

Gender Disparities in Sexual Behaviors and Attitudes among Adolescents and Young People in Tchaourou- Benin: A Multi-dimensional Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The sexual well-being of adolescents and young individuals is a critical concern in many African countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa. Numerous organizations have implemented projects and programs to tackle this issue, including Benin. This study utilizes data from a 2016 socio-demographic survey conducted in Tchaourou, a rural municipality in Benin, to examine the circumstances of adolescents and young people in the region. Specifically, we focus on gender disparities in sexual and reproductive lives. Our analysis reveals that girls have less exposure to comprehensive sex education, leading to early sexual initiation and earlier pregnancies compared to boys (17 years for girls and 18 years for boys). Girls also face higher vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections. Surprisingly, over 70% of boys have their first sexual intercourse at the desired time, while less than 50% of girls have the same experience. Although boys' situation appears relatively better, it remains a concern for both genders due to early sexual initiation, early pregnancies, and increased risk of STIs. Addressing this issue comprehensively is crucial for the well-being of both adolescent boys and girls.

Keywords: Adolescents-young people; sexuality; early sexuality; reproductive health.

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1. Introduction

The sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people has emerged as a matter of paramount concern for numerous stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations (both national and international), and the scientific community[1]. This concern is particularly pronounced in many developing countries, where adolescents and young people constitute a significant portion of the population and are at a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies[2]. The vulnerability of this demographic group is further compounded by their increasing sexual activity, emphasizing the need for comprehensive guidance on sexuality and STIs[3, 4].

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2009 that approximately one out of every two people infected with HIV worldwide was under the age of 20, with two-thirds of these infections occurring in sub-Saharan Africa[5].

This alarming statistic has drawn the attention of various stakeholders, leading to a concerted effort to prioritize sex education and improve access to reproductive health services[6]. Consequently, several African countries, including Benin, have made the promotion of reproductive health among adolescents and young people a priority action within the broader framework of reducing maternal and infant mortality[7].

It is noteworthy that the projects and programs implemented to address these concerns are designed and executed with a gender perspective. Recognizing that a comprehensive understanding of gender differences is crucial for effective outcomes, stakeholders have emphasized the integration of gender analysis into these initiatives[8]. This approach acknowledges that programs focusing solely on individual behaviors may not adequately address the complex interplay between gender dynamics and sexual health outcomes.

Existing research conducted in West Africa has shed light on the vulnerabilities faced by young girls, revealing that they are more than twice as susceptible to sexual risks as young boys[3].

However, limited information is available regarding the specific experiences of adolescent boys and girls in Tchaourou concerning their sexuality and the consequences that arise from it. Consequently, this study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by analyzing data derived from a socio-demographic survey conducted in 2016.

By examining the socio-demographic survey data, this study seeks to answer central questions pertaining to the experiences of teenagers and young boys and girls in Tchaourou in relation to their sexuality and the associated outcomes. The analysis will provide insights into the prevalence of sexual and reproductive health risks, patterns of sexual initiation, knowledge and access to sexual education, and the effectiveness of existing interventions.

The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and inform policymakers, educators, and healthcare providers in designing targeted interventions and comprehensive sex education programs that effectively address the specific needs and challenges faced by adolescents and young people in Tchaourou, Benin. Ultimately, the goal is to promote the overall sexual well-being and reproductive health of this vulnerable population.

2. Context of the study and conceptual clarification

Tchaourou, situated in the department of Borgou in North Benin, is a rural town characterized by its geographical boundaries. It shares borders with the communes of Parakou, Pèrèrè, and N'Dali to the north, the commune of Ouèssè to the south, the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the east, and the communes of Bassila and Djougou to the west. The town has experienced rapid population growth, with an intercensal growth rate of 6.7% between 2002 and 2013. Notably, 70% of its population consists of individuals under the age of 25. Tchaourou stands out as a unique commune due to its balanced sex ratio, with women comprising 50% of the population[9]. However, concerning sexual and reproductive health, significant unmet needs have been observed within its central district[10], predominantly among teenagers and young people.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence encompasses the age range of 10 to 19 years, while youth refers to individuals between 15 and 24 years old. These developmental stages are characterized by the natural process of puberty, typically occurring between the ages of 12 and 17. This period entails physical, emotional, social, and sexual maturation[11]. Unicef (2011) distinguishes between early adolescence (12 to 14 years old) and late adolescence (15 to 17 years old), wherein the former witnesses physical changes such as rapid body growth, the development of genitalia, and the emergence of secondary sexual characteristics, along with an increasing awareness of sexuality[12]. Late adolescence, on the other hand, represents a crucial period marked by significant physical transformations and enhanced analytical capacities among teenagers. For the purposes of this study, adolescent-young people are defined as individuals aged between 12 and 24 at the time of the survey.

Sex education encompasses various conceptual definitions, often referring to the teaching and learning of information related to human sexuality. It is deemed comprehensive when it adopts a holistic approach to development and sexuality[13]. According to UNESCO (2009), the primary objective of sexuality education is to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, and values that enable them to make responsible choices regarding their sexual and social relationships in a world impacted by HIV. This form of education significantly influences the sexual lives of young people, potentially leading to delayed sexual activity and increased utilization of condoms and contraceptives among sexually active individuals in general[14].

3. Data and methods

This section of the study focuses on two key aspects: the presentation of the data employed in this research and the description of the analytical method utilized.

3.1. Data source and quality

The data utilized in this study are derived from a socio-demographic survey conducted in 2016 in Tchaourou, titled "Economic activities, reproductive health, and education of adolescents and young people in the district of Tchaourou." The survey was undertaken by the National School of Statistics, Planning, and Demography (ENSPD), encompassing multiple sections, including a dedicated "Adolescent and Young People" section. Prior to the actual survey, a comprehensive training workshop was conducted for the survey agents, equipping them

with appropriate data collection techniques and a supporting guide. The tools were meticulously tested through a pilot survey, allowing for necessary adjustments and contextual adaptations to suit the specific population of Tchaourou. The subsequent data collection process was carried out under the meticulous supervision of researchers and research assistants to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the collected data. Within the "Adolescents and Young People" questionnaire, various themes were explored, with Section 5 specifically addressing issues related to the sexual lives and exposure to sexual education among adolescents and young individuals. The study population consisted of individuals aged between 12 and 24 years at the time of the survey in May 2016. A sample size of 2176 individuals was investigated, comprising 1291 females and 885 males within the adolescent and young people cohort. By utilizing this comprehensive dataset and implementing rigorous data collection and processing procedures, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the sexual and reproductive health landscape of adolescents and young individuals in Tchaourou. The utilization of a well-designed survey instrument and a carefully selected sample ensures that the findings can be considered representative of the target population, contributing to the robustness and reliability of the study's conclusions.

3.2. Analysis method

From a methodological standpoint, it is crucial to highlight that this study adopts an exploratory approach. Its primary objective is to assess and document the sexual behaviors and attitudes of adolescents and young individuals, with a particular focus on gender-based comparisons. Given the nature of the research objectives, a descriptive statistical analysis method is deemed most appropriate.

The analysis involves the utilization of frequency distributions, both absolute and relative, to facilitate comparisons between the sexual experiences of girls and boys. Key points of comparison encompass access to sex education, patterns of sexual activity (including age at first sexual intercourse, circumstances surrounding initial encounters, etc.), as well as experiences related to pregnancy (such as age at first pregnancy, among others). Through a comprehensive descriptive analysis, the study aims to shed light on these factors and their variations across gender.

To enhance the depth of analysis, the descriptive approach is further expanded into a multivariate framework through the application of factorial analysis of multiple correspondences. This analytical technique allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the interrelationships among various factors, revealing patterns and associations that may not be immediately apparent in a univariate analysis. By integrating this multivariate dimension, the study aims to capture a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the realm of adolescent and young people's sexual behaviors and attitudes.

By employing a combination of descriptive statistical analysis and multivariate techniques, this research endeavors to provide valuable insights into the sexual landscape of adolescents and young individuals, emphasizing the importance of gender-based considerations. The chosen methodological framework allows for a comprehensive exploration of the variables of interest, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the similarities, differences, and interdependencies among various aspects of sexual behavior and attitudes within this specific population.

The different types of statistical tables used in the simple comparative exploration of these behaviors and attitudes are summarized by the conceptual statistical table below:

Let's denote by:

N , the total number of adolescents and young people surveyed;

N_f , the total number of female adolescents and young people surveyed;

N_m , the total number of male adolescents and young people surveyed;

N_{fi} , the total number of female adolescents and young people with a behavior or attitude i ;

N_{mi} , the total number of male adolescents and young with a behavior or attitude i ;

N_i , the total number of adolescents and young people with the behavior or attitude i ;

p_{fi} , the percentage of female adolescents and young having the behavior or attitude i :

$$p_{fi} = \frac{N_{fi}}{N_f} * 100$$

p_{mi} , the percentage of male adolescents and young with the behavior or attitude i :

$$p_{mi} = \frac{N_{mi}}{N_m} * 100$$

p_i , the percentage of adolescents and young people with the behavior or attitude i

$$p_i = \frac{N_i}{N} * 100$$

The comparative description table is as follows:

Table 7

Experience	Gender		Global
	Male	Female	
1	$p_{m1} = \frac{N_{m1}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_{f1} = \frac{N_{f1}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_1 = \frac{N_1}{N} * 100$
2	$p_{m2} = \frac{N_{m2}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_{f2} = \frac{N_{f2}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_2 = \frac{N_2}{N} * 100$
...
n	$p_{mn} = \frac{N_{mn}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_{fn} = \frac{N_{fn}}{N_f} * 100$	$p_n = \frac{N_n}{N} * 100$
Total	100	100	100

Within the framework of this analytical scheme, the study has yielded significant results that facilitate a comprehensive comparison of the situation between adolescents and young individuals, as well as adolescent girls and young individuals, at various levels. Moreover, a multiple correspondence analysis was conducted to further enhance the depth of analysis. The ensuing chapter will elucidate the diverse outcomes derived from these analytical endeavors.

4. Results and discussion

This section is dedicated to presenting the findings resulting from the diverse analyses conducted. It is crucial to emphasize that this paper focuses on sexuality education, sexual practices, and experiences of pregnancy, all of which have been analyzed with a gender-based perspective at each level. The subsequent discussion will provide a comprehensive overview of the outcomes derived from these analytical investigations.

4.1. Sexuality education in Tchaourou

Sex education is considered a fundamental right for adolescents, as it plays a crucial role in promoting sexual and reproductive health by reducing the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and unwanted pregnancies. This education is particularly significant during the transitional phase from childhood to adolescence (UNESCO, 2009). To assess the extent of sex education among adolescents and young individuals, a direct question was posed to them: "Have you received sex education?" It should be noted that sex education encompasses not only formal education within educational institutions but also encompasses any form of teaching related to sexuality, whether it be within the family or other settings. The summarized responses are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of Adolescents and Young People by Sex and Receipt of Sex Education.

Sex education	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Received Sex Education	59.9% (530)	50.9% (657)	54.6% (1187)
Not Received Sex Education	40.1% (355)	49.1% (634)	45.4% (989)
Total	100.0% (885)	100.0% (1291)	100.0% (2176)

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 17.1396$ Pr = 0.000

Source: Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, it can be observed that more than half of the adolescents and young people surveyed have received some form of sexuality education. However, when analyzing the data separately for young boys and young girls, notable differences emerge. Young boys are more likely to have received sexuality education compared to young girls. Approximately 60% of young boys reported receiving education on sexuality, while only 50% of young girls reported the same. Consequently, a considerable proportion of both sexes find themselves in a situation where they have not received any form of sexuality education. Specifically,

around 40.1% of adolescent boys and 49.1% of girls have not received any sexuality education, resulting in a combined percentage of 45.4% for both sexes.

Although the need for sex education is present among both young boys and girls, it appears to be relatively lower among young boys. However, it is crucial to note that young girls are more vulnerable to the consequences of engaging in unhealthy sexual practices. In a broader context where 54.6% of adolescents and young people have received some form of sexuality education, it can be inferred that the taboo nature surrounding sexual topics is gradually diminishing. Sexual questions, which were previously met with prohibitions or taboos, are now being discussed more openly and freely. Consequently, the sexual experiences of adolescents and young people in this evolving context differ significantly from those in the past.

4.2. Exploring the Intimate Experiences of Adolescents and Young Adults

We examined the sexual life of adolescents and young people by investigating crucial aspects such as the age at which they engage in their first sexual intercourse, the voluntary or involuntary nature of this initial experience, and whether they encounter unexpected sexual acts. This exploration encompasses both male and female adolescents and young adults, revealing noteworthy disparities across all dimensions.

Notably, the sexual life of young girls is distinctly different from that of young boys, as evidenced by the findings of this research. The first sexual intercourse holds significant importance in the lives of adolescents and young individuals and is closely intertwined with sex education. The timing of this pivotal event varies across regions, places of residence, and genders. It is deemed precocious if it transpires before the age of 16, as observed in the study conducted by Maillochon and colleagues in 2014.

Table 2 below presents an insightful overview of the situation in Tchaourou concerning gender-specific characteristics related to the age at first sexual intercourse and other pertinent factors.

Table 2: Average age at first sexual intercourse by gender of adolescents and young people.

Gender	The average age at first sexual intercourse
Male	15.24
Female	15.17
Total	15.19

Source: Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

In Tchaourou, the initiation of sexual practices occurs at a premature stage for both young girls and young boys. It is noteworthy that adolescents, on average, engage in their first sexual intercourse prior to reaching the legal age of majority (18 years) and, consequently, before entering into a formal union. The average age at which both girls and boys experience their initial sexual encounter is 15. Although both genders share the common characteristic of early sexual activity, a subtle distinction emerges between young girls and young boys. The latter tend to display a slight delay in their initiation, yet both groups typically engage in their first sexual act at the age of 15.

This precocious engagement in sexual activity among adolescents and young people may be attributed to the level of sex education. Research has demonstrated that comprehensive sex education programs play a pivotal role in reducing precocity of sexual activity and can delay the onset of first sexual intercourse (UNESCO, 2009). The risks associated with early sexual activity are considerable, as adolescents in this phase are physically immature and often lack the cognitive abilities and skills required to negotiate protective behaviors (Luke, 2003). Consequently, in addition to the potential consequences of unwanted pregnancies, which can lead to high-risk abortions, the precocity of sexual intercourse exacerbates the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (N'Bouke, 2011; Harisson and colleagues 2008; Rossier and colleagues 2006).

In such a context, it becomes evident that the circumstances surrounding the occurrence of the first sexual act are far from ideal and vary among individuals. While some individuals approach their first sexual intercourse deliberately, driven by desire, intention, or prior planning, others do not share the same experience. Table 3 (below) provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse circumstances under which the first sexual intercourse takes place among adolescents and young people in Tchaourou.

Table 3: Gender-Specific Distribution of Adolescents and Young Individuals According to the Circumstances Surrounding Their Initial Sexual Intercourse.

Circumstance of first intercourse	Gender		Global
	Male	Female	
Deliberate	71.8% (257)	45.4% (338)	54.0% (595)
consented	13.7% (49)	26.0% (193)	22.0% (242)
suffered	7.5% (27)	15.6% (116)	13.0% (143)
Violent	1.4% (5)	9.5% (71)	6.9% (76)
Refuse to talk about it	5.6% (20)	3.5% (26)	4.2% (46)
Total	100.0% (358)	100.0% (744)	100.0% (1102)

Pearson $\chi^2(4) = 85.4861$ Pr = 0.000

Source: Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

The chi-square test conducted to examine the relationship between the circumstances of first sexual intercourse and gender indicates a significant association between these variables. It is evident that the circumstances surrounding initial sexual experiences vary based on whether the individual is male or female. Generally, the decision to engage in first sexual intercourse is voluntary and accounts for more than half of adolescents, approximately 54% of the population. However, notable disparities exist between genders. Specifically, voluntary sexual activity is reported by over 70% of males but less than 50% of females. Among boys, 7% experienced their first sexual intercourse under involuntary circumstances, while 15.6% of girls had their initial sexual encounter against their will.

Referring to Table 4, it is apparent that more than half of adolescents and young people have encountered unexpected sexual relations throughout their entire sexual lives. The incidence of victimization among young girls is equivalent to that of young boys, with both genders experiencing this in approximately 50.3% of cases. Engaging in sexual activities under such conditions carries significant consequences. Not only are they frequently associated with the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, but they also contribute to unwanted pregnancies, leading to clandestine abortions performed under unsafe sanitary conditions, thereby endangering the lives of young girls.

Table 4: Distribution of Adolescents and Young People Based on Experience of Unexpected Sexual Intercourse and Gender.

Gender	Experienced Sexual Intercourse	Unexpected	Did Not Experience Sexual Intercourse	Total
Male	50.3% (180)		49.7% (178)	100.0% (358)
Female	50.3% (376)		49.7% (371)	100.0% (747)
Global	50.3% (556)		49.7% (549)	100.0% (1105)

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.0003 Pr = 0.986

Source: Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

4.3. Consequences of sex life: Case of pregnancy

Table 5 presents compelling evidence of a substantial correlation between gender and the initial experience of pregnancy. The data reveals that early pregnancies are prevalent among adolescents and young individuals in Tchaourou. In fact, it is concerning that one in four teenagers or young people, regardless of gender, has already encountered pregnancy or been pregnant.

However, this trend is even more pronounced among young girls, with 36.5% of them reporting at least one prior pregnancy. Conversely, this situation affects less than one in ten young boys, specifically 8.3%. Consequently, young girls tend to initiate their pregnancy journey earlier than young boys in their cohort. It is worth noting that while over 90% of young boys have never experienced pregnancy, only 60% of young girls can make the same claim.

This disparity suggests that the individuals responsible for impregnating these young girls are typically older than them. Consequently, it can be inferred that young girls engage in sexual relationships with partners who have a higher age bracket. This observation aligns with Moore's research[15] on unmarried adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa, which suggests that sexual acts often involve exchanges of goods and favors received by adolescents. Regrettably, such practices expose these young girls to the risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections, as their partners have likely engaged in prior sexual relationships[3]. Moreover, due to limited decision-making skills at this stage of life and within a context of early sexual activity,

Table 5: Gender Disparities in Adolescent and Young People's Pregnancy Experiences.

Gender	To have been pregnant or to have become pregnant		Total
	Has been pregnant	Never got pregnant/Never got pregnant	
Male	8.3% (74)	91.7% (814)	100% (888)
Male	36.5% (473)	63.5% (822)	100% (1295)
Total	25.1% (547)	74.9% (1636)	100% (2183)

Pearson chi2(1) = 222.9515 Pr = 0.000

Source : Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

The earliness of first pregnancies in young girls

On average, adolescents and young people experience their first pregnancy before reaching the legal age of majority, which is 18. Moreover, there is a gender difference in the timing of these first pregnancies. On average, young boys have their first pregnancy experience around the age of 18. In contrast, young girls tend to have this experience slightly earlier, typically at the age of 17. Consequently, their first pregnancies occur at an early stage of their lives.

This early initiation of pregnancies poses significant risks to both the young mother and her future child. Scientific research indicates that children born to mothers under the age of 18 face more than double the risks compared to those born to mothers above 18 years old ([3, 16, 17]). Therefore, the precocity of first pregnancies not only puts the young mother's health and well-being at stake but also poses potential challenges for the child's development.

It is crucial to address this issue as early pregnancies can lead to maternal prematurity, which further compounds the associated risks. A comprehensive approach that includes targeted interventions, education, and access to reproductive health services is necessary to promote the well-being of both young mothers and their children. By addressing the factors contributing to early pregnancies and providing support, we can strive to mitigate the negative consequences and ensure a healthier future for these young individuals.

Table 6: Gender Disparities in the Age of First Pregnancy among Adolescents and Young People.

Gender	Average age at first pregnancy	Standard deviation
Male	18.0	2.2
Female	17.5	2.8
Global	17.6	2.7

Source :Survey data (ENSPD, 2016)

A conspicuous difference between young boys and young girls lies in the occurrence of pregnancies, particularly concerning instances of becoming pregnant (young boys) or being pregnant (young girls), as well as

the age at which the first pregnancy takes place. Young girls, on average, tend to experience their initial pregnancy at an earlier stage compared to young boys of their cohort. While young girls undergo this experience during their minor years, young boys, on the other hand, typically experience it upon reaching the age of majority.

Furthermore, beyond the age discrepancy, women are uniquely susceptible to the physical consequences of pregnancy from a biological perspective. This intrinsic distinction underscores the divergent realities and challenges faced by each gender in the context of pregnancy, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing these disparities to foster greater equality and well-being for all individuals.

4.4. Interpreting Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) Results

To elucidate the specific traits within each subgroup (young girls versus young boys), a factor analysis of multiple correspondences was conducted. This multidimensional descriptive method aims to uncover the distinct characteristics related to sexuality exhibited by young girls and young boys. The results of this analysis reveal that the first three factorial axes account for 63.1% of the total information, forming the basis for further analysis.

The first factorial plane demonstrates that axis 2 does not differentiate specific characteristics between the two subgroups, suggesting substantial similarities in certain aspects of sexuality among both young girls and young boys. However, axis 1 distinctly demarcates various characteristics. This axis juxtaposes young boys and young girls, individuals who have received sex education and those who have not, individuals whose first sexual intercourse is consensual or voluntary versus those who have experienced forced, violent, or non-consensual encounters, and those who consistently or frequently use condoms versus those who never utilize them. Notably, two distinct groups emerge from this analysis.

The first group comprises male individuals who have received sex education, consistently or frequently use condoms during sexual intercourse, and have willingly engaged in their first sexual experience. Conversely, the second group consists of female individuals who often lack access to sex education, tend not to use condoms, and have encountered their first sexual intercourse under sudden, violent, or, in some cases, consensual circumstances prompted by the partner's proposition.

These findings provide valuable insights into the disparities and variations within the sexual experiences of young girls and young boys. It underscores the importance of addressing these discrepancies, ensuring comprehensive sex education, promoting condom usage, and addressing issues related to non-consensual or violent sexual encounters for the holistic well-being and sexual health of all individuals.

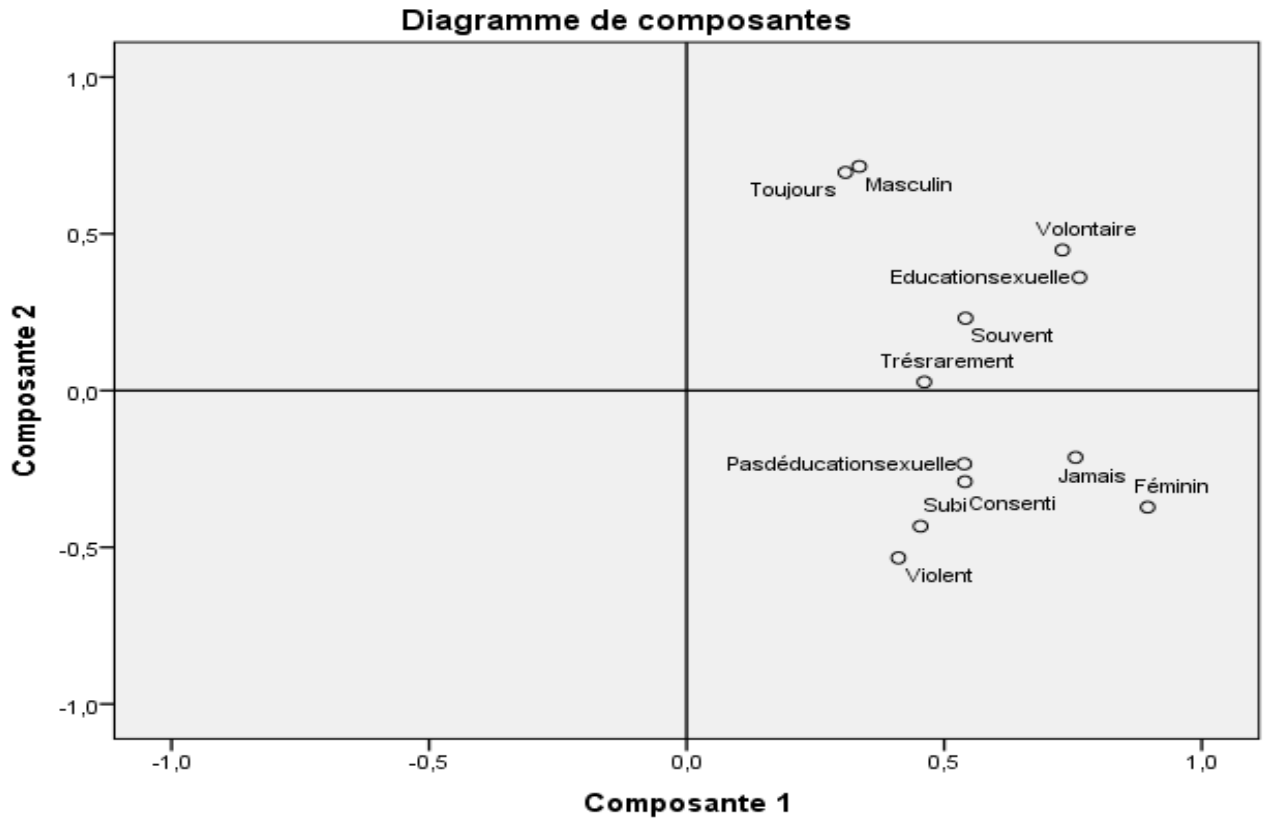


Figure 1: Diagram of components.

5. Conclusion

This research endeavors to examine the disparities and commonalities concerning the sexual experiences of young girls and young boys in Tchaourou. The findings reveal notable differences, indicating that young girls are more vulnerable than young boys when it comes to sexuality. Their vulnerability is evident in areas such as sex education, sexual activity, and pregnancy experiences. Young girls face greater challenges in accessing comprehensive sex education compared to young boys within their cohort. Although there has been progress, with a majority (over 50%) having received some level of sex education, there remains a significant portion that lacks access to this vital information. The subject of sex, once considered taboo, is gradually becoming more openly discussed. However, the disparities in access to sex education persist, underscoring the need for further attention. Analysis of sexual practices reveals that young girls initiate their sexual experiences earlier than young boys, although both groups exhibit early sexual initiation. Additionally, young girls experience a higher prevalence of involuntary or non-consensual first sexual encounters compared to young boys. This exposes young girls to heightened risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies, leading to suboptimal conditions for abortion procedures. Disturbingly, more than 36% of young girls have already experienced at least one pregnancy, while this proportion stands at 8% for young boys.

Furthermore, young girls tend to engage in relationships with partners who are relatively older than themselves. This pattern may stem from the perception that older partners are more capable of meeting their needs compared

to young boys within their generation. However, such relationships place young girls at increased risk of contracting STIs. Given these findings, questions arise regarding the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting the rights of young girls and combating violence against women. While older partners may offer perceived advantages, there is a pressing need to address the associated risks young girls face in these relationships, including the elevated risk of STIs. In light of these observations, it is imperative to continue implementing diverse projects and programs that strive to protect the rights of young girls and address the prevalent issues they face. Combating gender-based violence and ensuring comprehensive sexual health education remains paramount in promoting the well-being and empowerment of young girls in Tchaourou.

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