

Volume 13, No. 1 August, 2015

ISSN:1597-2666

THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST



Journal of
The Nigerian Society for Educational
Psychologists (NISEP)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEXUAL ACTIVITIES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities. The study also examined the variables of gender, religion and age. The target population for the study was all the 41 public and private secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. Proportional Sampling technique was used to select 9 secondary schools from the three local government areas represented in Ilorin Metropolis. A sample of 540 respondents was randomly selected. Relevant data was collected using the instrument tagged, "Attitude Towards Premarital Sexual Activities of Secondary School Students' Questionnaire" (ATPSAOSSSQ). Frequency Counts and Percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics and to answer research question 1. While t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. The result of this study revealed that secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis have non-challant attitude towards premarital sexual activities. It was, therefore, recommended that Parents, Teachers, Psychologists, Counsellors, Government and other stakeholders should as a matter of urgency be involved in enlightenment programmes to appropriately help and guide secondary school students towards creating good and healthy attitude towards premarital sexual activities.

Keywords: Attitude, Premarital Sexual activities, Secondary School Students, Ilorin Metropolis, Sex Education.

Introduction:

One of the aims of Education is to bring out fully all the potentials of an individual to enable that individual to fix himself up in the society where he finds himself and to make meaningful

contributions towards the development of that society. The National Curriculum for secondary schools has as one of its aims, to give students good moral education through broad-based religious instructions in schools. The question is, to what extent has this goal been achieved in our schools or among the adolescents today? (Ajagbe, 2005).

Several researchers have proffered some reasons why this goal seems elusive, Nwobi (1997) stated that there is an increasing rate of sexual activities among the adolescents particularly among secondary school students due to the culture of silence in matters relating to sex which cut across all levels of the Nigerian society. Premarital sexual activities have a lot of social taboos associated with it because sex is what is done in secret and is hardly discussed openly. Therefore, the secondary school boy or girl does not have free access to the right information he/she needs on sex and sexuality from the right quarters. Parents only emphasize the importance of abstaining from sex before marriage without adequately telling them "how" and "why" they should do this. The result of this action is that the boy or girl is left with no option than to find answers to the sex related questions on his/her own, often times from peers, journals, magazines, television and the internet. Unfortunately, they get misinformed and go ahead to experiment recklessly what they have learnt from these sources.

Araoye (1998) noted that adolescents have peer pressure to become sexually active at an early age. He opined that peer pressure on an

adolescent is one of the factors that make many secondary school students to even think of engaging in premarital sexual activities. Adolescence has been described as a stage of maturation between childhood and adulthood. The term denotes the period from the beginning of puberty to maturity. According to Adegoke (2003), the onset of puberty for girls from high socio-economic status is about 12 years while those from low socio-economic status is put at about 13 years. While the boys from high socio-economic status experience their first wet dreams at about 13 years and those from low socio-economic status have theirs at about 14 years of age. He noted that this period is also characterized by physical, psychological, social and emotional changes (Ogunlade & Olasehinde, 1995).

In the opinion of Olatunji (2000), sexual behaviour does not connote coital experience or sexual intercourse alone, but it also embraces all sexual activities that can lead to actual sexual intercourse. For example, light and deep kissing, breast/genital fondling, holding of hands, embracing, petting, oral genital contact among others. He observed that in the pursuit of education, students leave their homes for school and are no longer under the strict supervision of their parents. Most of them get exposed to western lifestyles more than ever and many get involved in premarital sexual affairs which they see as due marks of civilization.

The issues of adolescent's premarital sexual behaviour and other related issues have been of particular interest to scholars like

Owuamanam (1995), Nwobi (1997), Olatunji (2000); Abogunrin (2002); Owuamanam (2002); Adegoke (2003); Awoniyi (2004); Ajagbe (2005) among others. The conception has been that adolescence is a period of intense sexual drive and experimentation, which have resulted to unintended pregnancies, illegal abortions and dumping of unwanted babies in motherless babies homes, high rate of school drop-outs and increase in the rate of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDS), Human Immune Virus and the Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitude towards premarital sexual activities of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis, with a view to providing plausible suggestions that would help to change their attitude for good and to control adolescents' sexual activities because they are the leaders of tomorrow. Four research questions were raised based from the research problem.

1. What is the attitude of secondary school students towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin Metropolis?
2. Is there any difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of gender?
3. Is there any difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of religion?
4. Is there any difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of age?

Three null hypotheses were tested.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of religion.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of age.

Methodology

The research design used for this study is the descriptive research method and the population comprised all secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis with about 41 Public or Government owned secondary schools and 20 Private owned secondary schools. Proportional sampling technique was used to select 6 Public and 3 Private owned secondary schools, making a total of 9 schools. The actual schools that participated in the study and respondents were randomly selected. Sixty (60) students were sampled from each school, bringing the total number of respondents to 540.

The instrument tagged, "Attitude Towards Premarital Sexual Activities of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (ATPSAOSSSQ)" generated from literature review, was developed by the researcher, and was used to collect relevant data. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Selection A was made up of the respondents'

demographic characteristics while section B consisted of fifteen (15) items, rated on the 4-point Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree = (4), Agree = (3), Disagree = (2), Strongly Disagree = (1), with a minimum score of 15 and a maximum score of 60, with a range of 45, and a mid-point of 22.5 (23 approximately).

The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in the field of Educational Psychology, Evaluation and Measurement and from Counsellor Education in the University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was established through test – retest reliability coefficient. The instrument was administered to (60) students and re-administered to them after three weeks interval. The two set of scores were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Procedure. The correlation coefficient of the instrument was found to be 0.67. Based on this, the instrument was deemed to be reliable for the study.

The questionnaire was administered to students in their classes by the researcher and two research assistants. The students completed the questionnaire on the spot and returned them to the researcher and her assistants immediately. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages which was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to answer research question 1 which did not have a corresponding hypothesis. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t-test statistics while hypothesis 3 was tested using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), all at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings

The results of the study are therefore, presented as follows:

The distribution of respondents on the basis of gender, religion and age.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	250	46.3%
Female	290	53.7%
Total	540	100%

Table 1 shows that out of 540 students sampled, 250 (46.3%) were males while the rest 290 (54.7%) were females.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	318	58.9%
Islam	222	41.1%
Total	540	100%

Table 2 reveals that out of the 540 students sampled, 318 (58.9%) were Christians while the rest 222 (41.1%) were Muslims

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11 – 14	288	53.3%
15 – 18	230	42.6%
19 and above	22	4.1%
Total	540	100%

Table 3 indicates that out of 540 students sampled, 288 (53.3%) were within age bracket of 11 – 14 years; 230 (42.6%) fell within the age range of 15 – 18 years while the rest 22 (4.1%) were within the age group of 19 years and above.

Table 4: Percentages, Numbers of Positive Respondents and Rank of Respondents on Attitude towards Premarital Sexual Activities

Attitude Toward Premarital Sexual Activities	Items No.	No of Positive Resp.	%	Rank
In my Opinion:	1	410	75.9	1 st
engaging in premarital sexual activities is not against my religion.	2	383	70.8%	2 nd
engaging in premarital sexual activities at my age is not bad	6	371	68.7%	3 rd
engaging in premarital sexual activities is acceptable for males only.	12	362	67.1%	4 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities proves one's virility and fertility.	10	361	66.9%	5 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities is conducive for me.	11	360	66.6%	6 th
maintaining my virginity till marriage is old fashioned.	7	355	65.7%	7 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities is equally acceptable for females too.	13	333	61.7%	8 th
it is better to engage in premarital sexual activities than to masturbate.	5	330	61.1%	9 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities boasts adolescents' ego and show that you have come of age.	4	328	60.8%	10 th
students engage in premarital sexual activities in order to strengthen relationship and show affection.	14	327	60.5%	11 th
it is better to engage in premarital sexual activities than to be practicing homosexuality or lesbianism.	9	315	58.3%	12 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities is acceptable if one does not have a means of livelihood.	3	302	55.9%	13 th
engaging in premarital sexual activities is a sin against God.	8	301	55.8%	14 th
students from good family background cannot engage in premarital sexual activities.	15	239	44.3	15 th
engaging in Premarital sexual activities should be postponed till after marriage.				

Table 4 shows the attitude of respondents towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin Metropolis. The data on table 4 reveals that 410 (75.9%) respondents agreed that "engaging in premarital sexual activities is not against my religion". While 383 (i.e.70.8%) respondents agreed that "students engaging in premarital sexual activities at my age is not bad". A total of 371 (i.e. 68.7%) respondents agreed that "engaging in premarital sexual activities is acceptable for males only: 362 (i.e. 67.1%) respondents indicated that "engaging in premarital sexual activities proves one's virility and fertility". And 361 (i.e. 66.9%) respondents agreed that "engaging in premarital sexual activities is conducive for me".

Table 4 also reveals that 327 (60.5%) respondents felt that "it is better to engage in premarital sexual activities than to be practicing homosexuality or lesbianism". A total of 315 (i.e. 58.3%) respondents indicated that engaging in premarital sexual activities is acceptable if one does not have a means of livelihood". 302 (i.e. 55.9%) respondents agreed that engaging in

premarital sexual activities is a sin against God. Also 301 (i.e. 55.8%) respondents agreed that "students from good family background cannot engage in premarital sexual activities". While 239 (i.e. 44.3%) respondents agreed that "engaging in premarital sexual activities should be postponed till after marriage".

From the foregoing, it is evident that students have non-challant and unhealthy attitude towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin metropolis. This means that they do not see anything wrong with engaging in premarital sexual activities.

Hypotheses Testing:

Three null hypotheses were generated and tested using t-test statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of gender.

Tables 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Male and Female Students on Attitude Towards Premarital Sexual Activities

Variables	N	X	Standard Deviation	Df	Cal. t-Value	Critical t-value	Decision
Male	250	34.08	5.22	5.38	3.13	1.96	Do not accept HO ₁
Female	290	32.38	7.06				

Significance, $P < 0.05$

The result in Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value (3.13) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of Significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards premarital sexual

activities on the basis of gender is rejected. This is indicative of the fact that boys and girls differ significantly in their attitude towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin Metropolis.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of religion.

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and t- value of Respondents' Attitude towards Premarital Sexual Activities on the Basis of Religion

Variables	N	X	Standard Deviation	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value	Decision
Christians	316	33.08	6.35	537	.49	1.96	Do not reject HO ₂
Muslims	222	33.36	6.35				

NS = Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 6 reveals that the calculated t-value (.49) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis is thus accepted as the result shows that there is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of religion. This implies that students of different religious

affiliations did not differ in their attitude towards premarital sexual activities.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of age.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance on Respondents' Attitude Towards Premarital Sexual Activities on the Basis of Age.

Sources	Sum of Source	df	Mean	Cal. f-value	Critical f-value	Decision
Model	41.498	2	20.7492	.5176	2.21	Do not reject HO ₃
Error	21530.853	537	40.0947			
Total	21572.351	539		(NS)		

NS = Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 7 indicated that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of age as shown by the higher critical F-value (2.21) as against the calculated F-value (.5176) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is thus

accepted which says that students do not differ in their attitude towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of age.

Discussion of Findings:

Findings of the study show that secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis have

non-challant attitude or behaviour towards premarital sexual activities. This was revealed by the number of students on Table 4 who agreed that engaging in premarital sexual activities was not against their religion, supported by other respondents who said that engaging in premarital sexual activities at their age was not bad. Also some other respondents said that engaging in premarital sexual activities was conducive to them. These findings could be linked up to the fact that adolescents of today seem to value sexual activities more than their counter-parts of the past years. This is in line with what Owuamanam (1982) stated that the traditional values in the Nigerian society for sanctity of sex and sex for procreation has been overthrown in favour of liberal sexual activities.

Another finding of this study revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of male and female secondary school students towards premarital sexual activities in Ilorin Metropolis. Majority of the responses on the ATPSAOSSS Questionnaire agreed upon the fact that engaging in premarital sexual activities is acceptable for males only while some others said that involvement in premarital sexual activities was equally acceptable for females too. This finding is in agreement with the study by Owuamanam (1995) with 593 students in secondary and higher institutions in Ondo State, to determine the age at first sexual experience. It was discovered among other things that there were differences in the percentage of urban males and females engagement in premarital sexual activities.

Abogunrin (2002) stated that the difference in opinion of male and female respondents could be due to the issue of male exaggeration and female concealment of sexual matters. The males talk about their sexual exploits more readily than the females.

The result of hypothesis two showed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students toward premarital sexual activities on the basis of their religious affiliations. Findings show that a large number of respondents agreed that engaging in premarital sexual activities was not against their religion. This shows that the age long tradition of chastity and abstinence from sex before marriage is fast eroding away as only a smaller proportion of respondents agreed that engaging in sexual activities should be postponed till after marriage (Ajagbe, 2005). Owuamanam (2002) agreed that there has been increased youth involvement in premarital sexual activities since the period of the Nigerian Civil War. This she said could be due to the rapid secularization of schools and the removal of religious and moral instructions from the school curriculum and the greater emphasis on the co-educational system and the gradual phasing-out of boarding system in secondary schools.

The findings of hypothesis three revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of age. This implied that age does not affect the attitude of respondents towards premarital

sexual activities. Most of the respondents agreed that 'engaging in premarital sexual activities at my age is not bad'. This was in agreement with what Alonge (1991) opined that our youths read a lot of literature dealing with love and love-making. Thus, the whole process of sexual behaviour (i.e. dating, kissing, caressing and mating) are watched on the screen by both young and old and so the secrecy surrounding sexual matters have been completely removed, making it almost impossible to prevent the youths from indulging in sexual activities. The computer age in which we are now, for instance, the Internet, Magazines, Video clubs, Television and others, make all information on sexual issues available to all who need them.

Conclusion:

Sequel to the findings of this research, it could be said that secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis have free attitude towards premarital sexual activities. It was also discovered that secondary school students differed significantly in their attitude towards premarital sexual activities on the basis of gender, but did not differ significantly on the basis of their ages and religious affiliations.

In view of the non-challant attitude of students towards sexual activities, they engage in indiscriminate and unprotected sexual acts and with multiple partners which is dangerous to their lives. Leadership in the family and at schools, therefore, should educate their children and students on the dangers inherent in their involvement in premarital sexual acts especially in this era of

widespread sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) and the likes of HIV/AIDS, Ebola virus, among others.

Also students free attitude to premarital sexual activities have far reaching implications for education. This is because there is need for urgent intervention of professionally trained psychologists and counsellors in order to help the youths and the future leaders of this country to change their orientation towards sex and sexual issues.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this research and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is an urgent need for secondary schools to have sex education entrenched in the curriculum to be handled by specialists like Psychologists, Counselors, Physical and Health Education Teachers among others. This will help the students to develop normal and healthy attitude towards sex and sexuality.
2. Moral instructions should be re-introduced in secondary schools to be handled by Teachers with the active collaboration of Psychologists, Counsellors, Christian and Islamic clerics.
3. Psychologists in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellors in secondary schools should organise orientation programmes involving teachers, parents and students on regular basis on how to deal with the problems associated with students premarital

- sexual activities.
4. Government should make more concerted efforts to encourage enlightenment campaigns by providing the necessary materials needed to enlighten the students on the nature, scope and implications of adolescent sexuality and involvement in premarital sexual activities.
 5. Parents should ensure proper upbringing of their children and wards by instilling in them the fear of God. **Proverbs 22: 6** says, Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
 6. Students themselves should imbibe the teachings they receive from both the Holy Bible and Quran, which says, practice the fear of God, as this alone is the pinnacle of wisdom.

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