

Social Factors as Predictors of Premarital Sex among Secondary School Adolescents in South-East States Nigeria

Eke Ifeoma¹, Dr. (Mrs.) N. P. Ogbuokiri²

Department of Psychological Foundations Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400020>

Received: 02 April 2026; Accepted: 08 April 2026; Published: 25 April 2026

ABSTRACT

The study investigated Social Factors as Predictor of Premarital sex among Secondary School Adolescents in South-East in Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study employed a correlational survey design as the study sought to investigate relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The population of the study comprised 78,740 senior secondary school (SS II) students in the 1,230 public secondary schools in South East States of Nigeria. The sample for the study was two thousand four hundred and forty-one (2,441) students selected using stratified random sampling techniques. A researcher developed questionnaire titled “Social Factors Questionnaire (SFQ) and premarital sex Questionnaire (PSQ) was used for the study and was validated by three lecturers from the Department of Psychological Foundations Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.91 which implied that the instrument was reliable for the study. Research question was answered using simple linear regression, while t-test statistics associated with regression analysis was used to test hypotheses at 0,05 level of significance. The findings from the study reveal among others that family structure predicts premarital sex to a high extent among secondary school adolescent. Again, the corresponding hypotheses show that family structure significantly predicts adolescent involvement in premarital sex in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among other things that schools should educate parents about adolescent’s development, communication, and how their attitudes, values influence their children sexual behaviour.

Keywords: Social Factors, Premarital Sex, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Preamble: Premarital Sex among adolescents in the South East State of Nigeria is a significant concern due to its impact on health and social outcomes. Despite various interventions and public awareness campaigns, the prevalence of premarital sexual activities continues to rise, suggesting that underlying social factors maybe influencing these behaviours. Many studies have focused on biological and psychological aspect of sexual behaviour, often overlooking the significant role that social environment play. Factors such as low socioeconomic status, weak parent-child relationship, peer groups, internet use, school environment, religion, non-nuclear family structure and shifting societal norms may contribute significantly to young people’s decisions regarding premarital sex. Contemporary revelation in Nigeria unveils that certain social factors may be responsible for the youth’s involvement in adolescent exuberances. Most family have failed to inculcate the necessary and important societal norms, values and beliefs into the lives of the youths. This could partly be attributed to economic downturn, government failure to make necessary policies to support punishments, economic and social demand which must parents and families are facing and so on. The inability of families to perfume its basic responsibility in raising responsible children among others have led to increase in social vices such as drugs, armed robbery, kidnaping, drop out of school, examination malpractice, sexual problems and so on. Additionally, families failing in it responsibility of raising children can be felt in many ways as the product (children) of the families seem to be deviating from the expectation of parent and the society at large. The society today is experiencing breakdown in social norms, rise in level of illiteracy and risky sexual behaviours with its

attendant effect on sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, drop out of school and death. All this point to the fact that families are failing in their social responsibility of child upbringing. Despite the gravity of the problem, there is a dearth in research on premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States Of Nigeria. Social factor, refereeing to influence from societal and environmental context like, family, peers, culture that shapes individual behaviours, play a key role here. The prevalence of premarital social behaviours in the present days study could partly be attributed to some social factors, which may include peer pressure, environmental factors, cultural and societal norms, social economics status, family structure, family size location and parent-child relationship. The indices, the researcher is interested on is family structure.

Family is a social unit that performs certain essential functions, such as care giving and nurturing, economic support, emotional support and socialization (Giddens, 2018). He further stated that the institution of the family is based on the marriage of one or more sexually co-habiting couples. Usually, they raise their children legal or adopted. The family is the closest and most direct social environment that influences an individual's development (Fuligni, 2019). In the early stages of life, the family provides the physical needs, such as adequate food, breast milk or formula for optimal growth and development. Ensuring health care, such as regular check-ups, accommodation, providing safety and protection, also, the emotional cognitive and social needs (Webster, 2018). The concept of family has the main responsibility of socializing the child which begins with internalize cultural norms and values (Shonkoff & Philips, 2017). Family, also performs functions of child rearing, protecting, educating the children, transmitting the social values it has inherited and a special bonds between members (Webster, 2018).. This type of family setting is similar to the Nigerian traditional idea of family. Traditionally, it is believed that, it is the children that cement the union of a man and a woman together and make it a lasting and intimate one. Family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, who maintains sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults (Daly, 2018).

Family can be classified into nuclear and extended family. Nuclear family can also be known as conjugal family, this is a type of family structure that consist of two parents and their dependent children, biological or adopted. (Cheebrough, 2017). According to him parents are usually responsible for providing care, support, and financial stability for their children in both family structures, Extended family on the other hand, is a family structure that consists of relatives beyond the immediate nuclear family, which typically includes parents and their dependent children (Amato, 2020). He stressed that extended families often include multiple generations, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandchildren. They are bound together by kinship ties, responsibilities are shared and emotional support are also provided and a sense of belonging. Extended families can be grouped into three namely: The matrilineal which comprises of mother's relatives playing a significant role. We have the Patriarchal families which is a structure where the father's relatives hold authority and decision making power.

The Bilateral extended family where both the mother's and father's relatives are equally involved. However, they can also present challenges, such as conflicts, financial strain and boundary issues (Coontz, 2016).

He also asserted that, they are challenges faced by extended families structure "That as Nigerians move to urban areas, extended family ties can be strained due to physical distance and changing life styles, the influence of Western culture and modernization can lead to a decline in traditional extended family values and practices. Oyekanmi (2018), also observed that, these family structure shapes the context in which adolescents navigate identity, relationships and autonomy.

The word adolescence has been defined by various authors according to they perceive this very crucial stage of human development. Santrock (2018,) sees adolescence as the transitional period from childhood to adulthood, beginning around age 10 and ending around age 19 – 22. During which individuals experience significant physical, cognitive and socio emotional changes as they prepare to take on adult roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, World Health Organization WHO (2016), defined adolescence as a chronological age period of 10 – 19 years of life. Erik (1963) a renowned psychologist, discussed adolescence in his theory of social development. According to him, adolescence is a critical stage of development which he called "identity vs Role Confusion".

Erickson also noted that it is a time of exploration and experimentation, during which individuals form their identities and develop a sense of self, and navigate different roles and possibilities to determine who they are and where they fit in the society. He also observed that if the adolescents are unable to establish a clear identity they may experience role confusion, feeling uncertain about their place in the world. This crucial phase of their life may also affect the quality of social relationships with principals, teachers, and school supervisors and school mates (Kumari and Kumar, 2017). He further said that it is characterized by amorality, capable of violent act without feeling bad and disruptive of normal standard of social behaviour.

According to Santrock (2018), adolescence is a time of dramatic physical, cognitive and socio emotional change. At this period, adolescents face the challenges of adjusting to rapid physiological changes, exploring their identities, and development skills that will allow them to become competent adults. He also noted that adolescent at this point tends to seek greater independence to form their own relationships, as a result of pressure from their peers and social media. Davidson (2018) noted that independence from parents has clear effects. According to him, adolescents who do little and spend little time with their parents are likely to be bored, uninterested and self-centered. With little power and little control over their lives, adolescents often feel that they have marginal status and there may be driven to seek the respect that they feel they lack. He also noted that adolescents are trying to answer questions like “Who am I?” and “What do I want to do with my life?” as they explore their identities and develop a sense of self. Erick (1963) also proposed that adolescents try to answer the question like “who am I?”, “Where do I fit in?”. Opara (2018), described adolescence as a developmental stage and those that occupy the stage are referred to as adolescents. Adolescence is a developmental period that begins at puberty and encompassed the period from the end of childhood to the beginning of adulthood. At this period adolescents may experiment with substance or engage in social gathering as a way to cope with stress, seek new experience, or explore their identities, including their romantic and sexual relationships (Hollenstein & Hersh, 2023). In many societies, adolescence was not recognized as a phase of life. Most societies simply distinguished between childhood and adulthood (Crone, and Dahl 2020). Tanner and Amett (2022), observed that most adolescents have positive relationships with their families and friends, and are busy exploring their identities, developing skills and preparing for adulthood. “As adolescents forge their identities and seek autonomy, the underlying family structure whether patriarchal, bilateral, or extended plays a pivotal role in shaping their experiences and outcomes”.

Family structure refers to the patterned way in which members of a family are organized, related, and interact with one another. It encompasses the composition of the household, the roles and responsibilities assigned to each member, the rules that governs relationships, and the ways in which authority, resources and affection are distributed. This may include a nuclear unit (Parents and their children), extended relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), or even non-blood members who are incorporated through adoption, marriage, or strong social bonds, the composition can be described in terms of size (e.g. small versus large household), generational depth (single – generation, two – generation, multi – generation), and the nature of the ties biological, legal, or affective (Giordano, 2020). In summary, family structure is the organized arrangement of individuals, roles, relationships, and boundaries that together shape the functioning of a family unit. It provides the frame work within which members meet their physical, emotional and social needs, and it is continuously negotiated and shaped by internal dynamics and external influences. He further noted that family structure could be either intact or disrupted. An intact family refers to a family in which both biological parents are present in the household. In this type of family, husband and wife live together with their children. A disrupted family refers to a family that has experienced disruption due to divorce, separation, or death of a parent. (Amato, & Anthony 2019). Studies have shown that children living in disrupted families (i.e. families that do not consist of two married biological parents) are more likely to exhibit negative behaviours and less academic achievements and declined subjective well-being than children living in intact families (Opara 2018).

Life in disrupted families can be challenging and unpredictable both in the adolescent and the parents. Disrupted families, also known as non-traditional or non-intact families, suffer increase stress and anxiety due to the change and uncertainties of life (Sweeney 2017). Several theories discuss – disrupted families and their effects on individuals particularly children. Family system theory developed by Bowen Murray (1966), views family as an emotional. He suggests that family members are inter-connected and that changes in one member can affect the entire system. According to him, disrupted families can lead to emotional dysfunction and stress within the

family system. Children may feel anxious, responsible, or caught in the middle of parental conflict. This disruption may dampen parents well-being which in turn adversely affects their parenting, such as parental monitoring, discipline, and financial difficulty. Family structures and child's development has relationship in the child's upbringing. For example, children whose parents are separated are twice likely to be school drop out of school unlike those that have their two parents intact. Also, there is a notable correlation between parental separation and reduced academic achievements. Children who experience parental divorce may perform less academically than their peers from intact families (Opara, 2018). Walsh (2019), noted that disrupted families are more likely to experience economic hardship, which can have severe effect and long-lasting implications on their well-being, development and future prospects. Some of the implications of economic hardship on children from disrupted families include educational problems, smoking, drug abuse, violence vandalism, criminal acts than that from intact families.

“Every aspect of child rearing in a disrupted family tends to be challenging, encompassing emotional, social and economic dimensions. This multifaceted challenge often manifests in various ways, including poor socialization and cognitive development among children from single parent households whether due to divorce, or separation. Consequently, these children may experience strained relationships and limited interactions with their parents” (Amato 2020). He further noted that children from disrupted family, are oppositional and more aggressive, distractible, and demanding than children from intact homes. Family structure significantly influence attitudes towards premarital sex, for instance, adolescents from households with strict parental supervision and conservative values tends to have lower rates of premarital sex, whereas those from more permissive or single parent households way be more likely to engage in premarital sex.

Premarital sex is the involvement in sexual intercourse by individuals who have not engaged in marital vows or culturally recognize as having been enrolled in marriage institution (Regnerus, 2017). According to Uecker, (2019), premarital sex is a sexual activities practised by persons who are unmarried. The term also refers to sexual intercourse before legal marriage. It is generally used to refer to individuals who are presumed not yet of marriageable age, or between adults who will presumably marry but who are engaging in sexual activities prior to marriage. In most cases, premarital sex is not always a problem to individuals who are sexually matured since they may view it as a natural response to natural stimulus. However, premarital sex is said to be morally unacceptable in almost every human society that regards marriage as the requirement for sexual permissiveness. Premarital sexual activities is a wide-spread phenomenon among adolescents worldwide, including Nigeria. The rate of premarital sexual activities among adolescent students of secondary schools especially in developing countries like Nigeria is alarming and has continued to generate public attention. The exhibition of this trend include all kinds of sexual behaviours such as public indecency, kissing, hugging, holding hands and use of foul languages, exposing one's buttocks in public, often as a form of prank among others. These in most cases are against the wishes of parents, who see their children as hope for their future, that should be focused and acquire saleable skills that make them productive and capable of contributing meaningfully to the up-liftment of their families and the society at large (Erikson & Eriskson, 2017). Many students have dropped out of school, while others have become teenage parents or lost their lives due to the wind of social change from Western world, which is gradually blowing away the rich African Culture and creating permissive atmosphere for the young ones to do what they like (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The recent Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2019) report shows that 7.9% of boys and 9.6% of girls between the ages of 15-19 years had sexual intercourse with persons who were neither their husband nor lived with them. The Federal Ministry of Health (FMH, 2018), Survey on the sexual behaviours of Nigerians reveals that almost half of the females 46.2% and about a quarter of males 22.1% between the ages of 15 and 19 years have engaged in premarital sex. In fact, in many traditional societies premarital sex is considered a taboo or sacrilege especially for youths to indulge in sexual activities (Jenifer 2022). The idea is that premarital act reduces a woman's prospect of finding a suitable husband (Flaman, 2018). This societal norms is often rooted in cultural, religious, or moral beliefs that emphasize the importance of chastity, modesty, and marital fidelity (Omolewa, 2020). In those days engaging in premarital sex, could lead to severe consequences, such as social ostracism, family shame, religious or moral condemnation and limited life opportunities. These societal norms and consequences often served as a deterrent to premarital sex especially among young people.

In Christianity, the Holy Bible states that “the marriage bed should be kept pure, for God will judge all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4). In this context, keeping the marriage bed holy suggests abstinence from sex

before marriage. While sexually immoral refers to any unacceptable sexual acts especially premarital sex. In other words, it is a clear rule that Christians are also prohibited from engaging in sex before marriage (premarital sex). Nigerian society at large forbids sex outside marriage, a stance that is often seen as repugnant and forbidden, thereby limiting open discussions on love, sex, and marriage. (Marris, 2018). According to him traditional beliefs about premarital sex are far from being abode of *laissez faire* morality, he further stressed that there were strict moral principles that determined code and conduct. The establishment of moral code will guide the individual members on the social behaviours, and its feature for both the bride and the groom to be ignorant about sexual act until their marriage night was the practice of most Nigerian communities (Orji, 2017)

The advent of Christianity also strengthened the restrictive attitude towards premarital sexual expressions. Schools were built and managed by Missionaries and every stringent codes *ex conduct* were imposed on heterosexual activities. These aimed at preventing children from any type of sexual activities which was regarded as an act of immorality and sin against God. Traditional beliefs around premarital sex vary across cultures and religions. In many conservative religious traditions premarital sex is viewed as morally wrong and sinful. For instance, in Islam premarital sex is considered *haran* (forbidden) and is believed to lead to social and moral decay. In Christianity, particularly in evangelical and conservative denominations, premarital sex is often seen as violation of God's commandments and a threat to the sanctity of marriage (Regnerus, 2017).

Stressing more on this, Regnerus (2017) argue that premarital sex can have negative consequences for individuals and society, including increased risk of divorce, emotional trauma, and decreased relationships satisfaction. In other cultures, premarital sex may be viewed as a normal part of relationships and courtship, for example, in some African cultures premarital sex is seen as a way to demonstrate love and commitment between partners. Ugama (2017), noted that hundreds of Nigerian teenage girls roam the streets of urban cities, offering themselves to various men for economic gain. Moreover, many teenagers travel to urban areas in search of greener pastures and in most cases evade the watchful eyes of their parents or guardians. Uecker (2019), explored the complex relationships between religiosity, culture and premarital sex, and found that highly individuals are more likely to abstain from premarital sex, while those with lower level of religiosity are more likely to engage in premarital sex. At this, they enjoy the freedom to explore and experiment so many things including sex. Lending Credence to this, Opara(2018)noted that these children are promised good jobs and better economic gains, and other sweet promises which could land them into prostitution, hard drugs or even being killed. Premarital sex can take place in various forms and context, such as casual sex with a participant seeking to experience sex. It can also occur between partners in a committed relationships who are planning to get married (Uecker, 2019). He further opined that premarital sex can also occur between partners in a long term relationships who are not yet married. Lyons (2019) observed in other context that premarital sex occur between friends who have a sexual relationship without being romantically involved. Moreso, premarital sex can occur as a one – time intend to pursue a relationship. He concluded by also noting that premarital sex can occur on group settings, such as at parties or in social gathering.

Nwokoro (2016), noted that sexuality is not an instrument of enjoying lustful pleasure for human beings. She stressed that many at times immature human beings explore sexuality just out of curiosity and might be unaware of the consequences.

Sexual activity for the young people arrests their psychological, social and academic achievement. Studies have shown that when young people engage in premarital sex, their academic performance declines and social relationship with family members and friends deteriorates. (Santrock 2016). Rector, (2020) pointed out that the emotional side effect of premarital sex are also damaging to the young adult woman. He further maintained that one of the most common consequences of teenage sexual activities is depression. He noted that girls who are sexually active are more than three times as likely to be depressed as girls who are abstinent. Hill and Florsheim (2016), also noted that with regards to the potential negative psychological effects of early sexual activities in girls, they still engage in this act, which is dangerous for a young single woman to be sexually active at early stage. This can be number of risk factor for cancer, HIV, STIs, etc.

According to Alvarez and Tippins (2019), Health risk behaviour refers to actions or behaviours that increase an individuals likelihood of experiencing negative health outcomes, injury or even death. The behaviours can be

intentional or unintentional and can affect physical, emotional or mental health. Umunna (2018) define health risk behaviour as those threatening the righteousness of young people and interfering the way for them to be responsible adults. These behaviours according to him are generally listed in six categories: alcohol, smoking, substance use, unintended pregnancies, sexual behaviours contributing to sexually transmitted diseases, unhealthy dieting, behaviour and physical inactivity. Health risk behaviours in adolescent also include use of tobacco, illicit drugs which can lead to addiction, health problems and increased risk of injury or death. It also lead to unprotected sex without using condoms or other forms of protection, which increase the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. This act is relatively among the youths within the age of fifteen (15) years. Nutbeams (2017) argues that health interventions aimed at young people having traditionally focused on reducing specific health risk behaviours, such as teenage pregnancies or substance misuse. However, he suggests that this approach has limitations and that more comprehensive approach is needed to address the complex health needs of the young people. Viner and ward (2019) also emphasize the need for targeted interventions that address specific risk behaviours and take into account the unique developmental context of adolescence. Glanz, Rimer and Viswanath (2020) suggests that individuals' perceptions of their vulnerability to a health risk behavior, as well as the benefits and barriers of taking actions, influence their likelihood of adopting health promoting behaviours. Santrock (2020) suggests that risk behaviours such as substance use, reckless driving and unprotected sex, are common among youths and can be seen as a normal part of adolescent development. According to Hurrelmann & Richeter (2019), risk behaviour is seen as a normal part of adolescent development, as young people experiment boundaries. They further argue that risk behaviour possess challenge for health education, as it requires addressing the complex interplay of factors influencing adolescent behaviour. It is also influenced by environmental factors such as peer relationships, family dynamics and socioeconomic conditions.

The girls are not left out, because they are more vulnerable to such exploitation due to societal and cultural factors. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2019), girls are more likely to be victims of drug-related exploitation and abuse. At present, the western societies such as America and Europe under went a radical change in their attitude towards sex. They also noted that girls are also disproportionately affected by human trafficking including for purposes of drug-related exploitation. As a result of this sexual revolution in the Western world, sex become glorified and commercialized. The glorification of sex in Europe and America is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has evolved over time. Such types of behaviours exhibition include nudity, homosexuality, pornographies, magazines and films novel and books on sex have been published and even legalized. Different authors frowned at the situation and this made them say, "The world is a crazy place, and we're all just trying to survive." Kurt Vonnegut in his book "Slaughter house-five" (1969), explores the absurdity and craziness of war and the world. Linking this Ernest Hemingway in his book "A moveable Feast" (1964), Hemingway writes about the chaos and craziness of the world. A popular musician Michael Jackson who also declared this trend in song, "Heal the world (1991), Jackson sings about the craziness of the world and the need for change." There are several authors who have express concerns about the rapid changes in traditional values, such as Patrick Buchanan: in his book "The Death of the west" (2002), Buchanan argues that traditional values are being destroyed by multiculturalism, diversity, and other liberal ideologies. Gertrude Himmelfarb (1995) also laments the decline of traditional values and the rise of moral relativism. Stressing on this, Allam Bloom laments that, "the traditional values of western civilization are rapidly eroded, and are the consequences are likely to be disastrous" While Robert Bork opined that, "We are witnessing the collapse of traditional values, and the result is a society that is increasingly fragmented, atomized, and nihilistic." These authors, among others, have expressed concerns about the rapid changes in traditional values and their potential consequences for society. Unfortunately, Nigeria is left of this trend the country faces similar challenges with the objectification and commodification of sex, as well as the exploitation of women and children. The United Nations Children's Fund (2019), noted the contributing factors to the trend in Nigeria, they found out that many Nigerians, especially women and children, are vulnerable to exploitation due to poverty and economic inequality. Likewise, cultural and social norms in Nigeria can perpetuate the objectification and exploitation of women and children. The National agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in persons (2020), also noted that Nigeria's laws and policies aimed at protecting women and children are often not effectively enforced leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. The widespread availability of Western media and culture in Nigeria can contribute to the objectification and commodification of sex. Efforts have been made by different authors to address this ugly trend of objectification and commodification of sex in Nigeria and reducing risky behaviours

and perception of parents on prevalence of premarital sex among the adolescents especially the girl child. Chimanda Ngozi Adichie in her novels addresses issues of gender inequality, objectification, and exploitation of women in Nigeria. Notable work includes, “Half of a yellow sun” (2006) and “Dear Ijeawele or a Feminist Manifesto” (2019). In her work she noted how women’s bodies are often objectified and reduced to mere object for male pleasure. She also stressed how societal expectations can also lead to the objectification of women, where they are expected to conform to certain beauty standards or behave in certain ways. The present study deems it fit to find out how the adolescents can be helped at this stage of life. Hence, this study focused on social factors as predictors of premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East State, Nigeria.

Premarital sex is common among young woman age 15-24 years. In Sierra Leone, for instance a study found that pooled prevalence of premarital sex among young women in this age was 62.9% while ages 15-19 ranges from 34.6% in 2008 to 41.4% in 2019 (Augustus, 2024). The older age group 20-24. The percentage who engage in premarital sex was significantly higher ranging from 84.1% in 2008 to 92.2% in 2019. This study suggests that premarital sex is more common among older adolescents and young adults in Sierra Leone. The proportion of young people who are sexually experienced by age 15 and 18 years old in Nigeria showed significant variations between male and female. Where 5.7% of male between 15 have had sex, the female population was 15.7%. At age 18, the statistics showed that 25.6% of males have had sex but the female proportion 49.3%, which is remarkably higher than their male counter parts (Guttmacher institute 2020).. According to Deyoung (2017), there are so many consequences in engaging in premarital sex which involve unintended pregnancies, that have a significant effect on physical, emotional and financial consequences. It can increase the risk of contracting STIs, such as Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV. It can inflict injuries or trauma, particularly if the child was forced or coercive. This affects the girl’s education, and increases the level circle of poverty since she may not be able to go back to school and she may end up being an unskilled person.

Premarital sex can as well create relationship problems, including conflict, mistrust, and feeling of guilt and shame. According to Reisman (2016), it can lead to a decrease in relationship satisfaction and an increase in relationship instability. Other consequences are stigmatization, isolation, poor self-concept, negative self-image, teenage motherhood, single parenting to mention but a few. It can increase level of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and trauma can significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in health risky behaviours (WHO 2019). There are other factors contributing to motivate the teenagers to indulge in health risk-behaviours. According to National Institute of Mental Health (2020), the strongest social reasons for adolescents’ involvement in premarital sex is peer pressure. Both adolescents and teenagers are influenced by peer pressure, often driven by the desire to be accepted among friends or social circles, which sometimes exposes them to bad practices like smoking, drinking and sexual intercourse. Several studies have been carried out by different authors. For instance, Adewuya (2017), investigated Family Structure and Adolescents outcomes in Ijebu-Igbo, Ogun State. The findings showed that adolescents from two parents had better academic performance, higher self esteem, and fewer behavioural problems compared to those children from single parents and blended families. Abung and Luby (2018), also conducted a study on the influence of family structure on adolescents’ sexuality. The findings showed that children from disrupted families lacked close monitoring and supervision that those from intact families. Santor (2026) investigated peer pressure on adolescent. The findings showed that adolescent with higher anxiety levels are more susceptible to peer pressure. The study also revealed that children from disrupted family enjoyed high level of sexual permissiveness than their counterpart from intact families. Despite the depth and scope of these studies, none of them worked on family structure as predictor of premarital sex among secondary school students in South East States, Nigeria. Hence, the gap the present study intends to fill.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate social factor as predictor of premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States, Nigeria. Specifically the study intends to:

Determine the extent family structure predicts premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States, Nigeria.

Research Questions

One research question was posed to guide the study.

To what extent does Family Structure predict premarital sex among secondary school adolescent in South East States, Nigeria?

Hypothesis – One Hypothesis formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant

There is no significant relationship between family structure and adolescent involvement in premarital sex in South East States, Nigeria.

METHODS

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted 78,740 senior secondary students II (SS II) in South East States, Nigeria. The sample of this study was 2,441 senior secondary II students selected using stratified random sampling techniques. Data was collected from Secondary Education Management Board. A researcher developed questionnaire titled “Social Factor Questionnaire (SFQ) and Premarital Sex Questionnaire (PSQ) was used for the study. The questionnaire has two sections: Section ‘A’ was used to elicit information on the bio-data of the respondents while section ‘B’ is on Social Factors as predictors of premarital sex among secondary school students in South East States, Nigeria. The scale consists of six items on family structure were used to elicit information about social factors and premarital sexual behaviours. The response format was structured in line with four-point Likert scale with numerical value assigned to them as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) 4 points, High Extent (HE) 3 points, Low Extent (LE) 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1 point respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from the Department of Psychological Foundations, Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. It was found that the entire instrument was suitable for measuring what it supposed to measure. The reliability index was 0.91 using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of research assistant. Data collected were analyzed using linear regression analysis to answer the research questions, while the hypothesis was tested using t-test associated with linear regression at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent does family structure predicts premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States, Nigeria? The analysis and result of the research question is summarized in the table;

Linear Regression Analysis of the extent family structure predicts premarital sex among secondary school adolescents.

Model	r	r Square	r square x 100	Adjusted r Square	Remarks
1	.895 ^a	.801	80.1	.801	High Extent
a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Structure					

Data presented on the table I shows the summary of simple linear regression analysis of the extent family structure predicts premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States, Nigeria. The result shows the r-value of .895. The table also shows the r-square of .801, this reveals the coefficient of determination to be 80.1%. This result indicates that 80.1% of premarital sex is predicted by the family structure. Conclusively, family structure predicts premarital sex to a high extent among secondary school adolescents.

Hypotheses One

There is no significant relationship between family structure and adolescents involvement in premarital sex among secondary school adolescents.

The result of the analysis is presented below .

Summary of t-test Statistic Associated with Regression Analysis of Family Structure and Adolescents involvement in premarital sex.

Model	No	df	β	t	Sig	Decision
Family Structure	2441		.895	43.143	0.00	Reject Ho
Adolescents' involvement in premarital Sex		2440				

The above table presents a summary of t-test statistics associated with regression analysis for hypothesis which states that family structure does not significantly predict adolescent involvement in premarital sex among secondary school adolescents. The result revealed the df to be 2,440 B.,895 and a t- value of 43.143 with a p-value of 0.00, resulting from the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Since the P-value was less than 0.05, this result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis established thus, family structure significantly predicts adolescent involvement in premarital sex among secondary school adolescents.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding from the research question I, which investigated the extent family structure predict premarital sex among secondary school adolescents in South East States of Nigeria, showed that family structure predicts premarital sex to a high extent among secondary school adolescents in South East States of Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis shows that family structure significantly predicts adolescent involvement in premarital sex in South-East States of Nigeria. This finding is an indication that family structure may lead adolescents astray or not. The finding agrees with that of Albung and Luby (2018) who also investigate the influence of family structure on adolescents' sexuality in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. The result of the study indicated that children from disrupted families lacked close monitoring and supervision than those from intact families. The study also revealed that children from disrupted families enjoyed high level of sexual permissiveness than their counterpart from intact families. Further, the study also agrees with that of Yara and Tunde –yara (2019), whose study was on the effects of disrupted homes on academic performance of adolescents in secondary schools in Ibadan. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between family type structure and academic achievement of students from disrupted homes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between family structure and premarital sex. Adolescent from unstable or non-intact families are more likely to engage in premarital sexual activities compared to those from stable, two parent households. This highlights the importance of family cohesion and stability in guiding adolescents' behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. Social welfare policies should prioritize the promotion and support of stable home environments,. This includes the family counseling units in schools and communities, conflict resolution interventions, and promoting the importance of parental involvement in adolescent lives.
2. Family Counselling services and school-based parenting seminars should be introduced. These should focus on helping parents developing open, supportive and non-judgmental communications with their children on matters related to sexuality and values
3. Schools should educate parents about adolescent development, communication, and how their attitudes, values and education level influence their children's sexual behaviour
4. Community based sensitization and value re-orientation programmes should be implemented. These should involve traditional leaders religious institution and youth groups to reinforce positive cultural values while addressing modern influences that may encourage early sexual activities.

Limitations of the Study

The study employed a correlational survey: hence surveys are non-experimental, and they cannot determine cause-and-effect relationship. The study did not seek the view of teachers and all the adolescent in the secondary school within the study area. The literature in the study was from Primary source, as it was impossible to have secondary source. Self-report bias might affect data accuracy due to sensitive nature of premarital sex topic.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Suggestions for further research on this are as follows:

To deepen understanding, further research study should employ mixed methods, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, to explore how family structure shapes adolescent's sexual behavior. Longitudinal design tracking changes over time, incorporating predictors like social media exposure, peer pressure on sexual decision making (SDM) School environment, religion and social economic status, would provide researcher insight beyond one-time self-report. Practically, schools and parents should strengthen sexuality education, improve parent child communication, and offer guidance programmes supporting healthy adolescent's development and decision making.

REFERENCES

1. Abung, F. F. & Luby, K. (2018). The belief about love. Istanbul: Hadaamr Publishing Company
2. Adewuya A. O. (2017). Family structure and adolescent outcomes in Nigeria. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38(14), 11-35.
3. Amato, P. R., & Anthony C. J. (2019). Estimating the effect of parental divorce and death on children's educational attainment. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(1), 141-158.
4. Amato, P. R. (2020). The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children: A Research Review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1)12- 25.
5. Augustus O. (2024). Trends and patterns of Premarital Sexual intercourse and its associated and its associated factors among never married young women aged 15-24 in Sierra Leone. *BMC Public Health*, 24 (1), 1 - 3
6. Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*, New Jersey; Prentice Hall.
7. Brown, M. (1966). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. Jason Aronson.
8. Cheebrough, M. (2017). *Family Sociology*. New York. *Journal of Family Studies*, 23(1), 12 – 25
9. Cheerline, A. J. (2020). Love, marriage and family. A researcher's perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 5 – 10.
10. Coontz, S. (2016). *The way we never were. American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*: Basic Books.
11. Crone, E. A. & Dahl, R. E. (2020). *The neuroscience, Adolescence* Cambridge: University Press
12. Deyound, K. (2017). Is it wrong to have sex before marriage? *Table Magazine* 41(6), 12 -15
13. Fuligni, A. J. (2019). The role of primary groups in shaping adolescent development. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(3), 269-294.
14. Giddens, A. (2018). *Sociology (8th eds.)*. New York. W.W. Norton and Company
15. Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K & Viswanath, K. (2020). *Health behaviour and health education: Theory, research and practice (5thed)*. Jossey – Bass.
16. Higgins, J.A, & McGrory, E. (2017). Sexual debut and adolescent well-being: A systematic review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 60(3), 259-267.
17. Hill, H.L & Florsheim, P. (2016). Early sexual initiation and mental health. A systematic review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 59 (3), 349-358.
18. Hurrelman, K. & Richter, M. (2019). Risk behaviour in adolescence: A challenge for health education, *A Journal of Adolescent*, 119(5), 419 – 433.
19. Kiragu, M. N & Zabin, D.D (2017) Regrow influence on marital stability. *Journal of Environmental Science*, 2(1), 110 - 118.
20. Iliyasu, Z. (2016). Sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in Nigeria. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*. 20(3), 9 – 18.

21. Lyons, H. (2019). Sex, relationships and the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(3) 257 – 284.
22. Marris, V. O. (2018). Sexual and reproductive health communication in Nigeria. A study of cultural and religious influence, *Journal of Health Communication* 23(6), 542 – 553.
23. Meeker, O. C. & Calves, G. (2017). Main girlfriends, marriage and money: The social context of HIV risk behaviour in Sub-Saharan African. *Health Transit Review* 7:315 -325.
24. Nutbeam, D. (2017). Health literacy as a public health goal: A challenge for contemporary health education and communication strategies into the 21st century. *Health Promotion International*, 32(3), 539 – 548.
25. Nwokoro N. V. (2016). Health risk behaviour among secondary school in Abakaliki Education Zone. Unpublished M.Ed Submitted to Ebonyi State University Abakaliki.
26. Opara, O.V (2018). Catch them young: Child development learning and behaviour, Inaugural lecture delivered to Abia State University on 22nd November, 2018.
27. Orji, E.O (2017). Factors influencing premarital sexual behaviour among Nigerian Youths. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 60(30) 342 -348.
28. Rector, D. (2020). Pregnancy Counselling in Clinical practice. *Journal of Medicine*2(16): 122 – 129.
29. Regnerus, M. (2017). *Cheap Sex. The transformation of man, marriage, and monogamy.* Oxford University Press.
30. Santrock, J.W (2018). Adolescence *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 33(1), 3 -12
31. Santor , D. (2026). Peer Pressure and Emotional Regulations. *Journal of Adolescent psychology*, 50(2), 123-135 doi:1037/adpoooo123.
32. Shonkoff, J.P & Phillips, D.A. (2017). *From Neurones to Neighbourhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.* National Academies Press.
33. Sweeney, M.M. (2017). Remarriage and reparenting in the United State: Contemporary trends and implications for family's well-being. *Journal of marriage and family*, 79(2), 271 -291
34. Tanner, J.L. & Amett, J. J. (2022). *Emerging Adulthood. A guide to the New Map of Life.*
35. Uecke, J.E (2019). Premarital Sex and Relationship Quality: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Sex Research*, 56(4) 433 – 444.
36. Ugama, S.A. (2019). The relationship between home environmental factors and premarital sex among Secondary School Students in Alimosho Local Government Area Lagos State. An unpublished project, Lagos State College of Education Lagos
37. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019). *Global report on trafficking in persons*
38. Viner, R.M & Ward, J.L (2019). Adolescent risk taking. A review of the Literature *Journal of Adolescent Health* 65(3), 335 – 344.
39. Walsh, F (2019). *Strengthening family resilience.* Guildford Press. Webster, S.C. (2018). *The incredible years parents, Teacher and Children Training Series.*
40. Widman, L. & Jaki, T. (2018). Parent-Adolescent Sexual Communication and Adolescent Sexual Behaviour. A systematic Review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*62(3), 249 – 257.