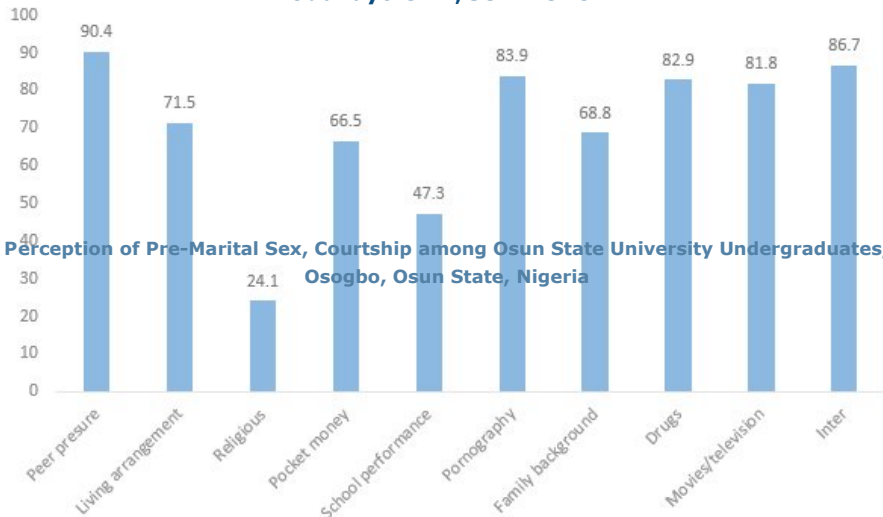




Perception of Pre-Marital Sex, Courtship among Osun State University Undergraduates, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

Abdulazeez A O¹, Adeyemi O^{2*}, Abayomi O³, Grace B⁴, Halima U Y⁵, Odunayo G A⁶, Jennifer O⁷



Abstract

Background: Pre-marital sex, a form of sexual activity practiced by unmarried individuals, has seen growing acceptance in western countries. Previously, it was considered a moral dilemma, prohibited by many cultures and religions. However, the acceptance of pre-marital sex has become more widespread.

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the perceptions, practices, and factors associated with pre-marital sex and courtship among undergraduates at Osun State University in Osogbo, Osun State.

Methodology: This descriptive study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents from Osun State University's main campus. The sample size was calculated using Leslie Kish's formula, resulting in 387 valid survey responses. Data collection involved self-administered semi-structured questionnaires comprising four sections. Data were coded, input, and analysed using SPSS v21.

Results: The mean age of respondents was 19.19±2.17 years, with the majority falling in the 18 to 24 age group. Approximately 52% of respondents held a positive view of pre-marital sex and courtship. Regarding courtship, a significant portion (88.3%) believed that individuals spending time together were involved in courting. Analysis of factors associated with pre-marital sex revealed that peer pressure (90.4%), Internet exposure (86.7%), access to pornography (83.9%), and substance use (82.9%) were the prominent contributors to pre-marital sexual behaviour among undergraduate students.

Conclusion: The study suggests that parents should actively monitor and visit their children while they are at universities. Providing essential materials and creating a comfortable environment can help protect them from succumbing to peer pressure. It is recommended that undergraduate students avoid engaging in pre-marital sex. While many students view courtship as a normal practice, it can still contribute to pre-marital sexual activity.

Keywords: Pre-Marital Sex, Courtship, Influences, University, Undergraduates

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Cite this Article

Abdulazeez A O, Adeyemi O, Abayomi O, Grace B, Halima U Y, Odunayo G A, Jennifer O. Perception of Pre-Marital Sex, Courtship among Osun State University Undergraduates, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. *Biomed Rev J Basic Appl Med Sci.* 2023;10(1):17-22.

Available From

<https://www.biomedicalreview.in/perception-of-pre-marital-sex-courtship-among-osun-state-university-undergraduates-osogbo-osun-state-nigeria-research-article>

Meta History

2023-12-29 Submission Received

2024-01-01 1st review

2024-01-08 2nd review

2024-01-15 3rd review

2024-01-22 Accepted and Published

Declaration

9% Plagiarism. Authors state no conflict of interest. Non Funded. The conducted research is not related to either human or animals use. All authors have accepted responsibility for the entire content of this manuscript and approved its submission.

Evidence in Context

What Know: Pre-marital sex, a form of sexual activity practiced by unmarried individuals, has seen growing acceptance in western countries. Previously, it was considered a moral dilemma, prohibited by many cultures and religions.

What New: The study suggests that parents should actively monitor and visit their children while they are at universities. Providing essential materials and creating a comfortable environment can help protect them from succumbing to peer pressure.

To view

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Introduction

Pre-marital Commonly, this concept "sex before marriage" refers to people who are supposedly not yet of marriageable age or to adults who are having sexual relations before they eventually get married (Ramesh, et al, 2008). Merriam Webster claims that according to the dictionary, courtship is the amount of time when people engage in love activities that potentially result in marriage, or the time frame during which such activities take place. Sex before marriage is sexual behaviour engaged in by single people. In the past, having sex before getting married is seen as a moral dilemma that many cultures forbade and that many people regarded to be sin in many religions, although it has gained wider acceptance across the board since the 1960s, especially in Western nations. Several research have been conducted on how individual perceives courtship considering its impact on pre-marital sex (Bogle, 2008).

According to these research, young adults—both male and female—frequently participate in casual sex, often known as "campus courtship" or "hooking up," as opposed to the traditional courtship model, which forbids pre-marital sex. A sexual contact, including kissing and having intercourse, is widely referred to as "hooking up," especially amongst young men and women, without suggesting a legal commitment. Premarital sex, non-marital pregnancies, and a high rate of divorce each year have all significantly altered the traditional family structure. Due to western education, courtship, a practice that has been prevalent in Nigeria for decades, gained popularity. Undergraduate courtship has changed some of the traditional male and female interactions in African society. Men had to make calls to ladies in the pre-colonial era and be invited to visit the woman's home while being strictly supervised by the family. This kind of courtship followed traditional wooing guidelines that both men and women were required to follow. However, the perception of young men and women about romance and sex before marriage has indeed been completely reshaped by western education. The university setting gives young people the chance to go out and indulge in another type of campus romance known as "hooking up" away from the watchful eyes of their families and neighbors (Hettinger, 2007).

The mass media, social media, the internet, peers, shifting family customs, money, the university setting, and other elements have influenced how young people think and engage in courtship alongside contemporary social changes. Undergraduates' sexual conduct has been influenced by this awareness of courtship, especially in relation to courtship and its relationship to premarital sex.

Material and Method

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out at **Osun State University**. The study was carried out with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. The information obtained from the finished instrument was calculated and analyzed using Statistical Product for Service Solutions version 21 software.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this study as data analysis strategies. To examine the data and provide answers to the study objectives, descriptive statistics like frequency distribution and mean will be used. Compound frequency distributions were used to track respondents' replies to each of the instrument's questions.

Results

Socio-Demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The mean age of the respondents is 19.19 ± 2.17 , with about 50% of them are between 18-24 years. More than two-thirds of the respondents were female, practiced Christianity (69.8%) and are the Yoruba (78.3%) tribe. The majority (98.5%) of the respondents were single and are 100 level (54.5%) students.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

Variable	n = (387)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
<18	182	47
18-24	193	49.9
≥25	12	3.1
Mean±SD	19.19±2.17	
Gender		
Male	137	35.4
Female	250	64.6
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	303	78.3
Igbo	53	13.7
Hausa	14	3.6
Others	17	4.4
Religion		
Islam	115	29.7
Christianity	271	69.8
Traditional	1	0.3
Marital status		
Single	379	98.5
Married	6	1.5
Level		
100	211	54.5
200	87	22.5
300	64	16.5
400	18	4.7
500	7	1.8
Department		
Anatomy	23	5.9
Pharmacology	26	6.7
Physiology	33	8.5
Public health	54	14
Computer science	10	2.6
Medical laboratory science	19	5
Biochemistry	8	2.1
Law	7	1.8
Mechanical engineering	8	2.1
Nutrition & Dietetics	19	5.1
Radiography & radiation science	26	6.7
Nursing	12	3.2
Others (Zoology, Statistics, Plant Biology, MCB)	142	36.3
Faculty		
Basic and Applied science	39	10.1
Basic Medical science	63	16.1
Engineering	26	6.7
FABAMSA	29	9.4
Health sciences	43	11.1
FBSS	9	2.3
FBMS	14	3.7
Others (BMS, CHS, LAW, College of Health)	164	40.6

Respondents' Perception on Pre-Marital Sex, Courtship and its Influences

Table 2 shows the respondents' perception on pre-marital sex courtship and its influence. About 78% of the respondents agreed that women and men (68.6%) should be a virgin before marriage. More than two-thirds of the respondents agreed that neither man nor woman should not have pre-marital sex. Many (71.2%) of the respondents agreed that pre-marital sex should be prohibited. About 61% of the respondents disagreed that pre-marital sex is normal for biological needs. More than half of the respondents disagreed that pre-marital sex should be acceptable if a couple falls in love and plan to marry. The majority (92.3%) of the respondents agreed that courtship is a process where partners get to know more about each other. About 70% of the respondents agreed courtship sometimes leads to pre-marital and unprotected (61.2%) sex. Many (65.2%) of the respondents agreed that courtship has ruined the lives of some students.

Figure 1 shows respondents' perceptions towards premarital sex, courtship, and its influence. About 52% of the respondents show a positive perception towards premarital sex and courtship.

Respondents' View on Courtship Practice

Table 3 shows the respondents' views on courtship practice among them. About 62.9% of the respondents think most of the people living together are courting. The majority (88.3%) of the respondents think those that go around together are courting. More than two-thirds of the respondents believed courting can take place without any form of personal contact with the help of modern technology. Most (84.7%) of the respondents believe singing romantic love songs, reciting poems and writing letters help the courtship building.

Figure 2 shows respondents' views on factors that lead to pre-marital sex among undergraduates. About 90% of the respondents think peer pressure has led to pre-marital sex among undergraduate students compared to the Internet (86.7%), Pornography (83.9%), Drugs (82.9%), living arrangement (71.5%), family background (68.8%) and Pocket money (66.5%)

Table 2: Frequency distribution of respondents' perception on pre-marital sex, courtship and its influence

Variable	Agree(%)	Neutral(%)	Disagree(%)
Woman should be a virgin before marriage	296(77.9%)	15(3.9%)	69(18.2%)
Man should be a virgin before marriage	260(68.6%)	21(5.5%)	98(25.9%)
Neither a man or woman should have pre-marital sex	263(69.7%)	18(4.8%)	96(25.5%)
Pre-marital sex should be absolutely prohibited	270(71.2%)	87(23%)	22(5.8%)
Pre-marital sex normal because it is a kind of biological need	119(31.4%)	30(7.9%)	230(60.7%)
Pre-marital sex is acceptable if a couple fall in love	135(35.6%)	27(7.1%)	217(57.3%)
Pre-marital sex is acceptable if he/she has only one partner	125(33.2%)	30(8%)	222(58.9%)
Pre-marital sex is acceptable if the couple plan to marry in the future	138(36.3%)	28(7.4%)	214(56.3%)
Courtship is a process whereby you get to know your partner	350(92.3%)	4(1.1%)	25(6.6%)
Courtship sometimes leads to pre-marital sex	267(70.4%)	11(2.9%)	101(26.6%)

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents View on Courtship Practice

Variables	n=381	Percentage (%)
By doing the live-in couple		
Yes	246	62.9
No	143	37.1
Couples that go together for some activities		
Yes	342	88.3
No	45	11.7
Courting can also take place without personal contact, especially with modern technology		
Yes	301	77.7
No	86	22.3
The practice of singing romantic love songs, reciting poems, writing letters and gift-giving		
Yes	328	84.7
No	59	15.3

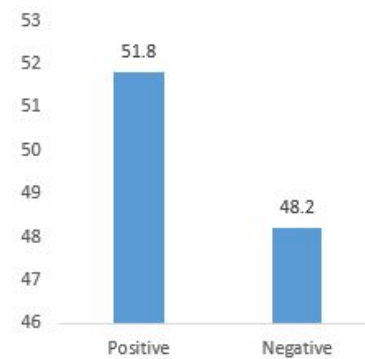


Figure 1: Respondents Perception towards Pre-Marital Sex

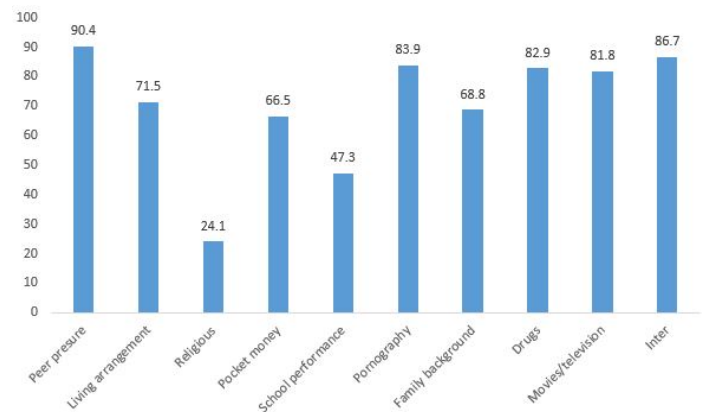


Figure 2: Factor Leading to Pre-Marital Sex among Undergraduate

Discussion

In this study, we examined the undergraduates' perceptions on courtship and its influence on pre-marital sex, we also ascertained how courtship is being practiced among the undergraduates and lastly, we identified the factors leading pre-marital sex among undergraduates. A large percentage of the respondents agreed that women and men should be virgins before marriage, neither a man or woman should have pre-marital sex, premarital sex should be prohibited and shouldn't be normal because it is a biological need, pre-marital sex should not be acceptable if a couple fall in love and plan to marry, courtship sometimes lead to premarital sex and unprotected sex and that courtship has ruined the lives of some students. This means that a higher proportion have a positive perception on premarital sex that it should be avoided.

Meanwhile on the perception of undergraduates on courtship, a higher proportion agreed that courtship sometimes leads to premarital and unprotected sex and courtship leads to the ruin of some students lives, this indicates that although there is an overall positive perception towards pre-marital sex that it should be avoided the perception on courtship indicates that courtship has a big role to play in undergraduates participating in premarital sex. It is obvious from the study that the undergraduate students show a positive perception towards premarital sex and courtship which means that pre-marital sex is a behavior that should be avoided among undergraduates in Osun State University, which is in line with a study conducted by (Hansel Teo Sze Young et. al. 2020) on the perception of premarital sex among students in a faith-based university.

This study also showed that majority of students say that those that hang around together are courting, a particularly large amount of people also says that singing romantic love songs, reciting poems, and writing letters is a method of courtship, while a lesser amount say couples that live together are also practicing courtship.

Results from the factors that influence pre-marital sex showed that peer pressure is the major contributing factor that leads undergraduate into having pre-marital sex. Following that are other factors such as pornography, drugs, internet, living arrangement, movies/television etc. these influencing factors are not peculiar to this study alone, it was also stated in another study that was conducted by (Adegboyega et. al. 2019; Omoge Adeyemi O. et al. 2022 & Adeyemi O. Omoge et al. 2023) on the influence of peer pressure on sexual behavior of undergraduates in kwara state.

Conclusion

Pre-marital sex is a practice that should be avoided by undergraduate students, though most students consider courtship as a normal practice, it is still used as a normal factor that leads them to practicing pre-marital sex. Some students especially in their teens, are mainly influenced by their peers, others by the promise of marriage which makes them fall victim of pre-marital sex. Our respondents have a positive perception on pre-marital sex, which tends to influence their courtship practices in a positive way.

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