Generational controversy on sexual activity in the context of the AIDS epidemic: evidence from Lagos

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the generational debate on sexual behaviour within the context of vulnerability to HIV infection. It operationalizes the generation concept against Nigeria's historical background and seeks variations in the patterns of selected sexual variables between and among generational groups. It appears that divergency in sexual behaviour along generational lines is not as strong as some scholars have suggested.

Since the appearance of the AIDS epidemic and its vector, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, efforts have been directed towards its containment. The initial research efforts were directed at finding medical solutions. Efforts became diversified later, when it was clear that a meaningful solution would not come exclusively from medicine. Thus, the need became apparent for a complementary and simultaneous effort towards a solution which explores the social elements in sexual behaviour. Social scientists and anthropologists have responded strongly to this challenge.

Among the numerous contributions by the social scientists, the theme of sexual networking has featured prominently. The primary aim of analysis has been to display the extant patterns of sexual behaviour and the extent to which they threaten the general sexual health of the communities studied. It was expected that the availability of such data would encourage the relevant agencies to design appropriate programs to persuade the larger society to embrace healthier sexual practice.

Side by side with the social scientists, there were other interest groups equally concerned with the problem of AIDS. To this group the problem of AIDS is generational.[1] It only reflects the incidence of anomalous[2] sexual behaviour of the younger-generation adults against the more conservative sexual practice and values of older generations.

Consequently, the question of inter-generational contradiction has since emerged both as formal and informal debate themes in sexual networking. Until now, much of the debate relied on anthropological evidence. Such contributions have tried to argue that significant changes have occurred in sexual orientation of African societies. While the temporal dimensions of the contributors have varied, the import of the debate as an inter-generational issue cannot be ignored. However, it has had minimal input from social surveys from which

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[1] A variant of this debate can be inferred from the Caldwell-Le Blanc controversy; although the debate focuses essentially on the contemporary African sexual system, the import of the generational argument cannot be missed.

[2] 'Anomalous sex' is employed here to embrace all sexual behaviour and practices that are traditionally disapproved of irrespective of the degree of their prevalence.

statistical inferences could be made concerning specific sexual behavioural parameters. It is against this background that this paper analyses the problem of inter-generational attitudes to sexual behaviour in Lagos.

Generational debate: the relevant theoretical questions

The initial focus of the debate on Africa's changing sexual system is wide. However, there is a clear question of whether or not changes abound in a generational pattern of sexual behaviour. On one side of the debate, Paulme's (1963) position is that customarily, female premarital sexual freedom in Africa was limited mainly by discretion. Southall (1961) seemed to identify with this view, but with a proviso that there could be variations between regions with respect to degree of occurrence. Indeed, most authors agreed that relaxed sexual behaviour characterizes the urban societies generally. However, there are minor disagreements over the degree of relaxation in sexual practice.

Common to nearly all the authors is the tendency to contrast sexual behaviour between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial societies, many of them relying essentially on anthropological evidence. The inferences which may be drawn from some aspects of past sexual behaviour of some African societies, from authors like Lloyd (1962), Fadipe (1970), Peel (1983), and Caldwell and Caldwell (1987) fit into this category. It is, however, necessary to note that the effect of modernization and urbanization is not likely to be static, but may be such that a dominant pattern of sexual behaviour may influence succeeding generations. In such cases the principle of variation rather than exclusiveness prevails between generations, in their sexual practice and values.

Indeed, despite the minor differences among scholars on sexual behaviour – such as between LeBlanc, Meintel and Piché (1991) and Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin (1991) – it is generally agreed that anomalous premarital sex is becoming more common now than in the past, when the sexual norms and sanctions were more effective because of the underlying socio-economic circumstances. However, a fair resolution of the generation controversy requires a broader assessment of various aspects of sexual behaviour which directly or indirectly endanger the sexual health of the population.

When the concern about sexual behaviour is linked with the problem of sexually transmitted diseases as is the case since the appearance of AIDS, then the entire sexual behaviour and attitudes which may spread the epidemic ought to be considered. Hence, a fair resolution of the intergenerational debate on sexual behaviour should embrace the comparison of the sexual orientations of individuals on either side of the generational divide.

In resolving the issue certain questions are very important. For example, are there indeed differences in sexual behaviour between the older and the younger generations? In what aspects of sexual behaviour are significant differences noticeable? Do such differences sharply discriminate between generations? And what valid inferences can we make from the observed pattern of sexual values and practices within and between generational groups? While the answers to the questions may be helpful, there remains another conceptual knot to be loosened: the determination of the generation concept for a valid analysis of the research problem. Previous authors such as Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin (1994) and Fadipe (1970) were not so much concerned with operationalizing the generation concept because of the conceptual orientation of their research interests.

However, for a better appreciation of the temporal dimension to the problem, the generational concept requires not only consideration but also a precise and relevant definition. It is felt that the generational concept should be functional and relevant to the context of analysis. In Nigeria, for example, different historical events could serve as

benchmarks for generational categorization depending on the focus of interest. However, in this paper there are two factors in the time frame used in demarcating the generations.

The first factor is the intention to use social statistical data in the comparative analyses of generations rather than the conventional anthropological method. This approach inevitably restricts us to the existing population from which our sample can be drawn and data obtained, as well as guiding us in defining the generational concept in a way that is historically relevant. Thus, we sought a relevant temporal schedule that would offer an objective categorization of the population into generational groups in a way that would be statistically and contextually relevant.

In resolving the second problem, we explored some of the statistical parameters of the population, and found that the median age offered a useful index. The median age for the sampled population was exactly 30 years; and it was 30 years ago that Nigeria obtained political independence. In essence, the sampled population was naturally divided into two: the pre-independence groups and the post-independence groups.

Some methodological considerations

The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Lagos in 1990 when the AIDS epidemic was arousing some curiosity in the minds of the people. The study formed part of a larger research effort aimed at probing into the sexual behaviour of the populace against the background of the HIV infection. Details of the methodological procedure including the sampling design, the fieldwork exercises, and their rationale, have been outlined elsewhere[3]. Nonetheless, it is instructive to review the sample population on which the present analysis is based.

The characteristics of the sample population

The study population comprises 458 adults, 246 (53.7%) males and 212 (46.3%) females. Essentially, the structure of the population is similar to the pattern observable in the developing cities. Intensive rural-urban migration makes Lagos a unique metropolis with a blended ethnographic pattern. The age pattern of the sample population shows that those between 15 and 24 years constitute 13 per cent of the males and 27 per cent of the females.

The ethnographic characteristic shows the majority as Yoruba (41.5% of males and 51.4% of females), a group long associated with traditional urbanism as well as the most pronounced desire for Western education and lifestyles in Nigeria. Next to the Yoruba are the Igbo, many of whom have migrated from the eastern part of Nigeria, a region chiefly dominated by rural landscape and lifestyle, although the Igbo have as strong a desire for Western education as the Yoruba.

The Igbo movement into Lagos predated Nigeria's independence, but various incidents have interrupted what could have been a consistent pattern of immigration of Igbo to Lagos. For example, there was a reverse-flow of the Igbo during the civil war years (1967-1970), and during the political crisis of 1993-1994. At the end of the civil war and the resolution of the political crisis there were renewed waves of migration of Igbo to Lagos. This migration resulted in a larger Igbo population as well as a wider spread over the metropolis than in the

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[3] See Adegbola, Babatola and Oni (1995). In the present study the focus is limited to the analysis of the sampling techniques as well as the study area to the extent that they can assist us in understanding the theme of generational analysis of sexual behaviour.

pre-war years.

The Southern minorities have blended cultural traits of the Yoruba and the Igbo, the two primary ethnic groups surrounding them. They also have a strong desire for Western education, but they largely have a rural lifestyle. The Northern group is more-or-less a conglomerate of diverse groups. Of this group, those from the middle belt have many affinities with the southern ethnic groups, while those from the core north have Islamic orientation.

The Catholics and the Protestants are the dominant religious groups. The Catholics are 35.7 per cent of males and 30.2 per cent of females, while the Protestants are 37.8 per cent of males and 45.3 per cent of females. The Muslims constitute 18.3 per cent of males and 21.7 per cent of females. The traditionalists and adherents of other faiths are the least represented.

The educational pattern reflects the characteristic role of Lagos compared to those of other Nigerian cities. The concentration of numerous institutions of higher learning, together with the generally strong desire for Western education for self-improvement or self-assertion, for better employment prospects and for occupational mobility, have transformed the educational structure of the Lagos population within the last two decades. Thus, the percentage of males with up to primary education is 21.1 against 21.7 for females. Those with secondary education and post-secondary vocational education are 34.1 per cent of males and 47.6 per cent of females. The percentage with higher education, which includes graduates of colleges of education, polytechnics and universities and those with equally valued professional certificates, is relatively high for both sexes. The females' figure of 30.7 per cent is about 14 per cent lower than that for the males.

The data and the analysis

The data gathered from the field survey cover a large area of interest either centrally or tangentially related to the theme of sexual behaviour. For the purpose of this analysis the data set has been divided into two broad groups. The first group is made up of data on the respondents born before 1960: the Pre-Independence Generation. The second group consists of people born after 1959: the Post-Independence Generation. The first group consists of 139 (61.8%) males and 86 (38.2%) females; the second group comprises 108 (46.4%) males and 125 (53.6%) females.

The analysis of the two generational cohorts compares the following sexual variables: the age at first sexual intercourse (ASIXI), sexual partners within the last year (ASEXP), and the focus element in their sexual intercourse with the last three partners. Other variables[4] examined include their perception of traditional values of sexual relationships as well as variables which evaluate their precautionary behaviour in sexual interactions.

In order to explore the temporal import of the generational variable further, each generation was further subdivided. The Pre-Independence Generation was divided into three subgroups and the Post-Independence Generation into two.[5] The new subgroups of the Pre-Independence Generation are the Oldest (born pre-1940), the Older (born 1940-1949) and the

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[4]   Analysis of extramarital sex was disregarded as a larger percentage of the Older Generation group are married, with longer years of marital life, as well as wider circumstances which might have promoted extramarital sex among them than the Younger Generation. Its consideration would have tilted this aspect of anomalous (extramarital) sexual practice against the Older Generational groups.

[5]   Only two groups emerged from the second generation population, as those born after 1980 were too young to be included in the sample.

Old group (1950-59). The Post-Independence Generation consists of the Young (born 1960-1969) and the Younger (born in, and after, 1970).

Table 1 shows the distribution of the generational subgroups by sex. The table shows a modal strength of the Young generational cohort, followed by the Old generational cohort and the Younger cohort in that order. It is also obvious that the males constitute the bulk of the Pre-Independence Generation cohort. The proportions of males among the total generational group range from 59.4 per cent of the Old cohort to 66 per cent among the Older cohort. By contrast, the females were in the majority among the Post-Independence group. Their percentages range from 51 (Young cohort) to 66.7 (Younger cohort).

Table 1
Generational subgroups

Generational Groups	Male Groups		Female Groups	
	No.	%	No.	%
Oldest	26	65	14	35
Older	31	66	16	34
Old	82	59.4	56	40.6
Young	95	49	99	51
Younger	13	33.3	26	66.7

Source: Fieldwork survey.

Patterns of sexual activity between generational groups

Table 2 shows the mean values of the selected sexual variables for the two generations. According to the table, both males and females of Generation 2 experienced sexual intercourse much earlier than their Generation 1 counterparts. The mean of 18.3 years for the Generation 1 males shows an entry into sexual activity about two years behind Generation 2 males. For the females the pattern is repeated, with the Generation 1 females about two years behind Generation 2 females. Generally for both generations, males had earlier first sexual experiences, although the gap of one year between the males and females of the Pre-Independence Generation is closer than that in the Post-Independence Generation.

Analysis of sexual partners within the last year shows only a minor difference in the partnership status of the two groups. The gap between the last-annual average sexual partners of the male groups in the two generations (0.2), is comparable to the gap between the female groups which is 0.3 partners. In both cases, the Pre-Independence generational group has the higher average values of sexual partners.

Sexual partnership within the last month shows no significant difference between the two generations, as both groups' average sexual partnership was 1.3. However, there are slight differences between the gender groups of the two generations. Thus, while the first generation males have had 1.4 partners within the last month, the Post-Independence group average is marginally lower, being 1.3 partners. In the female groups, the average of sexual partners for the Pre-Independence group is slightly under one partner, while for the Post-Independence group it is slightly above one.

TABLE 2
Patterns of sexual variables by generational groups

| | Generation 1 (Pre-Independence) | | | | | Generation 2 (Post-Independence) | | | | | Pop.Mean |
| | Males | | | Females | | Males | | | Females | | |
	Sub Mean	Mean	No.	Mean	No.	Sub Mean	Mean	No.	Mean	No.	
A	18.4	18.3	132	19.3	80	16.8	16.1	106	17.5	117	17.7
B	2.2	2.3	122	1.9	65	2.0	2.5	89	1.6	105	2.1
C	1.3	1.4	128	0.97	69	1.3	1.5	87	1.1	106	1.3
D	37.2	30.4	35	49.6	19	31.3	27.0	34	36.6	28	34.1
			(25.2)		(22.1)			(31.5)		(22.4)	
E	47.8	46.3	35	52.0	13	44.4	36.2	23	58.9	13	46.4
			(25.2)		(15.1)			(21.3)		(10.4)	
F	56.3	61.7	18	45.4	9	38.4	26.7	12	56.1	8	48.7
			(12.9)		(10.5)			(11.1)		(6.4)	
T	139			86		108			125		

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages.
KEYS   A   Age at first sexual intercourse (ASIXI)
            B   Number of sexual partners in the last year (ASEXP)
            C   Number of sexual partners in the last month (MSEXP)
            D   Coital frequency with the second partner (NSPAR2)
            E   Coital frequency with the third partner (NSPAR3)
            F   Coital frequency with the fourth partner (NSPAR4)
            T   Subgroup total

Sexual multi-partnership and focus

The intergenerational analysis of sexual networking patterns illustrated in Table 2 shows that 31.5 per cent of the Generation 2 males had at least two sexual partners against 25.2 per cent of Generation 1 males. The same percentage (25%) of Generation 1 males added a third partner compared to 21.3 per cent of Generation 2 males. At the fourth partnership level, the percentage of the Generation 2 males had dropped to 11.1 compared to almost 13 per cent of the Generation 1 males.

The pattern among the female population seems similar to that of the males, at least in the relative percentages of those who networked from one level of sexual partnership to another. Hence, the percentage of Generation 1 females with a second partner (15.1%) is higher than that of Generation 2 females (10.4%). There is a reversal of position at the third partnership level, although the excess of Generation 2 females is very slight, being only 0.3 per cent. Sexual intercourse with a fourth partner involved 10.4 per cent of the Generation 1 females as opposed to only 6.4 per cent of Generation 2 females.

Analysis of focus[6] in sexual networking shows that for the three levels of sexual partnership considered, the average frequencies of coitus for the Generation 1 males are consistently higher than those of Generation 2 . Table 2 for example, shows that at the second partnership level, the mean coital frequency for the Generation 1 males is 30.4 against 27.0 for Generation 2 males. The corresponding mean values of intercourse with the third and fourth sexual partners are 46.3 and 61.7 for Generation 1 against 44.4 and 26.7 for the Generation 2 males.

The pattern is different in the female population. Here there is a greater level of focus in the younger than in the older generation. However, the difference between the two female groups is not as sharp as that between the male groups. The frequencies of coitus at both levels show that the Generation 2 females had on the average about 14.5 and 10.7 experiences of intercourse more than the Pre-Independence Generation. Thus, while sexual intercourse with the second sexual partner shows that the Generation 1 female had a stronger sexual focus, with an average coital frequency of 49.6, the mean intercourse values with the third and fourth partners on the other hand, show a stronger sexual focus by the Generation 2 females.

Pattern of sexual activity within generational groups

An examination of the degree of homogeneity in sexual practice within each of the two generational groups requires an analysis of the intra-generational data analysed above. Table 3 analyses the age at first sexual experience (ASIXI) for the five subgenerational groups into which the two main generation groupings have been categorized. As with the previous analysis, the mean values have been employed to examine variations among the groups.

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[6] Data were gathered on the frequency of sexual intercourse with each of the last four partners. However, the analysis of focus was based on sexual intercourse with the last three partners, to make room for those who are married, most of whom reported their spouses as their first sexual partners. This is because a high incidence of sexual focus with spouse is normal and perhaps not as dangerous as when it occurs with an external party.

Table 3
Intra-generational patterns of age at first sexual intercourse (ASIXI)

Generational sub-groups	Sub-mean (Males & Females)	Male Groups		Female Groups	
		Mean	No. (%)	Mean	No. (%)
Pre-1940 (Generation 1)	18.7	18.6	25 (96.1)	19.1	10 (71.4)
1940-1949 (Generation 1)	18.9	19	29 (93.5)	18.7	15 (93.7)
1950-1959 (Generation 1)	18.6	17.9	78 (95.1)	19.5	55 (98.2)
1960-1969 (Generation 2)	17.0	16.3	94 (88.9)	17.7	96 (96.9)
1970 and after (Generation 2)	15.6	14.3	12 (92.3)	16.4	21 (80.8)
Cum. pop. mean	17.7				

Source: Fieldwork survey.

The pattern of variation between the older generational cohorts is not as consistent as that between the younger generational cohorts. The second male cohort (1940-49) has the largest average ASIXI of 19 years which is higher than that of the cohort that preceded it, that is the Pre-1940 Generation. However, it is of interest to note that the lowest ASIXI value (17.9 years) among the Generation 1 cohorts is greater than the mean for the 1960-69 cohort, which has the larger ASIXI value of the Generation 2 male cohorts.

Among the females, the mean ASIXI values only show minimum variations, and are comparable to the pattern observed among the male cohorts. The average age did not consistently reduce with relative recency of a generational cohort. For example, the 1950-59 group waited longest before their first sexual experience. They were followed by the Pre-1940 cohort and then the 1940-49 cohort. A greater degree of consistency is however observable with their Generation 2 counterparts: the 1960-69 cohort's mean ASIXI period of 17.7 years is higher than that of the post-1970 cohort which has a mean ASIXI of 16.4 years.

The pattern of sexual partnership within the last year (ASEXP) among the males as illustrated in Table 4, shows that the Oldest cohort has the larger mean value, approximating three partners. They were followed by the Young cohort (2.5), the Old (2.3), the Youngest (2.2) and the Older cohort in that order: there is a lack of homogeneity within any of the two broader generational groups. A similar tendency is observable among the female cohorts. While the largest mean of 2.6 ASEXP is associated with the 1940-49 cohort, the next largest value of 1.9 partners belongs to the Youngest cohort, which is only marginally higher than that of the Old cohort. The Oldest female cohort, on the other hand, had the lowest value of 1.2 partners within the last year.

Table 4
Last-annual pattern of sexual partnership by generational groups (ASEXP)

Generational groups	Sub-Mean	Males		Females	
		Mean	No. (%)	Mean	No. (%)
Pre-1940	2.5	2.9	20 (76.9)	1.2	6 (42.8)
1940-1949	2.2	2.0	28 (90.3)	2.6	12 (75.0)
1950-1959	2.1	2.3	74 (90.2)	1.8	47 (83.9)
1960-1969	2.0	2.5	80 (84.2)	1.5	87 (87.9)
1970 and after	2.0	2.2	9 (69.2)	1.9	18 (69.2)
Cum.Pop.Mean	2.1				

Source: Fieldwork survey.

Sexual partnership within the last month as illustrated in Table 5, does not differentiate significantly between the male cohorts. Thus, apart from the Younger cohort which had the largest mean value of 1.8 partners, all the other cohorts, with the exception of the Pre-1940 group, had an average of 1.5 partners in the last month. The Pre-1940 group had the lowest value of 1.3 partners. The female pattern contrasts significantly with that of the males. There is a tendency for the value of the MSEXP to increase with the recency of the cohorts, especially among the Pre-Independence groups. Hence, while the Pre-1940 Generation had an average (0.4) which is far lower than one, the succeeding cohort had an average of 0.8 which is close to one. The 1950-59 cohort's MSEXP value, on the other hand, is slightly above one (1.1). The difference between the two Post-Independence cohorts is very slight, both of them having had an average of about one sexual partner in the last month.

Table 5
Last month patterns of sexual partnership by generation groups (MSEXP)

Generational groups	Sub-Mean	Males		Females	
		Mean	No. (%)	Mean	No. (%)
Pre-1940	1.1	1.3	22 (84.6)	0.4	8 (57.1)
1940-1949	1.3	1.5	28 (90.3)	0.8	13 (81.2)
1950-1959	1.3	1.5	78 (95.1)	1.1	48 (85.7)
1960-1969	1.3	1.5	77 (81.0)	1.1	87 (87.9)
1970 and after	1.3	1.8	10 (76.9)	1.0	19 (73.1)
Cum.Pop.Mean.	2.1				

Source: Fieldwork survey.

Focus and sexual multi-partnership

The pattern of sexual activity among those who had at least a second partner is shown in Table 6. Among the Generation 1 male cohorts, the percentage of the sexually active tends to increase in the younger generations. Hence, among the Oldest generation 15.4[7] per cent were active against 23.6 and 29.3 per cent respectively of the Older and the Old generations. The same pattern is observable among the Post-Independence cohorts except that the margin of difference between the Younger and the Youngest generations is low, under 1 per cent.

The male pattern was almost repeated for the females except that the Older cohort of the Pre-Independence generation had the largest percentage compared with all the other four subgroups. The 37.5 per cent of its respondents who had at least two sexual partners in the last year also constitutes the modal percentage in a comparative analysis involving the male and the female groups. Excluding the Older cohort from the analysis, the percentage of those who had a second partner increased from 14.3 of the Oldest cohort to 23.1 of the Youngest cohort.

Changes at the third sexual partnership level are not as remarkable for the Older as for the Younger male cohorts. Among the three Pre-Independence cohorts, only the Old cohort shows a reduction of 3.7 per cent among the Generation 1 male groups, when compared to its sexual activity at the second partnership level. Indeed, the cohort with the lowest percentage (23.6%) of sexually active population at the third partnership level among the Generation 1 groups exceeded the Youngest cohort which had the larger percentage (23.1%) of the two Post-Independence cohorts.

Remarkable similarities and minor differences are observable generally among the

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[7] This figure was obtained from those who were specific in terms of the frequency of sexual intercourse with their second partner. Some respondents in this category did not indicate their coital frequency with the second partner, but did so for the third partner: thus the percentage of this cohort with a third partner is larger than that with a second partner.

female generational cohorts. The Old cohort still maintained the lead (18.7%) as it did at the second partnership level, even though its percentage of involvement has been reduced to a half of its sexual partnership at the second partnership level. The other two Pre-Independence cohorts are equal with 1.3 per cent of respondents having had a minimum of three sexual partners. The two Post-Independence cohorts had relatively low percentages, with the Youngest cohort having the smaller percentage (7.7%).

At the fourth partnership level, remarkable reductions are noticeable especially with some male cohorts, as well as with three of the female groups. It appears that the pattern established at the third partnership level was carried over to the fourth, except among the Youngest cohort, which with 15.4 per cent now has the larger percentage of the two Post-Independence groups, as well as ranking second among all the five generational cohorts.

The analysis of focus in sexual intercourse among males as illustrated also in Table 6, shows that at the second level of sexual intercourse, the Youngest cohort had the most intensive sexual focus with a mean of 49.2 acts of coitus. The cohort was followed by the Old (37.4), the Young (37.4), the Older (18.0) and the Oldest (10.5). This pattern changed with the female cohorts. For one thing, they were characterized by greater degrees of sexual focus than the male cohorts. Specifically, the Oldest female cohort had the largest mean intercourse value of 97.0, which was more than double the larger of the two mean intercourse values for their Generation 2 counterparts. Next to the Oldest was the Older cohort with 52.7 mean sexual episodes. The Old Cohort had the least sexual focus among the Generation 1 groups at this level of sexual partnership: it exceeded the Young cohort, which had the lower sexual focus of the Generation 2 groups, by an average of about five extra acts of coitus.

The third partnership level for males still shows a greater degree of sexual focus by the Generation 1 cohorts. If the average number of sexual episodes of the Young cohort (36.7), which has the stronger focus of the Generation 2 males, is compared with that of the Older cohort, which has the strongest focus among the Generation 1 male cohorts, the latter group is found to have an excess of almost 20 sexual episodes. Furthermore, the mean coital frequency for the Older and the Old male cohorts exceeds an all-male-cohorts average of about 41 episodes.

Among the female groups, only one cohort from each of the two generations exceeds an all-female-cohorts coitus mean of 63.6. The degree of focus still remains very high, and is comparable to what obtained at the level of the second sexual partnership, although the percentage of those who added a third partner dwindled for the Generation 2 cohorts.

Table 6
Focus in coitus by generational groups (NSPAR2, NSPAR3 & NSPAR4)

GG	Sub Mean NSPAR2 (M&F)	Male Groups Mean	No. (%)	Female Groups Mean	No. (%)	Sub Mean NSPAR3 (M&F)	Male Groups Mean	No. (%)	Female Groups Mean	No. (%)	Sub Mean NSPAR4 (M&F)	Male Groups Mean	No. (%)	Female Groups Mean	No. (%)
<1940	39.3	10.5	4 (15.4)	97	2 (14.3)	45.9	32.6	7[a] (26.9)	92.5	2 (14.3)	26.0	2.3	3 (11.5)	97	1 (7.1)
1940-49	34.0	18.0	7 (22.6)	52.7	6 (37.5)	49.9	55.6	7 (23.6)	36.7	3 (18.7)	56.4	69.7	4 (19.0)	38.7	3 (18.7)
1950-59	38	37.4	24 (29.3)	39.4	11 (19.6)	47.8	47.8	21 (25.6)	47.6	8 (14.3)	63.8	75	11 (13.4)	39.2	5 (8.9)
1960-69	28.5	24.0	30 (31.6	34.5	22 (22.2)	42.7	36.7	20 (21.0)	53.6	11 (11.1)	25.4	13.4	10 (10.5)	45.5	6 (6.1)
1970 & after	46.4	49.2	4 (30.8)	44.5	6 (23.1)	54.8	32.7	3 (23.1)	88	2 (7.7)	90.5	93.0	2 (15.4)	88.0	2 (7.7)
CM	34.1					46.4					48.7				

Source: Field Survey

Note: Numbers in brackets are percentages. GG=Generational Groups. CM=Cumulative Mean. [a] The larger percentage of the pre-1940 males for NSPAR3 is an indication that some of those who networked to the third partnership level did not provide information on their coital frequency with the second partner.

The pattern of intercourse with the fourth sexual partner for males shows that the Younger cohort with a mean coital frequency of 93 occurrences exceeded an all-male-cohorts average by 43. The other Generation 2 cohort had a rather lower mean value of 13.4 which is the second lowest among the five male cohorts. Two of the three Generation 1 male cohorts had mean values in excess of the combined male average of about 52. It is remarkable that the Oldest generation males consistently showed low focus in their sexual interaction.

The observed differences in the sexual focus generally among the females, especially between the Young cohort and the Older and the Old cohorts, are not as divergent as those between the equivalent male cohorts.

Sexual values and norms

In the section above, the data on actual sexual activities were analysed. However, in order to measure both the real and potential dangers to sexual health, an appreciation of the sexual norms and values of societal groups is important, being the underlying factor promoting particular sexual practices. The prevailing sexual practice is largely conditioned by the sexual norms and values held by the population, and the degree to which the practice is entrenched is an indication of the degree to which such values are entrenched. Thus, the existing sexual practices may be only transitory, if they are not strongly entrenched, being liable to change according to small disturbances in any of the particular characteristics of the population, such as their economic circumstances. Certain variables which measure perception, safe sex and description of the last four sexual partners are examined, first for a two-category generational grouping and then for the five categories into which the two generations were further divided.

Perception of sexual activity between generational groups

The perception of respondents on some selected variables is shown in Table 7 according to generational groupings. The analysis of contraception showed that 18.4 per cent of Generation 2 males used contraception at the time of their first sexual intercourse as opposed to 13.6 per cent of Generation 1 males. Among the females, the greater use of contraception by the Generation 2 group is even more evident, as almost 10 per cent more of Generation 2 females used contraception than did their Generation 1 females.

Table 7
Perception of sexual variables by generational groups

Sexual Variables	Male Groups				Female Groups			
	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 1		Generation 2	
USE1 Yes		13.6		18.4		25		35.6
RCON1 Preg STD	88.9	11.1	78.9	21.1	80	10	92.5	7.5
VIRM		43.4		36.8		50.6		36.4
CHASTE								
Rad Conserv	54.6	45.4	52.9	47.1	44.7	55.3	55.9	44.1
RCPAR1								
Cas %		25.8		24.7		25.4		16
RCPAR2								
Cas %		63		55.6		36.4		42.5
RCPAR3								
Cas %		67.9		41.4		50		40
RCPAR4								
Cas %		61.5		35		28.6		33.3

Similarly, more of Generation 2 males (21.1%) used contraception for the purpose of preventing sexually transmitted disease than did Generation 1 (11.1%) males. In the female groups, it seems that the desire to prevent STDs was generally lower than that observed among the males. Only 7.5 per cent of Generation 2 females used contraception to prevent sexual diseases, 2.5 percentage points lower than those who claimed to have done so among their Generation 1 counterparts.

The traditional preference for a woman to be a virgin at marriage received 43.3 per cent support from Generation 1 males, exceeding the proportion which supported it among Generation 2 males by about six percentage points. However, the difference between Generation 1 and Generation 2 is wider than that observed between the male groups. While 50.6 per cent of Generation 1 females approved of females being virgins at marriage, only 36.4 per cent of Generation 2 females were of that opinion. The closeness in the percentages of the Generation 2 male and female groups who approved of females' virginity at marriage suggests that, generally, among the younger generation, views on female virginity are converging, regardless of gender difference.

Opinion on chastity shows few variations and does not seem to reflect the relative positions held on the virginity of women at marriage, except in the case of Generation 1 males. Apart from the Generation 1 females, among whom 44.7 per cent had conservative views on chastity, the percentages of other groups who had liberal ideas about sexual chastity exceeded 50 per cent. Among the Generation 1 males, 54.6 per cent held a radical view, against 52.9 per cent of Generation 2 males. Similarly, 55.9 per cent of Generation 2 females were non-conservative.

Analysis of the level of risk in sexual relationship, measured by the number of casual partners or regularity of each of the last four partners, shows that the Generation 1 males had more casual partners than Generation 2 males. The comparative percentages of casual partners for both generations, for the first, second, third and fourth partners are 25.8, 63.0, 67.9 and 61.5 respectively among Generation 1 males against 24.7, 55.6, 41.4 and 35.0 per cent respectively among Generation 2 males.

Among the female groups, the pattern of sexual partners is not as distinctive as that

observed among the male groups. Sexual relationship with the first sexual partner shows that the Generation 1 group had a larger percentage (25.4) of casual partners. The order is reversed when the second partner is considered. Here, the Generation 2 group exceeded Generation 1 by six percentage points. Sexual intercourse with a third partner repeats the pattern with the first partner, while intercourse with the fourth partner resembles the second partnership pattern.

Perception of sexual activity within generational groups

Table 8 shows the intra-generational breakdown of the sexual variables analysed above. First, it shows that while none of the Oldest cohort males used contraception, about 10 per cent of the Older cohort did so. However, among the Young cohort, 41.7 per cent used contraception. Thus, there is a tendency for positive increase in the rates of contraception with the recency of a cohort, except for the Young cohort, which had a lower percentage than the Old cohort.

A similar pattern is observed among the female cohorts with the exception of the Young cohort which, with 26.1 per cent, falls below the Old cohort. The Young cohort has the maximum percentage (17.9%) of contraception followed by the Old cohort (30.4%), the Youngest cohort (26.1%), the Older cohort (21.4%) and the Oldest cohort (7.1%).

Caution about sexually transmitted diseases was the motivation for using contraception for 40 per cent of the Youngest male cohort, the largest percentage motivated by diseases among male cohorts. The Young cohort ranks second (14.3%) followed by the Old cohort (13.5%). None of the Oldest and the Older cohorts were motivated by concerns about epidemic disease. A similar pattern is observable with the females, except that the fear of sexual disease motivated a larger percentage of the Old cohorts than the Young cohort. Opinion on female virginity before marriage reveals that the proportion of all the Generation 1 males who are positively disposed toward it is larger than the proportion among any of the two Generation 2 cohorts. The same pattern is repeated among the female cohorts, except that the Youngest cohort has an equally large support for virginity at marriage, even higher than that given by both the Older and the Old cohorts.

Response to questions about chastity shows a contrasting pattern between the two Generation 2 male cohorts. While 50.5 per cent of the Young cohort had conservative attitudes towards chastity, the proportion of the Younger cohort with liberal attitudes to chastity was 76.9 per cent. Between these two extremes are different degrees of conservative inclination toward chastity. The Oldest cohort had 50 per cent conservative responses followed by the Older and the Old cohorts with 44.8 and 44.2 per cent respectively. Among the females, the Oldest group had the largest number of conservatives (61.5%), followed by the Old cohort (60.4%) and the Younger group (52%). The majority of the Young cohort (58.1%), in contrast to their male counterparts, exhibited a liberal attitude toward chastity.

The taste for casual sexual partnership is greater among the sexually active males than among the females. A summary of casual sex across the four levels of sexual partnership shows that, on the average, 27.2 per cent of females had casual sexual partners against 39.2 per cent of the males. Among the male cohorts, the Old cohort (44.7%) and the Older (42.2%) had the most pronounced affinity for casual partners. They were followed by the Young (37.6%) and the Younger cohorts (36.8%). The Older cohort had the least contact (33.3%) with casual partners.

On the female side, the Oldest cohort led others in casual sex (40%). They were followed by the Older (33.3%) the Youngest (30.4%) and the Old (25.7%), while the Young female cohort with cumulative average of 24.5 per cent casual sexual partners had the least tendency both among the females and in a combined gender-cohorts analysis.

Discussion

In the foregoing analysis, certain differences have been identified between the two categorized generational groups; however, these differences do not differentiate the population symmetrically. The broader categorization showed that while Generation 2 had younger age at first sexual intercourse as well as marginally higher mean of sexual partners over some selected periods, Generation 1 had more intensive sexual focus than the younger generation. The two generations were not sufficiently different in multiplicity of sexual partners as to warrant a blanket generalization on that parameter, although a lower percentage of the younger generation had sexual relationships beyond the second level of sexual partnership.

The search for intra-generational variations or homogeneity informed a multi-cohort regrouping of each of the two original generational groups. The differences observed between the two broader groups with respect to the average age at first sexual intercourse (ASIXI) remained, even with the sub-generational grouping. It showed a symmetrical pattern in which the younger cohorts consistently showed lower mean ages at first sexual intercourse. Such consistency, however, disappeared in the pattern of sexual partnership within the last year, but appeared again to some extent with sexual partnership within the last month, especially in the female cohorts.

Focus and multi-partnership sexual intercourse, however, associates a greater level of risk with the older cohorts. On both accounts, but specifically with the frequency of coitus, the older generation had a greater level of risk.

The analysis of the two generations, on the parameters of social values and norms of sexual behaviour as well as on the elements of safe sex, seems to offer some clues for a reasonable resolution of the sexual activity debate. First, it is observable that the younger generation and their different cohorts are more conscious of the need for safety in sexual intercourse, although only their males exceed the older generation in relating such safety to health rather than to pregnancy.

Secondly, greater percentages of the Older generation than of the Younger generation shared the traditional values of virginity of females at marriage and chastity of men and women. However, the sexual practice of the Older generation, both in having a relatively high percentage of casual sexual partners, and in multi-partner sexual activity shows a divergence between the ideals and sexual practices; especially where their response to chastity is concerned. The summary from the observed pattern of sexual variables – especially from the pattern of some of the sexual partnership variables, as well as the degree of approval and disapproval of societal norms and values – is that sexual behaviour and practice may have been better in the past. Such observations as cited in the literature may be ascribed to the prevalent socio-cultural practice, especially with respect to the polygynous marital arrangement, which gave a man access to more than one woman. It also provided access to wider sexual opportunities for the numerous wives within the polygynous family (Caldwell et al. 1994). The disappearance of that arrangement seems to correlate with the adoption of wider extramarital sexual practice.

The Older generation who were better placed to influence the perpetuation of the norms and values of sexual practices differed from the Younger generation only with respect to the verbal approval of such values and norms. Their sexual practice however was not in harmony with norms and values of which they expressed approval.Thus, whatever effect modernization is supposed to have had on sexual behaviour it has not significantly differentiated the Older from the Younger generational groups. Modern influences seem to be have a similar effect on the Older and the Younger generations, while in some instances the influence seems to be even stronger among the Older generation group.

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