Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.4 No.3 September, 2021; p.g. 195 – 201; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

THE EFFECTS OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN IGALA LAND

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ABSTRACT

The name Igala refers to both the people (Abo Igala) and the language (Ichi Igala). Igala people inhabit between latitude 6^0 and 8^0 and longitude 6^0 and 7^0. They occupy a total land area of about 13,665 square kilometers. Premarital sex is voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons. This paper was aimed at addressing possible ways of curbing premarital sex among adolescents in Igala land. The method used in this study is historical phenomenology. Premarital sex can lead to pregnancy, abortion, damage of uterus, drop out of school and it can also affect future marriages. The paper identified family and peer influence, pornography, drug abuse, alcoholism, and poverty as the factors that induce premarital sex. The paper recommended that family should discuss the issue of sex and drug in the open with utmost honesty, church leaders should emphasize the danger of premarital sex from the pulpit, moral education should be made compulsory in schools and colleges while parents should have an open conversation with their children to help them develop more critical attitude towards pornography.

Keywords: Effects, Premarital Sex, Adolescent, Igala.

Introduction

The name Igala refers to both the people (*Abo Igala*) and the language (*Ichi Igala*). The Attah Igala is the Royal Father of all Igala. The name Igala was given to the people and their language as a result of the invasion of the land by the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. The patriarchal leader of the people was called Ogala and the invaders refer to the people as Ogala people, though due to foreign influences, the Ogala people took up the name Igala people. Igala people inhabit between latitude 6^0 and 8^0 and longitude 6^0 and 7^0. They occupy a total land area of about 13,665 square kilometers Okwoli in (Adama, 2013). The 2006 Federal Government census puts population of Igala people at 1.6 million. Dialectical differences are noticeable in Igala language, yet the people are not divided. We have the Idah dialect, central dialect, the Dekina dialect with Bassa-Igbira influence, the Ankpa dialect with Idoma influence and the trans-Niger Anambra dialect (in Odolu and Ibaji) with Igbo influence. The linguistic categorization puts the Igala and Yoruba languages in the same group of kwa- sub – group of the Niger- Congo family.

Sexual immorality is not a new practice in Nigeria. Adolescent are vulnerable population to engage in pre-marital sex. The National Institute for Health (2005) explained that adolescence

is a period of life characterized dramatic changes in biological process, as well as physical and social contexts. United Nations, Information on Reproduction Health in Aneke (2015) shows that many Nigerian adolescents are known to start involvement in active sex at the early age of thirteen years. In the same vein Esien (1988) found that the age of sexual experience and involvement of young people is fifteen years.

In some societies, especially among Igala, elders and parents found it difficult to discuss sex with youths. In some communities it is a taboo to talk or discuss sex with teenagers no matter the intention. This makes it unsafe because, most youths have no awareness on how to prevent and how to get guidance services on reproductive anatomy, physiology, sexually transmitted infection (S.T.I.) and human immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Wondmnew, Taye and Kassawurar, 2019). Other negative effects of pre-marital sex among adolescents include pregnancy, abortion, early marriage, and school dropout. It will also affect their future marriages. It becomes necessary that more attention be given to this issue. This paper, therefore, examines causes and effects of pre-marital sex on the society with the aim of addressing the causes and possible ways of curbing pre-marital sex among adolescents.

The paper adopted historical phenomenological method. The research made use of the secondary source of obtaining pieces of information. The data were derived from existing published works. These include textbooks, journals and newspapers and the unpublished works - seminars papers, project, internet and parochial. The information gathered was presented using descriptive method for easy comprehension.

The Concept of Pre-Marital Sex and Adolescents

Premarital sex is a sexual activity practiced by persons who are unmarried. It is voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons. According to Aneke (2015) it can refer to more than one occasion of sexual activity or more than one sex partner. Premarital sex may take place in a number of situations, such as casual sex, for example with at least one participant seeking to experience sex. It may also take place between a couple living together in a long term relationship without marriage or a betrothed couple engaging in sexual activities before their anticipated marriage and many other situations. It is a sex before marriage, be it between a boy and a girl, a fiancé and a fiancée as long as it is between singles or between a single person and a married person, the single person is indulging in premarital sex.

Adolescent according to the National Institute for Health (2005) is a period of life characterized by dramatic changes in biological processes, as well as physical and social contexts. The age range of adolescence as transversely the period between 12-17 years of age. According to Sowele (2014) the adolescent stage are youths between the age of 10 and 24 years. To Okpanachi (1991) the period of adolescents is the period immediately after later childhood 11 years and the period before adulthood – 20 years. Adolescent period is the period of independence, changing relationship with peers and adults, sexual adjustment, educational and vocational preparation.

The Origin of the Igala

According to Ogba (2007) there are three main opinions about the origin of the Igala. These are:

- The Jukun/Kwararafa confederacy

- Migration from the upper Niger/Benue confluence and from the middle East and the opinion on
- The Benin/Yoruba background

The Igalas are said to originate from Jukun Kwararafa confederacy. This source ascribes the real origin of the Igalas to the Jukun/Kwararafa confederacy that flourished from about the early 17th century. The confederacy, according to (Ogba, 2007) consisted of several ethnic groups that united and fought external wars with Kano in 1953 and Bornu in 1671 respectively. These ethnic groups were the Idoma, the Jukun, the Igala and some smaller ethnic groups around Nassarawa and Keffi areas.

The Igala, according to this source were the ruling group in Wukari, but due to certain dynastic quarrels historical records had it that Abutu Eje was denied ascendency to the Aku throne, and this made him declare a separate independence from Jukun/Kwararafa confederacy and subsequently moved his soldiers and supporters in search of a new territory. The movement took them to Idah where the great Igala kingdom was founded.

The second school of thought believes that the Igala migrated from the Middle East. One of the past *Atah* of Igala (Late Alhaji Aliyu Obaje) in Etuh (2001) stated that "we are from South Yemen". It is believed that the Igalas came from Yemen, by passing through Ethiopia where there is an ethnic group called Gala then through Mali to Jukun land where they stayed briefly. As Jukuns demanded royalties from them for staying in their land, they refused and continue on their journey which took them to Idah.

In line with the history of the origin of the Igala monarchy which oral tradition traces to Jukunland, a delegation of seven from the royal court of the Aku Uka Wukari (Taraba State), representing the Jukun Kingdom will join Ata-to-be during his coronation which often commences from Ugwolawo, in procession, moved closely, directly surrounding and protecting him and all through the nooks and crannies of the Idah town. Through this, the Jukuns proved that they owned the Ata before the Igala people did (Miachi, 2013).

The third school of thought holds that the Igala originated from the same source with the Yoruba and that the Igala separated from the Yoruba about 200 years ago and came to settle in their present abode in 13th and 14th centuries. Bishop Ajayi Crowther in his visit to Idah in 1856 recorded tails of a foreign prince who migrated to Idah at an unknown date (www.igala history.com in Adama, 2014). A Yoruba Oba travelled to Rabba the old Nupe capital on the Niger and beseeched the Nupe king to provide him with a suitable habitat. He was taken to Idah where the *Akpoto*, the owner of the land allowed him to stay.

Those who ascribe to the above source believe that over three quarters of Igala vocabulary are in Yoruba language. The Igala folklore such as poetry, songs and dances resemble those of the Yoruba. The Benin origin of the Atta's brass pictorial masks, which still today form part of Atta's regalia (*Eju b'eju ailo*- the frightening countenance), The wearing of beads on wrist as a symbol of chieftaincy and the keeping in secret for one to three months after the death of a king, point to Yoruba culture and consequent origin.

Igala culture and premarital sex

Igala culture has teaching that relates to sexual ethics, and it prohibits premarital sex. In Igala culture, sex is to be done after marriage and when it is done before marriage then the persons involved are considered to be deviant. Igala girls are highly valued by their people. This is because they observe chastity before marriage as a moral value. Observation of chaste life before marriage is highly treasured and appreciated by Igalas.

Causes of Premarital Sex among Igalas

There is no behaviour without reason. The involvement of adolescents in sexual activities has been attributed to or influenced by the following factors.

Family Influence: family institution has the responsibility of moral upbringing of the children. The family determines to a great extent the character formation of the children. If the parents are morally deficient, they will certainly be unable to bring up morally sound youths. Bocar (2016) agrees that "the values in the family that the children observed are carried by them. Child caring involves love, guidance, acceptance and affection, and where these are lacking and they get them from outside especially from their peers or opposite sex, such one will exact more influence over them (Ekwunife, 2000). Living with single parents in some cases results to a "distorted family relationships and family dysfunction". "Poor communication and a less positive family atmosphere" are found by some studies to be ground for the adolescents to engage premarital sex (Bocar, 2016). Poverty level of parents may make it difficult for parents to provide basic necessities for their children and so, serves as leeway for them to engage in early sexual behaviour. In tandem with the above, Neijanenosreal, (2011) in Bocar, (2016) observe that "the young woman in the family who seeks to have good future but belongs to a poor family turn to engage in a relationship with older men to pay their school fees and provide their other needs" (p. np).

Peer influence is another cause of premarital sex. Peers are presumed to exert major social influence on adolescent social behaviour. Peers influence may operate at several levels. Some sex peers are a major source of information about sex and peers provide settings, for instance, social occasions and parties where sex can occur. In this way, same-sex friends may influence the perceived acceptability of sexual behaviour and sexually experienced friends may serve as role models (Abah, 2013). Wong et al (2012) observe that among adolescents one of the significant factors that is associated with sexual intercourse is lack of confidence to resist peer pressure to engage in sex, and also the perception that one half and more of their friends have already engaged in premarital sex.

Viewing phonograph films/videos is one of the reasons why adolescents engage in premarital sex. Pornography is capable of arousing sexual interest. It can also make someone to be sexually abusing people. Pornography can lure people with erotic pleasure. To this effect, Chibuko (1999) stated that watching pornographic films can arouse or push people to even go extra mile in committing evil more than he or she thought.

Drug abuse and alcoholism is significantly associated with premarital sex. Agha (2003) defines drug as chemical substance used to deliberately alter mood, perception or consciousness. Drug abuse according to Diakoke (2007) "Is the use of illicit drugs or the use of prescription drugs or over the counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are indicated or

in a manner or in quantities other than directed" (p. 149). Melgosa (2000) stated that "when drugs and substances are abused it depresses judgment and makes an addict to do thing he/she would not ordinarily do if he/she were not under the influence of drugs" (p. 125). In line with the above, Alen (2003) assert that "drugs could induce sexual desire and alcohol use have been identified as factors which may encourage unintended sexual activities. From the above, it is obvious that under the influence of drugs and alcohol one can go into premarital sex intentionally or been lured into it.

Living in poor neighborhood is associated with greater frequency of intercourse in both males and females (Abah, 2013). In the same vein Wong et al in Bolar (2016) observed that,

> Living condition in low-cost or poor housing is a significant factor that the male adolescents engage sexual intercourse. …they define history of sexual abuse as a sexual contact with a person that one of the parties does not want to. This occurs before the first voluntary sex. This could then be considered as a previous sexual abuse experience of the person. The young females who have history of sexual abuse are most likely the ones to engage in sex before marriage (np).

Effects of Premarital Sex

Premarital sex among Igala people has profound harmful effects on the health, education, marriage life and birth of the adolescents. Premarital sex leads to pregnancy; this may lead to untimely drop out of school. Early child bearing also limits training and work opportunities. Teenage mothers face health risk; obstructed labour is common and results in newborn deaths or disabilities in the mothers.

Premarital sex results to health challenges to those who engage in it. Some of the youth have multiple sexual partners and as result, Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are often passed. Sexual transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, staphylococcus and syphilis and HIV which are capable of claiming one's life and destroying ones reproductive organs if not treated in time can cause infertility in future and the home will suffer bareness (Blennen 2011 and Tamt, 2013).

Habitual abortion always results from premarital sex. Frequent abortion over stretched or damage cervix or uterus which can result to miscarriage in future. In support of these Adama (2013) states "if abortion is performed by inexperienced hand it can perforate the uterus which renders the woman sterile. That is, she can never give birth later on if she gets married" (p. 145). Marriage without child is easily dissoluble. Morally, abortion is wrong. Abortion is killing of innocent human life. The unborn child is human an innocent.

Premarital sex can make one lose the respect of his/her partner and one's focus blurred. Sex creates a bond between sex partners that can easily be violated if the commitment isn't strong enough to sustain it. Marriage creates a life-long commitment and can support the bond a sexual relationship creates. It is very difficult for couples engaged in premarital sex to ensure that their sexual relationship create a lasting bond. (Dan, 2018).

Premarital sex erodes the trust couples have for each other. It opens an avenue for distrust and suspicion in the marriage union. There is room for severe jealousy even when nothing is

happening. It is difficult for those who slept with each other during courtship to trust each other when they eventually marry.

Premarital sex replaces intimacy. The case of couples where one or both partners had been sexually active before marriage may find themselves comparing their marital sex life with that of premarital life often leading to dissatisfaction (Dan. nd). This is very harmful to both partners as they deal with mental flash back of earlier sexual encounters. This can be frustrating, disturbing and destructive to couples who later desire true intimacy and love in their marriage.

Premarital sex can lead to mental depression and dilemma. Sex unites a man and a woman. Each time a person gets involved in varied sexual encounters and moves out, that affects his or her sexual worries. To this effect, Chiradeep (2008) observe that sexual memories will hunt the person day and night, year after year… it leaves a scar which torments that person throughout his/her life.

Recommendations

From the above discussion, the following recommendations are put forward:

Parents should have an open conversation with their children to help them develop more-critical attitude towards pornography.

Families should discuss the issue of drugs and sex in the open and be honest in order that the teenagers will not seek information from his friends which might not be true or correct.

Church leaders should emphasize the dangers of premarital sex from the pulpit.

Moral education should be made compulsory in our schools and colleges.

Conclusion

Premarital sex is injurious to the society. Young people should have self control and abstain from it until after their marriage when they are qualified to experience it. Family and peer influence, viewing pornography, drug and alcohol abuse and living in poor housing were identified as the most vital factors to engage in premarital sex. Sex outside marriage destroys the peace in the home, it opens avenue for suspicion and distrust, and it can lead to mental depression and can make one barren. Parents should discuss openly about sex with their children so that children will not get involve, and out of curiosity to know the mysteries about sex.

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