

Men's sexual behaviour in urban and rural Southwest Nigeria: its cultural, social and attitudinal context



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A pilot project aimed at understanding both male and female attitudes to male sexual behaviour with a view to establishing what constraints did exist, was undertaken in Ado-Ekiti in late 1993 (Orubuloye 1994; Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell 1995). The result of the pilot research program was a guide to a larger project undertaken in late 1994 and during the first quarter of 1995.

The pilot program showed that male extramarital sexual activity was still largely taken for granted. There was also a clear manifestation of the general belief that men are biologically different from women in their need for sex: while a man has unlimited sexual freedom, a woman is expected to have only one partner. The need for men to have sexual variation and the assumed polygynous nature of men were the main reasons that men cannot be satisfied with one woman at a given time or over a lifetime.

The research program has also shown that, although wives were almost equally divided on the right of husbands to have extramarital affairs without wives interfering, a significant proportion of wives had attempted some control of their spouses. Wives' general inhibitions about attempting to control their husbands' sexual behaviour are gradually diminishing with advancement in education. Parents universally attempted to control their children's behaviour; however, because of the economic difficulties faced by many families and the high rate of unemployment among young school leavers, there are probably inhibitions on parents' control over daughters who choose to become prostitutes.

The need was stressed for intervention programs that will promote the rights of women; the community, the church, the society and perhaps the Nigerian women's movement have important roles to play in this regard.

The larger project was planned to ascertain whether the findings of the pilot survey will differ from those of a larger sample taken from wider urban and rural communities across Southwest Nigeria. The results are presented here.

Method

Data were collected from six locations: three urban and three rural areas. The urban locations are Ado-Ekiti in Ondo State, Ibadan in Oyo State, Badagry in Lagos State; while the rural locations are in Ekiti West and Ekiti Southeast in Ondo State, and Egbeda Local Government Area in Oyo State. Different sampling strategies were used in the selection of the respondents in each location. In Ado-Ekiti, the sample was taken from five clusters with a sampling fraction of 100 males and 100 females from each cluster. In Ibadan Town, the sample was taken from a fairly homogeneous indigenous group where all eligible male and female respondents were interviewed. The sample for Lagos State was taken from Badagry Local

Government Area inhabited mainly by the Igun, who are predominantly Yoruba. The sample for the rural component of the survey was taken from two rural locations in Ekiti West and Ekiti Southeast in Ondo State and two rural communities in Egbeda Local Government Area in Oyo State, where all eligible Yoruba males and females over 18 years old were interviewed. A total sample of 1,749 males (962 urban and 787 rural) and 1,976 females (1,073 urban and 903 rural) were successfully interviewed. Both male and female interviewers were engaged: each interviewed only respondents of their own sex. The age of the interviewers ranged from 24 to 47 years, and wherever possible older interviewers interviewed the older respondents.

The interviewers were paired so that both the husband and wife who fell into the sample could be interviewed at the same time. It was intended to limit the research to the Yoruba ethnic group, but this turned out not to be possible. The Igbo and Hausa ethnic groups who had lived and traded in the communities where the samples were taken for several years, and had regarded themselves as important members of the community, felt that they should not be excluded from the survey.

The survey was conducted during a major political crisis in Nigeria, when tensions between ethnic groups were high, so to avoid jeopardizing the survey through ethnic strife, all ethnic groups that fell within the sampling units were interviewed. Despite the decision to interview all eligible respondents, the sample remained very homogeneous, with the Yoruba accounting for 86 per cent of all male respondents and 87 per cent of all female respondents. The response rate was high, and two call-backs were made to interview respondents who were not found during the first visit. Any person not found during the second call-back was omitted from the survey, particularly in Lagos and Ibadan where interviews were difficult and expensive.

Separate but related questionnaires were administered to the male and female respondents; they contained some common or similar questions which allowed lengthy answers for subsequent study and office coding.

In addition to the basic questions on age, education, occupation, marital status, religion and type of union, the questionnaire sought information on whether the male respondents had permanent girlfriends, whether one woman was sufficient for a man at a given time and over a lifetime, whether there are differences between males and females in the number of sexual partners needed, when the male respondents last engaged in extramarital affairs, whether men should always have more than one woman, whether the wife said anything about the husband's extramarital affairs, whether a wife has the right to disapprove of her husband's sexual activities and whether husbands have a right to extramarital sex without wives interfering. The reasons for the responses were also asked. In addition, questions were asked on male circumcision, female clitoridectomy and female prostitution. Nearly all the questions were repeated in the female questionnaire, in addition to questions on mothers' rights over sons' and daughters' sexual behaviour, and on vaginal cleansing and scarification.

The data were analysed separately for the male and female respondents and according to urban and rural location. Both descriptive and analytical methods were used to examine the patterns and differences in responses to selected questions.

Findings

Characteristics of individual men and women

Table I presents the characteristics of the population. There were no major differences in the characteristics of the urban and the rural areas. However, those in urban areas were slightly younger, better educated and far more likely to delay marriage than the rural ones. Of the

married men, the proportion in polygynous unions was higher in the rural areas. The educational pattern observed in the rural areas is typical of Southwest Nigeria, where the educational gap between urban and rural areas has been reduced considerably since the introduction of universal primary education in the region several decades ago. Although Christianity was the dominant religion, there was a strong and visible Muslim community which made up about one-third of the urban population and about one-quarter of the rural population.

Table 1
Characteristics of individual men and women (percentage distribution)

	Males		Females	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Age				
15-34	51	44	49	52
35+	49	56	51	48
Mean age	36.0	39.7	37.5	36.2
Education				
None	13	17	21	18
Primary	24	23	17	27
Secondary	33	29	29	38
Above secondary	30	31	34	17
Occupation				
Farming	9	19	2	9
Trading	18	12	36	45
Artisan	24	19	11	15
White collar ^a	30	33	40	25
Others ^b	20	18	11	8
Religion				
Christianity	64	71	78	69
Islam	34	24	20	30
Trad/other	2	5	2	1
Type of union				
Currently not in union	37	30	16	24
Currently monogamous	42	41	63	45
Currently polygynous	21	29	21	31
N	962	787	1073	903

Note: ^a includes civil servants, teachers and nurses; ^b includes housewives, students and unemployed

Men's sexual behaviour

Attempts were made to explore male sexual behaviour through a battery of questions to male respondents on whether one woman is sufficient for a man at a given time or over a lifetime, whether men need more than one woman, whether males are biologically different from females in their need for sex, and whether those currently married engaged in extramarital sexual relations. The reasons for the responses were also asked. The findings are presented in this section.

On the question of whether one woman was sufficient for a man at a given time or over a lifetime, 61 per cent of the urban males believed that it was possible to be content with one

woman at a given time, while 59 per cent thought it was sufficient over a lifetime. The corresponding figures for the rural area are 59 per cent and 41 per cent. The distribution of the responses according to selected characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Is one woman sufficient for a man? (percentage distribution)

Characteristics	Urban				Rural			
	At a given time N = 934		Over a lifetime N = 933		At a given time N = 773		Over a lifetime N = 760	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
All	61	39	59	41	59	41	41	59
Age								
Less than 35 yrs	63	37	61	39	62	38	48	52
35 +	58	42	47	43	47	53	36	64
Education								
No schooling	45	55	46	54	31	69	19	81
Primary only	55	45	55	45	51	49	39	61
Secondary	66	34	65	35	53	47	43	57
Above secondary	65	35	63	37	67	33	51	49
Religion								
Christianity	68	32	66	34	58	42	47	53
Islam	50	50	49	51	46	54	30	70
Traditional	17	83	17	83	17	83	9	91
Types of union								
Monogamous	75	25	73	27	72	28	58	42
Polygynous	25	75	23	77	24	76	15	85
Not in union	66	34	65	35	58	42	43	57
Occupation								
Farming	39	61	40	60	38	62	26	74
Trading	50	50	53	47	50	50	37	63
Artisan	69	31	65	35	53	47	41	59
White collar	67	33	63	37	63	37	50	50
Others	62	38	61	39	58	42	45	55

There were close similarities between the responses of the respondents in the urban and the rural areas, but there were significant differences by education, religion, occupation and type of union ($p < 0.05$) for both urban and rural populations and for age in the latter. The distribution was very similar to that obtained from the pilot study (Orubuloye et al. 1995). The characteristics are closely related in that educated people are likely to be younger and monogamously married, and less likely to be reported as farmers or traders. However, those who answered 'No' to these two questions were sufficiently numerous to sustain a high level of extramarital sexual relations. The reasons why a man can or cannot be satisfied with one woman are presented in Table 3.

The desire to keep marriage intact, dignity and the fear of catching a disease were the main reasons for men to be satisfied with one woman. The mere mention of STDs and AIDS shows the level of awareness of the dangers of these diseases to the society. The economic difficulties faced by many families as a result of the Structural Adjustment Program of the government also influenced the responses, particularly in the rural areas.

Table 3
Reasons why men can or cannot be satisfied with one woman (percentage distribution)

	Urban			Rural		
	Currently not in union	Monogamous	Polygynous	Currently not in union	Monogamous	Polygynous
Reasons why men can be satisfied						
To keep marriage intact	37	54	9	31	56	13
It is dignified	40	49	11	24	63	13
To avoid STDs	46	48	6	39	52	9
To avoid AIDS	50	39	11	31	38	31
It is economical	37	60	3	40	49	11
Control sexual urges	33	50	17	28	56	16
It is godly	24	74	2	40	60	-
To avoid illegitimate birth	100	-	-	-	100	-
Reasons why men cannot be satisfied						
Need for sexual variation	36	27	38	30	21	49
Men polygynous by nature	14	14	73	22	26	52
Physiological necessity	34	34	32	17	31	52
Substitute for abstinence	11	56	33	14	43	43
One man too strong for a woman	44	28	28	31	15	53
Women may not co-operate	43	29	28	18	45	36

There were no significant differences in the responses between the urban and the rural areas or according to the characteristics of the respondents, except in the urban areas where there were differences according to age. However, more educated men were more conscious of their dignity, the desire to protect their marriages and the health implications of multiple partners than less educated men, while more monogamously married than polygynously married men were conscious of their dignity and the need to protect their marriages.

On the question why men cannot be satisfied with one woman, the need for sexual variation and that men are polygynous by nature accounted for four-fifths of the responses. The need for a substitute during the traditional long postpartum abstinence was less important, partly because of the rapid decline in the duration and partly because of the wide-scale practice of contraception now being adopted in Southwest Nigeria (Nigeria 1992; Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell 1992). There were significant differences ($p < 0.05$) according to age and type of union in the urban areas, and according to education and type of union in the rural areas. The desire for sexual variation was far more important among the younger men, while the polygynous nature of man, the need for a substitute for postpartum abstinence, and multiple partnership as a physiological necessity were more important for the older respondents. Although there were no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) according to the educational status of respondents in rural areas, educated men claimed the need for sexual variation more than less educated ones, while fewer educated than uneducated men said that

man was by nature polygynous. A significant proportion of polygynous compared to monogamous men reported the desire for sexual variation, and the polygynous nature of man, as the reasons that men cannot be satisfied with one woman.

On the question whether males are biologically different from females in their need for multiple sexual partners, 67 per cent of urban and 66 per cent of rural respondents answered yes. The responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Whether men are biologically different from women in their need for sexual partners (percentage distribution)

	Urban	Rural
Yes	67	66
No	33	34
If 'yes' why:		
Men's urge for sex	49	41
It is cultural	18	22
Adventure/variety	30	36
To boost one's ego	2	1
If 'no' why:		
What a man can do a woman can do too	78	86
Both men and women need some enjoyment	22	14

The distribution of the responses demonstrates the Yoruba traditional belief that a man has unlimited sexual freedom, while a woman is expected to have only one partner. This is perhaps the general belief across sub-Saharan Africa (see Anarfi and Awusabo-Asare 1993:30 on Ghana). Men's insatiable sexual appetite, the need for sexual variation and the support given to it by the culture are the main reasons why the respondents believed that men are biologically different from women. There were no significant differences according to selected characteristics, except in the rural areas where differences by age were statistically significant. Even among those with post-primary education, 53 per cent in the urban areas and 47 per cent in the rural areas reported men's insatiable appetite for sex as the reason why males are different from females in their need for different sexual partners, compared to 41 per cent in the urban areas and 33 per cent in the rural areas among those with no education who responded in a similar way. However, the desire for sexual variation was most important among polygynously married men in rural areas, while men's insatiable sexual appetite was most important for both single and monogamously married men in both urban and rural areas. A majority of those who responded 'No' believed that both men and women are equal in their need for sex.

Previous research in the Ekiti district and elsewhere in Nigeria had revealed a considerable level of extramarital sexual relations among both men and women (Orubuloye et al. 1994; Isiugo-Abanihe 1994). About 48 per cent of all married men in the urban areas and 66 per cent of those in the rural areas reported that they had had previous extramarital affairs. Thirty-eight per cent of the extramarital affairs of urban men happened recently, 18 per cent in the last month and the remaining 43 per cent happened in the past. The distributions for rural men were: 32 per cent happened recently, 18 per cent in the last month and 50 per cent in the past. The distributions are shown in Table 5.

In the urban areas, there were significant differences according to age of respondents and type of union and whether they ever had extramarital relations. Of those who had ever had extramarital relations, two-thirds were 35 or more years old, while 44 per cent were polygynously married. In the rural areas, the differences by age, education and type of union

were statistically highly significant ($p < 0.01$). Of those who had had extramarital affairs before, 44 per cent were 35 years old and above, 66 per cent had been to school, of whom three-quarters had gone beyond the primary school level, and 41 per cent were polygynously married. However, the three variables (age, education and type of union) are closely related. More of the older men tended to be less educated and in polygynous unions than the younger ones.

About 56 per cent of urban men who had had extramarital sex did so because they wanted the company of other women, 23 per cent because they wanted to enjoy sexual variation, 4 per cent because their wives were pregnant, 4 per cent to spite straying wives, 4 per cent because they were persuaded by friends, 5 per cent because they suffered sexual deprivation from their wives, and 4 per cent because their wives were observing the traditional postpartum abstinence. There were significant differences in the reasons given only by age and education.

Among the rural men, 64 per cent who had had extramarital affairs did so because they wanted the company of other women, 22 per cent for sexual variation, 5 per cent because their wives were pregnant, 4 per cent because the wives were observing the traditional postpartum abstinence, 3 per cent to spite straying wives and the remainder because they were seeking additional wives or were persuaded by friends. There were no significant differences in reasons given according to the characteristics of the men except in the type of union to which they belonged. Nevertheless, there were close similarities between the responses of the urban and the rural respondents.

On the question of whether they knew their extramarital partners, 82 per cent of the urban and 92 per cent of rural men reported that they did. Most female partners were relatives, girlfriends and school- or workmates; while about two per cent in each case were prostitutes or bar girls. Forty per cent of the urban and 38 per cent of the rural men paid in cash or in kind for their extramarital affairs, indicating that some were with prostitutes. More than one-fifth of urban men and about one-quarter of rural men reported that their wives were aware of their extramarital sexual activity; slightly more than one-half reported that their wives said something about it. Thirty-two per cent of urban and 29 per cent of the rural men who had extramarital affairs expressed the fear of catching a disease. Nearly 60 per cent of such fears among the urban men were of gonorrhoea, about 9 per cent were of syphilis and 27 per cent of AIDS. In rural areas 55 per cent feared gonorrhoea, 11 per cent syphilis and 29 per cent AIDS.

Of those who did not express any fear, 50 per cent in urban areas and 44 per cent in rural areas were using condoms; 14 per cent in urban and 32 per cent in rural areas used some antibiotics, 10 per cent in urban and 7 per cent in rural areas had frequent medical check-ups, while 16 per cent in urban and 9 per cent in rural areas were careful in selecting their sexual partners. Nearly one-tenth of urban men and 9 per cent of rural men were using some kind of herbal preparation as protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

Table 5
Males' extramarital sexual relationships (percentage distribution)

	Urban	Rural
Q1. When did you last have extramarital sex?		
Never	52	34
Recently	18	21
In the past month	9	12
In the past	21	33
Q2. What are the reasons for extramarital sex?		
For sexual variation	23	23
Wife in postpartum period	8	7

Sexual deprivation by wife	5	3
To spite straying wife	4	2
For companionship	56	64
Seeking additional wife	1	1
Persuaded by friends	4	1
Whether wife was aware		
Yes	22	24
No	78	76
Q3. Did she say anything?		
Yes	55	60
No	78	76
Q4. What did she say?		
Lack of self control	35	33
Immoral	24	23
Sexual deprivation	5	10
Could contract disease	32	29
Could die prematurely	3	-
Would seek divorce	-	4
Q5. Does this influence you?		
Yes	36	44
No	64	56

Men's extramarital affairs may diminish with modernization and with the popular trend towards monogamy. Fifty-nine per cent of urban and 41 per cent of rural men felt that men should be satisfied with one woman in a lifetime, if possible. The proportion who responded in this way is slightly lower for the urban men and much lower for the rural men than the proportion who had earlier agreed that one woman was sufficient for a man at a given time. About one-tenth in the urban areas and one-ninth in the rural areas regarded staying with one woman for life as a sign of an unfulfilled mission; 13 per cent of urban and 16 per cent of rural men would regard such a move as sad and to be condemned, 2 per cent urban and 3 per cent rural regard it as antisocial; 6 per cent urban and 4 per cent rural would leave the matter for the individual to decide. Nevertheless, 62 per cent in the urban areas and 58 per cent in the rural areas believed that it would increasingly be possible for a man to keep to one woman, mainly because it is now fashionable, and partly because it is dignified, costs less and reduces the risk of sexually transmitted disease. However, the desire for variety, the polygynous nature of man, his insatiable sexual appetite, and the need to substitute for wives during their postpartum abstinence are the reasons why 13 per cent of the urban and 23 per cent of the rural men felt that it would be impossible for a man to stay with one woman over a lifetime.

The preceding questions were general; the respondents were then asked specifically whether it would be possible for them to stick to one woman over a lifetime. Two-thirds of the urban men said yes, as did one-half of the rural men. Of those who responded in the affirmative, 63 per cent of urban and 57 per cent of the rural men would do this because it guarantees adequate love from one's wife, 27 per cent of urban men and 31 per cent of rural men because they did not want much sex, and the remaining one-tenth in the urban area and one ninth in the rural area because of the fear of disease, out of whom about 2 per cent urban and 3 per cent rural specified the fear of AIDS.

Wives' rights

It is a widely held traditional belief in sub-Saharan Africa and especially among the Yoruba, that wives have no right to know or talk about their husbands' sexual activities. The position may be gradually changing: about 21 per cent of urban and 13 per cent of rural men believed that wives have the right to disapprove of their husband's extramarital sexual activities. Of those who believed this, 37 per cent in the urban and 23 per cent in the rural areas thought that wives have such rights because they are 'the better half' of their husbands. The fear of disease was reported by 28 per cent of urban and 14 per cent of rural men, while 23 per cent of the former and 46 per cent of the latter expressed the need to keep the marriage intact, and 11 per cent of the urban men and 17 per cent of those in the rural areas thought it was desirable for wives to know their husband's movements. Out of those who responded negatively, 34 per cent in the urban and 31 per cent in the rural areas reported that it was not necessary because the women might stray; 42 per cent in the urban and 49 per cent in the rural areas because wives' rights are contrary to what religion preaches, and 24 per cent of the urban and 20 per cent of the rural respondents because the husband is the head of the family and his wish must be respected.

On whether the husband has a right to extramarital sex without the wife interfering, the responses were similar: 48 per cent of the urban men and 46 per cent of the rural men who answered the question responded in the affirmative. There were significant differences according to the educational characteristics of the men and the type of their marital union. Of the men who answered the question in the affirmative, all responded that 'the husband is the head of the family, his wish must not only be respected, it must be obeyed'. The majority of the respondents who would accept wives' interference in their extramarital affairs would do so partly to keep the marriage intact (51 per cent of the urban and 62 per cent of the rural men responding in this way), and partly to avoid disease (31 per cent urban and 20 per cent rural); 18 per cent of the urban and 19 per cent of the rural men would accept it because the woman is the 'better half'. Nevertheless, only 21 per cent of the urban men and 12 per cent of the rural ones believed that their wives had the right to disapprove of their extramarital activities.

Men's attitude to their daughters becoming prostitutes was universally negative. Fewer than 3 per cent of both the urban and the rural men would be happy or indifferent if their daughters earned a good income through commercial sex; the remaining 97 per cent would feel sad, disappointed or guilty. The responses apparently reflect the double standard that is common in the society. Many men who have extramarital affairs with the wives or daughters of other people, would not like others to do the same with their wives or daughters.

Women's attitudes to men's sexual behaviour

In order to assess women's attitude to men's sexual behaviour, a number of general and specific questions were asked. The questions include: whether there are differences between men and women in their need for sexual partners; whether men need more than one wife in a lifetime; whether men should have sexual relations with women other than their wives; whether husbands ever go to other women or prostitutes; whether husbands could be satisfied with just the wife; and whether anything could curb men's extramarital affairs. Questions were also asked about women's attitudes to their sons' and daughters' sexual behaviour. Responses to the questions on whether there are differences between men and women in their need for sexual partners, whether men need more than one wife, and whether husbands could be satisfied with just one woman are contained in the upper panel of Table 6. Nearly one-half of the urban women and 53 per cent of the rural women believed that there are differences between men and women in their need for sexual partners. The proportions of women who responded in this way to a similar question are higher than those of the men as reported in Table 4.

To the question whether men need more than one wife, 30 per cent of the urban and 36 per cent of the rural women who answered it, said yes. The percentages are far below those of men who responded positively to the same question. The differences in the responses according to education and type of union were statistically highly significant. The responses are in the expected direction: the younger women, better educated, in white-collar occupations, and monogamously married tended to respond negatively to men having more than one wife.

Responses were similar for other questions on whether husbands should have sex with women other than their wives, or go out with other women, or whether a husband could be satisfied with just his wife. The distributions are shown in the middle panel of Table 6. Although the differences according to some characteristics of women were statistically highly significant, there were no significant differences between the urban and the rural areas. Surprisingly, the percentage of women (4% in both urban and rural areas) who responded that their husbands went to prostitutes was nearly the same as the percentage of men who reported that their extramarital partners were prostitutes.

It is possible for wives to know whether their husbands go to prostitutes because these women operate from hotels and brothels in the inner parts of the cities, and towns which are heavily populated, where drinking and dancing take place and where all sorts of people visit. Although most of the activities take place in the evenings, after the day's work, it is possible for suspicious wives to have friends or relatives in the neighbourhood of the hotels and brothels who may spy on the husbands.

The reasons given by the respondents for their answers are mostly economic and partly social. On the question of whether men need more than one wife, the majority of those who answered in the affirmative gave help on the farm or in business as the main reason, one-fifth reported man's need to satisfy his sexual urge, and less than one-tenth mentioned wives' postpartum abstinence. On the other questions, husbands' need for sexual variation and enjoyment were overwhelmingly stressed. Most wives did nothing to stop their straying husbands, partly because it was regarded as part of men's way of life, and partly to avoid trouble or hurt. The few who did something quarrelled with their husbands, and a small number of women threatened divorce. About one-tenth merely warned their husbands against being infected with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Most women believed that fear of AIDS could stop men from engaging in extramarital affairs because the disease is deadly and incurable. One-half of the women also believed that adequate care and love by wives, fear of other sexually transmitted diseases and the cost of maintaining extra women might keep men from extramarital affairs.

Table 6
Responses to the questions on men's sexual behaviour (percentage distribution)

	Urban	Rural
Q1. Any difference between men and women in sexual needs?		
Yes	49	53
No	51	47
Q2. Do men need more than one wife?		
Yes	30	36
No	70	64
Q3. Do you think husbands could be satisfied with just one woman?		
Yes	54	51
No	46	49
Q4. Do husbands have sex with women other than their wives?		

Yes	55	69
No	45	31
Q5. Do husbands go to other women?		
Yes	36	39
No	64	61
Q6. Do husbands go to prostitutes?		
Yes	4	4
No	96	96
Q7. Do husbands have right to extramarital sex without wife interfering?		
Yes	37	45
No	63	58
Q8. Do wives have right to disapprove husband's extramarital activities?		
Yes	24	25
No	76	75

Husbands' and wives' rights

On the question of husbands' rights, 37 per cent of the urban and 42 per cent of the rural women who answered the question on whether the husband has a right to sex without wives' interference, said yes; only one-quarter of men responded in this way to a similar question. However, 42 per cent of the urban women and 25 per cent of the rural ones who answered positively would concede such rights to the men only when the wife is pregnant or nursing a baby, while 42 per cent of the urban women and 49 per cent of the rural women would allow the husband such rights to boost his ego. In addition, 14 per cent of urban and 19 per cent of the rural women would concede such rights to men if there was deliberate sexual deprivation by wives. The majority of women who responded that husbands have no such right believed that the denial of such rights was necessary to keep the marriage intact, and to avoid husbands being infected with disease.

Although nearly two-fifths of the urban women and 45 per cent of the rural women would not interfere in their husband's extramarital affairs, about one-quarter would disapprove. The distribution of the responses indicates that the association between wives' disapproval of husbands' extramarital affairs and the characteristics of the women was significant in respect of age and occupation in the rural areas. The association between these characteristics and husbands' rights to extramarital affairs without the wives' interference was highly significant for education, occupation and type of union. The three characteristics are closely correlated. Most educated women are likely to be in white-collar occupations, and are far more likely to be in monogamous unions than the less educated ones.

Mothers' rights: sons

Traditionally, Yoruba mothers have the right to exert control over the behaviour of their sons and daughters, including sexual behaviour. If anything goes wrong with the child, the mother takes the blame. It is a common adage that the successful children belong to the father, while the unsuccessful ones become the responsibility of the mother. In an attempt to understand the extent to which parents exert control over their sons' sexual behaviour, a series of questions was asked of all mothers with adolescent sons.

A majority of mothers with adolescent sons, 79 per cent in the urban and 66 per cent in the rural areas, believed that their sons were sexually active, while 75 per cent of urban and 85

per cent of rural mothers whose sons were sexually active had attempted some control, as had 77 per cent of urban and 83 per cent of rural fathers. The controls were mere scolding and advice against immoral behaviour. Most of the respondents reported that their sons had taken notice of both the mothers' and the fathers' admonitions. Nearly one-tenth of mothers with adolescent sons in urban areas and four per cent of rural mothers with adolescent sons believed that their sons go to prostitutes. Although earlier research in Nigeria showed higher levels of premarital sexual activity among single males than females (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell 1991), there was evidence that most boys start their sexual activities with girls of their own age, mostly schoolmates or girlfriends rather than prostitutes (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell 1993). It appears that the situation has not changed rapidly.

The majority of the respondents would be sad, ashamed and angry about their adolescent sons' visits to prostitutes. However, if their sons visited prostitutes, most mothers would resort to mere warnings, about one-tenth would tell the sons specifically about the dangers of STDs and AIDS and another one-tenth would pray for the sons, leave the matter for the father to decide, or do nothing.

It seems that most mothers attempted some kind of control over the sexual behaviour of their sons, but this may not be effective, since not all the sons took any notice, and there were no effective penalties for straying sons. The controls may limit but not halt the risk of STDs and AIDS in the society.

Respondents' attitudes to prostitution

Earlier research (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell 1994) had examined the growth, the social and health implications, and the economics of the sex industry in Nigeria. It was found that the majority of the prostitutes in most Nigerian cities were single, and better educated than the average for their age-group in the community; more than half had borne children, most of whom were back in their home towns being looked after by the prostitutes' mothers with financial support provided by the prostitutes' earnings. Most prostitutes retained their anonymity from their relatives and home town, and no one back home knew what they were doing in town. The women are not expected to tell people what they do, and people do not ask. However, most prostitutes, after their sojourn in the cities, return to their home town, where they get married and establish lucrative businesses.

It is true that many parents do not know what their sons and daughters do for a living while in the cities. Although many parents do not bother to ask such questions, those who care to ask hardly receive genuine answers. The survey therefore asked all the respondents hypothetical questions about what their attitudes would be if they found out that their daughters were earning a good income from commercial sex. As expected, an overwhelming majority would be sad, or ashamed or astonished about such news; 2 per cent of the urban and 3 per cent of the rural respondents would be indifferent; only 2 per cent of urban and 3 per cent of rural respondents would be delighted. Although one-quarter of respondents believed that prostitution is better than being unemployed, only 6 per cent would receive money or gifts from such daughters. Less than one-fifth would be proud of their daughters or feel delighted if they came back to set up a business in their home town or village, while the majority would be confused, ashamed, sad and astonished. Nevertheless, one-third of all the respondents believed that, after all, such daughters would probably make a good marriage. There were no significant differences in the responses to all the questions according to the characteristics of the respondents.

The society recognizes that emphasis on premarital chastity is no longer possible. Although the society may condone high levels of non-marital sexual activity among single males, it would condemn female prostitution because it is immoral and dangerous for the persons involved and the society. Parents may have no control over their daughters who

choose to become prostitutes because the determining factors are largely individual; those involved are determined to make their way in the world, and may not be influenced by the accusation that it is an immoral way of life (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell 1994). The current economic difficulties of many families, and the high rate of unemployment among school leavers, may make it almost impossible to limit the entry of young women into commercial sex.

The AIDS situation has become dangerous in Nigeria because the number of HIV-positive persons is increasing. In June 1994, about 1,450 full-blown AIDS cases had been detected and there are apprehensions that about 650,000 people in Nigeria may well be HIV-positive by now. It has also been firmly established that the AIDS epidemic has reached an alarming rate among prostitutes working in major Nigerian cities.

Conclusion

The research program on men's sexual behaviour has revealed that although their extramarital sexual activity is still largely taken for granted, an increasing number of men and women now believe that one woman is sufficient for a man at a given time and over a lifetime, to protect the marriage and for the sake of dignity. Fears of STDs and AIDS were also frequently mentioned: these are reasonable fears, given the current level of STD (Erwin 1993) and HIV/AIDS infection in the society. The need for men to have sexual variation, and the assumed polygynous nature of man were the two main reasons that men cannot be satisfied with one woman. Extramarital relations during the wife's postpartum abstinence are no longer important, because of the rising level of contraception and the rapid decline in the duration of breastfeeding and postpartum abstinence (Orubuloye et al. 1993). It is generally believed that men are biologically different from women in their need for sex, and that a man should have unlimited sexual freedom but a woman is expected to have only one partner.

Wives' inhibitions about trying to control their husbands' sexual behaviour are gradually disappearing with advances in education. Although wives were almost equally divided on the right of husbands to extramarital affairs, a significant proportion of wives had attempted some control of their husbands. Parents' attempt to control their children's behaviour was universal; however, there are probable inhibitions on parents' control of daughters who choose to become prostitutes, because of economic difficulties, and unemployment among young school leavers.

Certainly, the double standards on male and female sexual behaviour will diminish with increased access to education and the popular trend towards monogamous unions. The change will not be immediate. The current threats of STDs and AIDS demand urgent intervention strategies that will reduce males' extramarital sexual activity, and enhance women's ability to control their bodies and to refuse sex with unfaithful husbands. Women are getting more support from relatives in refusing sex to drunken husbands and husbands anxious to shorten their wives' postpartum abstinence period to unacceptable levels (Orubuloye et al. 1993). The church, the community and the Nigerian women's movement have important roles to play in promoting the rights of women through educational campaigns on this matter, as the latter has recently done in the case of clitoridectomy.

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