Tesho: The Traditional Way of Preventing Pre-Marital Sex Among Yoruba People

Ojo Matthias Olufemi Dada*

Department of Sociology, Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith, Mission, Ibesa, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

Pre-marital sex is a social problem in every society of the world which causes other social problems like: teenage pregnancy, abortion, abandoned children, spread of sexually transmitted diseases and other health challenges in the society. Many solutions have been provided to solve the problem of pre-marital sex but none can be guaranteed to have provided total solution to the problem. There is, therefore, a need to look inward into the traditional way of solving the problem. Tesho is a traditional way of preventing pre-marital sex among the Yoruba people of South-Western part of Nigeria. Types of Tesho were examined in this article and various ways of applying them on young unmarried girls were explained. The ways through which Tesho works were mentioned and the adverse effects of its application and how the effects can be prevented were discussed. It is argued that application of Tesho would prevent pre-marital sex, rape and the infections of sexually transmitted diseases among young unmarried girls in our society. Research surveys on whether Tesho should be applied on young unmarried girls or not to be applied are recommended.

Keywords

Pre-marital Sex, Young Unmarried Girls, Traditional Way, Social Problem and Tesho

1. Introduction

Yoruba people hold the institution of marriage in high esteem and with great sanctity. Therefore, the issues of pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex are totally forbidden among these people. They are expected not to be practiced in any Yoruba community. The offenders of pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex are held with disdain within the community of Yoruba people. Adultery is discouraged to the extent that the offenders (especially men) are usually punished with Magun. Magun is a dreadful charm that is usually placed on a suspected adulteress which, when she has sex with adulterer, would consequently cause the death of such adulterer.

The issue of pre-marital sex is not treated with levity among Yoruba people. An unmarried girl who is a virgin is a source of pride for her parents. A newly wedded girl is expected to be discovered a virgin in the night of her wedding. Therefore, parents of the bride usually waited with great expectation for the news that their daughter remained a virgin till the wedding day. A piece of white cloth stained with blood which is sent to the parents of the new bride would cause a great joy and jubilation in the family of such bride. Such white cloth, stained with blood was usually accomplished with many full gifts as symbols to the family of the bride that their daughter was found a virgin at the night of her wedding day.

Every parent in Yoruba land would do everything possible to prevent their daughters from engaging in pre-marital sex. When extra-marital sex (adultery) is usually punished with Magun, pre-marital sex is usually prevented through Tesho. Tesho is a traditionally prepared charm that is usually placed
on the body of a young unmarried girl to prevent any man from having the carnal knowledge of such charmed young unmarried girl.

This article, therefore, discussed Tesho as a traditional way of preventing pre-marital sex among Yoruba people. Types of Tesho were discussed with various ways of placing them on young unmarried girls. The effects of Tesho were equally discussed and how such could be prevented from causing calamities to the young unmarried girls who had Tesho placed on their bodies.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1. Introduction

Sex is a natural motive force. It is a motive force which brings two people into intimate contact. This encounter may be for a brief moment or it may lead to the principal relationship in their lives (Arunkumar et al, n.d). Most societies discouraged pre-marital sex. Sex is created for married couples and is expected to be practiced within a legal marriage. Pre-marital sex is an act of deviation. It is a departure from societal norms that attract social disapproval which is likely to elicit negative sanctions (Abdullahi and Umar, 2013). There are strong cultural norms against young girls engaging in pre-marital sexual activity, and the expectations that women should be sexually inexperienced at marriage are still widespread (Subaiya, 2008 and Podhisita et al, 2001).

#### 2.2. Prevalence of Pre-Marital Sex

Indications from the researchers conducted show that every society is undergoing sexual revolution. Wang et al (2005) argued that sexual revolutions of sorts are occurring particularly among youth. Greenwood and Guner (2010) were of the opinion that there may be no better illustration of social change that the sexual revolution that occurred during the 20th Century. Greenwood and Guner (2010) argued that in 1900 almost no unmarried teenage girl engaged in pre-marital sex, but by 2002 a large majority (roughly 75%) had experienced pre-marital sex. In similar analyses, Makatjane (2002) indicated in his findings that prevalence of pre-marital sex has more than doubled between 1977 and 1992 in Lesotho and that unmarried women living in urban areas are more likely to be sexually experienced than their counterparts residing in rural areas.

Olaore et al (2013) also argued that pre-marital sexual activities are listed among types of behavioral problems prevalent among Nigeria youths. It is one area in which the decline of traditional values is obvious. One revolutionary change in our present day society is the acceptance of pre-marital sex in a loving relationship.

### 2.3. Causes of Pre-Marital Sex

One may ask for the reasons why pre-marital sex is very prevalent in our modern day society, unlike centuries ago when pre-marital sex was not heard of. Many reasons have been provided in the literature as to why pre-marital sex is now the order of the day. Wang et al (2005) were of the opinion that rapid economic reforms which break down traditional norms that results into greater mobility, urbanization and the influence of mass media and western culture led to the proliferation of more liberal attitudes towards sexual behavior. Subaiya (2008) also supported the opinion of Wang et al (2005), Subaiya (2008) argued that popular media encouraged sex before marriage and that social and economic changes brought about by globalization and the increased exposure of youth to western culture have effected a change in moral attitude towards sex before marriage. Exposure to sexually explicit music, dance and other performances on television programmes, cinemas, videos and internet also contributed to the increase of pre-marital sex (Arunkumar et al, n.d). People living in urban areas are more exposed to these sexual explicit performances than the people living in the rural areas. Urban areas, therefore, facilitated pre-marital sex through the wider availability of information as urban areas are generally more permissive and more individualistic than rural areas (Futurochman, 2003). In summary, influence of western ideas, urbanization and industrialization encouraged sexual relation outside the boundaries of marriage (Sridawruang et al, 2010).

Schooling or academic factor, employment, and puberty are other factors which may contribute to the prevalent of pre-marital sex. Mensch et al (2001) argued that increase in pre-marital sex may be attributed to schooling and employment opportunities available to young men which give them greater independence from their families and sexual access to young women. Boys have heightened expectations and they make sexual demands on girls away from the watchful eyes of their elders. Biddlecom et al (2007) signified puberty as a factor which promotes pre-marital sex. They discovered, in their study, that puberty raises the likelihood of pre-marital sex for girls. Peer group influence is another factor which encourages pre-marital sex. Adeoye et al (2012) were of the opinion that young people often face enormous pressure especially from peers to engage in sex. Most information for their patchy knowledge comes from peers of the same sex who may themselves lack adequate information or are incorrectly informed. Wy (2009) also supported the peer group factor which encourages pre-marital sex. Wy (2009) observed that growing peer pressure of pre-marital sex plays
a major role in sexual decision making among youths. In most of the societies of the world, sex talk is considered a taboo and therefore not discussed openly among the people. This made the young people to seek for information on sexual behaviour from wrong places and people. Alo and Akinde (2010) argued that Nigeria is a relatively culturally conservative country. Topical issues on sex are considered forbidden between parents and their children. As a result of this, children learn about sexual behaviours in negative manner rather than having proper sex socialization. In the similar argument, Abdullahi and Umar (2013) observed that the value system of most Nigerian societies has created a barrier between parents and their children in matters relating to sex. Religious leaders preach against other social vices but seldom talk about sex education. Seme and Wirtu (2008) also gave the similar observation that because of cultural taboos, adolescents in many developing countries rarely discuss sexual matters explicitly with their parents. Hence, they learn in wrong ways which expose them to pre-marital sex. Other factors mentioned by Seme and Wirtu (2008) are the economic needs, drugs and clothing which exposes the body to opposite sex.

Stack, (1994) identified five mechanisms which encouraged pre-marital sex. They are: decreased ties to familiar community institutions including extended kin, erosion of the supply of social control, increased demand for social control, loneliness and arousal. Finally, Kumar and Tiwari (2003) argued that some improved nutrition and better health care make puberty to begin at an early age and therefore increases the chance to engage in pre-marital sex. Kumar and Twari (2003) also cited loneliness as a factor. The authors argued that children are being left alone due to working status of both parents, while congested housing with less privacy to couples result in unexpected early exposure to sex or sexual activities of the young people.

2.4. Effects of Pre-Marital Sex

The effects of pre-marital sex are worthy of being examined. Choe and Lin (2001) opined that women face more serious consequences of risks associated with pre-marital sex than men. The first effect of pre-marital sex is increasing number of young and unmarried who are becoming pregnant (Wy, 2009). Subaiya (2008) opined that the obvious implications for girls who engage in premarital sex are unwanted pregnancies. Premarital sex often results in risks of premarital pregnancy. Contraception simply reduces but cannot eliminate this risk (Kaczor, 2002). Rena (2005) also supported the view of unwanted pregnancies as an effect of premarital sex. Rena (2005) argued that premarital sex results into unplanned pregnancies and that from statistics, a baby is born to an unmarried mother in every 26 seconds and that in a 24 hours time period, 2795 teenager girls will become pregnant. Lwelamira et al (2012) argued that studies have indicated that adolescent motherhood poses serious problems to a newborn.

Makatjane (2002) in a related comment observed that studies on child mortality and marital status have documented that children of never married persons have a higher risk of mortality than legitimate children do. Maternal mortality is quite high in the developing countries and complications related to teenage pregnancy are leading causes of death among teenage mothers world-wide. Hence, premarital child bearing has become a notable social problem (Makatjane, 2002). A young girl who becomes pregnant, places herself and her unborn child at a risk. A young girl’s body may not have developed to the point of being able to handle child birth safely (Alo and Akinde, 2010). Abortion is another effect of premartial sex. An obvious implication of pre-marital sex is abortion (Subaiya, 2008). Moreover, there is a suggested high incidence of incomplete abortions (Makatjane, 2002). Abortion, as a result of pre-marital sex, has become a main public health issue (Wang et al, 2005).

Another associated effect of pre-marital sex is the abandonment of children. Wy (2009) argued that the rising incidence of abandoned babies is another indicator of unplanned and unwanted births resulting from pre-marital sex. Abandoned children are a problem that is worsening every year (Makatjane, 2002). The impact of premarital sex also occurs in the spread of sexual diseases (Hamdani, 2012). Arunkumar et al (n.d) argued that as a result of pre-marital sex, sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise among unmarried teenagers. Sexually transmitted infections as well as HIV/AIDS were common health effects of pre-marital sex (Wang, et al, 2005; Makatjane, 2002 and Kaczor, 2002).

Pre-marital sex may also cause emotional hurt (Kaczor, 2002). A bonding occurs when two persons become sexually involved. If one partner severs the relationship against the wishes of the other, the separation may cause mental and emotional burn out. Pre-marital sex would cause emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual problems to those who engaged in it. Both men and women feel the heavy regret of losing their virginity (Rena, 2005). Pre-marital sex also has effects on the quality of the future marriage. Pre-marital sex could lead to lack of openness in marriage union when a party is not willing to expose past sexual activities. Moreover, couples who engaged in pre-marital sex had been shown to be more prone to marital infidelity, (Ogunsola, 2012).

Premarital sex has been identified as a factor which affected the educationally development of the teenager girls. Mesch et al (2001) argued that as education has become more widespread, marriage, and especially child bearing among
teenagers, is increasingly mentioned as limiting formal schooling and reducing early training and work opportunities for the teenager girls. Occurrence of unwanted pregnancy often truncates the educational careers of young girls and cause inadequate preparation for future. (Ogunsola, 2012). Pregnant women are not allowed to attend school and may not return to school after the birth of their children. Those would return to school may likely remain financially dependent on parents who may not likely be able to pay their school fees (Faturochman, 2003). Hence, pre-marital sex is a strong factor which truncates the educational careers of the teenager girls.

2.5. Solving the Problem of Pre-Marital Sex

Solving the problem of pre-marital sex, Mast (1990) observed that the true sex freedom is to say “no” to sex outside marriage. Abstinence is still the norm that totally prevents the effects of pre-marital sex (The Sunday Times, 2009). Religion also plays crucial roles in preventing the problem of pre-marital sex. Religion sanctions against sex outside marriage (Wy, 2009). Religion preaches that pre-marital sex is morally wrong (Barkan, 2006) and research has also shown that religious role is associated with abstention, delaying or limiting pre-marital sex among teenagers (Sundan et al, 2012). Finally, proper introduction of sex education in schools is needed to prevent pre-marital sex among teenagers. Early sex education focusing on clarification of core values related to pre-marital sex, control in exposure to risky behaviour through increased parental involvement and prioritizing schooling particularly among girls are also suggested (Wamala, 2012). School-based sexuality programmes are needed that will provide students with accurate information about pregnancy, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases (Arunkumar et al, n.d).

The above suggested solutions to the problem of pre-marital sex may not yield desired results. Hence, there is a need to re-examine the traditional way of preventing pre-marital sex among young unmarried girls. The traditional way of preventing premarital sex through ‘Tesho’ is a very effective way than other suggested ways. Although, it is very effective, it also has some effects but these can be properly managed.

3. Tesho: A Traditional Way of Preventing Pre-Marital Sex

Tesho is a traditionally prepared charm which is applied on a young unmarried girl to prevent men from having carnal knowledge of her. Tesho works principally in two ways from which the types were derived. The first type when applies on a girl, makes any man who wants to have carnal knowledge of her to be temporarily impotent when on top of her. The second type is the one that would create sudden illness and uneasiness for the man when he wants to have the carnal knowledge of a girl whose body Tesho has been applied. The commonest of this type is the one that makes the man to be vomiting uncontrollably. One of the ingredients used in the preparation of this type is water yam (Diascorea Alarta) see Figure 1 for example. After the preparation of the charm (whether type one or type two), is the application of the Tesho charm on the girl who is to be prevented from engaging in pre-marital sex. The first method of applying Tesho charm is through “Ewon” (a traditional small chain). Under this method this traditional chain is soaked in prepared charm ingredients for specific days (normally 3 days, 7 days or 21 days). When the days of the preparation are over, the chain is then removed from the charm ingredients. The next process is to place the chain on the floor and allow the young unmarried girl to walk over the chain without her having the knowledge of the chain placed on the floor. The chain is then removed immediately she has walked over it to prevent her from walking over it the second time, which would destroy the potency of the charm.

Figure 1. A tuber of water yam (Diascorea Alarta) which is one of the charm ingredients used to make Tesho (This type causes vomiting as explained in the article).

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

Figure 2. A young unmarried girl crossing over Tesho charmed chain to fortified her with Tesho that would prevent her from having Pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.
Figure 2 shows how the chain is placed on the floor and a girl walking over the charmed chain.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** A calabash containing Tesho charmed powder which is used to rub incisions made round the waist of a young unmarried girl to be fortified against pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

The second method of applying Tesho is through incisions that are made round the waist of the young unmarried girl that is to be prevented from pre-marital sex. Under this method, the charm ingredients that are to be used would be burnt in a clay pot placed on a fire. When such charm ingredients are eventually burnt, they turned into a form of black powder (see figure 3 for example). When the charmed powder has been prepared, the incisions are made round the waist of such young unmarried girl and after this; the powder is rubbed on the incisions round her waist (figure 4 shows the incisions rubbed with charmed powder round the waist of a young unmarried girl).

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3.** A calabash containing Tesho charmed powder which is used to rub incisions made round the waist of a young unmarried girl to be fortified against pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

The third method is through charmed beads. Under this method, the beads to be used are soaked in charm ingredients for specific days as mentioned in the first method. After the completion of the days, the young unmarried girl would be requested to wear the beads always round her waist (figure 5 shows the illustration of a young unmarried girl wearing charmed beads round her waist to prevent her from unwanted pre-marital sex).

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4.** Incisions made round the waist of a young girl with Tesho charmed powder rubbed on them to fortified her against pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

The fourth method is through a charmed traditional ring (Oruka Elelo). Under this method, the traditional ring to be used would be soaked in charm ingredients for specific days as mentioned in the first method. After the completion of the days, the young unmarried girl would be requested to wear the ring on one of her left fingers to prevent pre-marital sex (figure 6 shows the traditional ring at its preparational stage).

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5.** A Tesho charmed beads wear round the waist of a young unmarried girl. The charmed beads have fortified her against pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

Finally, we have the concoction method. Under the concoction method, the charm ingredients are prepared and cooked with snails. After the preparation has been completed, the young unmarried girl would be requested to eat the prepared concoction which will eventually prevent her from engaging in unwanted premarital sex.

![Figure 6](image)

**Figure 6.** Three pieces of Traditional rings (Oruka Elelo) soaked in Theso charm ingredients. After some days the rings would be removed and the young unmarried girl to be fortified with Tesho would wear one of them on one of her left fingers to prevent her from pre-marital sex.

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2015.

As explained earlier on in this article, Tesho works out its potency through two principal ways. The first way is to make a man who wants to have pre-marital sex with a young woman wear the beads always round her waist to prevent her from unwanted pre-marital sex. The second way is to make a man who wants to have pre-marital sex with a young woman wear the beads always round her waist to prevent her from unwanted pre-marital sex.
unmarried girl that has been fortified with Tesho, to be temporarily impotent. He remains impotent as long as he is making effort to have carnal knowledge of such girl. The second way is to create sudden and strange illness that would make such man to be uncomfortable to have carnal knowledge of such girl that has been fortified with Tesho (i.e. vomiting or uncontrollable shivering).

4. The Adverse Effects of Tesho

Tesho needs to be applied with great caution. Tesho’s potency should be destroyed immediately a girl that has been fortified with Tesho is legally married to a husband. The potency should be destroyed through appropriation; otherwise, the legal husband would not be able to have sex with such a girl (now bride) on the night of the wedding day. Therefore, a parent (usually the father) who applied Tesho on his daughter need to share the knowledge of this with other confidant members of the family and the appropriation to destroy the potency, in case such father dies before her daughter is given away in marriage to a legal husband. In case, such father dies, the confidant members of the family who have the knowledge of the application of Tesho on such daughter may proceed to nullify its potency before such daughter goes to her husband house. Sharing the knowledge with other confidant family members is important, because if not done, and the parent who applied Tesho on his daughter died suddenly; the daughter may not be able to have sexual intercourse in life, even with her legal husband. Except the case is presented to those who are well versed in this traditional way of preventing pre-marital sex, who may possibly know the appropriate means to apply to destroy its potency.

Another effect of application of Tesho to prevent pre-marital sex is that, it may create psychological and emotional problems for the young unmarried girl that has been fortified with Tesho. The girl may think that something very serious has happened to her when a man can not have carnal knowledge of her, except such girl had the fore knowledge of the application of Tesho on her body. Moreover, a man who was unable to have sex with a young unmarried woman under the application of Tesho, may think that the temporary impotency is a natural one. Such a man if he does not test his sexual virility with another young woman (who is not fortified with Tesho), may be psychologically and emotionally disturbed. Some have been known to have attempted or even committed suicide as a result of this. Hence, when this happens to any man, he needs to seek the advice and knowledge of the elderly in the community to prevent such man from taking his own life.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

All the suggested ways of cursing the problem of pre-marital sex as reflected in the available literature may only reduce the rate of pre-marital sex. They are not permanent solutions to the problem. Tesho, though a traditionally way, gives a kind of permanent solution to the problem of pre-marital sex among the young unmarried teenagers. Application of Tesho will ensure that girls are kept under sexual chastity. Violent sexual crime like rape is also prevented. Moreover, it would prevent the infections of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. This article concludes, therefore, that African societies should start to look inward for the traditional ways of solving their social problems. In most cases, these are more effective ways of solving such problems in the society, and in most cases with little or no cost. We recommend social survey of the Yoruba communities on whether Tesho should be applied on teenager girls to prevent them from engaging in pre-marital sex or should not be applied. Future researches on this would expand our knowledge on Tesho as a traditional way of preventing pre-marital sex.

References


