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**Prevalence of Transactional Sex in Selected Fishing Communities of Kainji Lake Basin**

**By**

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**Abstract:** The paper examined the prevalence of transactional sex in the fisheries sector of Yauri emirate of the Kainji Lake Basin. A total of 187 questionnaires were administered in ten selected fishing communities and further subjected to descriptive analysis. The study on HIV/AIDS carried out revealed that prevalence of transactional sex is on the increase in selected fishing communities of the Kainji Lake Basin.. 11.8% have accepted sexual various propositions in exchange for work related activities. It is no longer gainsaying that people exchange sex for gift or economic gain therefore; transactional sex activities are gradually being noticed in some of the fishing communities of Kainji Lake Basin. Recommendations were proffered for the study.

**Keywords**: Fish, Sex, gift, livelihood and HIV/AIDS

**Introduction**

Nigeria has one of the fastest growing rates of new HIV/AIDS cases in West Africa and an enormous population.(UNAIDS, 2004) Findings from the Ministry of Health’s 2003 HIV sero-prevalence survey revealed a national HIV prevalence rate of five percent, similar to the recent UNAIDS estimate of 5.4 percent. Small scale fisheries and related activities such as fish processing and trading have long been recognized to provide safety net for the ’poorest of the poor’ in rural communities in developing countries (Panayotou, 1985, Jui Larsen et al 2003, Neiland and Bene, 2004) Food security is one of the major problems facing humanity particularly in the developing countries like Nigeria.

There is a growing consensus in literature that HIV/AIDS increases food insecurity and poverty (Baylies, 2002; DeWaal2002; Du Guerny, 2002; Boudreau and Hollemam, 2002; SADCFANR, 2003). In addition, some scholars note an indirect effect of HIV/AIDS: the early adoption of coping strategies which leave households vulnerable to other “shocks” (Rugalema, 1999; De Waal2002; SADC FANR, 2003). While both men and women are engaged in fish trade, local women are aware that they have a good opportunity to trade fish with full time fishers and other seasonal immigrants in the fishing camp even if they lack initial capital to start with. Women, as local informant put it, “go to the flats with nothing and return with a lot of fish. As a form of networking, some local women have their boyfriends in the fishing camps, which they visit and from whom they get fish usually on a regular basis, in exchange for sexual favour, (Bene and Merten 2008).

Women who do have boyfriends in the fishing camps have easier, more regular, and often cheaper access to fish than those who don’t or than the male fish traders. As one woman describes it “For those who have a boyfriend there (in the camp) it is easier. They get sometimes for the same price, while others who do not have a boyfriend have to pay more. So, as I am having boyfriend, I get the fish much cheaper so I can also sell it cheaper. So there is no big loss (if prices drop). Nevertheless, many of the fish I was just given because I was staying with the boyfriend. So these I can sell now” (Mbeza, 2002). The objective of the study is to investigate the extent to which fish/gift items are exchange for sex in selected fishing communities of Yauri emirate of Kainji Lake basin. .

**Methodology**

Kainji lake basin comprises of Niger and Kebbi States with the following neighbouring emirates Kontagora, Borgu and Yauri . For this study, the sample was taken from Yauri emirates from the following communities: Wara, Wawu, Tunga Mairuwa, Zamare, Rukubalo, Yauri, Rashe Salkawa, Hella, Barashi Tunga Alhaji Sharo. The selections of these communities were based on accessibility, level of fisheries activities and traditional institutions. A total of 187 questionnaires and 20 interview guides for key informants will be administered in the communities and further subjected for statistical analysis

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**Result and Discussion**

On the socio – economic characteristics as shown in Table 1, on sex, 63.6% of the respondents were males while 36.4% were females. Generally, male population usually predominate in the fishing communities The variation may be as a result women restriction to their household that is, they are in Purdah, which buttresses the findings of gender studies carried out by Yahaya, 1999. It can be assumed that the men are more likely to be aware of this deadly disease. The higher number of males in the study agrees with findings of experts that almost twice as many men as women were aware of HIV/AIDS. (UNAIDS, 1998)

From the study, 76.0% of the respondents were still in their active (reproductive) age, that is, 15 – 45 years. 24% were above 46 years. These ages are the active and productive years in agricultural production and they are crucial to agricultural development. The respondents were mainly young people implying that they were in sexually active ages. This study confirmed that majority of those who contract the HIV/AIDS virus fall under the age of 30 years (NDHS, 2003). Thus, they are the very people who are vital to the economic future of the rural communities where poverty is dominant.

Majority of the respondents (78.1%) were married, 21.4% were single while a negligible percent (0.5%) were widow. None of the respondent was divorced neither separated in the study area. This is an indication of a tendency for sexual continuation, particularly among the married people of the fishing communities. On religion, the respondents (84.5%) were Muslim faithful, only 15.5% practiced Christianity and 0.5% claimed to be idol worshipper. With this finding Men are permitted to have more than one wife, it is more acceptable for them to have multiple relationships than for women. Majority (58.7%) were into polygamy, 2.1% were monogamous and 49.2% could not response. This is not surprising because some of the unmarried respondents may constitute to the high percentage.

On educational background, less than half of the respondents sampled had formal education although some of the fishing communities selected lacked the facility. Only 18.7% had primary education and the same percent for respondents who had secondary school education. More than half of the respondents (57.2%) had no formal education.

This is a reflection of the areas in which the study was carried out and also the fact that the many of the people are not interested in the western education. Some of the fishing communities are more interested in sending their children to Quaranic School within and outside the community than attending western education. This has made them not see the need for at least primary school in their immediate environment. Therefore, the low level of western education may affect the knowledge of devastating HIV/AIDS that is ravaging globally.

Fisheries sector provides livelihood strategies to its dwellers. The study revealed that 84.5% of the respondents had their primary occupation in fisheries related activities and only 15.5% were into skill labour (such as welding, carpentry) and trading in other products. 27.8% of the respondents had secondary occupation such as firewood cutting, food hawking and haulage. The result confirms the high mobility in labour among fisherfolk. The finding corroborates Neiland et al, 2005 that combination of activities ranging from catching, processing, trading and transportation are important occupation in the fishing communities

**Characteristic of Respondent**

**Variable frequency(F) Percent (%)**

**Sex**

Male 119 63.6

Female 68 36.4

**187 100**

**Age**

15-25 45 24.1

26-35 55 29.4

36-45 42 22.5

46-55 28 15.5

Above 55 17 9.1

**187 100**

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**Marital Status**

Single 40 21.4

Married 146 78.1

Widow 1 0.5

Separated - -

Divorced - -

**187 100**

**Number of wife**

One 4 2.1

Two 59 31.6

Three 27 14.4

More than three 5 2.7

No response 92 49.2

**187 100**

**Religion**

Islam 157 84.5

Christianity 29 15.5

Idol 1 0.5

**187 100**

**Education**

Primary 35 18.7

Secondary 35 18.7

Tertiary 5 2.7

Adult Education 5 2.7

No formal education 107 57.2

**187 100**

**Primary Occupation**

Fishing 23 12.3

Farming-fishing 23 12.3

Trading in fish 15 8.0

Processing of fish 40 21.4

Boat construction 27 14.4

Craft/gear making 7 3.7

Skilled labour 5 2.7

Others 29 5.5

**187 100**

**Secondary Occupation**

Skilled labour 1 0.5

Firewood cutting 2 1.1

Food vendor 45 24.1

Transporting 4 2.1

No response 135 72.0

**Total 187 100**

The sexual behaviour of respondents varies. Majority of respondents are sexually active. About 62.5% of them said they became sexually active between ages 15-20.They have started having sexual intercourse in that age bracket. 10% became sexually active before age 10. Others (34.9%) were not specific on the exact period they had sexual debuts. About (16.9%) have had 1-2 sexual partners since they were 12years old. 11.6% had 3-4 sexual partners since then, 8.3% had above 5 partners, 28.2% had 5 or more sexual partners. Most respondents (68.1%) live with one partner, 21.9% live with two, 7.5% live with three, 2.5% live with four. On individual premarital experiences, 6.0% of the respondents had over 10 sexual partners before marriage, 7.0%) had between 5-9 partners, 29.9% had between 1 – 4partners and 57.0% said they had none. As married individuals, 9.3% said they have had extra marital sex while 86.5% claimed that they never did; 3.5% others did not response. 1.0% had experienced extra marital sex with over 10 persons in the past 12 months, 4.1% with between 5-9 persons, 18.4% with between 1-4 persons, and 76.5% reported with none.

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This percentage is worrisome and there is still much to do on sex education and it tends to signifies that much attention be given to discriminate sex life and curbing the alarming rate of increase of HIV/AIDS in the fishing communities

Sexual intercourse generally begins from age bracket of 15-20 in both sexes. In fewer cases, sexual debuting could be earlier at below age 10 particularly for the young female. On multiple and concurrent sexual relationships, except for an insignificant few, most respondents reported that they have been involved in sexual relationships with more than one partner, suggesting the widespread practice of maintaining multiple sex partners even by those that are married. Majority of respondents reported that in the last twelve months or so, they might have engaged in sex with multiple partners but did not, however, use condom or any other protective method of safe sex. socio-cultural tendencies and environmental factors that promote widespread multiple partnering and unsafe sex practices. This practice is risky and capable of fuelling the spread of STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancies in the communities.

**Table 2: showing Sexual behaviour, Common Diseases and Prevention in the Fishing Communities.**

**Age of first sexual intercourse Frequency(F) Percent(%)**

10-15 65 34.8

16-20 74 39.6

21- 25 23 12.3

26-30 10 5.3

Above 30 4 2.1

No response 11 5.8

**Total** 187 100

**Partners since age 12 years**

One 39 20.9

Two 30 16.0

Three 13 7.0

Above three 21 11.2

No response 20 10.7

**Total 187 100**

**Never had any sexual relation**

Still too young for sex 8 4.3

Too old for sex 5 2.7

A decision to abstain 10 5.3

Don’t consider it necessary 2 1.1

No reason 2 1.1

No response 160 85.6

**Total 187 100**

**If married when did you start**

**married life (year)**

1-5 19 10.2

6-10 34 18.2

11-15 50 26.7

Above 15 14 7.5

No response 70 37.4

**Total 187 100**

**Number of sexual partners before**

**marriage**

Between 1 and 4 60 32.1

Between 5 and 9 17 9.1

Over 10 24 12.8

None 71 38.0

No response 15 8.0

**Total 187 100**

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**Use of condom during sex**

Yes 38 20.3

Never 141 75.4

I can’t remember 2 1.1

No response 6 3.2

**Total 187 100**

Extra marital relationships, about 26% of the respondents were involved in extra marital affair while 74 .3% said they are not involved. The reasons for their involvement in extra marital affairs, 17.1% of the respondents said it was a routine as part of life style, 2.7% said as result of long separation from home, 1.6% said because they needed money and 74.3% did not response. The majority did not response they are private or personal matter and also the issues of sex are openly discussed especially if someone is not familiar to them. This result may have serious implication on the spread of HIV/AIDS in the selected fishing communities. 36.4% of the respondents said their activities take them away from home which confirmed one of the attributes of fisherfolk as a mobile group, this result also substantiate the reason they are involved in extra marital affairs. The study revealed sexual activity during movement, 13.4% said they sexual relation and only 10.7% did not response. The percentage may be low, but the information from key informant confirmed that there is prevalence of transactional sex in the study area.

4.8% claims to engage a professional colleague as regular partner among occasional sexual partners while 9.6% said with those individuals who patronized their services. Only 1.1% patronized Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs). The seasonality in the fisheries may encourage the people to succumb to such arrangement to sustain their means of livelihood and most time the fisherfolk have daily cash flow within their reach. 11.8% have accepted sexual various propositions in exchange for work related activities and 41.2% did not response. Although, 2.1% said is what they do often while 15% said sometime which corroborates Awounda (2003) that due to poverty women fishmongers have become victims of fishermen who are now demanding sexual favours on top of supplying fish”. It is no longer gainsaying that people exchange sex for gift or economic gain for their up keep, Commercial sex activities are thriving in the area which may one of consequences of effect of global warming on the water bodies which the desired attention has not been proffered. Specifically, 32.6% said there are Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) in their communities, 42.2% said there are none, and 17.1% said they do not know if they could be found in the communities. . On the origin of the individual CSWs in the communities, 7% said they come from within the community, 11.2% said they come from nearby villages and 15.5% did not know where they come from.

On the population of the CSWs, 5.9% of the respondents said there are just a few CSWs, 19.3% said they are many and majority did not response. The non response of the majority may be that their communities are not stigmatized since their religion forbids such activities and this might be that they want to disabuse the mind of the people that their communities are free of HIV/AIDS risks. Most of the CSWs might have been attracted by presence of migrant fishermen who often stay away from their individual families. Similarly, the availability of daily cash income especially loose monies in the hands of young adult fishermen may also attractive ladies/hawkers to the communities. From findings of the study, it was revealed that prevalence of sex for exchange of gift/economic gain. This could be done directly or indirectly in subtle manner among commodity hawkers and their clients and supported the statement of ActionAid Kenya (2003) that “women traders who wants to buy fish are often coerced to

offer sex for fish.

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**Table 3 showing the exchange of goods for sex and various transactional sexual activities in the study area**

**Variable Frequency (F) Percent (%)**

**Involvement in extra-marital**

**sex**

Yes 48 25.7

No 139 74.3

**Total 187 100**

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**Push factors to extra marital**

**affairs**

Vengeance 3 1.6

Routine 32 17.1

Long separation 5 2.7

Meeting old partners 1 0.5

Just a need for change 4 2.1

Need for money 3 1.6

No response 139 74.3

Total **187 100**

**Activity cause separation from**

**home**

Yes 68 36.4

No 119 63.6

Total **187 100**

**Sexual relation outside home**

Yes 25 13.4

No 142 75.9

No response 20 10.7

Total **187 100**

**Category of sexual partners**

**Outside**

Professional colleague 9 4.8

People who use my service 18 9.6

People I met while conducting

my activity 5 2.7

Prostitute 2 1.1

No response 153 81.8

Total **187 100**

**Acceptance of sexual proposition**

**on work related activities**

Yes 22 11.8

No 88 47.1

No response 77 41.2

Total **187 100**

**Sex proposition in exchange**

**for money**

Often 4 2.1

Sometimes 28 15

Never 102 54.5

No response 53 28.3

Total 18**7 100**

**Commercial sex**

**workers in the locality**

Yes 61 32.6

No 79 42.2

I don’t know 32 17.1

No response 15 8.0

Total 18**7 100**

**Origin of** **the commercial sex**

**workers**

Indigene 13 7.0

From nearby villages 21 11.2

I don’t know 29 15.5

No response 81 20.4

**Total 187 100**

**Population of commercial sex**

**workers**

Just few 11 5.9

About 10 3 1.6

Many 36 19.3

No response 137 72.7

**Total**  **187 100**

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**Patronage of commercial sex**

**workers**

Yes 22 11.8

No 1 0.5

I don’t know 48 25.7

No response 116 62.0

**Total 187 100**

**Use the services of the**

**commercial sex workers**

Often 7 3.7

Sometime 6 3.2

Never 92 49. 2

No response 82 43.9

**Total 187 100**

**Conclusion**

The study investigated the exchange of fish and other gift items for sex in fishing communities as observed in a number of countries around the World. The study revealed that what could be termed transactional sex is gradually setting in some of the fishing communities in the Kainji Lake Basin. These facts were discovered during a study to test the knowledge, attitude and practices of HIV/AIDS in fisheries sector of Yauri emirate of Kainji Lake Basin which is in consonance with the situation found in the Lake Chad Basin. It was also discovered their involvement at one time or the other in fish/gift items for sex bring to mind the relatively high vulnerability of this group to poverty. The links between fish for sex and HIV/AIDS in fishing communities is gradually been noticed in the study area. Poverty associated with the fisheries is more a function of the limited access to fishing opportunities, basic infrastructure, social amenities and other livelihood diversifications. Therefore the following are recommended in the Yauri emirate of Kainji Lake Basin

* Mainstreaming of gender equality in the fishing communities
* Awareness raising, and prevention through condom use campaign
* Empowerment interventions

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