

ORIGINAL PAPER**The Sexual Behaviour of Secondary School Adolescent Students in Tanzania: Patterns and Trends****Madan Mohan Laddunuri, PhD**

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Abstract

Introduction: A surge of sexual interest occurs around puberty and continues through adolescence. Heightened adolescent sexuality may be caused by a number of factors, including bodily changes, sexual hormones, social forces, and rehearsal for adult gender roles. The main objective of the present study is to understand the patterns and trends of adolescent students' sexual behaviour in Tanzania.

Methodology: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted and 550 secondary school students (13 to 19 years old) were recruited by using a multistage random sampling technique from Tanzania's secondary schools. The data collection tool was a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed by using SPSS software package version 16.

Results: More than one third (40.2%) of the participant students had experienced intercourse with mean age 17.2 ± 1.8 years and one sixth (17.6%) of the participants had multiple sexual partners. The mean age for hugging, kissing and breast fondling was significantly younger when compared to the sexual intercourse. Most (78.5%) of the students had used contraceptives but the frequency of contraception was less than half (48.6%) "always". The main reasons beyond sexual debut were "just for fun" (37%) and "peer pressure" (27.6%). A male student was 1.46 times more likely to have had intercourse than a female. Parental education was the most significant association with sexual debut of adolescents and the odds ratio indicates that sexual intercourse among students is decreasing with the increasing of parental education.

Conclusion: A relatively high sexual intercourse has been recorded and risky sexual behaviour also existed among the respondents. Hence, there is a need to promote specific intervention programmes built upon those factors which are associated with an increased likelihood for early sexual debut and risky sexual behaviour.

Keywords: adolescence; contraception; sexual behaviour; sexual debut; Tanzania