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PREMARITAL SEXUAL ATTITUDE AS PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was on premarital sexual attitude as predictor of academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Anambra State. Three research qhestions and one null hypothesis guied the study. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Anambra state. The population for this study comprised of 35,442 undergraduates of 10 Faculties Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. A sample size of 997 students was selected using multiplestage sampling procedure. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, which were administered directly to the students and recollected by the researchers. Research questions 1 and 2 were answered using aggregate scores and percentages. Research question 3 and the null hypothesis were analyzed using regression analysis. The result indicated that premarital sexual attitude was a significant predictor, contributing a negative impact of -7.4% to academic performance. These findings highlight the need for intervention programmes aimed at promoting healthy behaviours and supportive living conditions among university students. The study recommends the implementation of relationship awareness and

sexual education programs, as well as counselling services, to support students in managing personal relationships while maintaining academic excellence.

Keywords: Premarital Sexual Attitude, Predictor, Academic Performance, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Romantic relationships premarital sex, play a significant role in shaping the lives of undergraduate students. University life represents a period of social, emotional, and intellectual growth, but it also introduces new personal challenges, particularly in managing relationships and their potential impact on academic performance. Understanding how these intimate relationships correlate with academic engagements is crucial for students, educators, and policymakers. The socio-cultural shifts in African societies regarding premarital sexual behaviour is significantly linked to the processes of Westernization and globalization, which promote individualism and expose populations, particularly the youth, to foreign media and educational systems. This has resulted in a complex interface where indigenous, communal values intersect or clash with modern, liberal concepts. Since the university has majority of her students residing in private lodges in the town, most of the students cohabit.

Premarital sex, often an integral aspect of cohabiting relationships, also plays a critical role in the academic lives of students. Premarital sexual attitude refers to individuals' beliefs, feelings, and acceptance of sexual activity before marriage, varying from strict disapproval to complete acceptance, often influenced by culture, religion, gender, peers, and family, and significantly impacting behaviors like contraceptive use, STI risk, and unintended pregnancies, with younger, more permissive individuals often facing higher risks due to lack of education (Campbell, 2020). In traditional African cultures, premarital sexual relationships were generally restricted, and female chastity was highly valued as a prerequisite for marriage, often symbolizing good moral upbringing (Bogle, 2018). This traditional sanctity of sex has been eroded by Western influence, contributing to a "sexual revolution".

Exposure to global media, urbanization, and Western notions of sexual liberalization have made premarital sex increasingly acceptable, particularly among tertiary students and young adults (Bogle, 2018). This shift is driven by the modern mindset that views sexuality as an individual affair rather than a matter of strict communal or religious norms. The mindset has also shifted from viewing sexual relationships as a sacred act limited to the marital institution to seeing them as an area of personal choice and pleasure (Hettlinger, 2017). Engaging in premarital sexual activities is associated with various

emotional and psychological consequences, such as guilt, anxiety, and fear of unintended pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Ogunjimi, 2021). These stressors can negatively impact students' mental health and lead to distractions from their academic responsibilities. Additionally, students involved in sexual relationships may experience increased absenteeism, reduced academic focus, and a decline in academic performance due to the emotional and physical demands of managing intimate relationships (Bodenmann, et al., 2020). Studies have also highlighted the impact of these sexual behaviours cognitive functioning and motivation, further contributing to poor academic performance (Buote, et al., 2020).

Academic performance is the measurement of a student's academic engagements like attending lectures, doing tests, assignments, and classroom participation. It signifies comprehension and problem-solving skills, influencing future opportunities, and can involve both objective outcomes and behaviours like study habits or attendance (Kumar, 2021). More than 25 million youths, representing around 10% of the population aged 15–24, are pursuing University education in Nigeria. For most of these youths, university represents a shift towards greater independence from home, and school settings offers an opportunity to form new friendships, as well as new subculture with divergent norms and values. While for others, school represents an opportunity to experience romantic and/or sexual relationships and experiment new ideas.

Similarly, an analysis of the Demographic health Survey found that in 58.6% of the 41 countries studied, women 20 to 24 years of age were more likely than women of 40 to 44 years of age report having premarital sex. According to Nwankwo (2021) the rise in the prevalence of premarital sex in Africa is a social menace. Sex in traditional societies use to be regarded as sacred and limited only to adult males and females within the institution of marriage. A child learns through the mass media and peers unguided. Children learn the important topic of sex education in negative manners, rather than having proper sex socialization at home or in schools.

The phenomenon has been reported as being common among Nigerian University undergraduates. Corroborating this view, Nwankwo (2021), carried out a study to determine the prevalence of this phenomenon among adolescence in tertiary institution. The conclusion of the study indicates that premarital sex is highly normative behaviour among university students. A significant (85.6%) number of the respondents see nothing wrong with sex before marriage. The study also identifies cohabitation as one of the primary

influences on premarital sex among students in tertiary institution. Cohabitation of opposite sex is a predisposing factor to the initiation of sexual activities. Premarital sex is not confined to teens alone, a good number of people who are not married, are also vulnerable to premarital sex. This is evidenced by the large number of unintended/unwanted pregnancies many of which get terminated in back street clinics (Crissey, 2018).

The relationship between premarital sex and academic performance Is complex. On one hand, premarital sexual activity can provide emotional satisfaction and personal growth through intimate connections, which may lead to improved emotional well-being and, consequently, a more focused academic experience (Paul, McManus and Hayes, 2019). Emotional fulfillment derived from a healthy romantic relationship may serve as a buffer against academic stress, helping students to better manage the pressures of university life (Whitton, Weitbrecht and Kuryluk, 2019). However, there are significant negative implications associated with premarital sex, especially for students. Engaging in sexual activities can lead to distractions from academic work, reduce study time, and increase stress levels, especially when such relationships result in emotional turbulence, unwanted pregnancies, or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Fielder, Carey, and Carey, 2019).

Such outcomes can result in a decline in academic performance as students deal with the emotional and physical consequences of their actions (Lammers, et al., 2019). In some cases, the complexities of managing a sexual relationship may lead to emotional distress, affecting a student's concentration and academic performance. Eggleston et al., (2015) stated that school attendance as well as academic performance may be related to early sexual activity and unintended pregnancy. Also, Abraham and Kumar (2015) observed that poor academic performance in students influence the likelihood of having had premarital sex.

Furthermore, studies have found that students who engage in premarital sex, especially those with multiple sexual partners, are more likely to experience emotional distress, which in turn can negatively impact their academic performance (Boden, Fergusson and Horwood, 2020). Emotional turmoil from breakups or relationship conflicts may lead to depression, anxiety, or reduced motivation to pursue academic goals (Rhoades, et al., 2023). For example, Rhoades and colleagues found that the stress of navigating romantic relationships, particularly those involving sexual intimacy, often exacerbates academic pressures, making it harder for students to concentrate on their studies.

Also, Offor and Offiah (2021), investigated reasons and implications

of premarital sexual escapades among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 23,621 comprising 12639 males and 10982 females. The sample comprised of 800 undergraduate students. The sample was composed using simple random sampling method. Data collected were analyzed using mean. The findings of the study showed that cohabitation of students, poor socio-economic status of parents, peer group influence, indecent dressing among students, watching pornographic movies and pictures, quest for materialism, inability to control sexual urge, addiction to drugs and alcohol, poor parental upbringing of children and students' lifestyle were the reasons behind premarital sex among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Also, it was discovered that unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, infertility, untimely death, drug and alcoholic addiction, students joining bad company, loss of self-control, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution were the implications of premarital sex. Premarital sex with its attendant risk to unstrained fun and sexual activities may cause distraction for students. This may lead to academic underachievement. Based on the findings study, it was concluded that premarital sex persists among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka sequel to diverse socioeconomic reasons which could hamper their academic pursuit and goals in life. Thus, study relates to the present study by location, the same university. This study differs from the present study as it was conducted only on female undergraduates.

The academic performance of undergraduate is often influenced by multiple factors, including personal relationships and social behaviours. Premarital sexual activities have become increasingly prevalent among university students, raising concerns about their potential impact on academic success. While romantic relationships can offer emotional support, they may also serve as distractions from academic responsibilities, leading to poorer performance. The balancing act between personal relationships and academic commitments is particularly challenging for students, as they navigate the emotional and psychological complexities associated with sexual activities.

Several studies suggest that students who engage in premarital sexual relationships may experience greater stress and lower academic performance compared to their peers who are not involved in such relationships. Similarly, premarital sexual activities have been associated with increased anxiety, emotional distress, and even physical health

risks, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or unintended pregnancies, all of which can disrupt academic progress. Despite the widespread occurrence of premarital sex among university students, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of how these behaviours predict academic performance. This gap in the literature presents a significant problem, as university counsellors, administrators and educators need reliable data to implement interventions that support students' academic success. Thus, this study sought to determine the issue of how premarital sexual activities predict academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate premarital sex as predictor of Academic Performance of Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. Specifically, the study was to determine the following:

1. Premarital sexual attitude scores of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
2. Academic performance scores of the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
3. The predictive value of pre-marital sex on academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the premarital sexual attitude scores of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. What are the academic performance scores of the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
3. What is the predictive value of pre-marital sex on academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. The predictive value of pre-marital sexual attitude on academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State is not significant.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopted correlational survey research design. A correlational survey design examines the statistical relationship between two or more naturally occurring variables using surveys, without the researcher manipulating anything, to see if changes in one variable correspond to changes in another (Price, Jhangiani and I-Chant, 2015). This approach was

appropriate for identifying the predictive value of premarital sex on academic performance. A correlational survey design allowed for the collection of data from a broad population using questionnaires, providing an opportunity to explore the contribution of premarital sexual attitude to the students' academic performance in a structured manner.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study consisted of all 35,442 undergraduate students of 10 Faculties in the main campus of Nnamdi Azikiwe University at Awka. The student body included individuals from different academic disciplines and varying levels of study making it a significant group for studying the dynamics of premarital sexual attitude as predictor of academic performance.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consists of 1080 undergraduate students. The researchers adopted accidental sampling technique. In this simpling method, only the students met in their various lecture halls in various faculties of the University were selected and used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

In this study questionnaire was the main research instrument used. Two different types of questionnaires were used. They are: Premarital Sexual Attitude (PSA) and Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS). Premarital Sexual Attitude scale (PSA) is a 24 item Inventory designed to measure, attitudes towards sex outside marriage. Academic Performance Attitude Scale (APRS) Is a 19-item inventory designed to measure students' academic performance. Designed on Likert 5-point rating scale of Always 5; Almost always 4; Sometimes 3: Rarely 2 and Not at all 1 which were provided for the respondents to make their responses to the questionnaire items.

Validation of the Instrument.

The instruments used in this study were subjected to face validity. They were sent to two experts in measurement and evaluation and one in counselling psychology in Faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their suggestions were encoporated in the final drafts of the instruments.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instruments were administered to 50 students in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Anambra State. Cromback Alpha method was used to check the internal consistency of the instruments. At the end PSA has alpha of 0.92 while APRS has 0.90. These are high enough showing that the instruments are good for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The data collection was done through direct approach. The researchers personaly administeed the instruments to the students in their various lecture

halls in the university and they were collected back immediately after filling. A total of 1080 copies of the instruments were administered and 1000 copies were retrieved representing 92.6% percent response rate of which 3 copies of the questionnaires were invalid making it 997 correct copies of the questionnaires used. The entire data collection process took one week.

Method of Data Analysis

The data generated from the participants responses were analysed using aggregate scores and regression analysis. The hypothesis for the study was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using simple regression.

Results And Discussion

In this chapter, the data collected from the field for this study were analysed and the summaries were presented in tables to highlight the findings. This was followed by the discussion of the results.

Research Question 1: What are the premarital sexual attitude scores of students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table 1: Premarital Sexual Attitude Scores Of Students Of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
24 – 59	629	63.1	Negative attitude
60 – 96	368	36.9	Positive attitude

Table 1 shows that 629(63.1%) of students of Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka with scores ranging from 24 and 59 have negative premarital sexual attitude, while 368(36.9%) others who scored between 60 and 96 have positive premarital sexual attitude in the University.

The findings show a majority of students (63.1%) have a negative premarital sexual attitude, while a significant minority (36.9%) hold positive attitudes. This indicates a mixed landscape of beliefs regarding premarital sex within the student, with more students leaning towards disapproval or concern, though a substantial portion are more accepting of it. The higher percentage of students with negative attitudes (63.1%) suggests that, for the majority, there is a significant degree of moral or social disapproval of premarital sexual activity. This aligns with many traditional cultural and religious values that often discourage such behaviours. A mix of attitudes could imply varying degrees of engagement in premarital sexual activities, which can have significant consequences, including potential academic distraction, emotional distress, and health risks like sexually transmitted infections.

These results reflect a broader tension, seen in other cultural contexts as well, between traditional values and the

influences of modern, liberalizing trends. These scores suggest that a majority of undergraduate students express negative attitudes, yet a substantial minority hold positive views, pointing to a diverse and potentially conflicted environment concerning premarital sexual behaviour.

Research Question 2

What are the academic performance scores of the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table 2: Academic performance scores of the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
19 – 56	323	32.4	Poor academic performance
57 – 95	674	67.6	Good academic performance

In table 2, it was observed that 674(67.6%) of students of Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka with scores ranging from 57 and 95 have good academic performance, while 323(32.4%) others who scored between 19 and 56 have poor academic performance. The data reveals a significant disparity in the academic performance of undergraduate students, with a majority (67.6%) achieving good academic performance (scores 57-95) and a substantial minority (32.4%) showing poor performance (scores 19-56). This suggests a mixed academic environment where while two-thirds of the students are performing well, a considerable portion is struggling. The percentage of students with poor academic performance suggests a potential need for targeted interventions, academic support programs, or remedial measures to help them improve their scores and achieve better academic outcomes.

Research Question 3

What is the predictive value of premarital sexual attitude on academic performance of Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State?

Null Hypothesis 1

The predictive value of premarital sexual attitude on academic performance of Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State is not significant.

Table 3: Regression analysis on the predictive power of premarital sexual attitude on academic performance of Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Variable	N	BETA	Cal. t	df	Pvalue	Remark
Premarital sexual attitude	997	-0.074	-2.39	995	0.017	S

Table 3 indicates that premarital sexual attitude had Beta of -0.074. This indicates that premarital sexual attitude had contributed to -7.4 percent

for the students' academic performance in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Again, at 995df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t-2.39 with Pvalue 0.017 which is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, premarital sexual attitude is a significant predictor of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka students' academic performance.

The findings suggest that a more positive attitude toward premarital sexual activities may be associated with some level of distraction, which could negatively impact a student's academic engagement and achievement. The findings suggest that a more positive attitude toward premarital sexual activities may be associated with some level of distraction, which could negatively impact a student's academic engagement and achievement. These affirms the finding of Bolu-Steve, et. al (2023), that examined the causes and consequences of premarital sex among female students Oke- Ogun Polytechnic in Ogun State where they identified peer pressure, cohabitation and sexual harassment as major causes of premarital sex which consequently affects academic performance adversely. The present findings further agreed with findings of Boden, Fergusson and Horwood (2020) who found that students who engage in premarital sex, especially those with multiple sexual partners, are more likely to experience emotional distress, which in turn can negatively impact their academic performance. Also, emotional turmoil from breakups or relationship conflicts may lead to depression, anxiety, or reduced motivation to pursue academic goals (Rhoades, et al., 2023). For example, Rhoades and colleagues found that the stress of navigating romantic relationships, particularly those involving sexual intimacy, often exacerbates academic pressures, making it harder for students to concentrate on their studies. The results imply that university counselling services and awareness campaigns could provide students with strategies to balance social and academic life, and to manage potential distractions arising from relationships.

Conclusion

The study concludes that premarital sex is negatively a significant predictor of academic performance of students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended;

1. The university administration should organize regular workshops and seminars to educate students about the impact of premarital sexual acts on academic performance. These programs should promote time management skills and responsible behaviour, helping students balance their

relationships with their academic responsibilities.

2. The university should strengthen its counselling services by offering sessions focused on managing personal relationships and academic pressures. Counsellors should be encouraged to assist students in addressing the potential distractions caused by cohabitation, ensuring that these relationships do not negatively impact their academic performance.
3. The university management through the university counselling centre should implement comprehensive sexual education programs that not only provide information on sexual health but also highlight the consequences of premarital sex on students' academics, mental health, and future goals.

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