

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH IN KENYA

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Summary. This paper examines factors that may predispose unmarried and unemployed out-of-school youth to risky sexual behaviour. Data for analysis were derived from the Behaviour Surveillance Survey carried out in Kenya in late 2002. A total of 6129 male and female unmarried and unemployed out-of-school youth in the age range 15–24 years were successfully interviewed. However, for this paper only a sample of 3961 comprising sexually experienced youth in the 12 months preceding the survey was used. Methods of analysis included descriptive statistics and multinomial logistic regression. Results for males indicate that factors associated with low and high risk were whether they had fathered a child, district of residence and frequency of alcohol use, while current age and age at first sexual debut stood out for those with low risk alone. For females the district of residence and age of partner at sexual debut were the factors that predisposed them to low-risk sexual behaviour, while for high risk the district of residence, current age and ever being pregnant were significant. The results indicate that for these youth, contextual and probably social factors appear to be the main determinants of risky sexual behaviour for both males and females. The findings also support those of other studies that link risky sexual behaviour among youth, especially males, to alcohol consumption. Programmes for intervention therefore need to focus on these aspects. There is also a need for studies that can look at district-specific factors for more focused interventions.

Introduction

Sexual debut for most people occurs during their teenage years. Sexual experience in young people has been estimated in a number of countries: at a mean age of 15–17 years many young people have experienced first sexual intercourse. It has been estimated that 53% of young people in Greenland and 38% in Denmark experienced their first sexual debut at age 15 (Werdelin & Olsen, 1992). In Kenya too, sexual

activity among young people begins early. According to the latest Kenya Demographic and Health Survey that took place in 2003, eight out of ten young people have had sex before the age of 20 (Central Bureau of Statistics *et al.*, 2004). This high level of sexual activity is associated with risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, unsafe abortion, economic hardship and school dropout.

Coupled with this is partner turnover among this group (Billy & Klepinger, 1993). This is not only true for the number of casual partners, but also for those relationships perceived to be regular and monogamous (Rosenthal *et al.*, 1990). Although these serially monogamous relationships may be of short duration, their regular status gives them a sense of false security that they are safe from contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Rosenthal & Breumen, 1990). In other words, unprotected sex is not perceived as risky because the partner is regular or non-commercial as opposed to the partner being casual or commercial. Hence unprotected sex occurs with multiple partners, but the cumulative risk is rendered invisible by the apparent monogamy and commitment of each discrete relationship (UNAIDS, 1997). Moreover, young people are more likely to initiate sex without protection against STIs or pregnancy. It is therefore necessary for studies to look at factors that predispose young people to risky sexual behaviour as outlined above.

The paper draws from psycho-social theories that have attempted to explain the behaviour of young people. Hall (1904) and Erikson (1968, 1974) saw adolescence as a universal stage of turmoil and confusion that one has to pass through *en route* to a more balanced adulthood. This portrays the youth as people who are characterized by patterns of thinking in which immediate needs tend to take priority over long-term implications and initiation of behaviours that may be perpetuated over a lifetime (WHO, 1996). These views have, however, been questioned by writers who have argued that the problems and conflicts associated with youth as a stage of life are as much a consequence of the economic and social organization of society in general that motivates them to begin having sex at an early age (Mead, 1928). Hence, for Mead and her followers, the problems of youth are cultural constructions with their origin in history, the economy and societal arrangements that deny them opportunities and refuse to take their perspectives and experiences seriously (Mead, 1928). Some aspects of this environment are universal in that they are linked to the very nature of being a young person and include rapid and uneven physical, psychological and social growth and development and the onset of sexuality that is often combined with a lack of knowledge and skills with which to make healthy and informed choices (Gypi-Garbrah, 1985; Furguson, 1988; Youn, 1996). In summary, it can be said that the behaviour of young people in general increases their vulnerability to risky sexual behaviour. However, in the era of HIV/AIDS for there to be meaningful interventions, eliciting the factors that make them sexually reckless is desirable.

In Kenya, where 36% of the population is aged 10–24 years, the median age at sexual debut increased from 16.5 in 1998 to 17.8 in 2003 (Central Bureau of Statistics *et al.*, 2004). However, for data used in this study, the median age at sexual debut is 16 years for both males and females. Clinical and behavioural research has found an elevated risk associated with early age at first sexual intercourse and sexual health. It has been hypothesized that an earlier age at first sexual debut is likely to lead to an

increased likelihood of multiple and concurrent partners, lower probability of using modern contraceptive methods and an increased chance of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases including HIV (Gueye *et al.*, 2001). Research from a variety of settings indicate that early sexual debut in most cases is a result of sexual coercion and peer influence (Youri, 1994; Kiragu & Zabin, 1995; Nzioka, 2001; Erulkar, 2004). Studies on unwanted first intercourse suggest that those who experienced coerced or forced intercourse are less likely to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies or STIs in the future and more likely to have multiple sexual partners (Gueye *et al.*, 2001). The number of sexual partners has also been associated with the risk of contracting STIs including HIV/AIDS (Zulu *et al.*, 2002).

Social, economic and contextual settings have also been shown to play a key role in risky sexual behaviour among the youth. The study based on data collected in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 1999 and 2001 showed that high-risk sexual behaviour among youth was predominantly determined by social factors such as ever pregnant or ever made pregnant, ever given something for sex, age of sexual partner, currently in school, pressured by friends to have sex, peer influence on safe sex, and education level for males (Zambuko & Mturi, 2005). Other studies that have not used direct measures of economic status have shown that women's economic needs often explain such activities as those of commercial sex workers and liaisons between adolescents and older male partners (Zulu *et al.*, 2002). While economic reasons may play a major role in risky sexual behaviour among young women, for young men, the urge to have sex and curiosity play a role in risky behaviour (Okafor, 2005).

Alcohol use can also fuel the HIV epidemic by increasing risky sexual behaviour. A study in Rwanda found that young people aged 15–24 who consumed alcohol were less likely to abstain from sex. In another study of young adolescents in Jamaica, those who had experimented with alcohol were 2.4 times more likely than those who had not consumed alcohol to say they had unprotected sexual intercourse (UNFPA, 2003). The majority of studies that have linked alcohol consumption and risky sexual behaviour have been carried out in the developed world and among high school or college students (Cooper, 2002).

This paper is hence an attempt to contribute to studies that have examined factors that predispose young people to risky sexual behaviour. The objectives of the paper were threefold: to examine factors that predispose unmarried out-of-school youth to risky sexual behaviour; to assess whether the factors are different for males and females; and to determine whether there are contextual and social differences in risky sexual behaviour.

Data and Methods

Data source

The paper is based on data gathered from the Behaviour Surveillance Survey (BSS) held in all eight provinces of Kenya in late 2002. The aim of the survey was to monitor and track high-risk sexual behaviours in selected targeted populations such as youth in and out of school, female sex workers, women in low-income settings,

Table 1. Distribution of the response variable (risky sexual behaviour) for males and females

	Males		Females	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
No risk	883	41.2	820	51.4
Low risk	272	12.8	168	10.5
High risk	989	46.0	607	38.1
Total	2144	100.0	1595	100.0

mini-van (commonly known as *matatu*) drivers and their touts, bicycle taxi cyclists (commonly known as *boda boda*), policemen and men on large worksites (e.g. flower industries, sugar industries etc.). The survey questions focused on the main behaviours that put people at risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections such as number of sexual partners, unprotected sex etc. This paper focuses on out-of-school, unemployed and unmarried youth aged between 15 and 24 years. The choice of this data set is as a result of the sample size of the targeted population. In most data sets, including even the Demographic and Health Surveys, it is not possible to have a sample of such size for this population category.

A structured questionnaire was successfully administered to 6129 youths (2890 males and 3239 females) drawn from areas around antenatal sentinel surveillance sites in ten districts. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. For this paper a sample of 3961 sexually active youth was utilized. However, 222 cases (5.6% of the sub-sample) were deleted before the analysis because they were missing necessary information for creating the response variable. The final data set analysed comprised 2144 males and 1595 females.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable was risky sexual behaviour in the past twelve months. It has three categories: no risk, low risk and high risk. These were created by combining categories of various variables. The full description of how this composite variable was created is as follows. 'No risk' refers to those who stated that they were sexually experienced but they had no sex in the reference period (12 months prior to the survey). 'Low risk' refers to those who stated they had sex in the past 12 months with no commercial sex partner but had sex with one or two non-commercial sex partners and always used a condom. 'High risk' refers to those who had sex with one or more commercial sex partners whether they used a condom or not. In addition, the youth who had sex with non-commercial sex partner(s) with sporadic use of condoms or no use of condom at all, were included in this category. Table 1 presents the frequency distributions in each category for males and females. The table shows that youth in the low-risk category are fewer than those in the other two categories.

Independent variables

The selected variables that might be associated with risky sexual behaviour among unmarried out-of-school youth in Kenya include individual, demographic, social and contextual variables such as age of respondent, age at first sex, district of residence, level of education, ever pregnant, ever fathered child, age of partner at first sexual debut, frequency of alcohol use and circumcision status. The variables have been selected in accordance with what has been stated in the literature regarding their influence on the dependent variable (risky sexual behaviour).

Current age of respondent shows the exposure period within the age group while age at sexual debut gives an indication of the onset of sexual intercourse. District signifies the culture- and context-specific aspects that may expose individuals to risky sexual behaviour, while religion is a proxy for societal values governing indulgence in sexual activities. Education is a proxy for knowledge. Age of partner at first sex has featured prominently in the literature on sexual coercion and sex for gifts for female youth, while alcohol use has been associated with indiscriminate sexual behaviour. Circumcision has been used as a rite of passage to adulthood and depending on where, how and when it is carried out may influence onset of indiscriminate sexual behaviour. Being pregnant or fathering a child are used here as proxies for indulging in unprotected sex.

Results

Descriptive analysis

The distribution of risky sexual behaviour by explanatory variables is presented in Tables 2 and 3 for males and females respectively. Tests of significance are based on χ^2 tests. The results indicate that the socio-demographic factors that had a significant association with risky sexual behaviour for males were district of residence, current age of respondent, age at first sexual debut, religion, level of education, circumcision status, having fathered a child and alcohol use. However, age of partner at first sex had a weak association. For females the factors that had association were district of residence, level of education, alcohol use, having been pregnant and age of partner at first sex. Looking at the degree of risk, for both males and females it is observed that older age, early age at sexual debut, alcohol consumption, ever having been pregnant and having fathered a child were all associated with high-risk sexual behaviour. Some districts of residence (Thika, Machakos, Mombasa, Nandi, Suba, Kakamega and Busia) were also associated with high-risk sexual behaviour for males, while only Busia was associated with high-risk sexual behaviour for females. Garissa district had the least risk for both males and females. This could be linked to religion as the majority of the population in this district belong to the Islamic faith, and those in the Muslim category, for both males and females, had low-risk sexual behaviour. The Islamic faith has been known to have strict sanctions against those who indulge in pre-marital sexual activities, especially for females.

Multinomial logistic regression

The analysis was done separately for males and females. The results for the multivariate analysis presented in Tables 4 and 5 confirm the results observed in the

Table 2. The percentage distribution of sexually experienced out-of-school male youth in Kenya by risky sexual behaviour

Variable	Category	Risky sexual behaviour				N
		None	Low	High	Total	
Age of respondent	15–17	47.7	8.8	43.5	100.0	285
	18–20	41.2	12.8	46.0	100.0	1038
	21–24	38.9	13.9	47.3	100.0	821
Age at first sex	<15	39.5	11.1	49.4	100.0	633
	15–19	41.1	13.5	45.4	100.0	1324
	20–24	47.1	18.8	34.1	100.0	85
District	Unspecified	48.0	6.9	45.1	100.0	102
	Nairobi	43.6	12.9	43.6	100.0	225
	Thika	37.5	7.7	54.8	100.0	272
	Machakos	39.7	9.6	50.7	100.0	302
	Garissa	73.2	5.6	21.1	100.0	71
	Mombasa	44.5	9.2	46.2	100.0	238
	Nakuru	53.2	10.5	36.3	100.0	237
	Nandi	37.2	14.1	48.7	100.0	269
	Suba	35.7	15.4	48.9	100.0	272
	Kakamega	30.1	25.0	44.9	100.0	136
Religion	Busia	33.6	23.0	43.4	100.0	122
	Protestant	42.8	13.6	43.6	100.0	1132
	Catholic	35.5	13.0	51.5	100.0	679
	Muslim	50.9	8.3	40.7	100.0	216
Level of education	Other	40.2	10.3	49.6	100.0	117
	Primary	41.5	11.0	47.5	100.0	1291
	Secondary	40.1	15.4	44.4	100.0	810
Age of partner at first sex	Unspecified	51.2	11.6	37.2	100.0	43
	<15	39.6	13.7	47.7	100.0	39
	15–19	42.4	12.7	43.9	100.0	988
	20+	32.6	20.9	46.5	100.0	314
Age of partner at first sex	Unspecified	41.2	12.7	46.1	100.0	803
	<15	39.6	13.7	47.7	100.0	39
	15–19	42.4	12.7	43.9	100.0	988
	20+	32.6	20.9	46.5	100.0	314
Alcohol use	Unspecified	41.2	12.7	46.1	100.0	803
	Non-drinkers	26.6	12.4	61.0	100.0	1588
Circumcised	Drinkers	46.3	12.8	40.9	100.0	556
	Yes	41.6	11.6	46.8	100.0	1691
Ever fathered a child	No	39.7	16.6	43.7	100.0	453
	Yes	17.5	11.7	70.8	100.0	308
	No	43.4	13.1	43.4	100.0	1736
Total	Unspecified	41.2	12.7	46.1	100.0	100
		41.2	12.7	46.1	100.0	2144

Source: Kenya 2002 Behavioural Surveillance Survey.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of sexually experienced out-of-school female youth in Kenya by risky sexual behaviour

Variable	Category	Risky sexual behaviour				N
		None	Low	High	Total	
Age of respondent	15–17	47.3	8.9	43.8	100.0	338
	18–20	52.3	11.3	36.5	100.0	746
	21–24	52.8	10.6	36.6	100.0	511
Age at first sex	<15	49.6	8.4	42.0	100.0	262
	15–19	50.9	11.2	37.9	100.0	1156
	20–24	55.0	10.8	34.2	100.0	120
District	Unspecified	63.2	5.3	31.6	100.0	57
	Nairobi	56.3	10.7	33.0	100.0	197
	Thika	54.6	4.9	40.5	100.0	185
	Machakos	50.6	8.0	41.4	100.0	251
	Garissa	75.0	10.0	15.0	100.0	20
	Mombasa	45.3	10.6	44.1	100.0	161
	Nakuru	56.6	8.2	35.2	100.0	196
	Nandi	53.5	9.7	36.8	100.0	258
	Suba	47.8	13.0	39.1	100.0	115
	Kakamega	45.1	24.5	30.4	100.0	102
	Busia	39.1	16.4	44.5	100.0	110
Religion	Protestant	51.9	10.3	37.8	100.0	929
	Catholic	50.2	11.7	38.1	100.0	528
	Muslim	52.7	7.5	39.8	100.0	93
	Other	53.3	6.7	40.0	100.0	45
Level of education	Primary	49.9	13.5	32.5	100.0	975
	Secondary+	54.0	11.5	19.2	100.0	576
	Unspecified	69.2	4.5	43.2	100.0	44
Age of partner at first sex	<15	58.9	7.1	33.9	100.0	56
	15–19	49.9	13.5	36.6	100.0	523
	20+	51.5	8.8	39.6	100.0	908
	Unspecified					8
Alcohol use	Drinkers	38.4	19.2	42.4	100.0	151
	Non-drinkers	52.6	9.7	37.7	100.0	1421
	Unspecified	65.2	4.3	30.4	100.0	23
Circumcised	Yes	56.1	7.3	36.6	100.0	205
	No	50.7	11.0	38.3	100.0	1390
Ever been pregnant	Yes	52.3	5.3	42.4	100.0	761
	No	49.1	15.7	35.2	100.0	784
	Unspecified	74.0	10.0	16.0	100.0	50
Total		51.4	10.5	38.1	100.0	1595

Source: Kenya 2002 Behavioural Surveillance Survey.

bivariate analysis. The parsimonious multinomial logistic model for male youth is given in Table 4. Five variables were found to be significant for low risk and three

Table 4. The parsimonious multinomial logistic model of sexually experienced male youth in Kenya having low risk and high risk as compared with those with no risk

Variable	Category	Low risk	High risk
Age at first sex	<15	2.37*	—
	15–19	RC	—
	20–24	2.17	—
	Unspecified	3.02*	—
Ever fathered a child	Yes	RC	RC
	No	5.11**	15.00**
	Unspecified	2.70*	4.20**
Current age	15–17	RC	—
	18–20	0.60*	—
	21–24	0.97	—
District	Nairobi	RC	RC
	Thika	0.43*	0.76
	Machakos	0.31**	1.16
	Garissa	0.37**	1.10
	Mombasa	0.14**	0.33**
	Nakuru	0.33**	0.88
	Nandi	0.30**	0.54*
	Suba	0.57	1.11
	Kakamega	0.78	1.52
Alcohol use	Non drinkers	0.61**	0.40**
	Drinkers	RC	RC

Source: Kenya 2002 Behavioural Surveillance Survey.

*Significant at 0.05 level; **significant at 0.01 level.

RC, reference category.

for high risk when compared with no risk. It should be noted that all those variables that are significant at high risk were also significant at low risk. Male's age at first sex was associated with low-risk behaviour. Those youth who initiated sex before age 15 were 2.4 times more likely to be at low risk than those who initiated sex at age 15–19. Youth who were in the age group 20–24 were not significantly different to those aged 15–19. Current age was also found to be associated with low-risk sexual behaviour. The probable reasons for these findings could be that those who initiated sex earlier may also be those who adhere to behaviour change messages due to the consequences of early sexual debut. Given that the data set cannot support these explanations, there is a need for studies that could show the sequencing of events that may have led to such findings. The results also show that youth aged 18–20 were less likely to indulge in low-risk sexual behaviour than those aged 15–17. It can be concluded that youth need to be encouraged to delay initiation of sexual activities and avoid being sexually active until they are old enough to make wise decisions on their sexual activities.

Table 5. The parsimonious multinomial logistic model of sexually experienced female youth in Kenya having low risk and high risk as compared with those with no risk

Variable	Category	Low risk	High risk
Ever been pregnant	Yes	—	RC
	No	—	3.20**
	Unspecified	—	2.76*
Current age	15–17	—	RC
	18–20	—	1.40*
	21–24	—	1.02
District	Nairobi	RC	RC
	Thika	0.43*	0.55
	Machakos	0.21**	0.71
	Garissa	0.38**	0.74
	Mombasa	0.34	0.28
	Nakuru	0.54	0.90
	Nandi	0.34**	0.59*
	Suba	0.43*	0.62
	Kakamega	0.65	0.70
	Busia	1.29	0.61
Age of partner at first sex	<15	1.49*	—
	15–19	RC	—
	20+	0.67	—

Source: Kenya 2002 Behavioural Surveillance Survey.

*Significant at 0.05 level; **significant at 0.01 level.

RC, reference category.

It is striking to note that male youth who never fathered a child were more likely to indulge in risky sexual behaviour than their counterparts who were fathers. This could possibly be explained by the fact that those who may have experienced this event were more likely to avoid risky sexual behaviours because they were aware of the consequences. As expected, alcohol usage was found to be associated with risky sexual behaviour. Alcohol users were more likely to be involved in both low- and high-risk sexual behaviours than male youth who reported that they did not drink alcohol. Alcohol use is known to affect thinking and reasoning, and sometimes people do things (like getting involved in risky sexual activities) that they regret afterwards.

District of residence was also associated with risky sexual behaviour. Using Nairobi as a reference category, it was found that male youth residing in Thika, Machakos, Garissa, Mombasa, Nakuru and Nandi districts were less likely to indulge in low-risk behaviour. Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya and as such highly cosmopolitan and hence this finding is expected. The districts of Suba, Kakamega and Busia were not significantly different from Nairobi. Whilst district was still significant for the high-risk results, and in the same direction as the low risk results, it was found that only two districts (Mombasa and Nandi) were significantly different from Nairobi. Although Mombasa is also somewhat cosmopolitan (high tourist population), its situation can be explained by the fact that the majority of people in this

district are Muslims who are known to be very strict with regard to the sexual behaviour of unmarried youth. The majority of unemployed and unmarried out-of-school youth from rural districts tend to migrate to Nairobi in search of employment and greener pasture. This may expose them to risky sexual behaviour and make them vulnerable to sexual exploitation (especially for young women).

The multinomial logistic models for female youth are presented in Table 5. The district of residence remained significant for both low- and high-risk results. Although the significance of female youth residing in Mombasa disappeared, the difference between Nandi and Nairobi persisted. The age of partner at first sex was also found to be significant. Female youth who had a partner at first sex who was under 15 years old were 1.5 times more likely to be involved in low-risk behaviour than those who had partners aged 15–19. This finding was in line with what was found for male youth. The only difference was that for males it was their own age at first sex whereas for females it was the age of their partners. It should be emphasized, therefore, that age at sexual debut for both girls and boys needs to be postponed to at least their mid-teens.

It seems that there is a contradiction in Table 5 suggesting that female youth aged 18–20 were more likely to indulge in high-risk behaviour than those aged 15–17. This could possibly be explained by the fact that at age 18–20, many female youth think about marriage and hence they would be more likely to do things that will put them in the high-risk category, or since they were unemployed and unmarried they may become easy prey for sexual exploitation. The experience of being pregnant or not was related to risky sexual behaviour. The finding that female youth who were never pregnant were more likely to indulge in high-risk sexual behaviour than those who were ever pregnant was the same as in the case of male youth who were fathers. A similar explanation can be given that female youth who had the experience of being pregnant while unmarried would be careful next time around because they would not like to have the same experience again in a hurry. These could be viewed as protective factors for these youth.

Discussion

This analysis has shown that district of residence is a significant factor in all the models fitted. Out-of-school youth residing in Nairobi were more likely to indulge in risky sexual behaviour compared with those residing in the rural districts. Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya and hence the hub of the unemployed and unmarried youth from the rural areas searching for employment or greener pastures. The majority of these youth end up in slum settlements since in most cases they work in the informal sector where wages are generally low. These findings are consistent with other similar studies. In the study by Zulu *et al.* (2003) it is observed that unemployment and inadequate wages among the unemployed youth in slum settlements restricts their ability to meet personal and familial obligations leading to economic desperation (especially among women), which in turn leads to reliance on sexual relations and favours to make ends meet. Brokerhoff & Biddlecom (1999), using 1993 Kenya Demographic and Health survey (KDHS) data, found that migrants from rural areas to urban areas are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour than non-migrants. Further, in Kenya, as in many other African countries, the socio-cultural context in

which young men and women find themselves has changed immensely over the past generations. Social turmoil resulting from conflicting values as the country becomes more urbanized characterizes aspects of their socialization such as sexual behaviour and pregnancy (Kiragu & Zabin, 1995). For instance, it is known that traditional family values that restrict sexual behaviours of youth are more eroded in cities than in the rural settings.

Age variables have been found to be associated with risky sexual behaviour for both male and female models. Whilst younger male youth (15–17) were more vulnerable to risky sexual behaviour than their older counterparts, for female youth it was the age group 18–20 that was at high risk. Age at first sex for males and age of partner at first sex for females were also found to be significant. In other words, male youth who initiated sex when they were under age 15 were more likely to be involved in risky sexual behaviour, and so were female youth who initiated sex with a partner who was over 20 years old.

Two more variables were found to be related to risky sexual behaviour: alcohol use and ever fathered a child (males) or ever been pregnant (females). It is well documented that alcohol usage influences people, and especially youth, to indulge in behaviours that they would not have done if they were sober. Alcohol use was associated with non-use or sporadic use of condoms and involvement with casual sex, resulting in multiple sexual partners and dealing with commercial sex workers. The legal minimum age for drinking alcohol in Kenya is 18 years, but the problem is how effective it is. Reinforcement of this law will go a long way in making sure that youth stay sober. There is also a need to educate youth about the negative effects of drinking alcohol, such as getting involved in risky sexual behaviour. The relationship between ever fathered a child/ever been pregnant can be in both directions: influencing or discouraging risky sexual behaviour. It influences risky sexual behaviour because it means those youth were not using any protection and were hence exposed to infections. Conversely, it is also true that those youth may have suffered dire consequences, and hence were more careful. The Kenyan experience follows the later. The policy implication for this finding is that the youth who have been transformed from having bad experiences to avoiding risky sexual behaviour could be used as peer educators to inform others who may not be aware of such experiences.

Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to examine factors that may predispose unmarried and unemployed out-of-school youth to risky sexual behaviour in Kenya. It was found that the four major factors were: district of residence, age at sexual debut, use of alcohol, and ever fathered/ever being pregnant. However, ever fathered/ever being pregnant was found to be a protective factor, whilst the others were predisposing factors. These findings have a number of policy implications. Since the youth who had fathered a child or who had been pregnant are less likely to indulge in risky sexual behaviour, this finding suggests that there is a need to involve them in behaviour change and communication programmes as change agents. In other words these youth could be used as peer educators since their negative experience may have made them aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviours.

There is a need to reinforce the law and advocacy programmes emphasizing the dangers of alcohol consumption, especially its association with risky sexual behaviour. However, this is unlikely to work if punitive measures are not taken against people involved in supplying alcohol and other intoxicating substances to the youth. The study suggests that one of the options for the youth would be to avoid being involved with premarital sex altogether, but it is known that this is not a preferred option by many youth. The findings indicate that there is a need for age- and gender-based sex information and education programmes for out-of-school youth that is sensitive to the diverse socio-cultural landscape in Kenya.

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