

## Prevalence of Sexual Activities Among Secondary School students in Nairobi and Busia Counties Kenya

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Adolescent sexuality is an important public health issue, as it affects them in many ways; they risk contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; may become pregnant leading to school dropout and early marriage. The assessment of prevalence of sexual activities among students, may guide policies and programmes aimed at reducing the risks of engaging in early sex. The study used *ex post facto* and descriptive research design. Target population was 20227 form three students in Nairobi and Busia Counties. Accessible population was 3568 form three students in seven districts. Multi-stage, probability proportionate to size, stratified and simple random sampling was used to select the participants. Findings of the study shows adolescents engage in sexual activities at a very young age. They engage in sex activities with multiple partners and majorities do not use contraceptives. Overall prevalence of sexual activities was 28.8% male and 14.6% female. Variables positively associated with sexual activities include age, gender, school type and location. Any intervention aimed to promote students' sexual health should be designed with appreciation of factors associated with sexual activity in due consideration.

**Keywords:** Students, sexual activities, Prevalence

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### Introduction

According to demographic trends for adolescent ages 10-24 were about 1.2 billion in the world in 2009 (Demographic health survey (2009). In another study by United Nation population Fund (UNPF, 2014) adolescence between 10-24 was 1.8 billion. In Kenya, Kenya Nation Bureau of statistics (KNBS, 2009) adolescents' population was 12million. Students' sexual behaviour is typically described in terms of age at first intercourse, number of sexual partners and rate of condom use and frequency of sexual activities. Increasingly, public health policies and programs have focused on the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents, particularly in the developing world. This is largely as a result of recognition that adolescents constitute a large segment of developing countries population that is disproportionately affected by negative reproductive health outcomes due to limited information. Even with those who indicate they have knowledge on consequences of risky sexual behaviour, results in many studies have shown

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that perception of risk and high knowledge do not necessary translate to behaviour change (CSA, 2009; Odhiambo, Bukusu and Waweru, 2009). Apart from immediate consequences of students' sexual behaviour; unwanted pregnancy, parenthood, sexually transmitted infection, and exposure to HIV/AIDs, there are long term consequences that may affect them socially and economically such as dropping out from school. Studies done by Thomas, Asfew, and Anteneh (2015) showed that 60% of pregnancies among adolescents are unwanted or unintended in many countries including Ethiopia. According to Ethiopia demographic survey 2005, 0.4% of those between the age of 15-19 and 1.1 of those between 20-24 year are living with HIV AIDS. Studies done by Wondemagego, Mulat, Bayen (2014) also reported that more than half of new HIV infection occurs in people between ages 15-24 years.

In 2007 in the USA, 48% of high school students had had sexual intercourse, and 15% had had four or more sex partners during their life (CDC, 2007). 39% of sexually active high school students reported not to have used a condom during the last sexual intercourse (CDC, 2007). In the study done by women health policy (2014) more than one in ten (13%) female teenagers and one in six (17%) male teens had more than four sexual partners in their lives. This showed that adolescent engage in sexual activities with multiple partners putting them at greater risk. In the same study by women health, almost one-quarter (22%) of these students reported using alcohol or drugs during their most recent sexual encounter. More males reported using alcohol or drugs (26%) compared to females. Students mentioned many other reasons for engaging in sexual relationships as peer pressure, self desire, getting gifts and material gain Budeba and Neema (2014). This means that there factors tha encourage students to engage in sexual activities.

In Kenya, Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) (2009) indicate that 12% of young women and 22% of young men 15-19 years old had had sex before they were 15 (KNBS and ICF Marco, 2010). Some become sexually active as early as 12 years of age, long before they are physically mature. Adolescent partnerships are sometimes not exclusive and sexual activity is often unprotected (NCPD and MOH, 2003). This shows that adolescent begin their sexual activities early in life when they not physically mature and end up with complications.

Adolescent boys are more likely than adolescent girls to have multiple partners. Among sexually active young men of ages 15-19, approximately 17% had multiple partners (KNBS and ICF MARCO, 2010). The average number of sexual partners among boys that age was three, compared with two among women of the same age. The main reason male students have more multiple partners than female could be attributed to cultural tolerance of male sexual activities and in some societies may even encourage it. There is need to assess the influence of culture on students sexual behaviour. Of those who were sexually active, less than 30% used condoms at the first time they had sex, but consistent use gets lower (NASCOP, 2009). More disturbing is the fact that less than one in four women of ages 15-19 used condoms (KNSB AND ICF Marco, 2010). People who begin sexual activity at an early age tend to have more unprotected sex and

more lifetime sexual partners, placing them at greater risk of unplanned pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Lack of knowledge on contraceptive among young people is most reported reason for non-use. Therefore there was need to establish the influence of LSE on students' sexual behaviour.

### Research Methodology

The study used *Ex post facto* and descriptive survey research designs. The target population was 20,227 Form Three students in Nairobi and Busia Counties. The two counties were chosen as they have a high number of students engaging in sexual activities. Accessible population was 3568 Form Three students in the seven districts. Multi- stage, probability proportionate to size, purposive, stratified and simple random sampling was used to select the participants. The study sample comprised of 378 students, 21 teachers, 21 school principals and 7 education officials. Data was collected using questionnaires. Validity of instruments was checked through expert opinion and reliability tested using Spearman Brown Prophecy formula after a pilot study. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with assistance of computer statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

### Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish the prevalence of students' sexual behaviour in secondary school in Nairobi and Busia Counties. Prevalence rate of students sexual behaviour was measured using various indicators; age at first sex, frequency of sexual activities, number of sexual partners, their age and protection method used. The respondents were to answer questions by ticking/ writing yes or no against each statement.

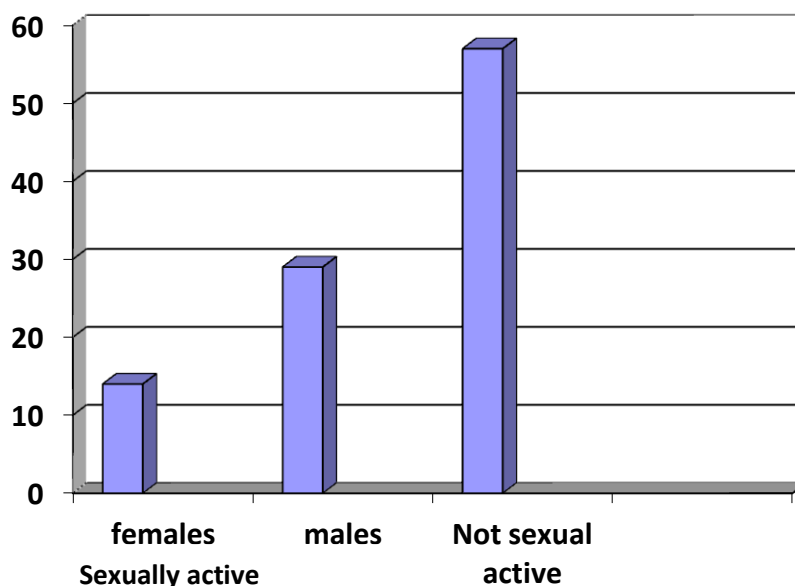


Figure 1: Prevalence Rate of Students Sexual behaviour

### Prevalence Rate of Students Sexual Behaviour

Results on prevalence rate of sexual behaviour are reflected in Figure 1 above. The findings of the study indicate that of the 378 students sampled, 109 (28.8 %) male respondents were sexually active as compared to 55 (14.6 %) of the female respondents. The findings concur with studies done by Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) (2009) which indicated that 12% of young women and 22% of young men 15-19 years old had sex before they were 15, and some became sexually active before they were 12 years of age; long before they were physically mature.

**Table 1 Cross Tabulation of Students' Age by Sexual Behaviour**

Response (percent)		11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Gender		years	years	years	years	years	years	
Age at first sex	Male	(2.9)	(1.9)	(2.1)	(1.1)	(10.3)	(11.6)	(35.5)
		11	7	8	4	39	44	1134
	Female	(1.9)	(0.8)	(1.6)	(2.9)	(4.0)	(5.0)	(23.6)
		7	3	6	11	15	19	88
Total		(4.8)	(2.6)	(3.7)	(4.0)	(14.3)	(16.7)	(58.8)
		18	10	14	15	54	63	222

### Students Sexual Activity by Age

Of those who had had sex, the average age that female students become sexually active was 15 years as opposed to males who initiate sex at 14. This shows that males begin sexual activities one year earlier than females. The findings of this study concur with those of a study done by Springer, Selwyne and Kelder (2006) that found out nearly half of the male study participants reported having had sexual intercourse as compared to less than 8% of females. Males were significantly more likely to report having had sex at or before age of 13 years. Gender difference with regard to prevalence of sexual activity may also be due to a possible cultural acceptance of young males' engagement in sex at an early age while for unmarried females; premarital sex is not widely accepted. Data from Table 1 shows that, age was positively associated with sexual debut among respondents. A high number of the respondents engage in sexual activities as they mature.

**Table 2. Number of Sexual Partners Among Students**

Responses	frequency/ percentage/ Partners								Total	
	Gender	1person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people	above6		none
Number of sexual partners	<b>Male</b>	4.0 (15)	10.3 (39)	4.4 (17)	4.2 (16)	0.8 (3)	0.0 (0)	5.6 (21)	30.9 (117)	59.7 (226)
	<b>Female</b>	5.3 (20)	4.8 (18)	0.8 (3)	2.4 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.8 (3)	0.5 (2)	25.7 (97)	40.2 (152)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9.3 (35)</b>	<b>15.1 (57)</b>	<b>5.3 (20)</b>	<b>6.6 (25)</b>	<b>0.8 (3)</b>	<b>0.8(3)</b>	<b>6.1 (23)</b>	<b>6.8 (214)</b>	<b>100.0 (378)</b>

Of those who were sexually active, majority had between one to two sexual partners; the females respondents at 38 (9.1 percent) and male respondents at 54 (14.3 percent). Male respondents had more than six sexual partners. These findings concur with a study by Adaji (2010) that many young people have sex with multiple partners and that boys were seven times more likely than girls to have multiple sexual partners. In another study by KNBS and ICF MARCO (2010) adolescent boys are more likely to have multiple partners than girls. Among sexually active young men of ages 15-19, approximately 17% had multiple partners. Average number of sexual partners among boys that age was 3 compared with 2 among women of the same age. This can be attributed to cultural factors that tolerate young men sexual activities or may even encourage it. Adolescent boys tend to use alcohol and drugs more often than girls, which can lead to sexual risk taking with many partners.

**Table 3. Students who used Protection**

		Never had sex	yes	No	Total
Used condom the last time had sex	<b>Male</b>	30.7 (116)	18.0 (68)	11.1 (42)	59.7 (226)
	<b>Female</b>	25.4 (96)	8.7 (33)	6.1 (23)	40.2 (152)
<b>Total</b>		<b>56.1 (212)</b>	<b>26.7 (101)</b>	<b>17.2 (65)</b>	<b>100 (373)</b>

Findings show that of those who were sexually active, 101 (26.7 %) used protection the last time they had sex as compared to 65(17%) who did not, meaning that condom use was low among the adolescent population. These findings concur with those of a study done by Magnani et al,

(1999) that reported that only 38% of male and 26% of female reported having used condoms at the time of first intercourse. In another study by Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) (2008-2009), it was noted that only 41 % of women and 55 % of men in sexual relationship use condoms during sexual encounters. It was also noted that one in four women of 15-19 used condom at their last high risk sexual encounters (KNBS and ICF Marco, 2010). Kiragu (1995) avers that in Kenya, young people are less likely to use contraceptive than adults. The common reasons that both young men and women give for not using contraceptives is that they did not expect to have intercourse, did not know about contraceptive use, or that it is difficult to access them.

Self-reported sexual behaviour data among adolescents are subject to a range of biases. In a study done by Ministry of Health (MOH) (2006) on adolescents in Kisumu County, the findings showed that it is not uncommon for sexually active adolescent's girls and boys to deny that they ever had sexual intercourse. Among males 15-24 who said they had never had sex, none had HIV infection though 7.5 percent had another STI. Among females 15-24 who reported that they were not sexually active, 10.8 percent had no HIV infection, 6.2 percent had HIV infection and another STI, and 11.3 percent had other STI. In the age group 15-19, males were nearly four times more to report sexual partners than young women. It appears under-reporting of sexual activity is common among young women, while it cannot be concluded that there is some over-reporting by men.

**Table 4: Students' Sexual Behaviour by Location**

	Location	Yes	No	Total
Intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex	<b>Urban</b>	23.2 (88)	22.0 (83)	45.2 (171)
	<b>Rural</b>	20.1 (76)	34.7 (131)	54.8 (207)
<b>Total</b>		<b>43.4 (164)</b>	<b>56.6 (214)</b>	<b>100 (378)</b>

#### **Location in Relation with Students' Sexual Behaviour**

Correlating the sexual behaviour to location, the findings show that 88 (23.2 percent) in rural areas were sexually active as opposed to 76 (20 percent) in the urban areas. Different studies have shown different results in relation to sex and location. In a study done by Crosby (2000) indicated that rural and urban adolescent females' risky sexual behaviour did not differ and that rural adolescent males had more risk behaviour than their urban counterparts. A study by KDSH (2003) revealed that women in rural areas start sexual activity about two years earlier than their urban counterparts, but argues that there is no difference in the timing of first sexual activity

between rural and urban males. Atav & Spencer (2002); Crosby et al (2000) suggest that rural adolescents are more likely to engage in sexual intercourse and not use condoms than those living in urban areas. However, the studies do not suggest that there is more tolerance for teen sex in rural areas. This is shown in Table 4.

**Table 5: Age in Relation to Sexual Behaviour**

	Age	Yes	No	Total
Are you in any intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex	13 to 16 years	23(34)	45(66)	68(100)
	17 to 20 years	130(43.8)	167 (56.2)	297(100)
	21 to 24 years	11(84.6)	2 (15.4)	13 (100)
<b>Total</b>		<b>43.4 (164)</b>	<b>56.6 (214)</b>	<b>100 (378)</b>

**Source: Field Data, n=378**

The study found out that 23 (34%) of respondents aged 13-16, were sexually active compared to 45 (66%) who were not. Among those aged 17 to 20, 130 (43.8 %) were sexually active compared to 167 (56.2%) who were not. 11 (84.6%) of those aged 21 to 24 years were sexually active compared to 2 (15.4%) that were not. The findings of the study indicate that comparatively, more students become sexually active when they are between 17 to 20 years. In most countries profiled, median age at first sexual experience among females is between 16-18 while that of males lies between 15 and 20 years. In a survey done by Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2011, it was discovered that the average age of sexual debut was 12.4 years.

**Table 6: School Type and Students Sexual Behaviour**

Response	School Type	Yes	No	Total
Are you in intimate relation with opposite sex	Mixed day	119(42.2)	163(57.8)	282(100)
	Mixed boarding	19(45.2)	23(54.8)	42(100)
	Boys boarding	14(60.9)	9(39.1)	23(100)
	Boys day	8(57.1)	6(42.9)	14(100)
	Girls day	2(40)	3(60)	5(100)
	Girls boarding	2(16.7)	10(83.3)	12(100)
	<b>Total</b>		<b>164(43.4)</b>	<b>214(56.6)</b>

The type of school students attend influences how they relate to the opposite sex and in turn their sexual behaviour. The study revealed that out of 164 (43.4 percent) of respondents who were sexually active, 119 (42.2%) were in mixed day, 19 (45.2%) in mixed boarding, 14(60.9) boys boarding, 8 (57.1%) boys day, girls day at 2(40%) and girls boarding each has 2 (16.7). The results indicate majority of respondents who indulge in sexual activities were enrolled in mixed day schools, followed by mixed boarding boys schools and very few in girls' schools. More sexually active students in mixed schools could be due to the fact that they have more chances of socializing with the opposite sex when they leave school. We can therefore conclude that there is a strong relationship between school type and students' sexual behaviour.

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