

P1.4. Assessing Perception and Understanding of Health/Social Risks among Young Female Bisexuals of Higher Institutions in Plateau State - Aminu Magashi Garba, Community Health and Research Initiative
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Background/Significance: Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities, roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships. (WHO) Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.

Sexual rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents.

These include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence to:

- The highest attainable standard of health in relation to sexuality, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services
- Seek, receive and impart information in relation to sexuality

Young people between the ages of 15-24 years have become a focus of researches due to the following reasons

- Patterns and experiences of high-risk sexual behavior
- Adventurous nature
- Experiences of adverse outcomes of sexuality such as unwanted pregnancies, abortion, STIs including HIV/AIDS
- Contraceptive availability and patterns of age
- Coerced and commercial sex
- Sexual exploitation by the older age group.

Objectives:

- To understand young female bi-sexuals' perception and understanding of health/social risks with respect to their sexual orientation
- To assess experiences of the target group with respect to access to sexual/reproductive information and services.
- To proffer recommendations that will enrich sexual/reproductive health/ adolescents/young people's policy in Nigeria.

Methodology: The author based on his experienced in maintaining a Weekly Health Interactive column in Daily Trust for the last six years, based on analysis discovered that many young females from Plateau State kept on asking questions related to social and health risks in relation to sexual exposure to both male and female peers. It was against that background that female contacts within the age bracket were identified and also mobilised others for the research. A qualitative research using semi-structured interviews were conducted with them based on consent and confidentially with the aim of assessing their perception and understanding of health and/or social risk of their sexual orientation.

Data Generated were analysed using Framework Analysis.

Findings and Lessons Learned

- All the students interviewed fall within the age bracket of 15-24 years and reasons for being bi-sexuals ranges from influence of peer group, media, and failed relationship with male partners, financial gain and fear.
- Majority of the target group were aware of Health Risks such as exposure to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion, but were not aware of any health risks of having sexual encounter with female partners.
- Majority of them were aware of some social risks such as parental punishment, risk of losing boyfriends, stigmatisation and not getting married.
- Very few of them know clearly where to seek for correct sexual/reproductive health information and services.

Recommendation/Conclusion: There is the need for policy and programmatic review by government, international development partners and civil societies with the aim of accommodating the needs of all young people.