

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the socio-cultural and economic factors that explain premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents. Specifically, the study attempts to: 1. investigate the role of parents and other family members in providing counseling and guidance to the adolescents on sexual matters; 2. identify the kind of knowledge and information that adolescents have about sexual behaviour; 3. identify common mass media information with which adolescents identify in relation to sexual behaviour; 4. identify economic favours which predispose adolescents to pre-marital sex, and, finally; 5. investigate the role of the community leaders in providing counseling and guidance to the adolescents on sexual behaviour. Pre-marital sexual behaviour among adolescents in this study is explained within the context of two theoretical frameworks: symbolic interaction and socialization theory. The study used qualitative research methodology. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly sampled primary and secondary school students. Additional data were obtained from four focus group discussions with the adolescents and in-depth interviews with eight key informants. Other methods included non-participant observation and a review of ethnographic literature. Study findings suggest that pre-marital sexual behaviour among adolescents can be explained by a combination of socio-cultural and economic factors. The findings indicate that there is minimal interaction in terms of guidance and counseling between adolescents and other family members on sexual matters. Results further suggest that adolescents have misinformed information and knowledge about sexual behaviour. A majority of the adolescents have information which indicates that sexual activity is fun. Findings also indicate that adolescents identify mostly with sex-related messages from the mass media. In addition, economic favours are observed as a driving force towards exposure to sex activity among these adolescents. On the other hand, community leaders and teachers play a minimal role in providing information on sexual behaviour. Based on the study findings, it is strongly recommended that a concerted effort be made among all individuals and groups involved with adolescents at the community level such as the Church, Schools, Parents and Peers to provide accurate sex-related information to the adolescents with a view to making them understand their sexuality in order to make informed decisions.