

This study examines the regional variation and correlates of socio-economic and demographic variables of age at first birth among adolescents in Nigeria. We use data from the baseline survey of the VISION Project conducted by MEASURE Evaluation through Centre For Research, Evaluation Resources and Development in 15 local government areas of three states from the three major regions in Nigeria – North, South East and South West. Adolescents were identified as individuals between 10-19 years. Within this age group, 768 (12.2% males, and 87.8% females) adolescents reported first birth at the mean age of 16.3 years (15.9 years in Bauchi, 16.7 years in Enugu and 17.2 in Oyo). Ages were re-grouped into three categories; less than 14 years, 14-16 and 17-19 years. The highest concentration of births is in the age group 14-16 years in Bauchi (53.2), 17-19 years in Enugu (55.3%) and Oyo State (70.4%). We correlate socio-economic variables including educational status, work status, marital status, ever use and current use of family planning methods, and fertility intention among adolescents across the regions.

Problem under study

Despite the incipient fertility reduction in many African countries, Nigeria remains a high fertility country. Although, the Nigeria Demographic and Health survey reported a modest decline in total fertility rates from 6.3 in 1981/1982 to 6.0 in 1990 and 5.7 in 2003, the rate is still high. A major contributing factor to the high fertility regime is the early onset of sexuality with poor knowledge and utilization of family planning methods. The early onset of sexual initiation, age at first marriage and acceptability of family planning methods depend on socio-cultural and economic factors (Kokole, 1994; Tan and Tey, 1994). Adolescent fertility behaviour, as a major contributing factor to high fertility in Nigeria can therefore be understood in the context of regional variation in Nigeria.

Objectives

The main objective of this is to examine regional variation in adolescent fertility across the three major ethnic regions in the country. The study further tries to explain how adolescent fertility behaviour has been a major contributing factor to the persistently high levels of fertility behaviour in Nigeria.

Data used

We used data from the baseline survey of the VISION Project conducted by MEASURE Evaluation through Centre For Research, Evaluation Resources and Development in 2002. Three states from the three major regions in Nigeria –

(North, South East and South West) were sampled during the survey. Five local government each was selected from the three states. In all, a total of 768 cases were used for analysis.

Results

Adolescents were identified as individuals between 10-19 years. Within this age group, 768 (12.2% males, and 87.8% females) adolescents reported first birth at the mean age of 16.3 years (15.9 years in Bauchi, 16.7 years in Enugu and 17.2 in Oyo). Ages were re-grouped into three categories; less than 14 years, 14-16 and 17-19 years. The highest concentration of births is in the age group 14-16 years in Bauchi (53.2), 17-19 years in Enugu (55.3%) and Oyo State (70.4%). We correlate socio-economic variables including educational status, work status, marital status, ever use and current use of family planning methods, and fertility intention among adolescents across the regions.

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