

**PRE-MARITAL SEX AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE:  
COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*Premarital sex refers to any sexual activity that single people engage in without the intending of marriage. This subject is not new, and in some ways it no longer causes as much anxiety or attention as it formerly did. This is due to the fact that it is increasingly becoming a frequent problem, and young people are engaging in it with little to no awareness of the repercussions it will have on them now and in the future. This essay presents the origins and effects of extramarital sex. According to the report, undergraduates should be informed about the unintended consequences of having sex before marriage, and parents, schools, and the surrounding community should all make this possible. Additionally, counsellors are expected to participate in ongoing outreach initiatives in both urban and rural regions.*

**Key words: Premarital Sex, Undergraduates, Counselling Implication.**

**Introduction**

Premarital sex is defined as voluntary sexual activity before or without plans for marriage, with that particular partner or with another person. When young women and men engage in what is typically referred to as a "sexual relationship," it usually implies that there will be intimate sexual contact. Most people who partake in it are young, single adults and undergraduates. There has been a great deal of discussion and controversy surrounding this issue, with varying viewpoints based on personal views, culture, and religion. The age at which premarital sex begins as well as the patterns and development of sexual behaviour vary greatly.

In Nigerian society, premarital sex has spread like an incurable moral disease. In most of Nigerian society, this tendency has become commonplace. The surviving seniors in contemporary society are preoccupied with taking care of their own affairs while children misbehave, in contrast to the past when parents and social elders preached abstinence as a virtue. Sexual relationships are becoming a threat to our society, premarital sex is the reason behind more than half of all new HIV infections in individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 and more than one in every twenty young people catches a treatable STD. Thirty-five million, three hundred thousand people worldwide, two million, one hundred of them are young, are HIV/AIDS positive. Over half of the two million, three hundred thousand new HIV infections are in young people (15–24 years old). The negative effects of premarital sex on perpetrators in Nigeria include school drop-out, chance of HIV infection, and illegal abortions. 25% of young people aged 15 to 19 engaged in sexual activity before to turning 15 (Arega et al., 2019).

Undergraduates often go through a phase of self-identity crisis during which they socialize, transit, and seek attention by acting in ways that could be harmful to themselves while believing they are on par with adults. According to several sources, youth is defined as those who are 18 years of age or younger. The United Nations defined youth as those who are between the ages of 15 and 24. The

World Health Organization (WHO) defines youth as those who are between the ages of 10 and 24. High levels of energy, the desire for adventure, dating, sexual experimentation, zeal, radicalism, rebellion, curiosity, and dangerous sexual behaviour are characteristics of the average youth. These traits frequently jeopardize the sexual and reproductive health of undergraduates. This generation, also referred to as youth, represents a significant portion of about a third (31.6) of Nigeria's large and growing population (Aderibigbe et al., 2019).

From the writer's viewpoint, premarital sex refers to sexual activity between unmarried individuals. It is typically used to describe people who are assumed to be under-age for marriage or to describe adult relationships that are expected to end in marriage but involve sexual activity before then. The majority of undergrads' sexual activity can also be linked to risky behaviours like substance misuse, ignorance, coercion and abuse, curiosity and experimentation, environment and background, and poverty.

### **Concept of Premarital Sex**

There are varied perspectives on the concept of premarital sexual relationships by different scholars. Premarital sex, in Oko's (2018) opinion, is a bad wind that neither boys nor girls should be exposed to. It causes an abundance of suffering, annoyance, and disillusionment. Menankiti (2016) added his voice to this argument by stating that, in general, sex is the most contentious and universal topic of conversation. It transcends national boundaries, cultural barriers, age groups, and socioeconomic classes. Young people are especially interested in sex talks because it seems like everything in their lives, except for eating and drinking, revolves around sex and the other sex. Menankiti's above submission confirms that one of the most powerful influences in youth is sex. Few topics may pique people's curiosity more than sex-related issues. Some children begin having sexual experiences as early as their preteen years. Eight out of ten men and seven out of ten women in the US report having sex when they were in their teens, according to a survey by the Alan Guttmacher Institute. In a world where glamorized sex is often portrayed on media, this is hardly shocking and should be anticipated.

Premarital sex, which is usually associated with young adults and undergraduates, in which sexual behaviour takes place before marriage. In a word, it's two people engaging in sexual activity with one another out of fun rather than marriage. And it encompasses a broad range of sexual behaviours including full sexual intercourse, anal sex, oral sex, mutual masturbation, and smooching (Salman 2021). Undergraduates, however, are exposed to a variety of situations, such as uncertainty, anxieties, and conflicting desires. As a result, they lack the courage to ask their parents and other elders for advice and guidance unless they are made to feel valued and at ease during serious conversations. Failure to do so may lead them to make poor choices and take risks that may come back to haunt them in the future. One of these foolish choices or experiments is having sex before marriage. Because most of these young adults lack the information necessary to protect themselves and seek guidance on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, reproductive anatomy and physiology, and other related topics, their behaviour is dangerous and risky (Arega et al., 2019).

Agbaje (2021) discovered that attitudes around sexual behaviour had shifted in an almost revolutionary way during the past 20 years. They proceeded by adding that surveys on extramarital sex, homosexuality, premarital sex, and particular sexual acts likely reflect the openness and permissiveness of these attitudes now more than they have in the recent past. They came to the following conclusions: condoms and abortions have reduced the fear of pregnancy; young people are exposed to sexual stimuli in publications, television, and movies to a higher level than in the past; and there are effective birth control options available. More freedom is granted to the newly mature person by all of these changes. They now view sexual activity with greater tolerance, and this has led to changes in their real behaviour. These shifting perspectives have disastrous consequences on young people's health.

According to Morton's (2017) perspective, increased sexual freedom and frequency of sexual interaction are the main factors contributing to the spread of venereal diseases (VD). Adolescents who engage in premarital sex are unfortunately not given the right guidance. In response to this predicament, Onyemeelukwe (2019) stated that, even in our urban areas, where attitudes about premarital sex are unquestionably more permissive, there is a public uproar against it. This discovery

supported Hoffman's (2019) claim that the rate of adolescent unmarried sexual activity in cities is rising, even though it's thought that the issue appears to be alarmingly prevalent in rural areas where it's quickly becoming a tradition (Izundu, 2021).

Premarital sex among young people is more common at secondary schools, where a larger proportion of young people in productive age groups are centered. Over 13 million school-age adolescents, or 7% of Nigeria's 13–18 population, are enrolled in university programs (Ayodele et al., 2021). Upper secondary school offers a chance for these young people to become more independent from their homes and make new acquaintances from many subcultures with different norms and beliefs. For the majority of them, it also marks a move toward greater independence from home. While for others going to school is a chance to explore new ideas and get into romantic or sexual connections. According to Alo (2018), in-school adolescents in Nigerian schools frequently exhibit this tendency. In agreement with this perspective, Ayodele et al. (2021) conducted research to ascertain the frequency of this phenomena among teenagers enrolled in upper secondary schools. According to the study's findings, premarital sex is a highly normal behaviour among students in upper secondary schools. A sizable portion of respondents (85.6%) said they saw nothing wrong with having sex prior to marriage.

A student pursuing their first degree in college or university is known as an undergraduate. The majority of students at this point of life are facing adulthood and experiencing freedom from their parents for the first time, making it the most vulnerable and important moment in their lives. Students go through an identity crisis during this time as they strive to live up to the expectations of being independent, grown adults. In addition to adjusting to the world of adults, they are given the chance to experiment and discover the lifestyle they want. They may be away from home, but ongoing supervision is still required to ensure their healthy transition into adulthood.

### **Theoretical Review**

Albert Bandura's 1986 "Reciprocal Determinism Theory" serves as a cornerstone for this presentation. According to the theory, an Individual's behaviour is shaped by both external and internal variables, which in turn impact each other in a cyclical manner. One of the main ideas in Albert Bandura's social learning theory is reciprocal determinism. Reciprocal determinism, often called triadic reciprocity, is a theory in which there are three elements that impact conduct: the individual (including their thoughts and feelings), their surroundings, and the behaviour itself. Earlier learning theories, like the one proposed by B.F. Skinner, maintained that an individual's behaviour was always influenced by their surroundings. that humans were merely passive objects influenced by their surroundings. However, in accordance with Bandura, an individual's environment not only shapes their thoughts, but also their behaviour, which in turn shapes their surroundings. In other words, the environment influences how a person thinks and feels, which in turn influences their behaviour to the social norms, which impacts the environment in return (Kendra, 2023).

Summarily, if the society fails to imbibe accepted cultural norm and conduct in children, these children will bring uncultured behaviour to the society and if the society failed to curb these uncultured behaviours, it will continue to spread like wildfire until what is known of that society's culture and good conduct perish.

The Implication of this theory to this paper is that if the society does not actively work towards curbing premarital sex among youths and undergraduates, the consequences fall back on the society itself because these youths and undergraduates are the ones that will later take charge of that society and an adage says "you can't give what you don't have". Watching young people grow on without decency and morality is just like watching a tree breaking without knowing where it will fall.

### **Causes of Premarital Sex**

The preceding review makes it evident that premarital sex has gained attention in today's culture. So what is the cause of this social misbehaviour? Reiss (2017) asserted that a large portion of the shifts in young people's sexual behaviour are due to their increasing independence from parents, churches, schools, and the government. Additionally, he noted that research indicates that a high percentage of sexual permissiveness is caused by frequent use of alcohol and illegal substances, identification with peers rather than parents, personal values, and a lack of attendance at church or a mosque.

Among the reasons of premarital sex relationships, Riza et al. (2019) listed the following:

- i. **Difficult Parent-Offspring Bond:** Parents have a vital role in shaping an undergraduate's basic personality and helping them make appropriate decisions in life, especially those involving their sexuality. Parenting style is a manifestation of every contact that takes place between parents and undergraduate students. It is common for a young person to look to friends for guidance on whether or not to have sex when they feel uncomfortable discussing sexual matters with their parents, either because they are unavailable or prohibit such conversations. This can lead to miscommunication and even teenage pregnancy. One of the biggest obstacles to protecting undergraduates from getting involved in sexual behaviour is the absence of communication, support, and information about sexual matters from parents (Riza et al., 2019).
- ii. **Complex of Inferiority:** Gallagher and Gallagher (2020), whom Garba (2021) referenced, claimed that an intense need for approval and affection is the reason for the propensity to initiate sexual behaviour at a young age. They said that it was an indication of the level of maturity that undergrads thought they had reached. Undergraduates are known to be more susceptible to dangerous behaviour and the problems that come with it because of this mindset.
- iii. **Childhood Experiences of Abuse:** Rong et al., (2022) Numerous studies has shown a strong correlation between child sexual assault (CSA) and unsafe sexual behaviour. The creation of treatments to prevent risky sexual behaviour is greatly aided by the fact that a small number of research have examined potential explanations for this association among middle school students, a demographic that may participate in premarital sex.
- iv. **Peer Influence:** A teen is more likely turn to friends to seek advice on whether or not to have sex when she doesn't feel comfortable talking to her parents about it, either because they are not around or because they forbid it. This can lead to misinformation and possibly expose her to premarital sex. In an effort to meet up with their group of friends and socialize, they may also take advice and lessons from their carefree and irresponsible peers, driven by their desire to live freely like them.

Other causes that are generally known includes; Poverty, Depression, Media Influence, Experiment/Curiosity, Drug and Substance Abuse, Environmental Factors and so on

### **Effect of Premarital Sex**

Undergraduates are a group of people who are more susceptible to risky sexual behaviour and other harmful behaviours. Undergraduate health issues include the spread of STDs, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and unplanned marriage have increased as a consequence. A handful of the many effects of premarital sex is what the researcher categorized are as follows: both Personal Effects and Social effects

**Personal Effects:** This covers the effects of premarital sex on the one who engages in it. These include unintended pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, being a single parent, STDs, and unmet academic aspirations.

- **Unwanted Pregnancy:** It is universally accepted that marriage, which elevates both individuals to new social status as husband and wife, will inevitably result in pregnancy among adults of the opposite sex. However, unmarried people are now more likely to become pregnant, especially those in their teens. Abortion and single parenthood are only caused by unwanted pregnancies. Young women who engage in premarital sex without understanding the value of protection, contraception, and contraceptives are more likely to become pregnant unintentionally and unwantedly. In these situations, their only option may be to have an abortion in order to prevent getting married unintentionally and facing social stigma. There's a risk of dying, an irreparable rhesus crisis, and lifelong infertility if the uterus is lost, marriage crisis brought on by the spouse's lack of respect. Notably, Rhesus crisis is another aspect of premarital sex that most students are unaware of. Rh incompatibility is the state in which the expectant mother and father are neither positive nor negative for the Rh factor. Rhesus is an antigen that stimulates the production of antibodies to combat foreign substances within the body. There are several risks involved in using an incompatible rhesus during conception. These include the possibility of miscarriages and stillbirths, as well as permanent infertility following a single pregnancy or careless abortion. Oniye (2019) asserted that rhesus compatibility is a sword that can sever the endless chances of success of a marriage is just as crucial

for prospective spouses as the love required to create a family. So it must not be left out during premarital counselling.

- **Teenage Pregnancy:** Nyakubega (2019) perceived teenage pregnancy as a situation in which a female becomes pregnant while still a teenager. Pregnancy is a major issue among Nigerian undergraduate ladies, according to Ekwueme (2017). She argued that this was due to the high prevalence of premarital sex among undergraduates, particularly in mixed schools. According to Audu (2017), more than a million Nigerian university students fall pregnant each year. Approximately 400,000 of them are minors, aged 17 or under. According to his projection, 1 in 5 young girls who would turn 20 in 2021 would have become pregnant by the time they turned 18 years old.
- **Sexually Transmitted Disease:** Premarital sex is the reason behind more than half of all new HIV infections in individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 and more than one in every twenty young people catches a treatable STD. Thirty-five million, three hundred thousand people worldwide, two million, one hundred of them are young, are HIV/AIDS positive. Over half of the two million, three hundred thousand new HIV infections are in young people (15–24 years old). The negative effects of premarital sex in Nigeria include school dropout, risk of HIV infection, and illegal abortions. Up to 25% of young people aged 15 to 19 reported having sex before turning 15 (Arega et al., 2019).
- **Unfulfilled Educational Goals:** In addition to being against societal and religious conventions, premarital sex is a major source of distraction for both male and female students. A young man who has overindulged in sexually risky behaviours will only consider school as a means of selecting from a large pool of girls who will assist satiate his desires. On this, girls are included as well. These diversions, meanwhile, have the potential to pull kids away from their academic goals. Premarital cohabitation, in which young single students of different sexes live together as boyfriend and girlfriend like a married pair, is therefore a unique issue among undergraduates in academic settings. According to Oniye (2019), cohabitation is nothing more rather than a place for unrestricted sex and experimentation, which is bad for the morals of those who live there.

### **Social Effects of Premarital Sex**

The effects of premarital sex on the society in which it is prevalent are explained by the social effect of premarital sex. This includes a rise in the percentage of the uninitiated, unemployment, poverty, lost prospects for benefits, marital instability, and issues with fertility. Most young people who engage in premarital sex have a tendency to become easily distracted in school, which causes them to pass through without learning anything. Some even drop out of school or graduate with a poor GPA that prevents them from pursuing higher education. The female students who become pregnant along the way become unintended brides and are unable to continue their study. Parents serve as role models for their children, and a child reared by parents with low intellectual attainment may not find much incentive to pursue a lengthy education. And this can restrict their aspirations in school. This could result in cycles of generational illiteracy, raising the family's overall unemployment and poverty rates.

In most high-illiteracy environments, the opportunities for empowerment are restricted to manual empowerment and appropriate environmental empowerment, such as government appointments, digital and technology empowerment, overseas scholarships, and other developmental opportunities that might not be abundantly available there.

### **Preventive Measures**

Since the issue of premarital sex is alarming especially because it involves undergraduates, therefore a serious intervention need to come into place and actively monitored.

**Parental Monitoring and Involvement:** According to Salman (2021) definition, parental monitoring encompasses all the endeavours parents undertake to safeguard their child's well-being and safety, as well as to equip them with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and resources to become respectable adults and instil cultural values in them.. Parents could monitor their children by directly observing their behaviour, being knowledgeable about their progress and weaknesses, as well as using parental monitoring skills to shape their behaviour.

The various ways of monitoring here could be direct supervision, knowledge of the child's whereabouts including leisure time activities, unexpected visitation to them in school, as well as constant telephone contact between the parent and child when they are apart.

**Sex Education:** According to Audu (2017), undergraduates are more likely to have unprotected sex and participate in early sexual experimentation if they have less understanding about premarital sex. Therefore, sex education is an attempt to discourage unrestricted sex, which can harm an undergraduate's reproductive system and leave them mentally unprepared for life as a parent. Therefore, more instruction is required to ensure that the notion of sex education content is understood.

**Collaboration of Landlords and their Legal Advisors:** Majority of undergraduate students prefer to live in privately owned accommodations due to the freedom and unquestionable privileges enjoined as they live freely and act recklessly with no one to question them. In comparison with school hostel and accommodation facilities, students who live in privately owned accommodations has the freedom to dress as they please, freedom to go in and out without anyone to question their whereabouts, freedom to cohabit with opposite sex, freedom to possess luxurious item and live extravagant lifestyles, which gives room for immorality in students.

Landlord has a key role to play in moderating this by stating a clear agreement/law that guide the validation of rent agreement through their legal advisors. Rule like time to open/close the gate to the accommodation, expected behaviour in the premises, rule that oppose to partying, cohabitation, indecent dressings as well as involvement of landlords in the case of scouting non-tenant. With the collaboration of private hostel owners and legal involvement, restrictions can be made on the student-tenants to curb social vices.

**Religious intervention:** Religious organizations' ongoing education campaigns are another tool that can help prevent students from engaging in inappropriate behaviour, such as harmful on-campus sexual encounters. The majority of students try their best to leave their homes in a respectable manner before succumbing to oppressive forces, displacing the moral instruction that their parents have instilled in them. Religious organizations can aid in this act with the right amount of effort.

In submission of Reiss (2017) a large portion of the shifts in young people's sexual behaviour are due to their increasing independence from parents, churches, schools, and the government. Additionally, he noted that research indicates that a high percentage of sexual permissiveness is caused by frequent use of alcohol and illegal substances, identification with peers rather than parents, personal values, and a lack of attendance at church or a mosque.

**Government Intervention:** Government and the CAC should get involved by imposing on business enterprises a law that supports decent means of advertising and marketing of products during company registration, and the sanctions that accompanied failure to abide such as revocation of business license.

### **Counselling Implications**

- Both the school and family institute have the role of creating awareness and educating people old and young on the matters of sex education. Rooms should be given for enlightening undergraduates on puberty in term of bodily/ hormonal changes and how to handle them, temptation, awareness on peer pressure, expectation and aspiration for a greater future. This will help to instil an upright behaviour in them and building a fine personality in them to make them responsible adults.
- Association of professional counsellors should include continuous organization of outreach program in their service to the nation especially in rural areas to educate parents, married adults and would-be mothers on the importance of premarital sex education for growing children and how to incorporate it into their parenting style. This is to ensure a safe transition of children into a responsible adults.
- School counsellors should endeavour to educate students on consequences of premarital sex and give more rooms for undergraduate counselling at all times.
- Counsellors in school settings should enlighten teachers on how to adopt orientation in students misbehaviours instead of punishment and embarrassment. And they should be enlightened on being a role model for students.

### **Conclusion**

Upon reviewing every piece of literature in this paper, it is found that premarital sex is a global problem and could be caused by various factors like childhood assault experience, poverty, inferiority complex, peer, media and environmental influences, drug and alcohol as well as pleasure/experiment by youths and undergraduates. It has a lot of effects on the person and the society including unwanted pregnancy, abortion, unfulfilled educational goals, increased rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty as well as loss of befitting opportunities. This problem can best be solved by the home, school and society through parental involvement and acceptance of sex education as an important intervention in building a fine personality in youths and undergraduates. As supported by the reciprocal determinism theory, if the society fails to reject defaults in the young ones, the society may one day become a defaulted society. **Suggestions**

The following are some of suggestions procured by the researcher:

- The parents, school and the environment needs to give room for enlightening undergraduates on the unforeseen effect of premarital sex.
- School counsellors should take up constant enlightenment programs.
- Parents should provide their children support, not only financially but emotionally. Emotional support creates serious attachment between parents and children.
- Parents should incorporate monitoring and involvement into their parenting style because this will make the children weary of their own behaviour.
- Elders in the society should follow the steps of our forefathers who fathered beyond their own offspring. They monitor, mentor, correct and punish even unknown children anywhere and everywhere in the society. This played a significant role in the nurturing and molding a responsible personality in the society at large.
- Government and the CAC should get involved by imposing on business enterprises a law that supports decent means of advertising and marketing of products during company registration, and the sanctions that accompanied failure to abide such as revocability of business license.
- Government and ministries of education should impose a timely awareness programs in all levels of education on pre-marital sex and matters that concerns personal development of children and young adults.

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