



# Perceptions of Students towards Premarital Sex in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State: Implication for Counselling

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## Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive and survey designs were used for the study. The population of the study comprises all Senior Secondary students in Etche Local Government Area with an estimate of 2,400 students (source Zonal Post Primary Schools Board, Okehi). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of three hundred (300) students for the study. The instrument for the study was a well-structured self-made questionnaire by the researcher titled "Perception of Students towards Pre-marital Sex (PSTPSQ)". Mean was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels. The finding of this study revealed that students from low socio-economic status are more prone to pre-marital sex than students from high social-economic status. The study also revealed no significant difference between male and female students' perception towards pre-marital sex and a significant difference between Christians and non-Christians perception towards pre-marital sex. The summary, conclusion and implication for counselling of the study were also made.

**Keywords:** Perceptions, Students, Premarital Sex, Implication, Counselling, Rivers State, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

Àyodele, (2011) stated that more than 13 million youths, representing 7 percent of the population bracket between the ages 15-24 are students in Nigeria. Most of these youths found that schools

represents a shift towards greater independence from home and school settings offers an opportunity with divergent norms and values. A tertiary institution represents an opportunity to experience romantic or sexual relationship and experiment new ideas. Sexual activities among adolescents have been reported to be increasing worldwide. Several studies in sub-Saharan Africa have also documented high and increasing premarital sexual activities among adolescents (World Health Organization, 2001).

It is unfortunate that sex before marriage in Nigeria is still being frowned at and children learn through the mass media and peers, the important topic of sex education in negative manners, rather than having proper sex socialization at home or in School (Asuzu, 2005).

Thomson (1999) started that Pre-marital sex is sexual intercourse or activity carried out by persons who are not married to each other. It is generally used in reference to individuals who are presumed not yet of marriageable age or between adults who presumably marry eventually, but who are engaging in sexual activity prior to marriage (Lucas, 2000).

Choe, Hanjati, Chair, Corazon and Shyan (2004) define premarital sex as a sexual intercourse engaged by a person or persons before marriage.

Pre-marital sex, according to Ramesch (2008) is sex before marriage and it is generally found among the youth. It may be seen as fornication, rape, defilement and incest. Premarital sex is a term which refers to any sexual activity between consenting unmarried partners. It is a voluntary sexual intercourse between persons not married to each other (Minna, 2000). However, viewing youths as a specific group with their own needs is a relatively recent practice, especially in developing country like Nigeria

In most developing countries, a cultural taboo hinders young people to discuss sexual matters explicitly with their parents. The information for their patchy knowledge comes from peers of the same sex who may themselves lack adequate information or are incorrectly informed. Tafia, Sundhy, Holm, Hanson and Gummer (2012) suggested that among people who have limited knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and know little about the natural process of puberty. This lack of knowledge about reproductive health may have grave consequences. However, sexual activities are occurring in the midst of an HIV/AIDS pandemic that is proportionately affecting adolescents and young adults.

Young people often face enormous pressure especially from peers to engage in sex, unlicensed erotic video films and the desire for economic gain. Pre-marital sex is a huge problem in our society today; there are many people who were married but have lost their virginity before their honeymoon. Pre-marital sex takes places amongst the teenagers and to youths “sex” is fun and everybody is doing it. According to Minna (2009), teenagers view that premarital sex is acceptable as long as two people love each other and this is the basis for youth engagement in pre-marital sex. However, Youths from well to do parents engage in pre-marital sex activities than youths from poor homes through uncommon visitation and variety of parties organized by their parents. Pre-marital sex activities are not so common among Christian youths compared to their non-Christian counterparts because of moral education. When viewed critically, male and female engage in pre-marital sex activities in the society. There are reports of homosexuality and lesbianism among youth. This phenomena is attracting a lot of public attention, therefore, it is important to find out some factors facilitating or responsible for pre-marital sex among youths in Etche Local Government Area.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

- What are the perceptions of male and female students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area?
- To what extent does students' parental socio-economic status influence their perception of pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area?
- To what extent does students' religious persuasion influence their perceptions of pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are formulated for the purpose of this study.

- There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area.
- There is no significant difference between the perception of students from low and high socio-economic status and their pre-marital sex.
- There is no significant difference between the perception of Christians and non-Christians and students' pre-marital sex.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive and survey designs were used for the study because according to Wali (2002), it is concerned with a description of the current status of events or facts about a given population. It is a design used to ascertain the current status of a problem or phenomenon by studying a true representative of the population or the entire population. The population of the study consisted of all the secondary schools students in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State which is an estimated population of two thousand four hundred students (sources: zonal post primary schools board Okehi Etche). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 students from the five selected senior secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The sample size for the study consisted of three hundred (300) senior secondary students in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Perception of Student's towards Pre-marital Sex (PSTPS)". The instrument consisted of two sections: section 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' has to do with respondents' personal data, while section 'B' comprised of items designed to elicit information on the variable under study. A Four (4) point modified Likert scale point of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D) were used.

The instrument was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Port Harcourt. The researcher and his research assistant personally administered the 300 questionnaires to the students and retrieved them on the spot to ensure no loss. Mean was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 Alpha level.

## RESULTS

**Research question 1:** What are the perceptions of male and female students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area? This research question was answered with mean and standard deviation statistics on table .1 below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation statistics of the perception of male and female students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Pre-marital sex refers to any activity between consenting unmarried partners.	300	2.80	1.16	Agreed
2.	Peers (friends) encourage youth to engage in pre-marital sexual relationship.	300	2.60	1.02	Agreed
3.	Pre-marital sex is good and should be encouraged in our society.	300	2.40	1.02	Agreed
4.	Electronic media influences students to have pre-marital sex.	300	2.93	0.94	Agreed
5.	Indecent/careless dressing leads students to have pre-marital sex	300	2.68	1.01	Agreed

Table1 shows perception of students towards pre-marital sex. The result further reveals that of the five items listed, all of the items achieved means score of 2.5 and above and were therefore accepted for being factors responsible for pre-marital sex.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does students' parental socio-economic status influence their perception of pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area? This research question two was answered with mean and standard deviation statistics on table 2 below:

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation statistics showing how socio-economic status of students influences pre-marital sex

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Inadequate provision of family needs lead youths/students to pre-marital sexual relationship.	300	2.66	1.01	Agreed
7.	Economic situation of parents can persuade students/youth to indulge in sex before marriage	300	3.20	0.75	Agreed
8.	Poor socio-economic status of engage in pre-marital sex	300	3.00	1.09	Agreed
9.	Poverty motivates students to engage in sex before marriage	300	3.20	0.75	Agreed
10.	Students engage in pre-marital sex just to better the situation of their family.	300	2.00	0.63	Agreed

It was accepted in all the items stated in table 2 above that the socio-economic status of parent influences pre-marital sex of students.

**Research Question 3:** What are the Christians perceptions towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area? This research question two was answered with mean and standard deviation statistics on table 3 below:

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation statistics showing how Christianity influences pre-marital sex

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Inadequate provisions of family needs lead youths/students to pre-marital sexual relationships	300	2.80	1.16	Agreed
12	Economic situation of parents can persuade students/youth to indulge in sex before marriage	300	2.40	0.49	Disagreed
13	Poor socio-economic status of parents makes students to engage in pre-marital sex.	300	2.00	0.63	Disagreed
14	Poverty motivates students to engage in sex before marriage	300	1.80	0.75	Disagreed
15	Students engage in pre-marital sex just to better the situation of their family.	300	2.60	1.02	Agreed

From table 3 above, it was discovered that Christianity denominations has stronger influence on students' perception towards pre-marital sex and that pre-marital sex is a taboo/sin and is rejected among religious groups. However, respondents disagreed that students' religion influences their engagement in pre-marital sex, no religion supports sex before marriage and religious belief do not determine students' abstinence from pre-marital sex.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception towards premarital sex in Etche Local Government Area. This hypothesis was analyzed with t-test statistics on table 5 below.

Table 4: t-test statistic showing male and female students' perception towards pre-marital sex

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-cal	Critical	Decision
Male	100	28.73	6.57	298	0.361	1.96	NS
Female	200	28.39	6.73				

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.361 while its corresponding table value is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha. The calculated value is less than the critical value, which means that there is no significant different in the perception of male and female students towards premarital sex in Etche Local Government Area. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 is upheld.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the perception of students from low and high socioeconomic status and their pre-marital sex.

Table 5: t-test statistics showing students' socio-economic status and its influence on pre-marital sex

SES	N	Mean	Std. dev.	df	t-cal	Critical	Decision
Low	200	22.19	23.41	2.98	127	1.96	NS
Female	100	14.08	1.86				

Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value is .127 while its corresponding table value (t-critical) is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. The calculated value is greater than the critical value. This means that there is a significant difference between high and low socio-economic status of students

perception towards pre-marital sex. Furthermore, the result implies that students from low socio-economic status tend to be prone to pre-marital sex than students with high socio-economic status. Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 is rejected.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference between the perception of Christians and non-Christian students and pre-marital sex.

Table 6: t-test statistics showing the perception of Christians and non-Christians towards pre-marital sex

SES	N	Mean	Std Dev.	df	t-cal	Critical	Decision
Christians	200	16.41	22.26	2.98	2.329	1.96	NS
Non-Christians	100	11.67	2.420				

Table 6 above shows that the calculated t-value is 2.329 while its corresponding table value (t-critical) is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. The calculated value is greater than the critical value. This means that there is a significant difference between Christians and non-Christians perception towards pre-marital sex. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## DISCUSSION

The result from hypothesis 1 indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area. This is in line with the works of Anna and Noeme (2013) who reported that the perception of male and female students is similar.

Hypothesis 2 reveals that there is a significant difference between high and low socio-economic status of students towards pre-marital sex. This work is in line with the findings of Emora and Fawole (2008) who reported that children from poor homes are likely to be street children, hawkers and more likely to live in a neighbourhood that will influence them negatively.

Hypothesis 3 reveals that there is a significant difference between Christians and non-Christians towards pre-marital sex. This work is in agreement with the works of Paschal, Dominic, Charles and Russel (1999) who reported that a negative relationship exists between religiosity and a number of pre-marital sexual behaviour and attitude was observed.

The result of the study showed that:

- There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception towards premarital sex in Etche Local Government Area.
- There is no significant difference between perception of students from low and high socioeconomic status of students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area.
- There is no significant difference between Christians and non-Christians towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded as follows:

- Students from low socio-economic status tend to be prone to premarital sex than students from high socio-economic status in Etche Local Government Area.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards pre-marital sex in Etche Local Government Area.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends as follows:

- Counselling should be made functional in all public secondary schools in the area to counsel students on the dangers of premarital sex.
- Teachers should be encouraged to cover the scheme of work for sex education.
- Guidance counselors should organize seminars, talk shows on pre-marital sex at the secondary school level.
- Students should be guided properly on choice of peers.
- Parents should ensure proper care, monitoring and provision of students' needs to enable them stay out of peer influence.

## Implication for Counselling

The Nigerian society is morally very loose and can be compared with the Biblical people of Sodom and Gomorrah as cultures are also losing its value in the life of youths and Nigerian people in general, especially as regards to sexual activities. It is obvious that indecent dressing, electronic media, peer groups and the society are the major factors responsible for students' pre-marital sex engagement hence, programme for enlightenment should be organized to curb the menace.

All relevant authorities and stakeholders should be active in finding a lasting remedy for this anomaly. The counselling profession and counselling services will be relevant in this endeavour. Students from low socio-economic status have been found or are more prone to pre-marital sex than students from high socioeconomic status. Guidance counsellors, should help such students by educating them on the dangers of engaging in pre-marital sex by organizing seminars, talks show and giving materials on the danger of pre-marital sex.

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