

IMPACT OF ATTITUDE MODIFICATION METHOD ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO PRE-MARITAL SEX IN OREDO, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated Impact of Attitude Modification Method on Students' Attitude to Pre-Marital Sex in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. To carry out this study, two null hypotheses were formulated to give direction. The sample of the study consisted two hundred (200) randomly selected students from public secondary schools in Oredo L.G.A. Edo State. The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed and the formulated hypotheses were tested using Chi-square statistical methods. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant. The results of the data analysis showed: There is gender difference in the attitude to pre-marital sex among the secondary school students and there will be no significant difference in the students' attitude to pre-marital sex due to their ages. Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made: - School counsellors, guidance services and moral instruction lessons should be strengthened in schools; Efforts should be geared towards avoiding the negative consequences to premarital sex; Young people should be informed to make choices regarding their sexuality. They should be empowered to make decisions that they find most suitable to their situation; Comprehensive Sexual Education should be introduced in schools at all levels; Family structure should be strengthened in Nigeria so that the adolescents can be taught to eschew pre-marital sex before marriage and Sex education should be incorporated into the school's curriculum from primary to tertiary levels and parents should be encouraged to openly discuss the important topic of sex with their children.

Keywords: - Keywords Attitude, Modification Methods, Pre- Marital Sex.

Background to the Study

Sexuality and sexual relationships is an important and necessary part of human development. Like all forms of human development, sexual development begins from the cradle. Sexual development includes not only the physical changes that occur as children grow, but also the sexual knowledge and beliefs they come to learn and imbibe which inevitably leads to the decision either to be involved or not in pre-marital sex.

Nigeria like many other countries of the world is currently ravaged by multifarious social problems including adolescent sexual activity with its attendant negative consequences. Indeed, pre-marital sex which is sexual activity practiced by young persons who are unmarried is reported to be increasing among students in Nigeria and indeed worldwide. According to the United Nations (2000) information on reproductive health, many Nigerian boys and girls are known to have started involvement in active sex at the early age of thirteen.

However, until recently, pre-marital sex was considered a taboo in the cultures of ethnic groups and the major religions in Nigeria. Indeed, before now, sex in Nigeria was regarded as sacred and limited only to adult males and females within marriage. But in the case of the present generation of adolescents in Nigeria, the timing of first sexual intercourse is increasingly distant from the timing of first marriage. Indeed, pre-marital sex has become something of a misnomer. Sex is increasingly detached from the promise or expectation of marriage. The stigma hitherto attached to pre-marital sex appears to have diminished. Pre-marital sex has become, if not acceptable, tolerable. Love has become enough for a reason to practice sex, instead of marriage or engagement.

The pathway leading to marriage has changed as well. The pattern of mating used to follow a sequence: Couple dating, going steady, sexual experimentation – sometimes leading to pre-marital sexual experimentation – and then marriage and children. Few people lived together before marriage but today, the pathway is more complex and varied. In many schools in the country, young male and female students socialize in groups with some pairing off for purposes of love and sex. According to Fawole (2010), opined the risk factors for pre-

marital sex which are quite prevalent among students in the contemporary Nigerian society include the following:

- A steady boy/girlfriend: Strong attachments and feelings of exclusivity. Inviting nature to take its course, especially when physical expressions of affection begin early in relationships.
- Little parental monitoring: Leaving adolescents alone for hours at a time or not requiring accountability is a set up for sex.
- A parental belief that adolescent sex is inevitable: Many parents who disapprove of pre-marital sex have also concluded that it is certain. Their approach to the subject will thus be double-edged: "Don't do it, but in case you do, use condom."
- A history of physical or sexual abuse: These acts against adolescents violate their bodies, minds, and hearts. Sexual abuse creates a grossly distorted view of sexual behaviour, destroys boundaries and drives a deep sense of worthlessness into the emotions.

Fawole (2010) posited that the basic human need for touch and physical affection is real, but even more important is the basic human need for a loving connection with others. Many adolescents confuse their need for sexual expression with their need for love. Some of them use sex as a way to create the sense of connection they need. Many boys and girls have engaged in sex just to meet the need of being held. The need for love, touch, and attachment may lead some adolescents to give sex to save a relationship. Teenage girls frequently say they agreed to have sex with a boy to prevent losing him, a strategy that rarely works. Some male students mount pressure physically on their female colleagues while some female students mount pressure on their male counterparts through indecent dressing and exposing their nakedness to seduce them.

Unfortunately, those who mistake sex for love and base their relationship on physical pleasure will find their relationship unfulfilling; eventually it will deteriorate and dissolve. Shaughnessy and Shakesby (1992) observed that adolescents have a tough time with true emotional intimacy for three reasons. First, they do not have the verbal skills to effectively label or describe their feelings. Second, their hopes, dreams, and aspirations are not very concrete, and third, sharing emotional intimacy does not always involve a conscious decision like

having sex. Thus, sex has become a convenient symbol and method to deal with this need for emotional intimacy. However, true emotional growth may be stunted by the substitution of sex for intimacy. It is for this very reason that Shaughnessy and Shakesby (1992) posit that sexuality education for adolescents need to include discussing emotional needs, components of relationships, and the long term consequences of sexual decisions such as pregnancy and the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This type of education is important, especially when adolescents, especially students are being bombarded with media messages, provocative advertisements, which gloss over the complicated and emotional act of sex with adventure, glamour, and excitement.

In fact, the prevalence of pre-marital sex among students appears to have been worsened because in many parts of Nigeria, cultural taboos hinder young people from discussing sexual matters explicitly with their parents. Many teenagers therefore learn about sex through the mass media and peers of the same sex who may themselves lack adequate information or are incorrectly informed. The implication is that they learn the important topic of sexuality education in negative manners, rather than having proper sex socialization at home or in schools.

It has also been found out that many young people have limited knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and know little about the natural process of puberty. This lack of knowledge about sexual and reproductive health may have grave consequences. Studies by (Ejue & Effiom, 2005; and Eruesegbefe, 2005) have shown that there is a high prevalence of sexual activity among students in Nigeria leading to a high rate of teenage pregnancy, unplanned early childbearing, school drop-out, academic under-achievement, unsafe abortions and maternal mortality, as well as infection with sexually transmitted diseases including the Human Immune Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

Parents in the contemporary society have equally been partly blamed for the prevalence of pre-marital sex because some of them have failed in their responsibility of cautioning their adolescent children on the danger of indulging in the act, especially through sexuality education in the homes. But some people are of the opinion that as adolescents, students are naturally open to the normal sex drive. This

drive is incensed by the impact of permissive Western culture transmitted through the sexual stimuli conveyed by the mass media. This has resulted in a generation of students who engage in sexual experimentation earlier than ever before, because they can access sex information 24 hours a day with just the click of a mouse through the internet.

Consequently, counselors are forced to find new ways to reach this population of students. Updating students with information during their required classes, utilizing multimedia approaches, and increasing competency among counselors are all innovative ways that educators are trying use to bring sexuality education to the secondary school students.

However, the dangerous sexual behaviours that students engage in are not likely be overcome overnight. Hence, it has become imperative to find out the effects of "an attitude modification method on students' attitude to pre-marital sex in the Lagos metropolis. This is because the goal of an attitude modification programme is to change and adjust behaviour that is inappropriate or undesirable which in this case is pre-marital sex. Attitude modification uses a scheduled approach that rewards desired behaviour and "punishes" undesirable behaviour. Thus it is expected that through attitude modification, students would change from the undesirable behaviour which is pre-marital sex to the desirable behaviour which is staying away from sexual activity until they get married.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students in Nigeria, who are mainly adolescents, complete their physical, emotional and psychological journey to adulthood in a changing world that contains both opportunities and dangers. They are tempted more and more to experiment with sexual activities resulting in divergent sexual behaviours and casual sexual relationships.

Indeed, the rate at which students indulge in pre-marital sex is increasing by the day. This poses a lot of problems for them and the society because many of them end up falling victims of the consequences of pre-marital sex which is considered as one of the cankerworms which has eaten deeply into the fabrics of the contemporary world. The increase in pre-marital sexual activities

among secondary school students gives rise to risks of unwanted teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, abrupt withdrawal from school, stigmatization, and sexual exploitation. More often than not many of the students who indulge in pre-marital sex regret their action as it does not give the expected satisfaction but rather leave them not only empty, but devastated, and disoriented. Some may never regain their focus on their academic pursuit, while the unlucky ones, particularly the females among them may lose their lives through complications arising from unsafe abortion or child birth. Thus, owing to indulgence in pre-marital sex, these students are confronted with the burdens of responsibilities which they are neither psychologically nor physiologically prepared for. Succinctly put, the consequences of pre-marital sex are so enormous that the future of many of these young ones who are in their teens have been jeopardised, hence the need for attitude modification to be done so as to bring a drastic change in their attitude towards pre-marital sex. There are certain methods and strategies that could be used to combat the problem of pre-marital sex among students and attitude modification is one of them.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to give direction to the study.

1. Students' attitude to premarital sex will not significantly differ to gender.
2. There will be no significant difference in students' attitude to pre-marital sex due to their ages

Literature Review

The meaning of Premarital Sex

As a prelude to a review of what pre-marital sex entails, it is pertinent to define sex. According to Makinde (2002), sex means mating or intercourse. Collins (2007) perceives sex as pervading all of life and ranging from mild feelings of pleasure about human relationships to sensual love making and stimulating orgasm. Smedes (1976) cited in Collins (2002) asserts that sex is sexuality throb within us, as movement towards relationship, intimacy and companionship, an exciting desire,

sometimes a melancholy longing to give ourselves in trust to another. It is an urge towards closeness and expression of a deep personal relationship with someone else. It could also be regarded as the physical copulation of a male and female which has an impacting emotional bond.

Causes of Pre –marital Sex

The world has today become a global village through technological advancement which makes students to have unlimited access to information about sex from different countries of the world. This has largely led to the prevalence of pre-marital sex among students.

However, Odelola (2004) observes that most of the information adolescents receive about sex are defective and they have profound negative effect on their sexual behaviour. He notes that one of the factors responsible for the prevalence of pre-marital sex is that adolescence is a period of rapid physical and emotional change characterized by stresses and tensions as the child strives to establish an individual identity on the journey from dependence to independence and adulthood. Apart from the fact that adolescents may want to experiment with everything, many of them are not fully aware of the seriousness of the attendant effects of pre-marital sexual behaviour.

Information from the media could be misleading, distorted and incomplete. Misinformation will only promote the act of engaging in risky sexual behaviour based on what they hear or learn from their peers and what they watch and read in the media.

Fields (2002) provides a clear idea of how the media has impacted today's students' sexual attitudes and behaviours more than any previous generation. He put it succinctly that Sexual expression has been a significant theme in youth culture for generations. Today, however, sexually explicit content is the cornerstone of youth-oriented music, their approach to style and fashion, radio, television and film, the music video culture, and cyberspace (Fields, 2002).

Consequences of premarital sex on students

Studies have shown that engaging in pre-marital sex has negative consequences on relationships. For instance, Remez (2000) found out that one of the consequences of pre-marital sex is the possibility of

contracting sexually transmitted infections such as herpes, Human Immune Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), gonorrhoea and syphilis. On the other hand, Forrest and Singh (1990) are of the opinion that adolescents who engage in pre-marital sex run the risk of unwanted or unplanned pregnancy which may force such people to marry or begin living together much earlier than intended. Indeed, Nigeria like many other countries of the world is facing a lot of challenges because of the rate at which adolescents engage in pre-marital sex despite its attendant health consequences.

Attitude Modification: Attitude modification also known as behaviour modification is the application of experimentally established principles of behaviour to problems of behaviour. Currently, it draws most heavily from studies and theories in the areas of learning and motivation, although attitude modification is not restricted to these areas. When used in settings that are primarily seen as clinical, attitude modification is often called behaviour therapy or conditioning therapy. Attitude modification is sometimes equated with applied operant conditioning which is just a part of attitude modification and more accurately called experimental analysis of behaviour.

Attitude Modification Methods: According to Johnson (1980), identified four methods of acquisition and modifications of attitudes: (1) Learning theories approach. (II) Social influence approach. (111) Functional approach and (IV) Cognitive Consistency Theories.

Learning Theories Approach: On the assumption that attitude are learned, all method known to increase or decrease learning should be applicable to the acquisition of changing attitude. Attitude change is said to be a matter of new learning. In this approach, students' negative attitude can be modified using Classical conditioning, Operant conditioning and Persuasion.

Classical Conditioning: This approach holds that people acquire negative attitude when they associate an idea, person or object with unpleasant experiences. For instance, students associate Mathematics lessons (conditioning stimulus) with kind of boredom, neglect and unpleasant feeling. (unconditioning stimulus).

Operant conditioning: The principle here states that those attitudes that are reinforced are more likely to be maintained than those attitudes that are not reinforced. A student negative attitude towards studying may be maintained because he receives reinforcement for doing so.

The Counselor should clearly identify the attitude he wish to strengthen and the behavior that represent the attitude. Every time the person manifests one of the specified statements of the behaviors, he should be rewarded in some way and in doing that the desired attitude will increase.

The Persuasion Method: Persuasion Method is the process by which a person's attitudes or behaviour are, without duress, influenced by communications from other people. The process of persuasion can be analyzed in a preliminary way by distinguishing communication (as the cause or stimulus) from the associated changes in attitudes (as the effect or response). The ultimate goal of the persuasive process is for individuals (or a group) to carry out the behaviour implied by the new attitudinal position.

Impact of Attitude to Pre-marital Sex among students

Attitudes about the behaviour of pre-marital sex include all the beliefs and knowledge that the person holds about certain behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). In the study of pre-marital sex, one aspect of the attitudes that is well researched is about premarital sex permissiveness. In 1969, about 73% of Americans view PMS as wrong whereas in the 1980s only 33-37% agreed that it is wrong. Since then the view on PMS remained the same, in favour of a more permissive attitude towards premarital sex (Hardling and Fancks, 2003).

Sexual permissiveness seems to be affected by sociological factors as well,. It has been highly gendered in some parts of the world. For example, matriarchies tend, to have more daughters who are permissive to premarital sex. Although this is the case, there was no difference between sexual behaviour in comparison to patriarchies. (Roebucks & McGee, 2007).

Religious views and affiliation can also significantly influence attitude to pre- marital sex and permissiveness on pre-marital sex (Peterson,

2004). Those who have sticker rules on premarital sex tend to have lower permissiveness.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive Survey was adopted for this study. The design entails the collection and use of data systematically from a given population to describe certain characteristics of that population. The design was considered appropriate for this study because the work was intended to source for data from a small group with the view to describing the entire population. This will be achieved by trying to investigate the impact of attitude modification methods on students' attitude to premarital sex in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

The Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the Secondary school students in government owed schools in Oredo Local Government of Edo State.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for the study consisted two hundred (200) secondary government school students. The age of the students, gender, type of school, class of study and religion were chosen through the use of stratified sampling technique. Simple random method was used to select two secondary schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. Fifty (100) students were selected from each of the two schools studied. The age of the participants ranged between 15-20years.

Instrumentation

A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire is made up of two sections. Section **A** and section **B**. The section **A** contained items eliciting the biographical information of the students and also, five (5) items which sought to find out the age of respondents; birth position in the family; whether he/she engaged in pre-marital; if yes, how many partners; what year was he/she engaged in pre-marital sex. Section **B** contained 5 Likert-scale requiring the respondents to indicate their level of agreement. The section B

consisted of 25 items called Scale of Attitude towards Pre-marital Sex (SATPS). Items 1-10 focuses on the causes of pre-marital sex, items 11-15 dealt with the consequences of pre-marital sex, items 16-20 was based on students' attitude to pre-marital sex and items 21-25 dealt with the remedies.

Validity of instrument

The instrument was validated by concerted effort of three experts in instrument construction. One of which majored in Measurement and Evaluation, one in Guidance and Counseling and the third expert in Educational psychology, they helped to review the instrument to ensure that the items were in line with the formulated research hypotheses. Corrections were made based on their observations.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out. Some of the questionnaires were administered on thirty students in Ovia local Government Area of Edo State. The responses of the subjects on the first administration was obtained, scores of the respondents were sorted out into odd and even numbers (Split-half-method) and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. However, because of the length of time and the short interval in the administration the reliability coefficient obtained was affected and this was corrected by the use of Spearman Brown Prophecy formular. The coefficient index of 0.75 was found. This value was adjudged high and therefore, the instrument was reliable and appropriate for this study.

Procedure

The administration of the questionnaire was undertaken by research assistants. Two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were administered so as to take care of attrition rate. Two hundred and five (205) were retrieved from the respondents out of which two hundred and two (202) were properly filled. Eventually, two hundred (200) were used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Chi- Square statistical tool.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Students' attitude to premarital sex will not significantly differ to gender.

Table1: Chi- Square (X^2) association between gender and attitude to pre-marital sex.

Chi- Square (X^2) value= 4.67 Degree of Freedom (DF) =1 Critical X^2 = 3.84.

Number	Cal X^2	DF	Critical X^2	Remark
200	4.67	1	3.84	Significant.

Table 1 above shows the association difference between the gender and attitude to pre-marital sex.

The computed chi-square (X^2) value of 4.67 is greater than the critical table value of 3.84, given 1 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. It therefore means that the null formulated hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained. This implies that students' attitude to pre-marital sex is significantly differing to gender:

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in students' attitude to pre- marital sex due to their age.

Table2: X^2 association between students' attitude to pre-marital sex and their ages.

Number	Cal X^2	DF	Critical X^2
200	3.88	2	5.99

Chi-square (x^2) value=3.88 Degree of Freedom (DF) = 2

Critical (x^2) value=5.99.

Table 2 above showed the association difference between the students' attitude to pre-marital sex and ages.

Evidence from the Table 2 revealed that computed Chi- square (X^2) value of 3.88 is less than the chi-square critical value of 5.99, with 2

degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. It therefore means that the null hypothesis formulated which states that there will be no significant difference in students' attitude to pre-marital sex due to their ages is accepted. So, the alternate hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the student's attitude to pre-marital sex as a result of their ages.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1: There will be no gender difference in the attitude to pre-marital sex among secondary school students. The result data analysis revealed that there is gender difference in attitude to pre-marital sex. Wahere (2009) asserted that the female population is worst hit among this age bracket than the male. Females are particularly vulnerable to a host of problems related to premarital sex. Female have certain peculiarities that increase the risk of infection whereas the male do not experience this. The vagina surface exposed to semen is large and semen, have greater concentration of HIV than vaginal fluid (AIDS 2002). If a young girl becomes pregnant, she places herself and her unborn child at his/her risk because a young girls body may not have developed to the point of being able to handle child birth safely. Even if a teen mother escapes severe health consequences as a result of premarital sex, she must still face the serious responsibilities of parenthood. These features are not found in manhood.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference between the students' age and attitude to pre-marital sex. This result showed that there is no significant difference between age of the students and attitude to pre-marital sex. This finding is in line with the Melmet, (2006) analyses revealed that majority of the women marry in their mid-to-late twenties as a result of premarital sex. The analysis result indicated that most of the respondents studied had low sexual intercourse. This low rate of pre-marital sex among students in schools is due to the influence of the guidance services, impact of the school counselors and moral instruction lessons in schools. On the contrary to this view Krihmen (2006) reported that premarital sex is not surprising in an era when men and women typically marry in their mid to late twenties. He went further that while access to sex education was far

less in rural areas, rural youth were twice as likely as urban youth to have had premarital sex.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results of the findings from this study, it is hereby concluded that there is an association between gender and attitude to pre-marital sex among secondary school students and age of the students in secondary does not influence their attitude to pre-marital sex.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the data analysis and the conclusion reached, the following are hereby recommended.

1. School counselors, guidance services and moral instruction lessons should be strengthened in schools.
2. Efforts should be geared towards avoiding the negative consequences to premarital sex.
3. Young people should be able to make informed choices regarding their sexuality. They should be empowered to make informed decisions that they find most suitable to their situation.
4. Comprehensive sexual education should be introduced in schools at all levels.
5. Family structure should be strengthened in Nigeria so that the adolescents can be taught to eschew pre-marital sex before marriage.
6. Sex education should be incorporated into the school's curriculum from primary to tertiary levels and parents should be encouraged to openly discuss the important topic of sex with their children.

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