the study. Lastly, simple random sampling was used to sample students from the two strata and questionnaires were administered to them.

Measures

Interview guide developed by the researchers were used to obtain in-depth information and gather opinions and perceptions on sexual abstinence of participants for the qualitative study. They were also used to obtain information from the heads of the senior high schools as well as the guidance and counselling coordinators of the schools concerning how their respective schools were assisting the students to abstain from premarital sex. The interview guides were designed to stimulate discussions with the participants who were interviewed. Moreover, open-ended questions were used to allow participants to answer from different angles. The interview guide which was used to interview the students contained nine items, while the ones used to interview the guidance and counselling coordinators and the headteachers contained seven and four items respectively.

Primary data for the quantitative study was collected using detailed structured questionnaire. Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. Often that is the only feasible way to reach several respondents large enough to allow the researchers to statistically analyse the results of the study. The questionnaire comprised of two parts: Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 was on demographic characteristics of the students which dealt with gender, age, name of school, school status, form, and religion. The Part 2 consisted of the questionnaire which was made up 31 items in all: sexual intention (four items), attitude (five items), subjective norms (six items), perceived behavioural control (four items), home environment (four items), religiosity (three items) and school environment (five items). Hence, it measured six psychosocial variables against sexual intention. The Youth Sexual Intention Questionnaire (YSI-Q) developed Muhammad, Shamsuddin, Amin, Omar & Thurasamy (2017), using the Theory of Planned Behaviour was adapted in the questionnaire.

Data Collection Techniques

For the qualitative phase, those selected for the interview were met separately for a face-to-face interaction over a span of a week. After the introductory letter was sent to the schools, the heads assisted in fixing appropriate dates and times that would be suitable for the researchers to undertake the interview. The heads and guidance and counselling coordinators of both schools were interviewed in their respective offices at times that were most suitable to them. The students were also interviewed at the counsellors' offices in both schools, and this was done in the absence of the counsellors. Students were met separately on different days. Consent

was sought from participants for the researchers to record the interviews in an audio form. Moreover, the researchers needed to take some notes during the discussions, hence, consent was sought from participants in this regard as well. Each interview session took about 30 minutes.

The quantitative study was carried out as a follow-up to the qualitative study. After explaining the purpose of the study to the students, the questionnaires were distributed to the students who consented to participate in the study. Each questionnaire took about 20 minutes for respondents to complete. To avoid information contamination, data was collected during a single day in each selected school. Data collection took place in the absence of class teachers and efforts were made to ensure maximum comfort and privacy for the participants. Students sat on their separate desks, and discussion was not allowed when completing the questionnaires, both to ensure privacy and to avoid shared responses. When they had finished, students were requested to submit their completed questionnaires as the researchers went round to collect them. All the eligible respondents selected took part in the study. The entire data collection process was about an hour in each school.

Data Analyses Procedure

Qualitative data was gathered for research question 1. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis, which is a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way. After transcription, the transcripts were reviewed and coded again by another independent person. The review process involved listening to the voice recording, coding it and comparing it with the transcripts that the researchers produced from these voice recordings. For the quantitative data, raw data collected was processed before applying different statistical methods to analyse and understand the data better. Data collected from respondents was processed using Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS).

For the closed ended questions on the questionnaire, the coding scheme was incorporated directly in the questionnaire and data was entered numerically. For the questions that required textual answers, independent codes were assigned to them, and such data was entered alphabetically. The first hypothesis (H_01) was analysed using standard multiple regression. This analysis was used because, standard multiple regression is used to explain the relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables (Simonoff & Chatterjee, 2013). Hence, standard multiple regression was used to assess the unique contributions of the various psychosocial factors to adolescent's sexual intention.

Ethical Considerations

Introductory letters were obtained from the Department of Psychology and Education at the University of Education, Winneba. These were presented to authorities of the two schools. This enabled the researchers to acquire approval from the selected schools to conduct the study. It was imperative that the consents of respondents were sought before they could participate in the study. For this reason, verbal consent was sought from the respondents. They were made aware of the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any point or decide to leave

questions which sought to infringe on their privacy unanswered. All information obtained from the participants were kept confidential. The names of respondents were also not associated with responses provided to ensure the anonymity.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents analysis of qualitative and quantitative results of the study.

Results of Qualitative Study

Psychosocial Factors that Influence Adolescents to Abstain from Premarital Sex

Positive Attitude

The interview revealed that a positive attitude towards abstinence was one psychosocial factor that can enable adolescents to abstain from premarital sex. A positive attitude towards a behaviour has to do with perceiving a positive outcome from the performance of a behaviour. Participants, who were all abstinent except one, who described himself as ‘partially abstinent’, pointed out positive outcomes of abstaining from premarital sex. One participant said:

Currently I'm not involving myself in sexual activities. If I indulge in premarital sex, I would have to use contraceptives for protection. However, the use of contraceptives comes along with its own adverse effects on the young ones who use them. There are a lot of benefits I gain from abstaining from premarital sex. Aside being able to fully concentrate on my academics, I feel good about myself and I believe it will enable me get a good marriage in the future. I believe my husband can trust me better and I will also earn respect from others. (form 2 girl, 17 years).

Positive Subjective Norm

Another relevant finding from the interview was positive subjective norms. This resulted from the belief that people of importance to these adolescents believe that adolescents must abstain from premarital sex. From the interview, these people of importance included peers, parents and the society at large. Beliefs of peers seemed to account for a positive subjective norm of almost all participants. Participants stressed on the influential role their peers play in their lives. Owing to this fact, most participants were selective in their choice of friends. One participant asserted:

The fact that my friends are abstinent and seem not to support indulging in premarital sex has really been helping me. Actually, we try to advice each other against indulging in premarital sex. We also encourage each other from time to time, since we all want to be responsible adults in the future. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

One interviewee however mentioned that not all her friends were in support of abstinence from premarital sex. She said:

Some of my friends don't really help me because most of them are indulging in sex and they tell me it's nice and that they protect themselves so it's no big deal. But for me, I just listen to them but I'm not tempted to join them. (form 1 girl, 15 years).

Beliefs of parents was another influential factor on adolescents' positive subjective norm. Participants acknowledged the fact that generally, their parents believe that people their age must not indulge in any form of sexual relations. One participant pointed out:

When I entered my teenage years, my mum began talking to me concerning issues about premarital sex, and she has not stopped doing so. Anytime I go home from school, she still advises me to abstain from sex until I marry. Her words ring in my mind a lot and serve as a check on me since I wouldn't want to disappoint her. (form 2 girl, 18 years)

However, most participants lamented about the fact that their parents barely talked to them about sexual issues in detail. One participant stated:

My parents don't often talk about sex related issues with me unless an issue comes up. For instance, it was until my big brother got a girlfriend that they spoke to him about sex-related issues and advised him to abstain from sex until marriage. (form 2 girl, 17 years)

One participant said he only gets to know his parents' stand concerning adolescents and premarital sex through the comments they passed and occasional pieces of advice they gave. He had this to say:

Occasionally, my parents advice me not to indulge in premarital sex. Moreover, the way they comment about adolescents who are sexually active makes me know how they'll treat me should I start such acts. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

Most of them also added that it's mostly their mothers who talked about such issues with them. One participant said:

Between my mum and dad, I'm closer to my mum and she is the one that usually talks to me and advices me to stay away from sex until I marry in the future. Anytime I have challenges in this area, I'm able to confide in her. For daddy, he's usually busy so he barely talks to me about such issues. (form 2 boy, 16 years)

The beliefs of society was yet another factor that influenced adolescents' subjective norm. Most participants talked about the fact that generally, our Ghanaian society frowns on adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex and this was explained in the remark below:

I will say that our society is not in favour of adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex. Just look at how teenage girls who end up pregnant are treated in the society. And any adolescent who is considered as indulging in such acts is regarded as insolent and

immoral and parents even advice their children to stay away from such people. (form 1 boy, 16 years)

One participant added that, that our society still cherishes virginity. She explained with an incidence:

I was recently at an outdoor ceremony and before the ceremony ended, the family of the man presented a gift to the new mother due to the fact that their son confirmed that he married her a virgin. The way they congratulated her encouraged me and made me know that our society is still interested in virginity. (form 2 girl, 17 years)

High Perceived Behavioural Control

Another psychosocial factor that the interview confirmed was a high perceived behavioural control on the part of abstinent participants; that is participant's perception of the ease of abstaining from premarital sex. Abstinent participants acknowledged the fact that in general, it was quite challenging remaining abstinent as an adolescent currently. They however pointed out that despite this fact, abstinence from premarital sex was an easy behaviour to imbibe if one is motivated and determined. One participant said:

For now, I would say that it is easy for me to abstain from premarital sex due to how determined I am to excel to make my mother happy. I think that motivation outweighs any pressure to indulge in sex. (form 2 girl, 18 years)

Another participant also remarked:

Personally, since I decided to abstain from premarital sex, it has been easy for me. I think I'm motivated by the fact that I am living right and also pleasing God with my lifestyle. (form 2 boy, 16 years)

Home Environment

As revealed through the interview, some factors in the home environment made it another psychosocial factor that influences adolescents' abstinence from premarital sex. Parenting style turned out to be one of such factors in the home environment. Most abstinent participants described their parents as being strict or as disciplinarians as one of them expressed:

My parents are quite strict and would not permit you to go out at any time you desire or for you to walk with anyone they do not know. (form 2 girl, 17 years)

One participant said his parents were generally lenient but were intolerant of misconducts and so he always tried to be of the best behaviour. He recalled:

Generally my parents are lenient, but can be very strict in certain circumstances. I remember my senior sister had a boyfriend while in SHS and my father went to give a

stern warning to the guy. And from then, my sister did not dare to enter into another relationship. Now, she's nicely married. So I think to some extent, my father's occasional strict nature helps us. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

For the one who said he was partially abstinent however, he described his parents as lenient:

My parents are not strict. They are quite lenient on us and do not boss us around. (form 1 boy, 16 years)

Socio-economic status of the family was another influential factor in the home environment on adolescents' abstinence from premarital sex. On the whole all abstinent participants described their families as being able to provide their basic necessities. One girl claimed:

My dad does send us money from abroad from time to time, so we're okay. However, my mum does not buy just anything we ask for, but what we need. (form 1 girl, 15 years)

Another also said:

I'll say my parents are middle income earners. I do get all my basic necessities, but not everything I want. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

Several participants also pointed to the fact that home location also played a role in the home environment in assisting them to abstain. Most participants described their homes as located in serene environments where there was not much peer pressure from others to copy their lifestyle as was revealed in one participants account:

We live at a new site, so I barely get to interact with people in my area. If I want to meet my friends, I have to go all the way to town. (form 2 girl, 17 years)

One participant however mentioned that he lived in an area where the houses were situated in close range to each other. He said due to this, one could easily copy the lifestyle of the others without realizing, as he explained further:

I live in a community where the houses are built close to each other. And there are a lot of young people in my community who are indulging in premarital sex and if you do not take care, you'll join them. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

Religiosity

Personal religious life of adolescents happened to be one factor that was characteristic of almost all abstinent participants. One boy made this comment:

Currently, I am a very committed Christian and even an executive of Scripture Union here in school. Being an executive and being serious with my Christian values, I cannot afford to mess up at all. (form 2 boy, 16 years)

Religious beliefs and teachings were also pointed out by participants to also play a role in they living sexually abstinent lives. Participants opened up about the fact that the teachings of their respective religions basically bordered on abstinence. A Muslim participant said this:

I am a Muslim, and we believe that young ones are supposed to abstain from sex until marriage. We are taught that anyone who waits until marriage to have sex receives special blessings from Allah. (form 1 boy, 16 years)

A Christian participant also remarked:

At church, we are always advised to abstain from premarital sex, as we believe that God ordained it for married people only. We are told that premarital sex is an immoral act and is displeasing to God. Moreover, our teachers and pastors cite examples of young people in the Bible who lived chaste lives and we're told to follow their example. An example is Joseph. (form 2 boy, 16 years)

Interview narratives also revealed that rewards and punishments connected to the sexual behaviour of young ones in their places of worship was another influential factor under the theme 'religiosity'. And according to them, the rewards served as strong motivations in living chaste. One participant narrated:

Usually the week before a lady marries in my church, the church confirms from a medical report if she is pregnant. If she is not, a day is set aside prior to the wedding day and all the older women in the church meet with the younger women and gifts are presented to the lady. This is done to provide an opportunity for the older women to advice the younger ones and to also encourage the other young women to keep themselves pure until marriage. I would want the same thing to be done for me so I would want to abstain from premarital sex. (form 2 girl, 18 years)

According to interviewees, the punishments served as deterrents in indulging in sexual activities before marriage. In relation to this, one girl said:

When a young girl gets pregnant or someone is caught in a sexual act, he or she is made to sit at the back during church services and will not be made to give offering at church for some time, as it is considered unclean to God. (form 1 girl, 15 years)

One participant however said that at his place of worship, culprits are not punished but that some do withdraw from the others because they feel guilty. He said:

Since we believe that children are gifts from God, we do not cast away those who get pregnant before marriage. However, due to our teachings, the guilt they feel makes them stay away from our gatherings. (form 1 boy, 16 years)

School Environment

In the school environment, the interview revealed that discipline was one key factor that helped adolescents to abstain from premarital sex. This was the case for participants who described the discipline in their school as good. One participant said:

For discipline, I think the school authorities and teachers are doing their best. Anytime they get to hear of students indulging in immoral activities, including premarital sexual activities, the culprits are not spared at all. So I think this deters most of us from indulging in such practices. (form 1 boy, 15 years)

Some participants however described the discipline in their school towards premarital sex as not so good, as one said:

Since I came to the school, I have never witnessed a student or a group of students being punished for indulging in premarital sex or its related acts. So personally, I think though there is an appreciable level of discipline in the school, it is not really enforced in terms of students' indulgence in premarital sex. However, students do engage in such acts on the school premises after school in secluded places, but such people are not really looked out for or punished. Recently, some students were punished for drug abuse, but such is not heard for premarital sex indulgence. (form 2 girl, 17 years)

Some also described the discipline in their school as seasonal. By seasonal, they meant disciplining of students was taken very serious at some points but relaxed at other times. One participant pointed out:

I feel the discipline in the school is seasonal. There are times our teachers get very strict on us, but other times too, they relax and leave the prefects to ensure discipline alone, which is mostly not helpful. (form 1 girl, 15 years)

Some participants talked about the need for strict discipline in their schools since some were day students, and one related to this point with this comment:

This school is both day and boarding. Sometimes, some boarders disguise themselves as day students and go to the town to engage in all manner of immoral activities. The day students are also quite difficult to control after school. So I think there is the need for more discipline. (form 2 boy, 16 years)

One participant also talked about the need for strict discipline in her school due to the high level of peer pressure in the school, especially because it's a mixed school. She said:

This school is a mixed school and so the peer pressure here to indulge in sex is also high. In my view, about seventy-five percent of the students in this school are into 'boyfriend-girlfriend' relations and quite a number of them are indulging in sexual affairs. I think the school authorities must do something about this by disciplining all

such students to help lower the peer pressure. It's really getting out of hand. (form 2 girl, 18 years)

The above quotes revealed that some psychosocial factors such as attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, home environment, religiosity and school environment do influence adolescents to abstain from premarital sex. It was evident from the interview that the existence of these factors in the lives of adolescents could assist them to abstain from premarital sex.

Results of Quantitative Study

H₀₁: Psychosocial factors do not have a significant influence on adolescents' sexual Intention at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality.

Table 1: Combined Effect and Contribution of Psychosocial Factors to Adolescents' Sexual Intention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	384.467	6	64.078	47.664	.000			
Residual	434.233	323	1.344			.685	.470	.460
Total	818.699	329						

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	-.008	.064		-.118	.906			
Attitude	.670	.052	.602	12.801	.000	.650	.553	.492
Subjective Norms	.117	.048	.114	2.451	.015	.418	.169	.127
Perceived Behavioural Control	.103	.042	.103	2.465	.014	.132	.350	.237
Home Environment	.041	.056	.031	.729	.467	.110	.114	.085
Religiosity	-.038	.058	-.027	-.651	.515	-.075	-.049	-.037
School Environment	-.020	.050	-.017	-.404	.687	-.061	-.041	-.030

Note: (Dependent Variable: Adolescent Sexual Intention)

It can be seen from Table 1 that the independent variables: attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, home environment, religiosity and school environment collectively have a significant influence on adolescents' sexual intention at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality. ($F(6, 323) = 47.66, p < 0.05$). Psychosocial factors that were stipulated for the study, explains 47% of the variance that occurs in adolescent sexual intention at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality ($R^2 = 0.47$). As indicated on Table 6, attitude ($\beta = .670, p = 0.000$), subjective norms ($\beta = .117,$

$p=0.015$) and perceived behavioural control ($\beta=.103$, $p=.014$) have a significant influence on the sexual intention of adolescents at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality. Hence, of the six psychosocial factors that were explored, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are better predictors of adolescents' sexual intention. On the other hand, home environment ($\beta=.041$, $p=0.467$), religiosity ($\beta= -.038$, $p=.515$) and school environment ($\beta= -.020$, $p=0.687$) have no significant influence on adolescent sexual intention at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality.

In answering the research hypothesis, it can be said that though psychosocial factors such as home environment, religiosity and school environment do not significantly influence sexual intention of adolescents at Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control of adolescents in Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality significantly influence their sexual intentions.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Adolescents in this study acknowledged in the process of the interview that abstaining from premarital sex as adolescents was not too easy currently. Nonetheless for the fact that some adolescents are still abstinent, getting to know factors that were supporting them to abstain was one of the focal points of this study. Psychosocial factors that were reviewed through the interview included attitude, subjective norms of significant others, perceived behavioural control, home environment, religiosity and school environment as these factors were seen to influence adolescents' sexual behaviour from the review of literature.

Concerning attitude towards abstinence, majority of abstinent adolescents in this study had a positive attitude towards abstinence from premarital sex as they talked about its outcome being a favourable one as opposed to the outcome of sexual indulgence. Hence, an adolescent who has a positive attitude towards abstinence is most likely to abstain, just as one who has a positive attitude toward sexual indulgence is likely to be sexually active. Oladepo and Fayemi (2011) reported similar findings in their study conducted in Nigeria. They stated that positive attitude towards abstinence as one of the major predictors of adolescents' sexual abstinence. This points to the fact that, to help adolescents in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality to continue to abstain from premarital sex, they must be assisted to develop a positive attitude towards abstinence from premarital sex. Adolescents will develop a positive attitude towards abstinence from premarital sex if they perceive that the outcomes of such behaviour are positive. Adolescents in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality must thus be opened to the likely positive results of abstaining from premarital sex as it will help them to develop a positive attitude towards abstinence.

Another factor that seemed to be significant in the lives of abstinent adolescents in this study was the subjective norms of significant others in the lives of adolescents. This presupposes that if the significant others in the lives of adolescents' regard abstinence from premarital sex to be positive and the adolescent is motivated to meet the expectations of relevant others, he or she is most likely to abstain, and the opposite is also true. Of the significant others that were analysed, it was realized from the interview that the normative beliefs of the adolescents' peers

had more influence on them than the others. Though they talked about the fact that both their parents and society were in support of abstinence and that had some level of influence on them, they all spoke extensively about the fact that bad company could corrupt them. For this reason, almost all abstinent adolescents talked about being selective of the friends they walked with. Bingenheimer, Asante and Ahiadeke (2015) conducted a study in Southeastern Ghana and their data indicated that teenagers in these Ghanaian towns generally perceived that their friends disapproved of adolescents and premarital sexual activity, and that engaging in such behaviour resulted in a loss of respect. Hence, teenagers in those towns were not under pressure to indulge in premarital sex. The opposite was true in Peçi's (2017) study which found out that teens were more likely to have sex if they believed their friends have more positive attitudes toward childbearing, have permissive values about sex, or are having sex.

Nonetheless, from the interview, it seemed not all abstinent adolescents were susceptible to peer influence as one person talked about the fact that her friends were indulging in sexual activities, but they had not succeeded in influencing her. In North Carolina, Widman, Choukas-Bradley, Helms and Prinstein (2016) confirmed this in their report that not all youth are equally susceptible to peer influence. They however concluded that boys evidence greater susceptibility to social pressure regarding sexual behaviour than girls.

Participants in this study lamented over the issue of their parents not openly and frequently talking to them about sexual issues. This was like a study conducted in Ghana by Aperkor (2016) which reported that parents communicated more with adolescents on general issues but less on their sexual reproductive health (SRH). According to the findings, Ghanaian parents lacked fine details of SRH issues to equip the adolescents in making the right decisions and choices. Adolescents also pointed out that even if there was any discussion at all, it was mostly their mothers that they could talk to. In a study conducted in Ethiopia, Dessie, Berhane and Worku (2015) reported that 51.92% of the adolescents communicated with their mothers and 38.74% with their fathers at a frequency of sometimes to always. This places a call to fathers to get closer to their children so their children can open to them concerning issues that have to do with their sexuality. Societal norms also tend to have an appreciable level of influence on abstinent adolescents. Participants talked about how society in general frowns on adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex and how pregnant girls are treated. Most of the girls expressed the fear of being shunned in society should they get pregnant; and that was a deterrent to them. In a study by Rijdsdijk et al., (2012), perceived societal norms were regarded as one of the predictors of adolescents' intentions to delay sexual intercourse in Uganda.

In this study, adolescents perceived behavioural control was confirmed by the adolescents to be one of the factors that influence adolescents to abstain from premarital sex. Hence, an adolescent in the municipality who perceived abstinence from premarital sex to be easy was likely to abstain from premarital sex but was likely not to abstain if he or she regards abstinence from premarital sex to be difficult. This is related to Albert Bandura's concept of 'self-efficacy' in some studies. Although adolescents acknowledged the fact that extra effort was needed to remain abstinent in present day, abstinent adolescents expressed their determination and ability to control themselves till marriage. Oladepo and Fayemi (2011) reported similar results in their study conducted in Nigeria. After analysing factors restraining or driving the adoption of sexual

abstinence using logistic regression, they realized that perceived self-efficacy to refuse sex was significantly associated with sexual abstinence ($p < 0.05$). Rijsdijk et al. (2012) also reported perceived behavioural control as one of the predictors of adolescents' delay of sexual intercourse in Uganda.

The findings of this study also revealed that the social environment of adolescents also had some level of influence on adolescents' abstinence from premarital sex. This agreed with Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory which explains personality in terms of how a person thinks about and responds to one's social environment. In the social environment, home environment, religious beliefs, and activities as well as school environment were examined. In the home environment it was realized that the parenting style had a greater level of influence on the sexual behaviour of adolescents than the other factors in the home environment. The fact that parents are primary socializing agents for their children (Ayalew, Mengistie, & Semahegn, 2014) makes this possible. Most abstinent adolescents described their parents as strict and as disciplinarians as well. They feared the treatment their parents would give to them should they indulge in premarital sex. The location of the home and the socioeconomic status of the family did not seem to have a significant influence on adolescents' intention to abstain from premarital sex. This places a greater onus on parents as the main force of influence in the home on their adolescents' sexuality. Idoko, Muyiwa and Agoha (2015) found out that in Nigeria, parental strictness significantly increases adolescents' odds of engaging in premarital sex. Moreover, Oladipupo-Okorie (2014) perceived parents' characteristics as influencing premarital sex among secondary school students in Ojo Local Government Area in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Religiosity happened to also be a significant influential factor in the lives of abstinent adolescents. All abstinent adolescents seemed to be serious with their personal religious lives and held on to their religious beliefs. Most of them were Christians and few were Muslims. According to participants, both religions preached abstinence till marriage. In Texas, Longest and Uecker (2017) observed a clear association between individual religiosity in adolescence and sexual behaviours in young adulthood. Their finding suggested that this relationship appeared to be driven mainly by the perceived importance of religion during adolescence. However, other aspects of individual religiosity, such as attendance at services or involvement in religious activities, however, did not have a significant or substantial relationship with most of the sexual behaviours tested. Idoko, Muyiwa and Agoha (2015) pointed out in their study that religious attendance elevated the chances of adolescents' odds of engaging in premarital sex as the religious settings provides an opportunity for adolescent males to meet their potential partners. This could be attributed to the fact that some adolescents only attend services without having personal religious lives. Hence for religious bodies to achieve their aim of talking adolescents out of premarital sex, they must focus on helping them build on their personal religious lives.

The last influential factor that was reviewed was school environment. Of all the elements in the school environment, it was discipline that seemed to have a greatest influence on adolescents' abstinence from premarital sex. Adolescents made it clear that where the discipline in the school is good, especially towards premarital sex indulgence, it serves as a

deterrent to the other students. In Nigeria, Nwakpa (2015) pointed out in his study that school principals should go further and constitute special disciplinary committees on premarital sex to bring students and staff to discipline and to ensure punishment is meted out to offenders.

Respondents in this study went on to talk about the fact that there is some level of peer pressure in their schools, especially since the schools are mixed schools. According to them, a good number of their peers were engaging in love relationships, which puts some pressure on those with the intention to abstain to feel left out. Samad, Hairi and Ismail (2016), had similar findings in their study in Malaysia and reported that both males and females who were susceptible to peer pressure were at increased risk of engaging in sexual intercourse. According to their study, influence from peers may alter the adolescents' perception that they will be more respected and achieve higher status if they engage in sex. Similarly, Nagamatsu, Yamawaki, Sato, Nakagawa and Saito (2013) also cited in their study in Japan that a significant factor leading to sex among adolescents is lack of confidence to resist peer pressure. This makes peer pressure an issue that needs to be given attention by school authorities if they would want to effectively assist their students to abstain from premarital sex.

Further, the results of this study revealed that there were some loopholes in the structure of the schools as they are being both day and boarding or hostels as in the case of Nsawam Senior High School. One participant revealed that it was quite difficult controlling day students after school. Moreover, some of the boarders sometimes disguised themselves as day students so they could go out of the school to do their own things. This could be related to what Teferra, Erena and Kebede (2015) found out in their study conducted in Ethiopia. They reported in their findings that, the odds of having premarital sexual intercourse among students living out of campus were more likely compared to those living in the campus or dormitory. They said this might be due to high level of personal freedom and social interactions, which offers an opportunity for high level of sexual networking among those living outside campus. Ihaji and Nase (2014) also reported that more day students in Nigeria were indulging in premarital sex than boarding students. According to the results, 343-day students were sexually active as compared to 145 boarding students. This points to the fact that discipline must be stepped up in handling adolescents in the schools, especially because of the issue of day and boarding and because they are mixed schools.

The quantitative results revealed that all the above psychosocial factors collectively influence adolescents' sexual intention, though home environment, religiosity and school environment do not individually influence adolescents' sexual intention significantly. Nonetheless, they could all be taken into consideration in designing programmes and formulating policies to aid adolescents to abstain from premarital sex as some studies have proven that each of these factors do influence adolescents' abstinence from premarital sex.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex has become not just a national canker, but a global one as well (Morris & Rushwan, 2015). Various interventions have been put in

place and abstinence is one of the key actions recommended for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and early pregnancy among young people (Kabiru & Ezech, 2007).

The findings of this study point to the fact that adolescents understand what it means to abstain from premarital sex, and that they have a positive perception about abstinence from premarital sex. Moreover, adolescents are willing to abstain from premarital sex if they get access to the right information about how to abstain and are told more about the benefits of abstinence. Also, helping adolescents to develop a positive attitude, positive subjective norm, and high behavioural control as regards abstinence, can positively influence their ability to abstain from premarital sex. These findings would help Ghanaian parents, school authorities and religious leaders, to tackle the issue of adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex from a credible perspective, which is likely to yield positive results.

Also, pointing out the fact that senior high schools have a role to play in assisting adolescents to abstain from premarital sex, school authorities would take a more critical look at this issue and seek more ways to assist their students. Further, in designing interventions to curb the prevalence of adolescents' indulgence in premarital sex, special interventions and tailor-made programmes could be designed for adolescent boys since according to the study, they are more likely to desire to indulge in premarital sex than the girls. The study has improved the understanding of psychosocial factors that could influence adolescents' intention to abstain from premarital sex in Ghana. Thus, this contributes to the evidence that is essential to be able to design theory and evidence-based sexuality education programmes. This study demonstrates that sex education in Ghana should consider adolescents' perceptions about sexual abstinence, and then their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control as regards abstinence.

Recommendations

1. Stakeholders, that is school authorities, teachers, parents and religious leaders must give adolescents more reasons to hold abstinence from premarital sex in high esteem, as this could motivate more adolescents to desire to live abstinent lives.
2. Programmes that are designed by policy makers to assist adolescents to abstain from premarital sex must focus on helping them to develop a positive attitude, positive subjective norm and high perceived behavioural control towards abstinence from premarital sex. This can be done by opening them up to the numerous beneficial outcomes that result from abstaining from premarital sex as opposed to the effects of indulging in premarital sex. They must also be encouraged to develop confidence in the fact that they can abstain from premarital sex until marriage.
3. The fact that adolescents lamented on not being able to communicate with their parents about sex issues means that there is more work for parents to do. Parents, especially fathers, need to get closer to their adolescent children to educate them about issues bothering on sex, so that their friends cannot influence them much. As it is said, "charity begins at home".
2. Authorities of senior high schools must come up with more initiatives to help majority of students to abstain from premarital sex. This includes making school guidance and counselling services more attractive to the students. This could be done by employing

the services of a professional counsellor and decorating the counselling centre to make its environment warm and welcoming. Moreover, abstinence clubs could also be formed with the aim of helping members to remain abstinent.

3. Sex education must not be done just occasionally. Counsellors must find innovative ways to regularly educate adolescents on issues concerning their sexuality, making them aware of the consequences of their choices.

Limitation

The results of the study must be interpreted within the following limitations: There was some reluctance on the part of some students to take part in the study as some viewed their sexual lives as private. This, however, did not affect either the sample size or the data collection process. Also, answers to the questions in the questionnaire might contain some biases which may influence the results of the study, since what people say is not always the true picture of what they do or practice.

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