

Influence of pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating on biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on previous research indicating a rise in premarital sexual activities among Nigerian youth, coupled with the challenges posed by dating behaviors, the study aims to explore the implications of these phenomena on students' academic success. This study investigated the influence of premarital sexual behavior and dating on the academic performance of biology students in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. The research employed a survey design, sampling 320 biology students from eight randomly selected public secondary schools in the region. A self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection, the data obtained was analysed using percentage and mean. The findings indicated a significant difference premarital sexual activities among students in Ilorin West, Kwara State, Nigeria, It also has influence on students' academic performance negatively. Similarly, dating behaviors have effect on time management skills, leading to shifts in academic priorities and potential distractions. The study concludes with recommendations aimed at addressing these challenges, emphasizing the implementation of school policies and workshop or seminar to promote positive relationship skills and healthier dating experiences and reduce potential stressors.

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KURJ
ISSN 2790-1394

pp. 80 - 87
Vol 2. Issue 3.
Mar 2024

Keywords: pre-marital sexual behaviour, Dating, Biology students academic performance

Introduction

Globally, there is growing concern regarding the impact of early sexual activity on adolescents' self-perception, social standing, and future health behaviors. Studies conducted by Akindele-oscar and Ayodele (2004), as well as Ogunsanya (2007), it is evident that Nigerian youth are increasingly engaging in pre-marital sexual activities, similar to their counterparts in the Western world.

However, studies have shed light on the escalating prevalence of premarital sexual behavior among students, emphasizing its widespread occurrence in African educational institutions (Jones & Espey, 2008; Idoko, *et al.*, 2015). Premarital sexual behavior encompasses intimate activities practiced by individuals who remain unmarried, traditionally considered taboo in certain cultures and regarded as a sin in various religions, (Stephen *et al.*, 2016). Sexual relationships among students have been an ongoing occurrence in Nigeria for some time. Research suggests that such relationships are

frequently described as instances of sexual exploitation (Goessmann, Ssenyonga, Nkuba, Hermenau, & Hecker, 2020; Mcharo, Mayaud, & Msuya, 2021; Millanzi, Kibusi, & Osaki, 2022). Consequently, this has resulted in a significant number of young people becoming sexually active and participating in unprotected intercourse, irrespective of their educational background, social environment, or place of residence, whether urban or rural (Olusakin, 2007; Ayodele & Akindele-oscar, 2014).

Dating behavior exhibited adolescence plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation for one's adult romantic relationships. Research indicates that sexual relationships among students are becoming increasingly common in African schools (Akindele-Oscar & Ayodele, 2004; Ayodele, 2014; Jones & Espey, 2008; Ogunsanya, 2010). It has been observed that the dating behavior of Nigerian youth poses significant challenges to their psycho-social development, including their health and academic performance (Ayodele, 2014). Furthermore, students' involvement in dating has led to a surge in unplanned pregnancies, poor academic achievements, and eventually, school dropouts (Miyakado, 2013). The prevalence of premarital sexual activity dating among students is high and can lead to various issues including health, social and academic problems (Ngalinda, 1998 & Miyakado, 2013). Engaging in premarital sexual activity has resulted in an increase in unintended pregnancies, a decline in academic performance, and ultimately, students dropping out of school (Miyakado, 2013). Thus, may frustrate the importance of learning biology in secondary schools.

The learning of biology in secondary school education occupies a very unique position in the educational system in Nigeria, because it is one the core subjects that determines the academic and professional career of students. Education at secondary school level is defined by Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2004), as the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The aim of biology as a secondary school subject is to prepare the individuals for useful living within the society, and for higher education.

However, in Nigeria, there are not enough studies on the influence of premarital sexual behavior and dating on biology students' academic performance. Previous studies in Nigeria have primarily focused on examining the factors influencing premarital sexual behavior and its overall effects on students (Adeola, 2014). To gain insight into the correlation between students' premarital sexual behavior and their academic performance, it is valuable to examine evidence from other countries. Numerous studies conducted in the United States have demonstrated that students who choose to abstain from sex are more likely to successfully graduate from high school and pursue college education, as compared to their sexually active counterparts (Sabia & Rees, 2009 & Miyakado & Timothy, 2014). However, it is important to acknowledge that the American context differs significantly from that of Nigeria in terms of socio-economic, educational, and technological development. This divergence makes it challenging to draw direct comparisons.

The public, particularly parents, teachers, and the government, are deeply worried about the consistent failure of secondary school graduates in core subjects. This issue of poor academic performance is not isolated to secondary schools alone but permeates throughout all levels of education. However, the purpose of this study is not to delve into the reasons behind these mass failures. Instead, it aims to shed light on the influence of premarital sexual behavior and dating behavior on students' academic success, particularly their performance in secondary schools in Ilorin West L.G.A, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating as it correlates biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. Specifically, the study examined:

- Pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating as it correlates biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State
- The effect of premarital sexual interaction on the academic performance of biology students
- The effect of dating on the academic performance of biology students.

Research Questions

- What is the pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating as it correlates biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State?
- Does pre-marital sexual interaction affect academic performance of biology students?
- Does dating affect academic performance of biology students?

Methodology

The survey research type was implemented in the study. This particular survey research was chosen because it the most suitable for collecting, organizing, presenting, and analyzing data. Its purpose is to describe the occurrence of an event or phenomenon within a specific group. The population of this study consisted of all students attending public secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area. A total of 320 biology students were selected as the sample from this population. From the fourteen public secondary schools in the L.G.A, eight (8) schools were chosen randomly. Within each school, a simple random sampling method was used to select 40 biology students who participated in the study.

A self-designed questionnaire was utilized for data collection. This questionnaire underwent validation by two experts from the Department of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education, and one expert from Department of Science, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method within a two-week interval, and the scores were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient, yielding a coefficient of 0.87, for the data collected to be analysed inferential statistics of multiple regression.

Results

Descriptive Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating as it correlates biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State?

Results in table 1 revealed that items 1-17 have mean scores of 2.92, 2.81, 3.11, 3.01, 3.17, 3.27, 3.31, 2.77 to 3.41 2 respectively with grand mean score of 5.75 greater than 2.5. This implies that premarital sexual interaction affect academic performance of biology students

Table 1: Pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating as it correlates biology students' academic performance

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	Premarital sexual interactions may introduce emotional distractions, impacting the concentration and focus of biology students on their academic studies.	2.92	Agreed
2	Engaging in premarital sexual interactions might lead to shifts in time management priorities, potentially affecting the allocation of time to academic responsibilities.	2.81	Agreed
3	The complexities of relationships formed through premarital sexual interactions may introduce stressors that can influence the emotional well-being and subsequently impact the academic performance of biology students.	3.11	Agreed
4	Unplanned pregnancies or concerns about sexually transmitted infections resulting from premarital sexual interactions can create additional stressors that may affect the academic performance of biology students.	3.01	Agreed
5	Social stigma and judgment associated with premarital sexual interactions may impact the self-esteem and mental well-being of biology students, potentially influencing their academic success	3.17	Agreed
6	Engaging in premarital sexual interactions might necessitate improved communication skills, which could negatively affect the interpersonal dynamics and academic collaboration among biology students	3.27	Agreed
7	Students may develop different coping mechanisms in response to the emotional challenges associated with premarital sexual interactions, potentially affecting their ability to handle academic pressures	3.31	Agreed
8	Varied societal expectations and gender dynamics related to premarital sexual interactions may influence male and female biology students differently, influencing their respective academic performances.	2.77	Agreed
9	Conflicts between personal values and behaviors related to premarital sexual interactions may introduce internal struggles that can affect the emotional well-being and focus of biology students on their studies.	2.97	Agreed
10	Engaging in a romantic relationship may require significant time and attention, potentially impacting the time management skills of biology students and influencing their academic commitments.	3.03	Agreed
11	Positive relationships can contribute to emotional well-being, enhancing a student's ability to focus on academic tasks	2.21	Disagreed
12	Problematic relationships may introduce stressors that negatively affect academic performance	2.99	Agreed
13	A supportive partner can provide emotional and academic support, positively influencing a biology student's academic performance through shared experiences and encouragement	2.98	Agreed
14	The dynamics of dating may introduce distractions, with students potentially prioritizing their relationships over academic responsibilities, impacting their focus on biology studies.	3.41	Agreed
15	Relationship conflicts or stressors related to dating may affect a student's mental well-being, potentially leading to decreased concentration and impacting academic performance in biology studies.	2.89	Agreed
16	Positive dating experiences can contribute to a student's sense of social integration, potentially enhancing their overall well-being and creating a conducive environment for academic success in biology.	2.16	Agreed
17	Healthy relationships can foster personal growth and development, positively impacting a biology student's self-esteem and confidence, which may contribute to improved academic performance	2.07	Disagreed
	Total	5.75	

Research Question 2: Does premarital sexual interaction affect academic performance of biology students?

Results in table 2 revealed that items 1-9 have mean scores of 2.92, 2.81, 3.11, 3.01, 3.17, 3.27, 3.31, 2.77 and 2.97 respectively with grand mean score of 3.04 greater than 2.5. This implies that premarital sexual interaction affects academic performance of biology students.

Table 2: premarital sexual interaction effect on academic performance of biology students.

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	Premarital sexual interactions may introduce emotional distractions, impacting the concentration and focus of biology students on their academic studies.	2.92	Agreed
2	Engaging in premarital sexual interactions might lead to shifts in time management priorities, potentially affecting the allocation of time to academic responsibilities.	2.81	Agreed
3	The complexities of relationships formed through premarital sexual interactions may introduce stressors that can influence the emotional well-being and subsequently impact the academic performance of biology students.	3.31	Agreed
4	Unplanned pregnancies or concerns about sexually transmitted infections resulting from premarital sexual interactions can create additional stressors that may affect the academic performance of biology students.	3.01	Agreed
5	Social stigma and judgment associated with premarital sexual interactions may impact the self-esteem and mental well-being of biology students, potentially influencing their academic success	3.17	Agreed
6	Engaging in premarital sexual interactions might necessitate improved communication skills, which could negatively affect the interpersonal dynamics and academic collaboration among biology students	3.27	Agreed
7	Students may develop different coping mechanisms in response to the emotional challenges associated with premarital sexual interactions, potentially affecting their ability to handle academic pressures	3.31	Agreed
8	Varied societal expectations and gender dynamics related to premarital sexual interactions may influence male and female biology students differently, influencing their respective academic performances.	2.77	Agreed
9	Conflicts between personal values and behaviors related to premarital sexual interactions may introduce internal struggles that can affect the emotional well-being and focus of biology students on their studies.	2.97	Agreed
	Total	3.04	

Research Question 3: Does dating affect academic performance of biology students?

Results in table 2 revealed that items 1, 3,4,5,6, and have mean scores of 3.03, 2.99, 2.98, 3.41, and 2.89 greater than 2.5 while items 2,7 and 8 have mean scores lower than 2.5. The grand mean is 2.71 greater than 2.5. This implies that dating affects academic performance of biology students.

Table 3: Dating effect on academic performance of biology students.

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	Engaging in a romantic relationship may require significant time and attention, potentially impacting the time management skills of biology students and influencing their academic commitments.	3.03	Agreed
2	Positive relationships can contribute to emotional well-being, enhancing a student's ability to focus on academic tasks.	2.21	Disagreed
3	Problematic relationships may introduce stressors that negatively affect academic performance.	2.99	Agreed
4	A supportive partner can provide emotional and academic support, positively influencing a biology student's academic performance through shared experiences and encouragement.	2.98	Agreed
5	The dynamics of dating may introduce distractions, with students potentially prioritizing their relationships over academic responsibilities, impacting their focus on biology studies.	3.41	Agreed
6	Relationship conflicts or stressors related to dating may affect a student's mental well-being, potentially leading to decreased concentration and impacting academic performance in biology studies.	2.89	Agreed
7	Positive dating experiences can contribute to a student's sense of social integration, potentially enhancing their overall well-being and creating a conducive environment for academic success in biology.	2.16	Agreed
8	Healthy relationships can foster personal growth and development, positively impacting a biology student's self-esteem and confidence, which may contribute to improved academic performance.	2.07	Agreed
	Total	2.71	

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that pre-marital sexual behaviour and dating influence biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. This may be due to the fact that their knowledge and understanding of the subject will be affected by the immoralities. This is in line with Schvaneveldt *et al.*, (2001) observed academic goals, achievement and age at first sexual intercourse; longitudinal and bidirectional influences reported that when individuals invest more energy and focus in sexual activities, there is a tendency for a decline in motivation for academic performance. Furthermore, the early onset of sexual intercourse is linked to diminished academic achievement.

The results of the findings on Table 1 showed that pre-marital sexual behaviour influence biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. This is in line with Adeola, *et al.*, (2019) observed influence of premarital sexual behaviour on secondary school students' academic performance reported that engaging in premarital sexual behavior has an impact on students' academic performance, potentially leading to an increased likelihood of school dropout due to pregnancy and, consequently, truncation of their education. Quatman, Sampson, Robinson and Watson, (2001) and Timothy, (2010) observed academic motivational and emotional correlates of adolescent dating and the influence of sexual relationship on the performance in secondary school students and university students noted that students involved in romantic relationships consistently demonstrate significantly lower levels of academic motivation. Conversely, those who choose to abstain from sexual activity during high school are markedly less likely to face expulsion, dropout, and are more likely to attend and successfully graduate from college.

The results of the findings on table 2 showed that dating influence biology students' academic performance in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. This is in line with Mlyakado (2013) observed school girls' awareness of and initiatives against risky sexual activity: "The imperative for sex education in schools" revealed that students engaging in dating experiences have been linked to a notable increase in unplanned pregnancies, subpar academic accomplishments, and ultimately, instances of school dropouts.

Ayodele (2014) observed fostering adolescents' interpersonal behaviour: an empirical assessment of enhanced thinking skills and social skills training reported. The dating behavior exhibited by Nigerian youth presents considerable challenges to their psycho-social development, encompassing aspects of their health and academic performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, premarital sexual behaviour and dating introduced emotional distractions and stressors, potentially influencing concentration and focus on academic performance of biology students in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

- Develop and implement school policies should be developed and implemented to address the specific challenges posed by premarital sexual behavior.
- The policies should prioritize the well-being and academic success of students while respecting cultural sensitivities.
- Workshops or seminars should be organised to promote positive relationship skills, effective communication, and conflict resolution strategies. Equipping students with these skills can contribute to healthier dating experiences and reduce potential stressors

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