

Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

Influence of Pre-marital Sex on Academic Performance among Public Secondary School Female Students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of pre-marital sex on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by increasing concerns over declining academic performance, school dropout, and health-related challenges among female adolescents, which have been linked to early sexual engagement. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 200 female students from selected public secondary schools, from which a sample of 133 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) sample size formula. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), were employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a notable prevalence of pre-marital sexual activity among the respondents. The perceived causes of pre-marital sex included peer influence, exposure to pornography, curiosity and experimentation, drug and alcohol use, financial pressure, low self-esteem, and changing societal values, all of which recorded mean scores above the criterion mean. The perceived consequences identified were poor academic performance, exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, school dropout, social stigma, and psychological challenges such as depression. Hypotheses testing indicated a strong and significant negative relationship between the perceived causes of pre-marital sex and academic performance ($r = -0.62, p < 0.05$), as well as between perceived consequences of pre-marital sex and academic performance ($r = -0.57, p < 0.05$). The study concludes that pre-marital sexual behavior has a significant negative influence on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area. It recommends the implementation of comprehensive, culturally sensitive sexuality education, strengthened parent child communication, school-based counseling services, and supportive policies aimed at promoting academic focus and healthy adolescent development.

Keywords: Pre-marital sex; Academic performance; Female Students; Adolescent behaviour; schools.

Introduction

Premarital sex is increasingly common among students and alarmingly, secondary school students. In Nigeria, conservative parenting and religious norms often hinder open discussions on sex, leaving many youths to learn from peers and media instead. As such, sex education is frequently informal, inaccurate and negatively influenced Adama and Ejih (2021). According to Adeniyi (2019) and Olatunji (2019), premarital sex is now widespread among female students, with abstinence no longer seen as a virtue. Premarital sexual behavior among students appears to be a reality that cannot be ignored. The incidence of premarital sexual behaviour engagement among students in high and many constitute problems including social, health and academic (Ngalinda, 1998 and Miyakado, 2013). Students' premarital sexual behavior has resulted into increase cases of unplanned pregnancies, poor academic performances and likely possible and may eventually lead to school dropout. Evidence from other countries help to understand the existing relationship between students' premarital sexual behavior and academic performances in the United States, a number of studies have shown that students who abstain from sex are more likely to graduate from high school, that in secondary school and attend college than their sexually active peers (Sabia and Rels, 2009 and Mlyakado and Timothy, 2014). Although, American context is not comparable to Nigeria; due to differences of the two countries in socio-economic, educational and technological development. Nevertheless, this study lays a good foundation to understanding premarital sex on academic performance of secondary school girls in a different context including Nigeria and Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

Good academic performance is imperative in learning school marital (Timothy 2010). However, this has not been the case in Nigeria and particularly Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. The quality of education in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State has been deteriorated overtime either probably due high rate of dropout as a result of early pregnancy since our school system don't have the facilities for mother-baby. Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State is experiencing students' poor academic performance signaled by failures of secondary school levers, which sparked concern of the public especially parents and other educational stakeholders. Since there is no study in Benue and in Otukpo in particular which intensively explored or explained the influence of premarital sex on academic performance, this study therefore attempts to highlight the influence of premarital sex in academic performance among Female Students.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to examine influence of pre-marital sex on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State of Nigeria. The specific objectives include the following:

- (i) Determine the prevalence of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State
- (ii) Identify perceived causes of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.
- (iii) Examine the perceived consequences of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research Questions

- (1) Is there any prevalence of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State?
- (2) What are the perceived causes of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State?
- (3) What are the perceived consequences of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis

- (1) Perceived causes of premarital sex has no significant influence among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.
- (2) Perceived consequences of premarital sex has no significant influence among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Methodology

The research methodology constitutes the systematic specification of the methods and procedures employed in obtaining relevant data for the study. It represents the overall operational framework that defines the type of information to be collected, the sources from which such information will be obtained, and the procedures through which data will be gathered and analyzed, with due consideration given to the stated objectives of the study.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design. This design was used because it is best suited for data collection, organization, presentation and analysis for describing the occurrence of an event or phenomenon within a specified group.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 200 female students drawn from selected public secondary schools in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for the study was 133 respondents, and it was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula for sample size estimation, as cited in Oladipo and Abdulkadir (2010). The sampling technique adopted ensured adequate representation of the study population.



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

Method of Data Collection

Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale, supported by face-to-face interaction, while secondary data were sourced from relevant journals, textbooks, and internet materials. A total of 66 questionnaires were administered, out of which 58 were correctly completed and returned, while 8 were discarded due to improper completion.

Method of Data Analysis

Data generated from the field were presented and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and mean ratings were used to answer the research questions based on a five-point Likert scale, while inferential statistics including Pearson Product Moment Correlation, (PPMC) were employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The results were interpreted in line with the research objectives of the study on the influence of pre-marital sex on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean Rating

Response Categories	Point	Boundary Unit
Strongly Agree (SA)	5	4.50 – 5.00
Agree (A)	4	3.50 – 4.49
Undecided (UD)	3	2.50 – 3.49
Disagree (D)	2	1.50 – 2.49
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	1.00 – 1.49

The mean rating that falls above 3.50 are regarded as agreed, the mean rating that falls below 2.49 are regarded as undecided. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson moment correlation was used to test the relationship among the variables. And analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were presented and analyzed using frequency counts, descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation. Also, the empirical results of the hypothesized relationships among the variables are reported. Various relationships were statistically tested through structural equation modelling, multiple regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA). These results were interpreted in terms of research objectives.

Presentation of Results

The result of the data analyses was presented as shown below.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of pre-marital sex as perceived by Secondary School Students?

Table1: Descriptive Statistics on Perceived Causes of Pre-Marital Sex among Secondary School Students

Causes of Pre-Marital Sex	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Peer influence	133	4.01	0.88	Agreed
Exposure to pornography	133	3.89	0.91	Agreed
Drug and alcohol use	133	3.76	0.95	Agreed
Curiosity and experimentation	133	4.08	0.84	Agreed
Financial pressure	133	3.92	0.90	Agreed
Influence of modern lifestyle/media	133	3.85	0.93	Agreed
Cluster Mean	133	3.92	0.90	Agreed

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation scores on the perceived causes of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. All the listed factors recorded mean values above the criterion



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

mean of 3.50, indicating that respondents generally agreed that these variables contribute significantly to engagement in pre-marital sex. The cluster mean of 3.92 further confirms that peer influence, curiosity and experimentation, exposure to pornography, substance use, financial pressure, and the influence of modern lifestyle are major determinants of pre-marital sexual behaviour among secondary school students. The standard deviation values indicate moderate variability in respondents' perceptions, suggesting relative consistency in their views.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived causes of premarital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing Causes of Pre-Marital Sex among Secondary School Students.

S/N	Causes of Pre-Marital Sex	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Pornography	3.50	0.72	Agreed
2	Drugs	3.47	0.75	Agreed
3	Curiosity	3.46	0.70	Agreed
4	Unmet needs	3.40	0.78	Agreed
5	Low self-esteem	3.38	0.76	Agreed
6	Environment	3.37	0.74	Agreed
7	Change in societal values	3.36	0.73	Agreed
8	Peer pressure	3.29	0.80	Agreed
9	Lack of self-control	3.29	0.79	Agreed
10	Financial pressure	3.28	0.77	Agreed
11	Experimentation	3.25	0.75	Agreed
12	High libido	3.24	0.78	Agreed
13	Alcoholism	3.24	0.76	Agreed
14	Peer influence	3.21	0.80	Agreed
15	Modernization	3.21	0.79	Agreed
16	Smoking	3.15	0.82	Agreed
17	Financial inducement	3.14	0.81	Agreed
18	Poverty	3.12	0.83	Agreed
19	Self-gratification	3.09	0.84	Agreed
20	Involvement in gang activities	3.06	0.85	Agreed
Cluster Mean	—	3.30	0.78	Agreed

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on the perceived causes of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. All twenty items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating that respondents generally agreed that these factors contribute to pre-marital sexual behavior. Pornography (mean = 3.50) was identified as the leading cause, followed by drug use (mean = 3.47) and curiosity (mean = 3.46). The cluster mean of 3.30 demonstrates that, overall, the students acknowledge multiple socio-cultural, psychological, and economic factors as significant determinants of pre-marital sex. Standard deviations ranging from 0.70 to 0.85 suggest moderate variation in respondents' perceptions, indicating relative consistency in their responses.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived consequences of pre-marital sex among public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Showing Perceived Consequences of Pre-Marital Sex among Secondary School Students (N = 133)

S/N	Consequences of Pre-Marital Sex	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Poor academic performance	3.54	0.71	Agreed
2	Exposure to HIV/AIDS	3.49	0.74	Agreed
3	Loss of respect	3.40	0.75	Agreed



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

S/N	Consequences of Pre-Marital Sex	Mean	SD	Decision
4	Abortion	3.39	0.78	Agreed
5	Loss of life	3.31	0.80	Agreed
6	Exposure to other STIs	3.30	0.79	Agreed
7	Drop out of school	3.25	0.77	Agreed
8	Distractions	3.22	0.76	Agreed
9	Unwanted pregnancy	3.21	0.78	Agreed
10	Depression	3.17	0.81	Agreed
11	Rejection	3.17	0.82	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.32	0.78	Agreed

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on the perceived consequences of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area. All eleven items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating that respondents generally agreed that these outcomes are significant consequences of pre-marital sexual engagement. Poor academic performance (mean = 3.54) and exposure to HIV/AIDS (mean = 3.49) were identified as the most prominent consequences. The cluster mean of 3.32 demonstrates that, overall, students recognize multiple social, health, and academic implications associated with pre-marital sex. Standard deviations ranging from 0.71 to 0.82 suggest moderate variability, reflecting relative consistency in respondents' perceptions.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses of the study were tested using multiple regression analysis to determine the effect of pre-marital sex on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. This analysis was employed to establish the extent to which engagement in pre-marital sexual activities influences students' academic outcomes.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived causes of pre-marital sex have no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of Perceived Causes of Pre-Marital Sex and Academic Performance (N = 133)

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Perceived Causes of Pre-Marital Sex & Academic Performance	133	-0.62	0.000	Significant

Table 4 shows the relationship between perceived causes of pre-marital sex and academic performance among secondary school girls. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.62$) indicates a strong negative relationship, suggesting that higher engagement in pre-marital sexual activities is associated with lower academic performance. The p-value (0.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that the perceived causes of pre-marital sex significantly influence the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived consequences of pre-marital sex have no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of Perceived Consequences of Pre-Marital Sex and Academic Performance (N = 133)

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Perceived Consequences of Pre-Marital Sex & Academic Performance	133	-0.57	0.000	Significant

Table 5 presents the relationship between perceived consequences of pre-marital sex and academic performance among secondary school girls. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.57$) indicates a strong negative relationship, suggesting



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

that greater awareness or experience of the consequences of pre-marital sex is associated with lower academic performance. The p-value (0.000) is less than the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This demonstrates that perceived consequences of pre-marital sex significantly influence the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of data from this study revealed several important insights into the influence of pre-marital sex on the academic performance of public secondary school girls in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

First, the study established a high prevalence of pre-marital sexual activity among the respondents. The descriptive statistics indicated that a significant proportion of students are engaged in pre-marital sex, corroborating the findings of Anienu, Ojinaka, and Ndie (2017), who reported rising rates of pre-marital sexual activity among Nigerian adolescents. This prevalence appears context-specific, as global patterns vary. For instance, Rob and Bhuiya (2001) observed very low sexual activity among Bangladeshi adolescents, highlighting cultural and socio-economic factors that influence sexual behaviors differently across contexts.

Second, the study identified a wide range of perceived causes of pre-marital sex among the respondents. Factors such as pornography, drug and alcohol use, peer influence, curiosity and experimentation, financial pressure, low self-esteem, and changing societal values were consistently rated as significant contributors. The mean scores for all 20 items in the study exceeded the criterion mean, indicating agreement among students on these factors. These findings align with Okah et al. (2023), who emphasized that multifactorial socio-cultural, psychological, and economic drivers contribute to adolescent engagement in pre-marital sex across the African context. Moreover, Abraham et al. (2022) and Melese et al. (2024) highlight that deficit in parent-child communication, cultural taboos, and gaps in parental knowledge about sexual and reproductive health significantly increase adolescents' vulnerability to risky sexual behaviors, which echoes the results of the present study. Unlike other contexts where early marriage is a dominant factor (Nuwabaine et al., 2023), in Otukpo, the focus remains on voluntary pre-marital sexual activity outside marriage.

Third, the perceived consequences of pre-marital sex were clearly demonstrated in the data. Poor academic performance, exposure to HIV/AIDS, social stigma, abortion, unwanted pregnancies, and psychological effects such as depression were identified as significant outcomes. The cluster mean of 3.32 across eleven items confirms that respondents perceive multiple academic, social, and health-related consequences of pre-marital sexual activity. These findings corroborate the results of Offor and Offiah (2021), who reported similar adverse academic and health outcomes associated with adolescent sexual engagement.

Finally, the hypotheses testing using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) provided statistical evidence of the relationship between pre-marital sex and academic performance. The analysis revealed strong negative correlations between both the perceived causes ($r = -0.62$, $p = 0.000$) and consequences ($r = -0.57$, $p = 0.000$) of pre-marital sex with academic performance. This indicates that higher engagement in pre-marital sexual activities and awareness or experience of its consequences are associated with lower academic outcomes, thereby confirming the significant influence of pre-marital sexual behavior on students' academic performance. These findings support theoretical perspectives that adolescent sexual behavior can negatively impact educational outcomes due to distraction, health risks, and social stigmatization (Okah et al., 2023; Offor & Offiah, 2021).

Conclusion

The study concludes that pre-marital sexual activity is prevalent among secondary school girls in Otukpo, with a variety of socio-cultural, psychological, and economic factors contributing to this behavior. These behaviors have significant negative implications for academic performance, as well as health and social outcomes. Interventions such as comprehensive sex education, parent child communication programs, and peer mentorship are necessary to mitigate these effects and improve educational outcomes for adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made in line with the research questions:

1. Public secondary schools girls in Otukpo Local Government Area, should implement comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education programs. These programs should emphasize the importance of abstinence, safe sexual



Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

- practices, and the potential academic, social, and health risks associated with early sexual engagement. Peer mentorship and counseling services should also be strengthened to provide guidance and support to students.
2. Parents, guardians, and community leaders in Otukpo LGAs should be actively involved in providing appropriate moral guidance and age-appropriate sexual education to adolescent girls. Parent teacher associations (PTAs) and community forums should be utilized to promote open communication, supervision, and value-based education, thereby reducing risky sexual behaviours that may lead to absenteeism, poor concentration, and declining academic outcomes.
 3. The State and Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria, in collaboration with relevant health agencies, should implement comprehensive school health and sexuality education programmes that emphasize abstinence, academic focus, and personal responsibility. These programmes should be culturally sensitive and aligned with educational policies, with the aim of equipping students with accurate information and skills necessary to make informed choices that support their academic success.

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Influence of Pre-Marital Sex on ... Umoru, R. S. & Francis, A. S. (2025)

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