



An investigation of sexual behaviors among expectant fathers in urban areas

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ABSTRACT

For decades the issue of pregnancy has been thought of as a woman's domain. For this reason, some expectant men not only show little concern but engage in illicit sexual activities or affairs. The study aimed at investigating the sexual behaviors among expectant fathers in urban areas and it focused on the sex seeking behaviors among the same group; the factors influencing the expectant fathers' engaging in affairs during their wives' pregnancies as well as the consequences of the said sexual behaviors. A total of 136 expectant fathers or men participated in the study. The study adopted the descriptive and exploratory research design. Data was collected using a questionnaire and was analyzed using the chi-square statistic and presented using frequencies and percentages. The study found out that age, religion and employment status of the respondents had no effect on the respondent's participation in sexual activities when their wives were expecting.

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Introduction

For decades the issue of pregnancy has been thought of as a woman's domain. Why should a man concern himself? After all, he doesn't have to carry the fetus or give birth. It's hard for people to concede that the expectant father's physical distance from the process of pregnancy brings its own stress and worries. Yet the mere question of paternity can be stressful for men. In this regard, the woman is always certain that the child is hers. Along with her expanding waistline and a host of other changes accompanying pregnancy comes the inalienable right to call this child her own. A man doesn't have that certainty and in many primitive cultures he must fight for his paternity right; it is not given freely.

Paternity issues aside, men's role in pregnancy has a long history of exclusion. According to Rodriguez (2006), in America the advent of the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s had an effect on a great number of people. Not only was this a time when African Americans demanded equal rights; it also served to mobilize all under-represented groups. Women, Latinos, Gays and Native Americans also joined the Civil Rights movement in order to have their opinions and social messages expressed. To a large extent, this movement provided men with an opportunity to move from their role as family breadwinner to the more active heart of the family. It was in this air of revolution that Lamaze classes began and men were invited into the birth process. Men were rescued from the waiting room and given the role of coach; a supporting role indeed but at least they were now more actively involved. It was also at this time that research and literature about expectant fathers began to appear.

The pre-1960s literature was primarily based on psychoanalytic observations of expectant fathers (Blum, 2001). Early reports coined the term "parenthood psychosis" to describe the phenomenon where men suffered severe depressive reactions to their impending fatherhood. Additionally, attention was paid to other psychological events that were occurring within expectant fathers. Few reports painted positive pictures of expectant fathers. Many psychoanalysts stressed the ambivalence fathers harbored towards the fetus, envy that was

geared towards their wives' ability to create a child, and feelings of sibling rivalry the analysts saw as emerging during the prenatal months.

The greater role that expectant fathers were playing in pregnancy and birth starting in the 1960s, however, did not bring complete social approval. Shapiro (2000) recorded observations and conversations with hundreds of expectant and new fathers that revealed what he termed a "cultural double bind." Men are encouraged to participate but are simultaneously made to see themselves as outsiders. Their presence might be requested but their feelings surely are not. This is especially the case if they believe that their feelings of anxiety, anger, sadness, and fear might upset their wives or partners.

Therefore, they sense their feelings as unwelcome. It is just these hidden emotions that result in the deterioration of the parental relationship during pregnancy and after the birth of their child. Being invited to participate in the pregnancy and birth while simultaneously feeling they aren't allowed to get involved in the process is just not enough for developing commitment.

In the majority of the late-pregnancy affairs several important factors are present: - (a) the affairs are with a close friend or relative of the pregnant partner (in one case her sister, and in another, her mother), (b) in each case, the men report being attracted to their partners, and literally stimulated by her pregnant shape regardless of their behavior toward another woman, (c) interviews with these men indicate that they all feel particularly pushed away by the pregnancy and birth process, (d) each of the men in these affairs describes a strong need to talk to someone about their feelings during the pregnancy and (e) the majority of men sexually involved outside of their relationship have no previous sexual affair history.

In addition to the incidence of affairs, other research about expectant father behavior has emphasized their involvement in pregnancy and parenting, their stress levels and common concerns during pregnancy, their readiness to father, a variety of demographic variables about dads, particularly describing their age and length of marriage and couvades symptoms (the simulation of pregnant symptoms in the expectant father).

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Although these studies argue the fine points among themselves, there is consensus about pregnancy being a life crisis marked by stress in men, as well as, women. This crisis can result in monumental growth and contentment for a couple or completely disrupt the harmony and balance of the expectant couple's relationship. The difference in outcome is determined by how you and your partner manage each other's expectations.

The most robust studies of pregnancy, and thoroughly supported by my own research, indicate that the more stress expectant fathers feel, the lower their level of relationship satisfaction. Simultaneously, the higher the level of stress they experience, the lower will be their level of attachment to the unborn baby.

There is also a relationship is between an expectant father's stress level and depression. The higher the level of stress, the more likely he is to become depressed. Looking for a reason for the depression, a man is likely to associate it with the pregnancy and baby. There is overwhelming evidence that men are not immune from pre and postpartum depression. About 10 percent of women suffer postpartum depression. Researchers now suggest the same percentage of new fathers also suffer from it. They may experience dramatic weight gain or loss, difficulty sleeping, sadness, a complete loss of interest in the outside world and difficulty making decisions.

The study aimed at investigating the sexual behaviors among expectant fathers in urban areas. The study focused on the sex seeking behaviors among the same group, the factors influencing the expectant fathers' engaging in affairs during their wives' pregnancies as well as the consequences of the said sexual behaviors.

Methodology

The population of this study comprised husbands of expectant women who were visiting prenatal clinics at the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital. The expectant women visiting the clinics were used to reach their husbands and set the date for administration of the instrument. In total, a population of 136 men was reached within a period of seven (7) months. The research subjects were followed after their pregnancies to find out whether those who had mentioned that they had had an affair had been "caught" and what the consequences were.

The data for the study was collected using a questionnaire whose validity and reliability were checked and found acceptable. A total of 136 respondents were issued the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Sexual Behavior

Of the 134 expectant fathers who participated in this study, a total of 126 respondents attested to the fact that they engaged in sexual activities during their spouses' pregnancy while 5.97 % said they did not.

Of the 126 who said that they engaged in sexual activities, 27 respondents indicated that they engaged in the said activity with their spouses while the rest (78.6%) said that they engaged in those behaviors with people other than their spouses. This was considered by the researchers as extra-marital affairs. Those who engaged in the affairs identified that they were intimately involved with a workmate (23), family friend (29), church mate (9) while the rest (38) were involved with girl friends.

The researchers asked the respondents who had sexual activities with their expectant wives to give reasons for doing so, and some of them indicated love and affection for spouse (18), commitment (4), Christianity (1) while 4 said that they did so to

fulfill their marital duties. The motivation for expectant fathers engaging in sexual activities with women other than their spouses included: adventure (33.3%), stress (21.2%), seeking attention from the partner in the affair (7), prenatal depression (11.1%), peer influence (10.1%), psychological effects of the pregnancy on spouse as well as health conditions of spouse (17.2%). Clearly, a majority are tempted into affairs by the hope that the affair will be adventurous.

The researchers sought to establish how frequently or often the respondents who had sexual relationships with other partners engaged in such sexual activities and the findings were: 21.2% always engaged in such activities, 48.5% said they engaged in those activities sometimes while the rest (29.3%) engaged in those activities occasionally.

When the subject of sexual activities is mentioned, there is an assumption that it refers to a range of activities from regular communication to sex with the other partner. Of the 99 respondents who had an affair, only 6 were "talking friends", 11 communicated regularly with a member of the opposite sex, visiting social places together (8), 32 said that they were intimate but without engaging in sex, while the remainder (44) engaged in sex. Regular communication was through calling, writing and sending of short messages using cell phones as well as e-mails while intimacy without sex involved exchanging of gifts, spending time together, kissing among others. From this finding it is apparent that for most people who have affairs, sex is a major motivator.

The study sought to establish whether the wives of the respondents who had an affair had information that they were or they had been engaging in such sexual activities. A majority of the respondents (83) said that their spouses had no information while 16 said that their spouses had learned about their affair. When asked to mention the consequences of their spouses knowing about the affairs, 37 (44.6%) said that it caused a conflict, 11(13.3%) mentioned that it led to separation, 13 (15.7%) said that the spouse ignored while 22 (26.4%) mentioned that as a consequence, their spouses denied them their conjugal rights.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they would engage in the same behavior in future, 69.7% said that they would while 30.3% said they would not. When asked to give reasons, most of the former group said that as long as they experienced stress as expectant fathers, they would feel compelled to do so while most of the respondents in the latter category said that they had learnt that it was unfair to their spouses.

Age of the Respondent versus Sexual Behavior

The researchers wanted to find out whether age influenced the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities when their spouses were expectant and consequently the null hypothesis H_{01} : Age has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities was tested using the chi-square statistic. The distribution of the respondents was as follows.

Table 1: Age of the respondent versus sexual behavior

Age	Always engages in sex outside marriage	Sometimes engages in sex outside marriage	Never engages in sex outside marriage	Total
<25 yrs	21	11	3	35
26-35 yrs	19	09	0	28
Over 35	24	10	2	36
Total	64	30	5	99

The researcher computed the chi-square observed and obtained a value of 14.730 which was greater than the X^2 critical at $\alpha = 0.05$ and 4 *df* of 9.488 and hence the null hypothesis was accepted implying that age has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities when their spouses were expectant. From the distribution of sexual behavior as a function of age, it was observed that the younger and older respondents tended to engage in illicit sexual behaviors or affairs equally. This is contrary to the expectation in the African setting where the youth would be expected to engage more in such behaviors due to their vulnerability and hedonistic tendencies compared to the older people.

Religion of the respondent versus sexual behavior

The researchers anticipated that the religion of the respondent was likely to affect the perception of issues and the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities, especially the decision not to engage in such activities. The researchers tested the null hypothesis: H_{02} : Respondent's religious affiliation has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities using the chi-square statistic and the results are presented below.

Table 2: Sexual behavior as a function of the respondent's religion

Religion	Always engages in sex outside marriage	Sometimes engages in sex outside marriage	Never engages in sex outside marriage	Total
Catholic	11	15	2	28
Protestant	14	12	7	33
Muslim	9	8	5	22
Others	3	11	2	16
Total	37	46	16	99

When the null hypothesis H_{02} : Respondent's religious affiliation has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities was tested, a X^2 value of 11.73 was obtained which was less than the X^2 critical at 6 *df* and $\alpha = 0.05$ which was 12.59 and hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This implied that respondent's religious affiliation has no significant effect on the respondent's having an affair or participation in illicit sexual activities and hence expectant fathers are likely to engage in such sexual activities regardless of their religion.

Employment status of the respondent versus sexual behavior

The researchers wanted to find out whether the respondent's level of employment status influenced the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities when their spouses were expectant. Consequently the null hypothesis H_{03} : Employment status has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities was tested using the chi-square statistic. The distribution of the respondents was as follows.

Table 3: The distribution of the respondents by employment status

Employment status	Always engages in sex outside marriage	Sometimes engages in sex outside marriage	Never engages in sex outside marriage	Total
employed	23	21	2	46
unemployed	37	14	1	52
Total	60	35	3	98

Note: Only 98 respondents (75.4 %) were included in the above analysis since 1 respondent did not indicate his employment status.

On computing the chi-square observed, a value of 4.79 was obtained which was less than the X^2 critical at $\alpha = 0.05$ and 2 *df* of 5.991 and hence the null hypothesis was accepted implying that employment status has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities. Both the employed and unemployed expectant fathers or husbands are likely to participate in illicit sexual activities or have an affair in much the same way or manner.

Education level of the respondent versus sexual activity or behavior

The researchers anticipated that the respondent's level of education and elite status were likely to affect the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities when their spouses were expectant. The researchers tested the null hypothesis: H_{04} : Respondent's level of education has no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities when their spouses were expectant using the chi-square statistic. When the null hypothesis was tested, a X^2 value of 9.609 was obtained which was greater than the X^2 critical at 4 *df* and $\alpha = 0.05$ which was 9.488 and hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that respondent's level of education has a significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities and hence expectant fathers are likely to engage in the said behavior based on their elite status and level of education. The statistics indicated that a majority of those who engaged in these behaviors were the educated and the elites and few incidences were found among the illiterate.

Conclusion

The study established that a significant number of expectant fathers or husbands engage in sexual activities outside marriage when their spouses are expectant. Some of the people with whom the respondents engaged in the said activities with were: work mates, family friends, church mates and girlfriends. The reasons given for engaging in sexual activities with other partners outside marriage were: stress, quest for attention, adventure, peer pressure as well as psychological effects of the pregnancy on spouse and health conditions. The results of hypotheses testing indicated that the younger and older respondents tended to engage in illicit sexual behaviors or affairs equally. It was established that respondent's religious affiliation has no significant effect on the respondent's having an affair or participation in illicit sexual activities and hence expectant fathers are likely to engage in such sexual activities regardless of their religion.

Again, the employment status of the respondent had no significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities. Both the employed and unemployed expectant fathers or husbands are likely to participate in illicit sexual activities or have an affair in much the same way or manner while the respondent's level of education had a significant effect on the respondent's participation in illicit sexual activities. The expectant fathers are likely to engage in the said behavior based on their elite status and level of education. The statistics indicated that a majority of those who engaged in these behaviors were the educated and the elites and few incidences were found among the illiterate. This implies that there is need for societies to invest in moral education with focus on all males regardless of their status. If this is not done, these sexual behaviors are bound to increase the social costs to society through breakages of families and marriages.

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