Reviewer’s report

Title: Religiosity and sexual abstinence among Nigerian youths: Does parent religion matter?

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Reviewer: Felix Muchomba

Reviewer’s report:

This paper uses data from Nigerian youths to study the association between religiosity and sexual abstinence among youth. My main concerns with the paper have to do with the sample and the measure for religiosity:

What were the study exclusion criteria, and did the study exclude married youth? If married youth are included, could a separate set of analysis that excludes married youth be conducted? If highly religious youth get married earlier/later, that would bias the association between religiosity and abstinence.

Was the measure for religiosity adapted from previous studies, or was it based on a previously validated instrument? If so, please cite the studies. If an original measure was developed, please state why that was preferred over existing measures.

The use of different cut-offs of frequency of religious behavior based on the respondent's religion (i.e., defining religiosity for christians and muslims differently) needs more justification. Is this commonly done in the literature?

Also, it appears that the author equates praying 5 times a day to attending religious services 5 times a day. Is this how the respondents would have interpreted the survey question? I.e., would a Muslim respondent who is praying at home consider that a religious service?

How did the author classify frequency of religious behavior for respondents of other faiths (i.e., not Muslim or Christian)?

How was salience of religion measured?

Please describe in more detail how the dimensions of religiosity were scored and combined.

A large majority (88%) of the sample is highly religious, which likely reflects the source population. This makes the 12% who are not highly religious a very select group that is able to go against the societal norms by not being highly religious. Could their low sexual abstinence be an extension of their tendency to against societal norms? What can the author tells from the data and from previous literature on why this small group of youth are not religious? Without this information, it is difficult to say that the low religiosity group has low rates of sexual abstinence because of their low religiosity and not because of other factors that may have brought about their low religiosity, e.g., exposure to media, risk taking, etc.
In addition, I have the following comments listed in roughly chronological order:

P 1 line 45. I recommend that the author remove "important"

P 2 line 6. Please clarify what forms of abuse are referred to here.

P 2 line 10. Please reword "low percentage of females using condoms" so that it is clear what the issue is. E.g., is the concern that females are engaging in unprotected sex? Or that females are not engaging in sex (protected or unprotected)? Or that it is males who are using condoms and not females?

P 2 line 11. Please clarify which behaviors you are referring to.

P 2 line 13. The sentence beginning with "These factors..." needs to be made more clear. E.g., what factors is the author referring to?

P 3 lines 35-44. There are two different studies cited which are reported as if it was one study. The use of "the authors" is problematic.

P 3 lines 44-51. Please clarify what was the reference category for the cited study

The Hypotheses section outlines the mechanisms through which youth religiosity affects sexual abstinence. The author writes, "This association will operate, in part, through parental religion and presence of parents in the household. It will also be mediated by family and community social capital." The author should provide evidence to support these statements. Also, please explain how youth religiosity can affect these hypothesized mediators (parental religion, co-residence of parents, social capital).

P 5 line 35. Please clarify what "positive sexual behaviors" are.

Please explain why selection of states was done based on ethnicity rather than religion.

Why were states with the highest prevalence of "positive sexual behaviors" selected?

In the sample size section, please state directly what effect or difference the sample size was aimed at detecting.

Why did the author decide to sample 571 youths in each state? Was the original plan to do analysis stratified by state? Also, why did the author decide to sample more than the necessary number youths from the same states rather than add more/new states to the study?

Please state the total number of wards selected.

Were any efforts done to ensure adequate numbers of both males and females were recruited? If so, what were the efforts?
What language(s) were used to interact with respondents?

How was "sex" defined in the study (vaginal?, oral?, anal?) and what efforts were undertaken to ensure a consistent understanding of "sex" by respondents? E.g., across ethnic and age groups?

P 9 line 5. Please explain why the author "expect[s] an individual to respond yes to about two of the measures."

How was Presence of a role model measured?

Which parent's religion was measured? Mother's or father's? Please clarify.

P 9 lines 8-13. Please explain why the variables listed were included in the analysis? Was it to control for confounding?

Please state how the complex survey design was accounted for in the analysis.

The author's literature review suggests that gender is a moderating variable. Why did the author not stratify the analysis by gender?

It would be interesting to see if there is an interaction between religion and religiosity.

Policy recommendations (e.g., to provide youth with religious events) based on the evidence provided seems premature. I recommend that the author removes the policy implications.

I recommend that the author use sexual abstinence rather than sexual behavior or positive sexual behavior in the paper wherever possible. E.g., in the titles of the tables.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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