Factors Associated with Sexual Abstinence among Adolescents in Four Sub-Saharan African Countries

Caroline W. Kabiru & Alex Ezeh

African Population and Health Research Center. Shelter Afrique Center, 2nd Floor Longonot Road, Upper Hill. P. O. Box 10787, 00100 _ G.P.O. Nairobi, Kenya

*For Correspondence: Phone: +254-20-2720400/1/2

Abstract

Drawing on nationally representative data collected from Burkinabé, Ghanaian, Malawian, and Ugandan adolescents, this study examines differences among four groups of never married, 15-19 year olds: primary abstainers (sexually inexperienced), secondary abstainers (last sex more than 12 months prior to the survey), recent abstainers (sexually active in last year but not in the last 3 months), and sexually active (had sexual intercourse in the last 3 months). The percentage of primary abstinent adolescents ranged from 42% (Malawian males) to 85% (Ghanaian males). In general, a greater proportion of females than males were primary abstainers. Primary abstainers were younger than sexually experienced adolescents. Current involvement in a romantic relationship was a significant predictor of sexual status with primary abstainers being the least likely to be romantically involved. Overall, findings suggest that adolescents' gender, prior sexual experiences and contextual circumstances, such as romantic partnerships, should be considered when designing abstinence promotion programs.

Keywords: Adolescents, Sexual abstinence, Sexual activity, Sub-Saharan Africa

References