

**THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

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EDU2102398**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, acknowledge that this research work was carried out by Somto Paschal AGU with matriculation number EDU2102398 in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, the Author of my life and the Light that guides my path. In every moment of doubt, He has been my refuge; in every challenge, my strength; in every success, my inspiration. To Him alone belongs all glory.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the causes and effects of premarital sex among undergraduate students in the University of Benin. In recent years, premarital sexual activities have become increasingly common among young people, particularly university students who are exposed to diverse social, cultural, and academic pressures. This growing trend raises concerns due to its potential implications on students' health, emotional wellbeing, and academic performance. The study therefore sought to identify the major factors that influence students to engage in premarital sex and to examine its consequences on their overall adjustment within the university environment.

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of 270 undergraduate students residing in Ekosodin Community, from which the sample was selected. A structured questionnaire was the principal instrument for data collection, and it was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through statistical analysis. Data collected were analyzed using mean to answer the research question, while simple linear regression and independent sample t-test were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The findings revealed that premarital sex among undergraduates is influenced by multiple factors such as peer group pressure, curiosity and the desire for sexual experimentation, exposure to media and internet content, lack of comprehensive sex education, family background and parenting style, socioeconomic challenges, and the influence of alcohol and drug use. Furthermore, the study established that premarital sexual activities have far-reaching effects, including poor academic performance, health risks such as sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies, emotional and psychological distress, social stigma, and long-term relationship difficulties. Based on these findings, the study recommends that parents, educators, school counsellors, and policy makers intensify efforts toward providing comprehensive sexual education both at home and in schools. It also recommends strengthening counselling services within the university to help students cope with emotional and psychological challenges. Creating awareness programmes that discourage risky sexual behaviour and promoting value-based education among youths were also suggested as measures to reduce the prevalence of premarital sex among undergraduate students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Over the years and all through history it has been observed that opposite sex attracts, that is, man to woman, young boys to young girls, male child to female parent (Oedipus complex) and female child to male parent (Electra complex). This attraction could be sexual gratification, sense of identity or a feeling of belonging. Literature has shown that these two parties (male and female) have always had a strong connection that is beyond the ordinary. Something, someone or an idea has drawn them together. Premarital sex is generally used in reference to individuals who are presumed not yet of marriageable age, or between adults who will presumably marry eventually, but who are engaged in sexual activity prior to marriage (public opinion polls have consistently shown that premarital sex is wrong and dangerous to health resulting in abortions, teenage mothers and sexually transmitted infections (Aaron, 2011; Finer, 2015).

An undergraduate student refers to individuals enrolled in a tertiary educational institution pursuing their first academic degree, such as Bachelor's degree. In the Nigeria context, undergraduates typically range from the age of 16years to 30years, with most falling within the late adolescent to early adult stage.

Many undergraduates in Africa struggle with balancing academic demands and social pressure affecting their academic performance and mental health (Michael Tagoe, 2012)

Premarital sex refers to sexual relations that occur between individuals who are not legally married and it has been considered taboo in some cultures and numerous religions (Stephen & Stephen, 2016). It has become an issue of increasing global concern, especially among young adults and university students. The rise in premarital sex in Africa has resulted from a sexual revolution that came with western culture (Scott, 2015).

Among university students, various factors contribute to this growing trend. A primary influence is peer pressure, as students often feel compelled to align with the actions and expectations of their social circles, which may include engaging in sexual activities.

Another key factor is the impact of media and digital technology. The easy access to the internet, along with exposure to sexually suggestive content through social media, films, and music, often encourages behaviors that normalize or even celebrate premarital sex. Such portrayals can influence students' perceptions and prompt them to experiment.

Premarital sex, defined as sexual activity before marriage, is particularly common among young people, including secondary school and university students. A 2014 pew study on global morality found out that premarital sex was considered immoral or sinful in many cultures and religions—especially in predominantly Muslim nations like Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Egypt where over 90% disapproval while it has become more normalized in modern society, especially in Western nations such as Spain, Germany, and France, where disapproval is below 10%.

Despite its increasing acceptance in some regions, premarital sex is linked to a variety of behavioral problems observed in Nigerian secondary schools and universities. These include truancy, disobedience, drug use, violent conduct, cultism, and examination malpractice. Many students enter higher institutions already exposed to or experienced in sexual activity, often driven by curiosity, peer pressure, access to pornography, a desire for pleasure, or a misguided sense of achievement.

A 2015 UNICEF survey found that in 10 out of 12 developed nations, over two-thirds of teenagers had engaged in sexual intercourse before adulthood. In countries like Denmark, Finland, Germany, and the United States, around 25% of

15-year-olds and half of 17-year-olds have had sex. This trend shows that sexual activity often starts well before university.

Moreover, the influence of Western culture and digital media has contributed to a shift in values, often glamorizing or encouraging early sexual experimentation. This sexual revolution has led to a rise in premarital sexual activity across Africa, accompanied by moral decline and growing social concerns.

Premarital sex is not only a moral or cultural issue but also a public health concern. According to Fernandez et al. (2019), one-third of the 340 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) reported annually affect individuals under the age of 25. Despite these risks, many young people continue to engage in premarital sex because it is perceived as pleasurable and fulfilling. The challenge, therefore, lies in educating students about the consequences and promoting healthier and more responsible attitudes toward sex. Institutions have witnessed a noticeable increase in such behavior, reflecting a broader societal shift where premarital sex is gradually becoming normalized within university settings.

Furthermore, the absence of comprehensive sex education in many schools leaves students unprepared to make informed choices about their sexual health. Without adequate knowledge, they are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual

practices, putting themselves at risk. The consequences of premarital sex among undergraduates are varied and often serious.

A prominent issue is the occurrence of unintended pregnancies, which can interrupt a student's education and affect future aspirations. Those who face early parenthood often encounter emotional, financial, and societal difficulties. The risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, is also heightened. These risks are frequently linked to poor access to contraceptives and lack of awareness about safe sex practices, resulting in serious and sometimes long-term health problems.

Emotional and psychological repercussions are also common. Students involved in premarital sex may suffer from guilt, depression, anxiety, or regret—particularly if their actions clash with personal or cultural values. Social stigma may also lead to feelings of shame and isolation, which can negatively affect mental well-being. While some view premarital sex as a normal aspect of growing up and forming romantic relationships—offering individuals an opportunity to better understand their sexual identity—this perspective does not diminish the importan

Consequently, Eze (2014) stated that other motives that encourage premarital sex among adolescents include the desire by males for sexual

gratification, the desire by females to develop romantic relationship that will lead to informed and responsible behavior.

To marriage, urbanism, negative peer influences, mass media and poor social economic status.

Given the wide-ranging causes and consequences of premarital sex, it is crucial to examine the phenomenon among undergraduate students. This study aims to explore the reasons behind student involvement in premarital sex and assess its effects on their academics, health, and social interactions. The findings are intended to guide educators, parents, policymakers, and students in raising awareness, improving sexual education, and encouraging more responsible sexual choices. It could also act as a guide to school Counsellors.

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to examine the level prevalence of premarital sexual activity among undergraduate students. The study also seeks to identify the underlying causes and assess the impact of such behavior on students' academic and social lives. By understanding these causes, effective strategies can be developed to reduce the occurrence of premarital sex among students to the barest minimum.

Personal observations and informal surveys within the university environment reveal indications of sexual activity, such as used condom wrappers scattered in certain areas—though not widespread, it suggests that the issue exists. Students in the university are part of a diverse community, and through constant interaction with peers from different backgrounds, they are often influenced by social pressures and a desire to conform to perceived standards. This can lead many to engage in premarital sex.

Premarital sexual activities among undergraduates are linked to several serious consequences, including unwanted pregnancies, exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), declining academic performance, school dropout, and other related misfortunes. These outcomes not only threaten the future of the students involved but also risk tarnishing the reputation of the institution.

It is important to note that these challenges are largely preventable. With proper awareness, guidance, and intervention, the negative effects can be minimized. As premarital sex increasingly becomes part of the student culture, it is essential to thoroughly understand the issue and actively seek effective ways to curb its spread within the university community.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

- What is the level of premarital sex among undergraduate students in University of Benin?
- Does curiosity or the desire to experiment influence students' decisions to engage in premarital sex?
- Which sex is more prone to premarital sex? Male or Female?

Research Hypothesis

The following research questions were hypothesized..

1. Curiosity or desire does not influence students decision to engage in premarital sex.
2. Male students are not more prone to premarital sex

Significance of the Study

This study will be of benefit to the following:

Undergraduate students

Academic institutions

Counsellors

Researchers

Undergraduate students stand at the center of this research. As the primary population under investigation, they are both the most affected and the most empowered to change the narrative. This study will help students gain deeper insight into the factors influencing their sexual decisions, including curiosity, emotional needs, social exposure and pressure to conform.

It will also help students understand the potential risks of premarital sex such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancies, emotional trauma and academic decline so that they can make more informed and responsible choices. By exposing the real life effects of such behaviour, this research offers undergraduates' tools to build healthier boundaries, resist harmful peer influence, and navigate romantic relationships more wisely within the university setting.

If this study is properly utilized, it can help the school authority and the public in general on better approach to teaching sex and sex education

This study can be used to strategize for better alternatives on educating the students

And how to go about the unavoidable pressure associated with sex in the university community

Futhermore, result got from this research will provide additional knowledge to the past research findings already done on premarital sex, provide the

University of Benin with an arsenal of knowledge about the cause of premarital sex in her institution

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on examining the causes and effects of premarital sex among undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Edo state, Nigeria. It explores the prevalence, motivations and consequences of premarital sexual activities within this academic environment. Specifically the study investigates factors such as peer influence, curiosity, media exposure and lack of sex education as they relate to students' academic performance, health, emotional well-being and social relationships.

The study is delimited to all University of Benin undergraduate students residing in the main town of Ekosodin community in Ovia North-East Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State.

Definition of Terms

- **Premarital sex:** Sexual activity before marriage between two people who are not married to each other.
- **Undergraduate:** A student at a university who has not yet received a degree.
- **Students:** A person who is enrolled in and attends an educational institution.
- **Sex:** The act of being a male or female.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review related literature under the following headings:

- Theoretical Framework.
- Causes of premarital sex.
- Effects of premarital sex.
- Empirical studies.
- Summary of literature review.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the foundation upon which this study is built. It offers the perspective through which the causes and effects of premarital sex among undergraduate students can be understood. By applying the relevant theory, the research can better explain the motivations behind student behaviour and the consequences that follow. This study is guided by this theory:

Psychoanalytic Theory (Sigmund Freud, Early 20th Century)

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory highlights the role of unconscious desires and early childhood experiences in shaping later behaviour. According to Freud, sexual energy or libido is a central component of human development. He argues

that unresolved conflicts during childhood may resurface during adolescence or adulthood, influencing sexual expression.

In the university context, some students may engage in premarital sex as a way of satisfying repressed desires or coping with emotional needs. For instance, students who lacked affection or proper emotional support in childhood may seek intimacy through sexual relationships. Freud's theory also points out the role of defence mechanisms—such as denial or rationalisation—in explaining how individuals justify behaviour that contradicts their moral or cultural beliefs.

Causes of Premarital Sex among Undergraduate Students

Premarital sexual activity among undergraduates is influenced by a complex interplay of psychological, social, environmental, and economic factors. These factors often intersect and intensify during the university phase, a period marked by exploration, identity formation, and reduced parental supervision. This section explores the primary causes in detail.

Peer Group Influence

Peer pressure remains one of the most powerful forces shaping adolescent and youth behaviour, particularly in university settings where students often seek belonging and approval. Undergraduate students, especially those in their early

years, are highly susceptible to the influence of their peers, who may already be engaging in or normalising premarital sexual relationships.

In such environments, sex is sometimes portrayed as a sign of maturity, independence, or social status. When a student sees that their friends are involved in romantic or sexual relationships, they may feel pressured to do the same to avoid being seen as naïve or inexperienced. Peer encouragement, teasing, or even direct challenges can push students into situations they may not initially be comfortable with.

A study by Akpan and Eyo (2019) found that over 65% of students who engaged in early sexual activity cited peer pressure as a significant contributing factor. Moreover, university social settings such as parties, clubs, and informal gatherings often provide the platform for peer-driven sexual exploration. These spaces promote a sense of freedom and experimentation, reinforcing the belief that engaging in premarital sex is not only acceptable but expected.

Curiosity and Sexual Experimentation

The transition from adolescence into young adulthood is often accompanied by an intense desire to explore and understand one's sexuality. Undergraduate students, particularly those who have not received adequate sexual education or

guidance, may engage in sexual activity out of pure curiosity. They seek to understand the sensations, emotional connections, or pleasure associated with sex.

This curiosity is heightened by hormonal changes, exposure to sexually suggestive content in media, and conversations among peers. Many students may not initially intend to engage in sexual intercourse but may gradually become involved through experimentation that begins with less intimate forms of physical contact. Without proper knowledge of sexual boundaries, contraception, or emotional consequences, such experimentation often escalates into full sexual activity.

In their study, Alabi and Salami (2018) found that 54% of sexually active students identified curiosity and the desire to “experience it for themselves” as the main motivation behind their first sexual encounter.

Exposure to Media and Internet

The digital age has significantly reshaped how young people perceive sexuality. Access to the internet, smartphones, and mass media has increased exposure to sexually explicit content, including movies, social media posts, music videos, and pornography. These media sources often glamorise sex, portraying it as a natural and essential part of youth culture, without highlighting its risks or moral implications.

Moreover, pornography, which is easily accessible online, plays a significant role in shaping unrealistic sexual expectations and behaviours among undergraduates. Continuous viewing of such content can desensitise students and increase their willingness to try out what they have seen, often without fully understanding the physical or emotional consequences.

Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook host a wide range of content that subtly or overtly encourages romantic and sexual experimentation. Online influencers and celebrities often present a lifestyle that equates sexual expression with confidence and modernity. This constant exposure influences students' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about relationships (Asekun-Olarinmoye, Adebimpe & Omisore, 2004).

Moreover, Pornography, which is easily accessible online plays a significant role in shaping unrealistic sexual expectations and behaviours among undergraduates. Continuous viewing of such content can desensitise students and increase their willingness to try out what they have seen, often without fully understanding the physical or emotional consequences.

Lack of Comprehensive Sex Education

A major gap in many educational systems across Africa is the absence or inadequacy of comprehensive sex education. Many students enter university

without sufficient knowledge about reproductive health, consent, contraception, or the emotional dimensions of sexual relationships. As a result, they are left to navigate complex sexual decisions based on hearsay, myths, or trial and error.

Where sex education exists, it is often limited to warnings about abstinence or vague moral teachings that do not equip students with the skills to make informed decisions. Without access to accurate information, many undergraduates do not fully understand the risks involved in unprotected sex, nor are they aware of how to negotiate consent, prevent STIs, or protect themselves emotionally.

Adebayo and Osakwe (2020) emphasise that students who receive comprehensive sex education are less likely to engage in early sexual activity and more likely to make responsible decisions when they do. Conversely, the absence of this knowledge creates fertile ground for risky sexual behaviour.

Family Background and Parenting Style

Family upbringing plays a critical role in shaping a student's moral values and behavioural tendencies. Students raised in homes with poor parental supervision, broken marriages, or inconsistent discipline may seek emotional satisfaction or validation in romantic and sexual relationships. Lack of communication between parents and children about sexuality further deepens the

gap, leading many students to rely on friends or the internet for information (Baumrin, 1991; Steinberg, 2001).

Permissive parenting styles, where children are allowed too much freedom without guidance, or authoritarian parenting, where children are overly controlled, can both lead to rebellious or risk-taking behaviours in the university environment. In such cases, premarital sex may be a form of self-expression, rebellion, or escape.

Furthermore, students who grow up witnessing domestic abuse or dysfunctional relationships may develop skewed perceptions of love and intimacy, making them more vulnerable to unhealthy sexual relationships in adulthood (McKee & Payne, 2014).

Socio-Economic Pressure

Economic hardship is a driving factor behind many undergraduates' decisions to engage in sexual relationships. In Nigeria and other developing countries, students from low-income backgrounds often face financial constraints that affect their ability to pay fees, buy textbooks, afford accommodation, or even meet daily needs.

Some female students, in particular, may engage in transactional sex with older men (popularly known as “sugar daddies”) in exchange for money, gifts, or favours. Others may become dependent on boyfriends who provide financial

support, resulting in sexual obligations within the relationship. This form of economic dependence can blur the line between affection and survival (Nyanzi et al. 2001).

Males are not exempt; some may feel pressured to engage in sexual relationships to prove masculinity or satisfy partners they are financially supporting. Societal expectations around money and masculinity can push some male students into risky ventures to meet their partners' demands, which may include sexual expectations.

Influence of Alcohol and Drug Use

Substance abuse is common among students, particularly during parties, social events, or stress-relief activities. The consumption of alcohol and psychoactive drugs impairs judgment, reduces inhibitions, and often leads to impulsive or regrettable sexual decisions.

Alcohol, in particular, lowers self-control and increases emotional vulnerability. In such a state, students may engage in unprotected sex, become victims or perpetrators of sexual assault, or initiate sexual activity they would typically avoid when sober. In some university environments, alcohol and drugs are integral parts of hostel parties or club outings, creating situations where sex is seen as a casual and expected outcome.

Research by Obot and Umoh (2019) indicates that students who frequently consume alcohol are twice as likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour compared to their sober counterparts.

Effects of Premarital Sex

Premarital sex, while often driven by curiosity, desire, or emotional attachment, comes with a wide array of consequences that can significantly affect the physical, emotional, social, and academic wellbeing of undergraduate students. These consequences vary by gender, frequency of activity, use of protection, and emotional maturity. This section explores the most common and serious effects in detail.

Academic Performance

One of the most immediate and observable consequences of premarital sex among undergraduates is its impact on academic performance. Students who become emotionally entangled in sexual relationships often struggle to maintain the focus and discipline required for academic success. Time that should be spent on studying or attending lectures is sometimes diverted to romantic or sexual engagements.

Moreover, sexual relationships within the campus may foster codependency, where students prioritise their partners' needs above their academic goals. This

often leads to poor time management, low productivity, and increased stress, especially during exam periods.

Research by Adeyemi and Adegoke (2020) revealed that students who were involved in sexually active relationships had a 23% lower GPA on average than those who were abstinent. The distraction caused by romantic conflicts, breakups, or the emotional demands of a sexual partner can lead to absenteeism, reduced motivation, and poor class participation. In more severe cases, issues such as unplanned pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections can result in temporary withdrawal from school or a permanent dropout.

Moreover, sexual relationship within the campus may foster codependency where students prioritise their partner's needs above their academic goals. This often leads to poor time management, low productivity and increased stress, especially during exam periods.

Health Risks: STIs, HIV, and Unplanned Pregnancy

Premarital sex, particularly when it is unprotected, exposes students to a range of serious health risks. These include sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, and more gravely, HIV/AIDS. Many undergraduates lack the knowledge or resources to consistently use condoms or

other contraceptives, leaving them vulnerable to infections that may go untreated due to stigma or ignorance.

A study by Okafor and Bello (2018) found that over 40% of sexually active female students had never visited a health clinic for a sexual health check-up. Some were unaware they had contracted an infection until complications occurred. Infected students face not only physical pain but also long-term reproductive health issues, such as infertility or chronic pelvic inflammation.

Unplanned pregnancies are another significant health consequence. Pregnancies outside marriage can lead to unsafe abortions, which are prevalent among university students in countries where abortion is illegal or stigmatised. According to the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2018), unsafe abortion contributes significantly to maternal mortality among young women aged 15–24. Those who carry pregnancies to term may face academic disruptions, financial hardship, and social isolation.

Emotional and Psychological Consequences

Premarital sex among young people, especially when not accompanied by emotional maturity, can result in severe emotional and psychological consequences. These include guilt, regret, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety,

and emotional dependency. The emotional toll is often more pronounced in relationships that end abruptly or involve betrayal.

Many students enter sexual relationships expecting long-term commitment, only to be disappointed when their partners withdraw or lose interest. Such outcomes often lead to emotional trauma, heartbreak, or even suicidal ideation in extreme cases. Females, in particular, report feelings of being used, abandoned, or devalued, especially if the relationship was primarily based on sexual gratification.

According to Adeola and Yusuf (2019), 61% of female students who engaged in premarital sex expressed regret and emotional distress within six months of their first sexual encounter. Emotional pain can lead to decreased academic motivation, social withdrawal, or engagement in further risky behaviours as a coping mechanism.

Social Stigma and Reputation Damage

In many African and conservative societies, engaging in premarital sex carries a significant risk of social stigma, particularly for female students. Despite increasing liberalism in youth culture, virginity and sexual purity are still idealised as virtues, especially for women. A female student known or rumoured to be sexually active may face gossip, mockery, slut-shaming, or even discrimination from peers, lecturers, or community members.

Male students, on the other hand, are often subject to a cultural double standard. In some circles, they are celebrated for sexual conquests, thereby reinforcing gender inequality and unhealthy masculinity. This disparity not only perpetuates societal injustice but also emboldens predatory behaviours and excuses sexual irresponsibility among males.

Reputational damage can affect students' social interactions, leadership opportunities, and self-worth. In some cases, it may strain family relationships, particularly if parents discover the student's involvement in sexual activity. For religious students, the fear of being judged or condemned by their faith community may lead to spiritual guilt or alienation.

Future Relationship and Marital Stability

The effects of premarital sex can extend beyond university life into students' future relationships and marital experiences. For some, having multiple sexual partners may alter their perception of intimacy, commitment, and fidelity. They may struggle to develop trust or sustain long-term relationships due to past traumas, comparisons, or emotional baggage.

Moreover, societal judgement often follows students beyond graduation. In a culture where chastity is valued, a history of premarital sex may reduce a female's marriage ability. Males may also face challenges if their reputation as promiscuous

or irresponsible precedes them .Even when both partners are sexually experienced, previous relationships can cause jealousy or insecurity within marriages. Incompatibility, suspicion, and unresolved emotional wounds from past sexual relationships can lead to arguments, reduced sexual satisfaction, or even divorce. Hence, while premarital sex may seem like a personal or short-term decision, its long-term implications on emotional stability and marital harmony cannot be underestimated.

Empirical studies provide the necessary evidence-based foundation for understanding the causes and consequences of premarital sex among undergraduate students. These studies, conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods, help validate theories and offer insights into real-life student experiences across various socio-cultural contexts. Below is a review of selected local and international studies relevant to this topic.

Alabi and Salami (2018) conducted a survey-based study on “The Influence of Peer Pressure on Sexual Behaviour among Nigerian Undergraduates” at the University of Ilorin. Using structured questionnaires distributed to 300 students across various faculties, the researchers found that over 68% of respondents reported engaging in premarital sex due to peer influence. The study further

revealed that males were more susceptible to peer-driven sexual exploration than females.

Okafor and Bello (2019) mixed methods study examined the relationship between internet exposure and sexual behaviour among undergraduates. The researchers observed that 420 students in the university of Lagos frequently accessed sexual explicit contents online were more likely to engage in unprotected sex. They also noted that online dating platforms such as Tinder and Badoo were being used by students to initiate casual sexual encounters. The study concluded that internet serves as both an enabler and educator, but without guidance it can encourage risky sexual behaviour, especially in the absence of proper sex education.

Adebayo and Kolawole (2018) conducted a survey among 350 undergraduates at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and found that peer pressure was a significant determinant of students' involvement in premarital sex. Respondents indicated that friends often encouraged them to prove their maturity through sexual experience, thereby normalising early sexual debut.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has critically examined the existing literature on the causes and effects of premarital sex among undergraduate students. Through both conceptual and theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and contextual analyses, this review has provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of premarital sexual behaviour in the university environment. In the theoretical framework, Psychoanalytic Theory offered a unique perspective, from behavioural modelling and unconscious motivation to societal norms. The causes of premarital sex were examined under seven core subtopics, including peer group influence, curiosity, media exposure, lack of sex education, family background, economic pressure, and substance use. These causes reflect the real-life complexities and interdependent factors that influence students' sexual decisions.

The effects of premarital sex revealed serious implications for students' academic performance, health, emotional wellbeing, social standing, and future relationships. Particular attention was paid to sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, psychological trauma, and reputation damage. The empirical studies provided real-world data from Nigerian and international contexts. These studies validated the claims made in earlier sections, with findings

consistently pointing to peer pressure, economic hardship, poor parental communication, lack of access to contraceptives, and media influence as core drivers of premarital sexual behaviour among undergraduates.

Overall, the literature reviewed reveals that premarital sex among university students is a complex and evolving issue influenced by psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors. There is no single cause or effect; rather, a combination of internal desires and external pressures drives this behaviour. The literature also shows that while abstinence and morality are widely advocated, they are not always realistically achievable without comprehensive support systems, education, and open dialogue. This chapter provides a strong basis for the research methodology and fieldwork to follow.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methods employed in the study were described under the following:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

The design of the study adopted for this research is the descriptive survey design. This design was chosen because it allows for the collection of data from a large number of respondents within a natural setting, without manipulating any variables. Since the study focuses on exploring both the causes and effects of premarital sex among students, the descriptive approach makes it possible to

gather factual information, describe existing situations, and interpret patterns as they occur among undergraduates at the University of Benin.

A survey design is most suitable for sensitive topics like this because it gives respondents the freedom to express themselves honestly and anonymously through structured questionnaires. This method also makes it easier to identify trends, draw comparisons, and make informed conclusions based on the data collected. It fits the scope of the study because it focuses more on what is happening rather than why it is happening, which aligns with the goals of this research.

Population of the Study

Population: The target population was 270 (Source: Field Work) undergraduates of the University of Benin residing in Ekosodin Community main town. The area comprises three major streets—Edo, Newton, and Market Road—and serves as an off-campus accommodation zone for students.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size was 161, representing 60% of the population. The sample was selected through simple random sampling techniques. A reliable sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of reliable sample size for a known population.

Research Instrument

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, faculty, level, etc.)

Section B: Questions related to the causes of premarital sex

Section C: Questions related to the effects of premarital sex

Section D: Open-ended questions for additional comments or experiences

The questions were designed to be simple, clear, and easy to understand, in order to encourage honest responses. Most questions were multiple-choice and Likert-scale based, allowing for quantitative analysis.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. For this study, the questionnaire was subjected to content validity to ensure that the items covered the major variables under investigation namely, the causes and effects of premarital sex among undergraduates. To achieve this, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in the field of Educational Psychology. Their corrections and suggestions helped to refine the wording of questions, remove ambiguities, and ensure that the instrument aligned with the research objectives. A pilot test was also carried out on 30 students from

another university (not included in the main study), and feedback from this trial confirmed that the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting appropriate responses. This process enhanced the overall validity of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency or stability of a research instrument when administered on repeated occasions. An instrument is considered reliable if it produces the same results under consistent conditions. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha statistical method was used to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The pilot test data was subjected to reliability analysis, and the instrument produced a coefficient of 0.82. According to Nunnally (1978), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is acceptable for educational and social science research. Therefore, the coefficient of 0.82 indicates that the questionnaire is highly reliable and suitable for use in this study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the selected students in various faculties with the assistance of three trained research assistants. In cases where students were unavailable physically, digital copies of the questionnaire were distributed via Google Forms, ensuring wider reach. All questionnaires were retrieved after completion, and any incomplete responses

were excluded from analysis. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to encourage openness.

Method of Data Analysis

Research question one was answered using mean. Hypotheses one and two were tested using simple linear regression and independent sample t - test respectively at .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, data collected were analyzed and presented in tabular form and discussed, the analysis and discussion is presented in the order of the research questions and hypotheses in chapter one.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: What is the level of premarital sex among undergraduate students in University of Benin?

Table 1: Level of premarital Sex among Undergraduate Students in University of Benin

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1.	A large number of undergraduate students are involved in premarital sex	101	49	7	4	3.53	Accept
2.	Premarital sex has become a common Practice	65	82	8	6	3.28	Accept
3.	Peer influence increases the rate of premarital sex on campus	65	81	15	0	3.31	Accept
4.	Many students see premarital sex as part of university life	53	89	18	1	3.20	Accept
5.	Students freely discuss their sexual activities with their friends	65	69	24	3	3.22	Accept
6.	Most undergraduate students have at least one sexual partner before marriage	53	76	27	5	3.10	Accept
7.	Engaging in premarital sex is considered normal by many students	70	67	18	6	3.25	Accept
	Total					22.89	

Normative Mean = 17.5

Table 1, shows used to measure level of premarital sex. It indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 has a mean score rating of 3.53, 3.28, 3.31, 3.20, 3.22, 3.10 and 3.25 above the criterion mean of 2.5. Also, the accumulated mean is 22.89 higher than the normative mean of 17.5 This shows that widespread acceptance and open discussion of sexual activities, with peer influence playing a great role, and many students viewing sex as a normal part of University life and having at least one sexual partner before marriage indicates the level of premarital sex amongst undergraduate students in University of Benin. Therefore, the level of premarital sex among undergraduates in University of Benin is high.

Hypothesis One: Curiosity or Desire does not Influence Students’ Decision to Engage in Premarital Sex

Table 2: Linear Regression of Curiosity or Desire on Students’ Engagement in Premarital Sex

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	
1	F Regression	Sig 240.396	1	240.396	28.679
		.000			
	Residual	1332.809	159	8.382	
	Total	1573.205	160		

Alpha = .05; R = .391; R Square .153

a. Dependent Variable: Pre-Marital Sex Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Curiosit/ Desire to Experiment

Table 2 shows an F value of 28.679 and a p value of .000. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p value is less than the alpha level, Consequently, the null hypothesis which states that curiosity or desire does not influence students' decision to engage in premarital sex is rejected. This indicates that curiosity or desire plays a major role in students' decision to engage in premarital sex. The R Square value is .153; this indicates that the predictor accounts for 15.3% of students' engagement in premarital sex. It implies that students are involved in premarital sex because of curiosity or desire to experiment sex before marriage.

Hypothesis Two: Male students are not more prone to marital sex

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test of Premarital Prevalence by Sex

	Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)
1.	Male	64	22.50	2.17			
	Female	97	22.27	2.91		159	.545 .586

Alpha = .05

Table 3 shows a t value of .545 and a p value of .586. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p value is greater than the alpha level. Hence the null hypothesis which states that male students are not more prone to marital sex is retained. It is an evidence that although male students slightly tend to be more prone to premarital sex with a mean score of 22.50 for male slightly above 22.27 for female, the difference is found to be not significant. It means that both male and female students are prone to premarital sex.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed a high level of premarital sexual involvement among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. This finding indicated that a huge number of students view sexual activity as a normal part of university life, with many reporting at least one sexual partner before marriage. Peer influence was also found to play a crucial role in shaping these behaviours, as students often conform to the social expectations within their peer groups. This finding aligns with the work of Adebayo and Kolawole (2018), who reported that peer pressure remains one of the strongest predictors of students' involvement in premarital sex. Their study among University of Ibadan undergraduates showed that friends frequently encourage one another to validate their maturity through sexual experiences. The similarity between Adebayo and Kolawole findings and this finding underscores the pervasive influence of social circles in shaping students' sexual decisions across Nigerian universities.

Furthermore, the findings corroborate with Asekun-Olarinmoye, et al., (2004), who argued that media exposure and the glamorization of sexual freedom by online influencers and celebrities significantly affect young people's sexual attitudes and behaviours. The students' perception of sex as a common and acceptable aspect of university life is not unconnected to the normalization of

sexual openness propagated through social and digital media platforms. The reinforcement of such ideals through repeated exposure may weaken traditional or moral constraints that discourage premarital sex. In addition, the findings lend indirect support to Obot and Umoh (2019), who identified a relationship between alcohol consumption and risky sexual behaviour. Although this study did not directly assess substance use, the general pattern of permissive sexual attitudes observed among respondents may partly stem from social environments such as parties and gatherings where alcohol consumption is prevalent and peer influence is heightened.

The finding of hypothesis one revealed that curiosity or sexual desire significantly influences students' decision to engage in premarital sex. The possible explanation for this finding can be due to high level of students' involvement in premarital sexual activities because they want to experiment sex even when they are not married to partner. This suggests that, beyond peer pressure or social trends, internal motivational factors such as the urge to explore or satisfy sexual curiosity play an important role in shaping sexual behaviour among undergraduates. This finding aligns with the work of Okafor and Bello (2019), who observed that exposure to sexually explicit content on the internet stimulates students' sexual curiosity, often translating into actual sexual

experimentation. Their study at the University of Lagos showed that frequent access to online sexual materials and dating applications encouraged students to initiate casual sexual encounters. The present finding supports their conclusion that curiosity, especially when fuelled by unregulated media exposure, acts as a strong internal motivator for premarital sexual engagement among young adults. Similarly, Alabi and Salami (2018) emphasized peer pressure as a dominant factor influencing sexual behaviour, their study also highlighted that such peer interactions often awaken or amplify individual curiosity and desire to explore sex. In other words, while peers may serve as external influencers, the actual decision to engage in premarital sex is frequently driven by personal inclination and internal desire. This interpretation reinforces the present study's finding that curiosity is not a passive emotion but an active determinant of behaviour among students. Taken together, these findings suggest that students' engagement in premarital sex cannot be attributed solely to social or environmental influences; rather, psychological factors such as curiosity, desire, and the need for self-discovery contribute meaningfully.

The finding from hypothesis two revealed that male students are not more prone to premarital sex than their female counterparts. This result suggests a narrowing gender gap in sexual behaviour among undergraduates, indicating that

both male and female students participate actively in premarital sexual relationships, albeit sometimes for different underlying reasons. This outcome challenges long-held social assumptions that men are naturally more sexually active or adventurous than women within university environments. The result appears to contradict the submission of Alabi and Salami (2018), whose study at the University of Ilorin found that male students were more susceptible to peer-driven sexual exploration compared to female students. However, the discrepancy between their finding and the present result may reflect changing social norms and gender dynamics within Nigerian universities. Increased liberalization, exposure to social media, and evolving cultural attitudes toward female sexuality may have contributed to a more balanced expression of sexual behaviour among both genders.

The present finding also finds partial support in Nyanzi et al. (2001), who observed that female students sometimes engage in sexual relationships as a form of economic or material exchange, particularly with older partners. This behaviour, though motivated differently from male sexual expression, still reflects active female participation in premarital sexual relations. Hence, while the motivations may differ, that is curiosity and pleasure for some males, and economic dependence or emotional security for some females the overall level of sexual

involvement may now be similar across genders. Similarly, Okafor and Bello (2018) highlighted that a considerable number of sexually active female students engage in unprotected sex and seldom seek sexual health care, suggesting that female students are increasingly involved in premarital sexual activities, sometimes without adequate health awareness. Their finding lends indirect support to the present result, implying that female sexual participation is not only significant but may rival or even surpass that of males in certain contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the summary of the study, the conclusion drawn from results obtained, and recommendations arising from the findings of the study are stated. This chapter also contains the contribution to knowledge and suggestions for further studies.

Summary

This study determined premarital sex among undergraduates in University of Benin. The study specifically evaluated the level of students premarital sexual involvement that curiosity or sexual desire significantly influences students' decision to engage in premarital sex and if male students are more prone to premarital sex among undergraduates in University of Benin. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study was 270 undergraduates in University of Benin residing in Ekosodin main community (Newton, Edo and Market Road streets). The sample size was 161, 60% of the population selected through simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a validated questionnaire which yielded reliability coefficients of : 0.76; 0.87 and 0.86 for three subscales respectively. Data was collected independent by the researcher. Mean simple linear regression and independent

sample t-test was utilized in data analyses. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 an alpha level of significance. Findings revealed:

1. A high level of premarital sexual involvement among undergraduate students at the University of Benin.
2. That curiosity or sexual desire significantly influences students' decision to engage in premarital sex.
3. That male students are not more prone to premarital sex than their female counterparts

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that undergraduates are highly involved in premarital sex with curiosity or sexual desire to engage in sexual intercourse playing a significant role among male and female undergraduates alike in the University of Benin.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions draw from this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Campus wide counseling targeted at reducing or eliminating premarital sex among undergraduates should be urgently carried out as an intervention.

2. University Counselors should utilize group-counseling as an intervention strategy to promote delayed gratification for sexual resulting from curiosity or desire for sex among male and female students.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the field of Counseling in specific way.:

1. This study has established that premarital sex is high among University undergraduates with curiosity or sexual desire to engage in sexual intercourse playing a significant role. among male and female
2. Males and female students are prone to premarital sex alike in an environmental similar with characteristics.

Suggestions for Further Studies

To develop on the findings of this study, future studies should:

1. Evaluate measures that can help to curb premarital sex among undergraduates.
2. Examine Efficacy of selected therapies in curbing premarital sex among undergraduates.

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APPENDIX A
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

This questionnaire is designed for research purpose to elicit responses on “The Causes of Premarital Sex among Undergraduate Students of the University of Benin.” All responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: ____
2. Sex: Male [] Female []
3. Faculty/Department: ____
4. Level: 100 [] 200 [] 300 [] 400 [] 500 []

Section B: Research Items

Research Question 1: To what extent do undergraduate students in the University of Benin engage in premarital sex?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
5	A large number of undergraduate students are involved in premarital sex.				
6	Premarital sex has become a common practice among students.				
7	Peer influence increases the rate of premarital sex on campus.				
8	Many students see premarital sex as part of university life.				
9	Students freely discuss their sexual activities with their friends.				
10	Most undergraduate students have at least one sexual partner before marriage.				
11	Engaging in premarital sex is considered “normal” by many students.				

Research Question 2: How does curiosity or the urge to experiment affect students' involvement in premarital sex?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
12	Curiosity motivates many students to engage in sexual activity.				
13	The urge to experiment leads students to try premarital sex.				
14	Exposure to movies and internet content increases students' sexual curiosity.				
15	Students often engage in premarital sex because they want to test sexual compatibility.				
16	Curiosity influences students more than peer pressure when it comes to sexual activity.				
17	Some students engage in premarital sex just to experience what it feels like.				
18	The need for adventure or experimentation drives some students into sexual relationships.				

Research Question 3: Which gender of students is more likely to engage in premarital sex?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
19	Male students are generally more likely to engage in premarital sex than female students.				
20	Female students are more often pressured into premarital sex compared to male students.				
21	Male students tend to be more open about their sexual activities than female students.				
22	Female students are more likely to engage in premarital sex for financial or material benefits.				
23	Male students are more influenced by peer groups to engage in premarital sex.				
24	Female students experience greater criticism when they engage in premarital sex.				
25	Male students usually take more risks in sexual matters compared to female students.				

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=Sex Level Ugd_PreSx_1 Ugd_PreSx_2
 Ugd_PreSx_3 Ugd_PreSx_4 Ugd_PreSx_5 Ugd_PreSx_6 Ugd_PreSx_7
 Urg_PreSex_1 Urg_PreSex_2 Urg_PreSex_3 Urg_PreSex_4 Urg_PreSex_5
 Urg_PreSex_6 Urg_PreSex_7 Gndr_PreSex_1 Gndr_PreSex_2 Gndr_PreSex_3
 Gndr_PreSex_4 Gndr_PreSex_5 Gndr_PreSex_6 Gndr_PreSex_7
 PreMaritalSexInvolv Gender_Prevalence Curiosity_DesireToExpe
 /STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX.

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sex	161	0	1	64	.40	.491
Level	161	1	5	474	2.94	1.014
A large number of undergraduate students are involved in premarital sex	161	1	4	569	3.53	.698
Premarital sex has become a common practice	161	1	4	528	3.28	.726
Peer influence increases the rate of premarital sex on campus	161	2	4	533	3.31	.635
Many students see premarital sex as part of university life	161	1	4	516	3.20	.653
Students freely discuss their sexual activities with their friends	161	1	4	518	3.22	.764
Most undergraduate students have at least one sexual partner before marriage	161	1	4	499	3.10	.784
Engaging in premarital sex is considered normal by many students	161	1	4	523	3.25	.799
Curiosity motivates many students to engage in sexual activity	161	2	4	553	3.43	.630

The urge to experiment leads students to try premarital sex	161	1	4	524	3.25	.645
Exposure to movies and internet content increases students' sexual curiosity	161	1	4	531	3.30	.723
Students often engage in premarital sex because they want to test sexual compactibility	161	1	4	464	2.88	.786
Curiosity influence students morethan peer pressure when it comes to sexual activity.	161	1	4	484	3.01	.833
Some students engage in premarital sex just to experience what it feels like	161	1	4	517	3.21	.794
The need for adventure or experimentation drives some students into sexual relationships	161	1	4	513	3.19	.838
Male students are generally more likely to engage in premarital sex than female students	161	1	4	516	3.20	.936
Female students are more often pressured into premarital sex compared to male students	161	1	4	521	3.24	.763
Male students ten to be more open about their sexual activities than female students	161	1	4	534	3.32	.720
Female students are more likely to engage in premarital sex for financial or material benefits	161	1	4	537	3.34	.707
Male students are more influenced by peer groups to engage in premarital sex	161	1	4	487	3.02	.866

Female students experience greater criticism when they engage in premarital sex	161	1	4	542	3.37	.677
Male students usually take more risks in sexual matters compared to female students	161	1	4	463	2.88	.973
PreMaritalSexInvolv	161	13.00	28.00	3686.00	22.8944	3.13569
Gender_Prevalence	161	13.00	28.00	3600.00	22.3602	2.63522
Curiosity_DesireToExpe	161	16.00	28.00	3586.00	22.2733	2.73630
Valid N (listwise)	161					

APPENDIX C

Table 3.1									
<i>Table for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population</i>									
N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	100000	384

Note: N is Population Size; S is Sample Size

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

APPENDIX D

amongst undergraduate students in University of Benin.

Hypothesis One

Curiosity or desire does not influence students' decision to engage in premarital sex.

Table 2: Linear regression of Curiosity or desire on students' engagement in premarital sex

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	240.396	1	240.396	28.679	.000
	Residual	1332.809	159	8.382		
	Total	1573.205	160			

Alpha = .05; R = .391; R Square = .153

a. Dependent Variable: PreMaritalSexInvolv

b. Predictors: (Constant), Curiosity and Desire to Experiment