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DATING PATTERNS OF UNDERGRADUATES OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Dating is a major phenomenon in Nigerian tertiary institutions in which youth enter into many years before they contemplate on marriage. The paper investigated the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara State. A total of 640 undergraduates were selected using purposive sampling technique to select ten tertiary institutions for the study. Data were collected from the respondents using an instrument titled "Dating Patterns of Undergraduates Questionnaire" (DPUQ). The hypotheses generated were analyzed using t-test statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study indicated that there was no significant difference in the dating patterns of the respondents on the basis of religion and school type. However, there was a significant difference on dating patterns on the basis of the age and gender. Recommendations were made on the desirability of establishing counselling centres in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The study also stressed the need for students to be regularly sensitized on how to promote positive attitude towards healthy dating habits.

Key words: Dating, Dating patterns, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of sexual experimentation, a period when young boys and girls share psychological and emotional feelings with the opposite sex. The sharing of feelings is a gradual process that develops over time as it takes two opposite sexes to consciously or unconsciously come to an agreement to achieve their sexual desire. Imperatively, before emotional feelings can

be expressed and achieved, there must be an avenue for meeting and acquaintance thus, dating is a prerequisite for sharing a long time sexual feelings. According to David (2004), dating is an essential biological instinct. Therefore, it is expected that when young boys and girls reach the age of puberty and their sex organs are fully developed, they should start consciously nursing the idea of dating.

Literarily, dating means the act of going out on date. Thus a date is merely a set of time agreed upon by two people to engage in an activity. The common definition of dating is that it is an appointment for a specialized time, especially social engagement between persons of opposite sex (Webster Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, 2004). In Western societies, a date is an occasion when one socializes with a potential lover or spouse. This suggests why Muhammed (2007) opined that dating is an uncommitted relationship and a social engagement between two persons of opposite sex with mutual interest in one another to communicate with and to understand each other better through participation in one or more social activities during day time away from work.

According to Lao (2004) dating is a part of human mating process whereby two people meet socially for companionship, beyond the level of friendship, or with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a partner in an intimate relationship. While the term has several meanings, the protocols and practices of dating, and the terms used to describe it, vary considerably from country to country and over time. The most common idea is two people trying out a relationship and exploring whether they are compatible by *going out together* in public as a couple who may or may not yet be having sexual relations.

Wittman (2007) observed that, single people in dating market today face challenges of finding a significant other. The high school or campus is a traditional place where dating take place, as church and mosque attendance has declined especially in western countries, religious institutions and services less frequently serve this purpose. However, this view seems not applicable in Nigeria as church and mosque attendance as well as religious functions experience high

attendance in Nigeria, campus offer greater opportunity for dating because of the relaxed environment. In addition, because the work women do is often sex- segregated, work offers only limited contact with eligible mates. According to Wittman (2007), some of the common dating patterns on campuses are as follows:-

Single Bar and Gay Dating: - This is a pattern for dating where a group of single men meet to socialise, with the hope of forming romantic partnerships. These are rejected by many people as nothing but "Meat market".

Self- Advertising /Personal Advert: - This pattern is now a common method used by young people to attract dating partners. It is an acceptable way to meet people, especially among educated people. In this pattern of dating, single men and women post personal advert on the media (especially social media) for the purpose of attracting suitors.

Dating clubs:-Specialized dating club can be especially appealing but cater for specific client. People go there to enjoy themselves and to catch fun.

Video Dating: - Many singles now use video to help in mate selection, although it is generally expensive and not common.

Online Dating: - Dating by way of interest has become a pretty routine for variety of single people today as many youths are looking for a match make in cyber- Space. It could be through computer introduction services, match making, online modem to-modem services e.t.c. Here client complete a comprehensive questionnaire and the information is fed into the computer that matches it with other client who have similar profile. Client also in some cases have the advantage of seeing their partner on the

computer during chatting using web cam.

Group Dating: Is a modern pattern for dating where a group of single men and a group of single women organize a night out, with the hope of forming romantic partnerships. It is most popular in Japan, where it is known as *gōkon*. In other cultures, **group dating** is becoming more popular as a safe alternative to single dating (especially blind dating). It also helps to ease tension, because both parties will feel more comfortable having the company of their friends (Olivia, 2006). Group dating is often recommended by parenting experts as a more age appropriate form of dating for preteens than one-on-one dating (Yuko, 2007). According to Yuko (2007), in Japan, a *gōkon* is a group blind date, typically used to form at least some friendships between two groups that are of a single sex. Generally, a single man and a woman who know each other organize the *gōkon* in advance, each agreeing to bring at least 3 or 4 eligible friends. The venue is usually a restaurant, or anywhere people can eat, drink and make a bit of noise.

Universally, dating has been infused with expectation of accomplishment of personal and social development, that is, dating is supposed to bring about such self enhancing, growth-producing ability and assumed to be an essential part of the human experience. It has become a vital part of growing up, intended to encompass every individual (Brown 1999). Thus, through the process of dating, certain functions are expected to be performed for the society as well as for the individual. For instance dating is supposed to serve as a means to an end through which an initial commitment to marriage may arise. Some other functions of dating identified includes that dating serve as avenue for learning self-role; achieving pleasure and recreation and a means of socialization as well as mate selection. Also

dating is a practice that is determined by many factors ranging from influences of parents, social conditions, peer group, biological factors, religious factors, age factor social status and educational level (Brown 1999; Levine & Cureton 2003).

As much as dating performs important function in adolescent development, the issue of abuse which may result in wrong dating patterns among youth cannot be ignored, since dating as suggested by Lao (2004) and David (2004) is seen as a precursor to engagement or marriage. This submission is corroborated by findings of Collins Welsh & Furman (2009) who asserted that dating can be a positive experience for adolescents, promoting self esteem and contributing to the development of communication and conflict management skills. Yet not all youth dating experiences support healthy outcomes. Dating potentially facilitates social development but it may also put youths at risk (Poon, 2008). Researchers such as Zimer-gembeck, steibenbrunner & Collin (2001); Beith-Doyle, Brendgen, Markiewicz & Kamkar (2003) found out that having romantic experience at an early age has been associated with adjustment problems and risky behavior. Also, Brown, Feiring & furman (1999) posited that youth who are involved in romantic relationship at an early age have high rate of psychological and behavioural difficulties in school as well as lower level of academic performance than those who delay until late adolescent. This study intends to find out the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state with a view of identifying the common dating behaviours of different groups of students in Kwara state tertiary institutions and the implication of their dating patterns for counselling.

Statement of problem

Millions of shattered families began with

wrong dating habit. The habit made proper courtship impossible and the result have been tragic, the utmost universal effect of modern dating demonstrates widespread ignorance and the next step of achieving a happy marriage becomes impossible. There are right and wrong ways of dating, the consequence of which could make or mar future relationships. Some of the consequences of wrong dating patterns include among others, engaging in risky dating behaviours (e.g. sexual experimentation, rape, violence and cohabitation e.t.c), adjustment problems resulting into psychological and behavioural difficulties as well as poor school performance.

Adeniyi (2004) carried out a study on risk behaviour associated with dating habit of undergraduates in higher institutions in Kwara State: A case study of Kwara State College of Education. The findings of the study revealed that students of Kwara State College of Education have similar view towards the practices that are perceived as likely risky behaviour in dating.

Muhammed (2007) worked on dating patterns and counselling needs of dating students as perceived by undergraduates of University of Ilorin. The findings of the study revealed that **the commonest dating patterns of undergraduates of University of Ilorin takes the form of dating on line, dating to catch fun and dating for having sex.** The study also showed that as far as undergraduates' of University of Ilorin are concerned; respondents are not different in their perception of dating pattern and counselling needs on the basis of age.

The previous researches carried out in Nigeria focused on dating patterns and risk dating behaviour of undergraduates using a case study of an institution, adolescent or gender. An encompassing study is however, needed to be

carried out on dating patterns among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara State in order to identify the common dating patterns of different groups of students in Kwara state tertiary institutions and the implication of their dating patterns for counselling.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the dating patterns among undergraduates of tertiary institution in Kwara State. It also seeks to investigate the different dating patterns among male and female undergraduates of different religion affiliate and school type.

Research Question: What are the common dating patterns of undergraduates in Kwara state tertiary institutions?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to be tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of religion.
3. There is no significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of school type

Method

The research design adopted for the study is a descriptive survey. The population for the study comprises of all the undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara State, while the target population consisted of ten (10) selected tertiary

institutions in Kwara State. The procedures used in selecting sample for this study were purposive sampling and proportional stratified sampling techniques. The purposive sampling method was used to select ten tertiary institutions in Kwara. In addition, the proportional stratified sampling technique was used to select six hundred and forty (640) respondents according to the variables of the study from the ten (10) tertiary institutions selected for the study. The variables are gender, religion and school type.

scores were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient formula. The correlation co-efficient obtained was 0.62 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Based on this, the instrument was adjudged reliable for the study. The data obtained from the instrument were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage and ranking order for the descriptive data while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical analysis were used to test the null hypotheses generated.

Instrumentation

The main instrument used to collect data for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed personally by the researcher after a careful review of the related literature and it is tagged "Dating Patterns of Undergraduates Questionnaire" (DPUQ). The questionnaire comprises two (2) sections; A and B. Section A focuses on the demographic data of the respondents which include information on gender, religion, and school type. While section Section B contains fifteen (15) items which seek to establish some of the dating patterns of undergraduates. It was patterned after the Four Point Likert Type rating scale format of: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD)

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the draft of the questionnaire was given to experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, to vet it for face and content validity and it was later subjected to the test re-test method to establish it reliability. Thus twenty (20) undergraduate students in Kwara State, Ilorin who did not form part of the respondents for the study were first served with the questionnaire and at an interval of four weeks; the questionnaire was administered to the same group of student. The two sets of

Table 2: Rank Order Analysis of Dating Patterns of Undergraduates of Tertiary Institutions in Kwara State

Item no	My dating partner and I always	MEAN	RANK
12	live together in the same environment	3.34	1 st
1	attend social functions together	3.33	2 nd
3	go to eatery together	3.32	3 rd
6	travel together	3.32	3 rd
5	go on picnic together	3.31	5 th
8	engage in internet interaction	3.29	6 th
4	go to the cinema together	3.22	7 th
14	go to the gymnasium during our leisure period	3.21	8 th
11	read together after classes	3.20	9 th
2	engage in religious functions together	3.19	10 th
13	receive lectures together in class	3.15	11 th
9	engage in phone conversation	3.09	12 th
10	take a walk together	3.10	13 th
15	sit in seclusion together	2.70	14 th
7	engage in video teleconferencing	2.62	15 th

Table 2 shows the ranking of the items contained in the questionnaire on dating patterns. Items 12, 1 and 3 ranked as top three items. Item 12 which states that "My dating partner and I always live together in the same environment", ranked first with a mean score of 3.34. Item 1 which states that "My dating partner and I always attend social functions together" ranked second with a mean score of 3.33. Item 3 which states that "My dating partner and I always go to eatery together" ranked third with a mean score of 3.32. However, items 7, 15, and 10 ranked as the least three. Item 7 which states that "My dating partner and I always engage in video teleconferencing" ranked 15th with a mean score of 2.62. Item 15 which state that "My dating partner and I always sit in seclusion together" ranked 14th with a mean score of 2.70, Item 10 which state that "My dating partner and I always take a walk together" ranked 13th with a mean score 3.09. Since all the fifteen items have mean scores that are above the mid-mean score of 2.50, then it can be said that majority of the respondents agreed with the stated items as some of the dating patterns of undergraduate of tertiary institutions in Kwara State. However, it can be concluded that the common dating patterns of undergraduate of tertiary institution in Kwara state include; living together in the same environment, attending social functions with dating partners, and going to eatery with the dating partner.

Hypotheses Testing

In this study, three (3) null hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure. Significant differences were determined at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference in the dating

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation and t-value of Respondents' Dating Patterns on the Basis of Gender

Gender	No	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Males	264	37.63	7.29	638	34.62*	1.96
Females	376	54.16	4.78			

Table 3 presents data on the mean, standard deviation and t- value of respondents' dating patterns on the basis of gender. The table shows that the calculated t-value of 34.62 is greater than the critical t- value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. On this basis, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significance difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions on the basis of gender was rejected. The difference was noticed with the mean score of males higher than that of females. This means that males students in tertiary institutions in Kwara state differs in their dating patterns from the females students.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference in the dating patterns of the respondents on the basis of religion.

Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of dating patterns of respondents on the basis of religion

Sources of Variance	Sums of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	Calculated F-value	Critical F-value
Between Groups	188.37	2	94.19	1.04	3.00
Within Groups	57280.58	637	89.92		
Total	574468.96	639			

Table 4 presents data on the Analysis of Variance of respondents' dating patterns on the basis of religion. The table shows that the calculated f-value 1.04 is less than the critical f-value 3.00 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the dating pattern of undergraduates on the basis of religion is accepted. This means that respondents from different religions have similar dating patterns in Kwara state tertiary institution.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the dating pattern of respondents on the basis of school type

Table 5: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of dating patterns of respondents on the basis of school type

Sources of Variance	Sums of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	Calculated F-value	Critical F-value
Between Groups	99.43	2	33.14	0.36	3.00
Within Groups	57369.53	637	90.20		
Total	57468.96	639	NS		

Table 5 presents data on the Analysis of Variance of respondents' dating patterns on the basis of school type. The table shows that the calculated F-value 0.36 is less than the critical F-value 3.00 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the sexual behaviour of undergraduates on the basis of school type is accepted.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state. The results of the study indicated that the proportion of male who responded to the questionnaire was 41.2%, while female respondents made up 58.8%. The proportion of Christian respondents was 53.9%, the proportion of Muslims was 41.6 % and that of African Tradition Religion worshipers was 4.4%. The proportion of respondents from various institutions indicated that respondents from University were 29.4%, Polytechnic were 35.8%, College of Education were 15.5%, while School of Nursing were 19.4%.

In this study, it was found that the common dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state includes "living together in the same environment" "attending social functions together" and "going to eatery together". The findings conform with the view of Lao (2004) **who asserted that dating** is a part of human mating process whereby two people meet socially for companionship, beyond the level of friendship, or with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a partner in an intimate relationship. Thus, the essence of dating is for individuals in date to become acquainted with each other and decide whether they want to have a serious relationship. The result of this finding may be attributed to the level of moral decadence as well as the porosity of students' accommodation in our various tertiary institutions which has given opportunities for students to cohabitate like husbands and wives.

The study also revealed that there is significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of gender. The hypothesis formulated was rejected. This means that both male and female students have different patterns of dating. The finding is in line with the submissions of Feiring, (1999) and Shulman & Scharf, (2000) whose studies revealed gender differences with respect to dating behaviours. According to these researchers, female adolescents emphasize more commitment, care, self-disclosure and intimacy in their romantic relationships than male adolescents. Also, the finding corroborated the findings of Miller & Benson (1999) who asserted that male adolescents are more likely to focus on the sexual aspects of relationships

than female adolescents. The findings could be as a result of the fact that boys and girls motives and expectations in dating activities differs to some extent. For example boys on usual occasions go into date for sexual experimentation and to assess their level of sexual prowess.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the dating patterns among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of religion. The hypothesis was accepted. This means that Christian and Muslim respondents are similar in their dating patterns. The finding could be as a result of the fact that when two people grow up in completely different religious environment, they will naturally have different values, beliefs perspectives and methods of approaching situations.

The third hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara state on the basis of school type. The hypothesis was accepted. This means that students of various school types are similar in their dating patterns. The result of this finding could be as a result of the fact that students from tertiary institutions in the State possesses similar characteristics and share the same value system and beliefs in their dating patterns.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. There was significant difference in the dating patterns of undergraduate of tertiary institutions in Kwara State on the basis of gender.
2. There was significant difference in the dating pattern of undergraduate of tertiary institutions in Kwara State on the basis of religion.
3. There was significant difference in the dating pattern of undergraduate of

tertiary institutions in Kwara State on the basis of school type.

4. The common dating patterns of undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Kwara State includes living together in the same environment (cohabitation), attending social functions together (for example party) and going to eatery together (eating out)

Counselling Implications of the findings

The essence of counselling is to help individual live a balanced, well adjusted, meaningful and happy life. Muhammed (2007) observed that youths of today are in confused state of mind with respect to courtship and marriage and usually enter into it without proper guidance. Since a successful marriage foundation began long before wedding day, dating has been viewed as one of the major activity which youth enter into many years before they contemplate on marriage.

The implications of this finding included that if dating students engages in cohabitation (living together in the same environment) there is the tendency that they will engage in sexual intercourse which is a risky behaviour due to it lifelong and irreversible harm. Also, because of the level of freedom enjoyed by undergraduates on and off campuses in Nigeria, dating students could adopt wrong dating habits and engage in risky dating behaviours such as engaging in dating violence, sexual coercion, multiple dating practices, drug use, and date rapes. The effect of these on individual dating can be very devastating as it will leave a long lasting effect on future relationships (marital life) of students and could cause psychological and behavioural difficulties in school as well as lower level of academic performance. Based on the above stated implications, all hand must be on deck to

provide preventive measures against wrong dating habits among undergraduates in order to enhance a solid foundation for future marital life. Since dating is a major activity in the tertiary institutions, premarital counselling service needs to be provided for students so as to know that selecting right mates during dating could help in building a successful marriage foundation and happy home.

General Recommendations

Based on the result of the findings and all that has been discussed in this study, it was recommended that students should be exposed to premarital counselling before they dabble into marriage. Undergraduate students preparing for marriage or dating relationship should be educated on adverse effect of wrong dating pattern. Premarital counselling could be made a compulsory course to all students in higher institutions by incorporating it into the General studies courses.

Counselling units should be established in higher institutions of learning so that student could receive appropriate counselling on reproductive health and sexuality. Also counsellors should encourage positive cultural practices such as avoidance of sex before marriage and discourage unhealthy dating among undergraduates of higher institution of learning. Finally, workshops and seminars should be organised from time to time in tertiary institutions to promote positive attitude towards healthy dating and sexual behaviours.

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