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**SOCIAL INSTIGATORS OF PREMARITAL SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UYO LOCAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

By

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**Abstract**

This study investigated social instigators of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted while the population of the study comprised 6,618 senior secondary Two (SS2) students in the fifteen (15) public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 378 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students was selected for the study using Taro Yamane sampling formulae. To get adequate sampled schools, random sampling method was used to select 9 public secondary schools out of 15. Thereafter, 42 students were selected from each of the sampled schools using hat and draw method of random sampling, which gives a total of 378 sampled respondents. The researcher's structured questionnaire titled "Social Instigators and Premarital Sexual Activities among Students Questionnaire (SIPSASQ)" was used for data collection. Data collected from the field was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics and the study finding revealed a very high positive and significant relationship between peer group influence, sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in the study area. Conclusion was drawn from the findings while the researcher recommended among other things that, school administrators and counsellors, parents as well as the teachers should wake up to their responsibilities of monitoring and advising students on the kind of associations they should keep, so as to reduce peer influences towards premarital sex.

**Keywords:** Socio-personal Instigators, Premarital Sex, Peer Group Influence, Sexting

**Introduction**

Premarital relationship is a common social problem affecting the general health and well-being of secondary school adolescents in Nigeria. This is because adolescence period is mostly considered very turbulent, as the psychological and physiological changes accompanying this period predispose young people to a number of risky behaviours. Socio-personal variables such as peer pressure and online sexting among others tend to predispose school adolescents to premarital sexual activities. These factors seem to be very influential in exposing students to risk of premarital sexual activities because according to Okeke and Deborah (2016), students' lifestyle at adolescence period is predominantly characterized by experimentation and risk taking. More often than

not, this earns them social stigma that could cause serious harm to their overall health.

Early sexual activities usually expose adolescents to risk of pregnancy and diseases. Fatusi and Blum (2014) reported that school adolescents who experiment early sexual behaviours are often predisposed to high level of teenage pregnancies, abortions, school dropouts and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and AIDs. Dorothy, (2012) added that students who engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour are often predisposed to high rising behaviour and problems like HIV and AIDs or STI, unwanted pregnancy, high rate of abortion, poor school performance, high school dropout rate, conduct disordering and other forms of psycho-social problems.



In the Nigerian society, young men and women have different interests' motivations and strategies for engaging in premarital sexual relationships. For women, premarital sexual relationship is usually done for the enhancement of their marriage prospects, proving their fertility to their future husbands, and for financial benefits. Men on the other hand, are more likely to engage in sexual relationships before marriage, for sexual experience and urge satisfaction. Having multiple partners is often a means for a male adolescent to gain social status and respect among his peers. Due to these differences, adolescent boys and girls have different patterns of sexual behaviours; hence, they are exposed to different reproductive health risks (Aderibigbe and Araoye, 2018).

There are various instigators of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students, of which peer group influence could be one of them. As students begin to socialize with their peers, they tend to shift from values they learnt from home socialization to reliance on their peers. Hammer and Bangers (2017) stated that a commonly cited reason for initiating sexual relations among adolescents is pressure from society and their peers. In their quest for a sense of belonging and to avoid rejection by the group, the adolescent succumb to this pressure. In addition, Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong (2016) in their study found that students whose friends are sexually active or perceive their friends to be sexually active are more likely to be sexually active themselves.

Also, the prevalence of students involving in online sexting (the act of using mobile phones or electronic devices to send and /or receive sexually explicit images or texts) seems to encourage premarital sexual practices among students. Sexting is action or practice of sending sexually explicit photographs or messages via mobile phone. With the advent and consistent utilization of social network platforms, internet chat rooms and online dating sites among youngsters have led to the widespread happening of romantic talks. Young ones may post on facebook about their sexual and romantic successes and failures. Doring (2014) stated that the use of electronic media for sharing and exchanging content of a sexual nature has become another form of introducing students into forming secret romantic liaisons with opposite sex. Adolescent who feel a stronger need to be popular may likely post photos of themselves, thinking that posting their own sexual photos represents a strategic means of gaining acceptance among their peers, without minding the adverse effects on the emotional stability of other peers. Therefore, one hopes that proper study on socio-personal instigators of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee will go a long way in solving some of the health related problems associated with premarital sex among students.

## Theoretical Review

### Self-efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)

Albert Bandura propounded the theory of self-efficacy in (1977). Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to successfully accomplish a task. It is considered a theory, as well as a construct of social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy theory postulates that people, generally, will only attempt things they believe they can

accomplish, and won't attempt things they believe they will fail in trying to accomplish. According to Bandura, efficacious people set challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. When such individuals are faced with impending failure, they increase and sustain their efforts in order to be successful.

Efficacious individuals experience obstacles in the tasks they engage in but Bandura claimed that they see these stressors as challenges to be mastered, rather than threats to be avoided. They approach threatening situations with the confidence that they have control over them. Having this outlook helps them reduce stress and lowers the risk of anxiety and depression. On the other hand, when people who doubt their ability to accomplish difficult task see these task as threats, they avoid them based on their own personal weaknesses and view these stressors as obstacles preventing them from being successful.

The relevance of this theory to this work is that it shows the relationship between self-efficacy and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students. It is observed from this theory that students who believe that they can successfully engage in safer sex without serious consequences would rather see no wrong in establishing romantic liaisons with opposite sex. The more students associate themselves to the model (those who practice unwelcome sexual relationship) or pictures with sexual contents, the greater they will imitate same behaviour being observed.

### Peer Group Influence and Premarital Sexual Activities among Students

A peer is someone of the same age or social class while peer group refers to groups of people especially young of the same age or social group. According to Akomolafe and Adesua (2016), members in a peer group usually consist of people who are equal in age, education, social class, interest and background. Every parent and even the teachers wish young ones to be of good report by displaying good moral conduct and serving as examples for others to imitate. Peer groups play a large role in the social, emotional and academic development of students. Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) maintain that peer group influence begins at an early age and increases through the teenage years; and that understanding the prospect and challenges of peer group is crucial for the development of the society. A number of students see some of their peers as role models. Teachers, parents and peers all provide adolescents with suggestions and feedback about what they should think and how they should behave in social situations. These models can be a source of motivation or a lack thereof.

Peer group influence is an act of encouraging group members to change their attitudes, values, or behaviour to conform to groups' norms. Peers exert a significant influence on the behaviour of young ones particularly during adolescence (Cho and Choi, 2016). Peer pressure is commonly associated with risk taking behaviour such as premarital sex, drug abuse among others vices, because these activities commonly occur in the company of peers. Observing others perform a particular behaviour or voice a certain opinion such as playing truant can introduce an individual to new behaviours and viewpoints that may be different from his or her

own. Observation also enlightens an individual on the consequences of such behaviour and opinions. Depending on these consequences, observation of a model can strengthen or weaken the likelihood that the observer will engage in such behaviour or adopt such beliefs in the future.

A strong correlation between peer group influence and premarital sexual relationship among students had been established by academic researchers and authors. One of such study was conducted by Hammer and Bangers (2017) and the authors found that the most common reason for initiating sexual relations among adolescents was pressure from their peers. Musa and Abdullahi (2013) who found a significant influence of peer pressure on students' premarital sexual behaviour. This finding is also in line with that of Alo, Lawrence, Benedict, Uche and Omaka (2016), which revealed a significant association between peer relationship and students sexual behaviour. In their quest for a sense of belonging and to avoid rejection by the group, the adolescents succumb to this pressure. Young people whose friends are sexually active or who perceive their friends to be sexually active are more likely to be sexually active themselves.

#### **Sexing and Premarital Sexual Activities among Students**

Sexing is the act of using mobile phones or electronic devices to send and/or receive sexually suggestive and or sexually explicit images or texts (Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones and Wolak, 2012). It is a relatively new phenomenon among young people. Sexing has been described as a harmless behaviour and a normal ways of communicating intimacy (Rice, Rhoades and Sanchez, 2012). This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that sexting has been observed to be common among young people who have desired of sustaining romantic relationship. Some adolescents also use sexting as a way of expressing their sexuality and serve an alternative to more explicit physical sexual acts. Adolescents who engage in sexting have reported that their peers always communicate sexual messages to them, regarding it as a normal behaviour

However, sexting has been shown to be associated with some factors, including health risk behaviours (some of which have devastating consequences) and environmental and personal factors. Some of the health risk behaviours include risky sexual behaviours, pornography and substance use, bullying, and even suicide (Lenhart, 2019). According to Lenhart, young people who engage in sexting are more likely to engage in risky physical sexual activities; and more likely to seek the fulfillment of the aroused desires shortly after exchanging sexual messages with their sexual partners. Young people who get involved in sexting have been reported to develop new risky sexual behaviours. Accordingly, Barrick, Mount and Judge (2018) noted that personality has been shown to be a strong predictor of behaviours; and personality traits that have been associated with sexting include extraversion, neuroticism, and low agreeableness. The negative consequences of sexting may be devastating among young people because of their inability to handle complex emotional issues which sometimes accompany sexting. Also, external stressors like academic and social demands are common at this stage of development.

Study have shown that constant online sexting have influence on students sexual behaviour. One of such study was conducted by Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor and Wolak (2012) who found that most school adolescents have been exposed to pornography by "sexting" - using mobile phones or electronic devices to send and/or receive sexually suggestive and or sexually explicit images or texts; and that such messages triggered sexual urge among students. Also, Doring (2014) also found that some students initiated sex shortly after exchanging sexual messages, so sexting can be primer for sexual activity.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Premarital sexual activities have become a common social problem which negates societal moral standards. It is very common in our communities to find two members of opposite sex who are not yet married living together as husband and wife. In Uyo Local Education Committee, sharing sexual relationship out of marital bond is highly disputed and unappreciated by most members of the society; yet it is common to find youths practice such unacceptable act. This condition could be attributed to socio-personal such as peer pressure, self-efficacy and online sexting among others.

It is also observed that some students use online sexting to seek the fulfillment of aroused desire for sex. These has exposed most of our students to sexual risk-taking behaviours such as sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, school dropout, poor school performance and many other social problems. Though the Federal Government through the Federal Health Management Board (FHMB) has been engaging in series of campaigns to create public awareness on the dangers of premarital sexual practices, the issue of premarital sex still persists. Therefore, the present study sought to determine social instigators of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate social instigators of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

- (1) The relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.
- (2) The relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are put together to guide the study:

- (1) What is the relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee?
- (2) What is the relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee?

### Research Hypotheses

The following research questions were raised and tested at .05 level of significance.

- (1) There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

### Research Method

#### Design of the Study

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. This design measures a relationship between two variables without a researcher controlling either of them. It aims to find out whether there is a positive, negative or zero correlation between variables. According to Udoh and Joseph (2005), this design is applicable whenever the researcher wishes to find out the magnitude and direction of relationship that exists between the dependent and independent variable. Therefore, this design enabled the researcher to measure the interrelationship between social instigators and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

#### Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all the 6,618 senior secondary Two (SS2) students in the fifteen (15) public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State (Secondary Education Board, Research and Statistic Division, 2026).

#### Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 378 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students which represents 5 percent of the study population was selected for the study using Taro Yamane sampling formulae. To get adequate sampled schools, random sampling method was used to select 9 public secondary schools out of 15. Thereafter, hence, 42 students were selected from each of the sampled schools using hat and draw method of random sampling, which gives a total of 378 sampled respondents.

#### Instrumentation

The researcher's structured questionnaire titled "Social Instigators and Premarital Sexual Activities among Students Questionnaire (SIPSASQ)" was used for data collection. The items were framed in line with the research questions and hypotheses. The instrument had two parts. Section (A) contained 15 items, that is, 5 items each on social instigators while section (B) contained 10 items measuring premarital sexual activities among students. The SIPSASQ was measured in a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA); = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The respondents were requested to give their own opinions or views to the instrument using the symbol (√).

#### Validation of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, three copies of the questionnaire instrument were given to lecturers for face validation. Two of the experts were from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) while the remaining one was from Social Studies and Citizenship Education, all in the University of Uyo to assess the suitability or otherwise of the items in the instrument. The inputs and corrections made by the evaluators and that of the researchers' supervisor were used to form the final copy for administration.

#### Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the reliability of the instrument, inter-item reliability technique was applied. Here, the instrument was administered 40 SS2 students in a selected school not included in the population sample. The instrument was administered and data were collated. Data was subjected to Cronbach Alpha statistics, which yielded the overall reliability co-efficient of .820. This index according to Udoh and Joseph (2005) is a high reliability index since the reliability co-efficient is above .50. Therefore, the instrument was deemed reliable for use in the study.

#### Method of Data Collection

The research instruments were personally administered on the respondents in their respective schools by the researcher with the assistance of two class teachers. Also, permission from the respective principals were sought to allow the respondents respond to the items in the instrument. In addition to items written on the questionnaire, the subjects were given verbal instructions and clarifications where necessary. Copies of the questionnaire were retrieved after completion without subjecting the respondents to time constraint. All the 378 copies of questionnaires administered were filled properly according to instructions and collected instantly.

#### Method of Data Analysis

Data generated were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions. The same statistical tool (PPMC) was used for testing of the null hypotheses by comparing the r-value with the critical r-value, so as to determine the significance of the relationship between variables all at .05 level of significance. The research questions were answered using the decision rule for answering questions in a correlational study, as presented by Uzoagulu's (2011) as follows:-

| Coefficient (r) | Relationship                                |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1.00            |                                             |
| ± .71 to ± .99  | - Very high positive relationship           |
| ± .50 to ± .70  | - High positive relationship                |
| ± .35 to ± .49  | - Average or moderate positive relationship |
| ± .33 to ± .34  | - Weak positive relationship                |
| ± .10 to ± .22  | - Very weak positive relationship           |

#### Results and Discussion of Findings

##### Research Questions 1



What is the relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee?

There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

### Hypothesis 1

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students**

| Variables                        | n   | $\sum x$<br>$\sum y$ | $\sum x^2$<br>$\sum y^2$ | $\sum xy$ | r-value | P-value | Decision |
|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|
| Peer Group Influence (x)         | 378 | 5416                 | 76984                    |           |         |         |          |
| Premarital Sexual Activities (y) | 378 | 5494                 | 74718                    | 752372    | .862    | 0.000   | Sig.     |

\* Significant;  $P < .05$ ;  $df = 376$

Result in Table 1 shows a correlation value of .862. From the decision rule, it is noticed that a very high positive relationship exists between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. The implication of this result is that students tend to engage in premarital sex if they usually observe or perceive their friends to be sexually active and vice versa. Also, it is observed that the calculated p-value of 0.000 is less when compared with .05 levels of significant at 376 degrees of freedom. Hence, the research hypothesis is therefore rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This means that there is a

significant relationship between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

### Research Question 2

What is the relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee?

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary**

| Variables                        | n   | $\sum x$<br>$\sum y$ | $\sum x^2$<br>$\sum y^2$ | $\sum xy$ | r-value | P-value | Decision |
|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|
| Sexting (x)                      | 378 | 5349                 | 76984                    |           |         |         |          |
| Premarital Sexual Activities (y) | 378 | 5494                 | 74718                    | 739234    | .794    | 0.000   | Sig.     |

\* Significant;  $P < .05$ ;  $df = 376$

Result in Table 2 reveals a correlation value of .794. From the decision rule, it is seen that a high positive relationship occur between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. This result implies that students urge for sex tend to be active if they usually send or received sexually explicit images or messages through mobile phones and other electronic devices and vice versa. Also, it is observed that calculated p-value of 0.000 is less when compared with .05 levels of significant at 376 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This means that there is a significant relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee.

### Discussion of Findings

The researcher made a combined discussion of results gotten from the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

Results from research question one and hypothesis one revealed that there is a very high positive and significant relationship

between peer group influence and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study conducted by Musa and Abdullahi (2013), which revealed a significant influence of peer pressure on students' premarital sexual behaviour. This finding is also in line with that of Alo, Lawrence, Benedict, Uche and Omaka (2016). The authors found a significant association between peer relationship and students sexual behaviour. Young people whose friends are sexually active or who perceive their friends to be sexually active are more likely to be sexually active themselves. Based on this finding, the researcher wishes to observe that peer pressure could make students appreciate sex before marriage.

Results from research question two and hypothesis two revealed that there is a very high positive and significant relationship between sexting and premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in Uyo Local Education Committee. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study conducted by Olatunde and Balogun (2017) that sending and receiving sexually suggestive or explicit images or texts (sexting) were significantly associated

with students' sexual intercourse. This finding is also in conformity with the finding of the study conducted by Doring (2014), who found that some students initiated sex shortly after exchanging sexual messages. From the above finding, the researcher wishes to observe that online sexting can increase students' sexual urge and tendency to involvement in sexual activity out of marital relationship.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Peer pressure has a strong association with students' premarital sexual activities. Students tend to get involved in sex before marriage if they perceive their friends to be sexually active. Online sexting tend to increase students' sexual urge and tendency toward involvement in sexual activity out of marital relationship. The overall conclusion of the study is that socio-personal factors have strong connection with students' premarital sexual activities.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators and counsellors, parents as well as the teachers should wake up to their responsibilities of monitoring and advising students on the kind of associations they should keep, so as to reduce peer influences towards premarital sex.
2. School counsellors should ensure that students are discouraged from sending and receiving sexually suggestive or explicit images or texts so as not to increase their urge for premarital sex. Thus, if these recommendations are implemented, it is believed that the issue of premarital sex in public schools will reduce.

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