

## CAUSES AND PROBLEMS OF PRE-MARITAL SEX AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN EDO STATE

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to find out the causes and problems of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area of Edo state. The research design that was adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all SS3 students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State in the 2019/2020 session and the total population was three hundred and twenty five (325). The sample size for this study was 100 SS111, representing 30.8% of total the population. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The research instrument that was used for this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of two sections (A and B). Section A, includes the bio-data of the respondents while section B, was a short item questions that elicited information on the causes and problems of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The instrument was validated by the three experts from the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, faculty of Education, University of Benin. Their clarifications, modifications, criticisms, corrections, suggestions and recommendations served as the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the research instrument was established through measuring the internal consistency of the items. The instrument was administered to a group of 20 students who were not part of the study. The data collected was analysed using the Cronbach Alpha and a coefficient value of 0.88 was obtained, by this value, the instrument was said to be reliable for this study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages as well as mean and standard deviation. The result of the study revealed amongst others, that poor academic performance, depression, loss of self-respect, unwanted pregnancy, rejection, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse are the problems of premarital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area of Edo state. It was therefore recommended that Advocacy and public enlightenment should be carried out routinely by health educators in public secondary schools with*

*regards to the dangers of premarital sex. It could be concluded that peer pressure, involvement in gang activities, smoking and drug abuse, viewing of pornographic films/video are the causes of premarital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area.*

## **Introduction**

Today, due to the advances in technology and its impact on the quality of life, addressing the health and its influencing factors has become important. Also, providing health for the society is considered as one of the main issues in any country. Sexual behaviors of adolescents and youth are categorized as one of the main health priorities of a society because of the high prevalence of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and unwanted pregnancies. (Eaton, Kann, Kinchen, Shanklin, Ross, & Hawkins, 2010). Based on different research studies, it is estimated that about 50% of the 35.3 million population of those who are infected with HIV have got infected before the age of 25 years. (Joint United Nations on HIV/AIDS, 2010).

Each day, some 500,000 young people, mostly young women, are infected with an STI (excluding HIV); among these infections, hepatitis B, genital herpes, and genital warts are not curable. Research studies show that the rate of STIs, such as genital warts, chlamydia, and gonorrhoea, among teens and young adults is greater (Rosenthal, Von Ranson, Cotton, Biro, Mills, & Succop, 2001). Besides that, unwanted pregnancies which are caused due to premature and unprotected sexual contacts in teenagers and youth would bring unsafe abortions and their heavy and long-term consequences which are either physical or mental. Sometimes, it would even bring death to such mothers (Moyse, Wiley- Blackwell; 2009). Over the past few decades, a significant number of adolescents and youth in most Western countries have experienced premarital sexual relations. The studies in Northern Europe and North America have shown that 50% of women have reported sexual contacts by age 17, and this percentage is increased to 70% by age 20 (Oats, & Abraham, 2010). National surveys have revealed that premarital sex is less in Asia in comparison to the developed countries. However, smaller in-depth studies focusing on youth have indicated that their sexual activity has clearly increased (Tangmunkongvorakul, Carmichael, Banwell, Utomo, & Sleight, 2011).

Youths are in a state of rapid physical and psychological change. They have curiosity and urge to experience new phenomena (Lewis, 2013). Nevertheless, youths are exposed to different circumstance like fears, worries and different desires, they feel shame to get advice and guidance from their

parents and elders (World Health Organisation, 2015). Over a life cycle approach, youths and their communities need to know about reproductive health so that, they can make informed decisions about their reproductive health and sexuality (Baryamutuma, & Baingana, 2011). Premarital sex, defined as voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons, is increasing worldwide (Shahid, Ah & Wahab, 2017). It is unsafe because, most youths have no enough awareness on how to prevent and how to get guidance services on reproductive anatomy, physiology, sexually transmitted infection (STI), and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Habtamu, Direslgne & Hailu, 2015). As a result, they are exposed to serious problems including premarital sex with its consequences and emotional scar (Beyene & Seid, 2014).

Though, schools are institutions where sufficient information and formal educations are provided to youths, premarital sexual practice among high school youths have been increased worldwide (Endazenaw & Abebe, 2015). Globally, 35.3 million people live with HIV/AIDS of which youths account 2.1 million. Among 2.3 million new HIV infections, youths (15–24 years) account more than half (Habtamu, Direslgne & Hailu, 2015). Illegal abortions, risk of HIV infections and school dropout are the bad consequences of pre-marital sex in sub-Saharan Africa (Gage, & Meekers, 2004). Up to 25% of 15–19 years, old youth's exercised sex before age 15. In Ethiopia, the prevalence of premarital sex is increasing (Bogale & Seme, 2014). A study conducted in Eastern part of Ethiopia and Lalibela Town reported that above one-fourth of the school youths were exposed to premarital sex (Bogale & Seme, 2014). Another study which is done in west Shoa Zone reported that about 60% of high school youths were exercised premarital sex (Endazenaw & Abebe, 2015). Different scholars identified inconsistent factors which were positively or negatively associated with premarital sexual practice. Some of these factors includes age of students, sex, residence, educational level, peer pressure, having pocket money, substance use, alcohol drink, watching pornography movie, living arrangement, discussion with parents about sexual issues, having peers who are experienced sex and fall in love and access religious and life skill education (Bogale & Seme, 2014). According to Debretabor Town Education Office (2017) district health office report sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and unwanted pregnancy are high in the study area among youths. However, prevalence of premarital sexual practice and its associated factors among high school youths (grade 9th to grade 12th) in the study area was not dealt yet. Thus, this study aimed to determine premarital sexual practices and associated factors among high school youths in Debretabor town, south Gondar, Ethiopia.

Today, due to the advances in technology and its impact on the quality of life, addressing the health and its influencing factors has become important. Also, providing health for the society is considered as one of the main issues in any country. Sexual behaviors of adolescents and youth are categorized as one of the main health priorities of a society because of the high prevalence of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and unwanted pregnancies (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Based on different research studies, it is estimated that about 50% of the 35.3 million population of those who are infected with HIV have got infected before the age of 25 years (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Each day, some 500,000 young people, mostly young women, are infected with an STI (excluding HIV); among these infections, hepatitis B, genital herpes, and genital warts are not curable (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Research studies show that the rate of STIs, such as genital warts, chlamydia, and gonorrhoea, among teens and young adults is greater (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Besides that, unwanted pregnancies which are caused due to premature and unprotected sexual contacts in teenagers and youth would bring unsafe abortions and their heavy and long-term consequences which are either physical or mental. Sometimes, it would even bring death to such mothers (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Over the past few decades, a significant number of adolescents and youth in most Western countries have experienced premarital sexual relations. The studies in Northern Europe and North America have shown that 50% of women have reported sexual contacts by age 17, and this percentage is increased to 70% by age 20 (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). National surveys have revealed that premarital sex is less in Asia in comparison to the developed countries. However, smaller in-depth studies focusing on youth have indicated that their sexual activity has clearly increased (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Although sexual behavior in teenagers and youth is mostly due to the effect of sexual hormones, the role of psychosocial factors such as media, friends and peer group, drugs and alcohol, and family cannot be denied (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Family is the important environment which influences a large number of social behaviors in children. One of the functions of family is socialization of children. In the socialization process, children learn values, beliefs, and the accepted behavioral criteria of their society (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Family is an organized system which affects children. The daily routines of families and their relations and contrasts are regarded as a resource which has an effect on

the growth of children. A healthy family creates a healthy structure and provides the opportunity for growth and development of children. In contrast, any problem in the family functions creates problem in the members' behavior (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). In different research studies, the family environment is regarded to have an important role which defines the involvement of teenagers and youth in sexual relations. Manning *et al.* in their research study investigated the role of family on the sexual socialization and its relation with teenagers' sexual behaviors (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014). Based on the work of Mazengia and Worku in a district in the northeast of Ethiopia, it was concluded that children's and parents' inappropriate relationships are regarded as an independent predictor for early sexual relations in youth (Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol & Ali, 2014).

Premarital sex is the involvement in sexual intercourse by persons who have not engaged in marital vow or culturally recognized as having been enrolled in marriage institution. Although marriage rites take different forms depending on cultural permissiveness, nevertheless the major thrust is the acceptance by the society. 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 a natural stimulus. However, premarital sex is morally unacceptable in almost every human society that regards marriage as the legitimate requirement for sexual permissiveness, and especially among youths who are considered vulnerable to health – related problems. Both Christianity and Islam (the major religions in Nigeria) vehemently oppose premarital sex and thus prescribed specific punishment for culprits. Sometimes, premarital sex is rebranded as fornication because of its implication. In Islam, the Holy Quran chapter 24 verse 2 prescribed that a man or woman caught in the act of fornication (sex before marriage, that is, premarital sex) should be flogged with a hundred stripes in the public and that no one should have compassion for the victim. In addition, Quran chapter 17 verse 32 says: “*Nor come nigh to it (premarital sex) for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil...*” These Quran verses point to the fact that Islam opposes premarital sex. In Christianity, the Holy Bible states that: “*... the marriage bed should be kept pure, for God will judge... all the sexually immoral*” (Heb.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 particularly premarital sex. Thus, it is also clear that Christian faithfuls are prohibited from engaging in sex before marriage (premarital sex).

The traditional practice which made premarital sex abominable paved way with the advent of civilization across the globe. In particular, the

emergence of the so-called “sex liberation” in the Western world in 1960s and 1970s significantly legitimized the acceptance of sexual behaviours, including premarital sex, outside marriage (Abraham & Kumar, 1999). The modern society thus appears to be more permissive in many ways because premarital sex has become an ‘ordinary’ activity that permeates the adolescent group in particular and the entire human existence. According to Arumala (2005), the prevalence of premarital sex among adolescents is evidenced in the magnitude of unwanted (teenage) pregnancies, abortions, high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and death resorting from sexual activities among youths age group 13 to 21 years old. Scott (2006) corroborates this when he stated that, throughout the world; most young people have had sex before they reach 19 years of age (the adolescence and pre-marriage age) without engaging in marital vow. He went further to identify some other ones who engage in so-called “sexually alternatives” such as fondling their sex organs (masturbation). Gelana (2009) stated that in Ethiopia, 60% of pregnancies which emanated from premarital sex are unwanted or unintended and thus endanger the life of the expectant youth who become mothers by accident. In a study of Kenya’s population, Ajiboye, Aina and Oyebanji (2014) reported that a lot of Kenyan youth engage in premarital sex and the behaviour is on the increase.

The proportion of young people who are sexually experienced by age 15 and 18 years old in Nigeria in 2008 showed significant variations between male and female. Where 5.7% male of age 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 females’ proportion was 49.3%, which is remarkably higher than their male counterparts (Adeyemi, 2013). The reasons for the variation could be numerous ranging from biological (maturation), social, cultural to psychological. Many factors account for premarital sex, youthful age itself is a stage of human life that is characterized by accelerated development in different parts of the body. In particular, the unprecedented growth and development of sex organs and the attendant heightened emotion as correlate are enough significant factors that may predispose youth to premarital sex. Different studies identified different factors that may dispose young persons to premarital sex. In Thailand and Philippines, family structure was associated with premarital sex; youths living with single parent have higher rate of premarital sexual activities than those living with both parents (Stewart, Sebastiani & Lopez, 2001). In Turkey, Mechet (2006) identified mother’s education, age, ethnicity and employment status as the most important predictors of attitudes of young women toward premarital sex. One may deduce from the two studies mentioned that home background is a

common factor that dispose youths to premarital sex. In support of this, Ajiboye, Aina and Oyebanji (2014) did observe that in Africa homes, parents are not fully equipped to answer questions on sexual matters adequately; even those who attempt to pass on faulty information to their children. Thus, insufficient sex education from home throws youths into confusion which often results to personal search and in the process become prey to adults who could take advantage and defile the innocent young females especially. Other factors associated with premarital sex include influence of media, peer pressure, insatiable lust for money, cultural influence, sexual harassment, curiosity, poor school discipline, location of school, religious teachings and literacy (Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Ajiboye, 2006; Adegoke, 2013).

There are numerous sexual behaviours that can make the youth susceptible to practicing premarital sex. A category of such behaviour is autoeroticism in which an adolescent attempts to gratify his/her sexual urge by carrying out the activities by self and on self. Among such acts are sexual fantasy (a mental exercise involving imagining, mapping, desiring and navigating, in abstract, into sexual pleasure), masturbation (the manual stimulation of one's own genital for sexual pleasure), and erotic dreams (an unconscious state especially during sleep when one experiences sensual feeling). Other sexual behaviours that could dispose adolescent to premarital sex include pornographic viewing, kissing and touching (frotteurism). There is no doubt the fact that premarital sex has dire effect on youths. Ajiboye, Aina and Oyebanji (2004) identified teenage pregnancy as a major consequence of premarital sex. No wonder, Gyepi-Garbrah (2005) inferred that premarital sex is one of the reproductive health problems witnessed among youth as a result of daily increase of teenage pregnancy with its attendant consequences. Hutterth and Hayes (1997) reported that young girls between ages 14 and 20 in Dakar sold sex with seven or eight clients per night and 40% did not know anything about condoms. This suggests double tragedies for the girls because they may incur unwanted pregnancy and get infected with STDs. These two dire consequences could become a springboard for other challenges such as school dropout, poor health conditions, and permanent deformity, which may resort from sexual activities. Other consequences are stigmatization, isolation, self-guilt, poor self-concept, negative self-image, teenage motherhood, single – parenting depression, poor academic performance, loss of self respect to mention a few.

## **Method**

The research design that was adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. According to Nworgu (2015) descriptive survey aim at

collecting data and describing it in a systematic manner that characterizes the features or facts about a given population. The population of the study comprised of all SS3 students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State in the 2019/2020 session and the total population was three hundred and twenty five (325). The sample size for this study was 100, representing 30.8% of total the population. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the students. This involves balloting without replacement. The research instrument that was used for this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of two sections (A and B). Section A, includes the bio-data of the respondents while section B, was a short item questions that elicited information on the causes and problems of pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Three experts from the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education. Their clarifications, modifications, criticisms, corrections, suggestions and recommendations served as the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the research instrument was established through measuring the internal consistency of the items. The instrument was administered to a group of 20 students who were not part of the study. The data collected was analysed using the Cronbach Alpha and a coefficient value of 0.88 was obtained, by this value, the instrument was said to be reliable for this study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents after the researcher have introduced himself to the respondents. After completion, the questionnaire were retrieved. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages as well as mean and standard deviation.

## Result

**Table 1:** Descriptive in Percentages, Mean and Standard Deviation of the causes of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	Items	NO (%)	Yes (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	Peer pressure	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>	.87	.34	<b>Yes</b>
2	Involvement in gang activities	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>	.83	.38	<b>Yes</b>
3	Smoking and drug use	<b>22</b>	<b>78</b>	.78	.42	<b>Yes</b>
4	Viewing of pornographic films/video	<b>01</b>	<b>99</b>	.99	.10	<b>Yes</b>
5	Living in low cost housing	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	.47	.50	<b>No</b>

Number of respondents (N) = 100

Table 1 shows the descriptive data with respect the causes of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area. From the table five Item were constructed to address the issue, responses to the items revealed that majority (> 50%) of the respondents but Item number 5 “Living in low cost housing” (47%) are of the view that “peer pressure”, “Involvement in gang activities”, “Smoking and drug use”, and “Viewing of pornographic films/video” are all causes of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area .

**Table 2:** Descriptive in Percentages, Mean and Standard Deviation of the problems of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	Items	No (%)	Yes (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	Poor academic performance	45	55	.55	.50	Yes
2	Depression	35	65	.65	.48	Yes
3	Loss of self respect	19	81	.81	.39	Yes
4	Unwanted pregnancy	13	87	.87	.34	Yes
5	Rejection	20	80	.80	.40	Yes
6	HIV/AIDS	18	82	.82	.39	Yes
7	Drug use	28	72	.72	.45	Yes

Number of respondents (N) = 100

Table 2 shows the descriptive data with respect the problems of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area. From the table seven Item were constructed to address the issue, responses to the items revealed that majority (> 50%) of the respondents are of the view that “Poor academic performance”, “Depression”, “Loss of self respect”, “Unwanted pregnancy” , “Rejection”, “HIV/AIDS” and “Drug Use” are all problems of pre-marital sex among Secondary School students in Egor Local Government Area .

**Discussion**

The result revealed that, peer pressure, involvement in gang activities, smoking and drug abuse, viewing of pornographic films/videos are the causes of premarital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area of Edo state. Meanwhile, data revealed that living in low cost housing is not a cause of premarital sex. The finding of this study agrees with Mah, Fariba, Merghati-Khoei, Maghol and Ali, (2014) they noted that sexual behavior in teenagers and youth is mostly due to the effect of sexual hormones, while psychosocial factors such as media, friends and peer group,

drugs and alcohol are the causes of premarital sex. The findings of this study corroborated with the views of Abraham and Kumar, (1999); Ajiboye, (2006); Adegoke, (2013) they asserted that other factors associated with premarital sex include influence of media, peer pressure, insatiable lust for money, cultural influence, sexual harassment, curiosity, poor school discipline, location of school, religious teachings and literacy. The findings of this study agrees with the findings of Bogale and Seme (2014) identified various negative or positive factors associated with premarital sexual practice. Some of these factors includes age of students, sex, residence, educational level, peer pressure, having pocket money, substance use, alcohol drink, watching pornography movie, living arrangement, discussion with parents about sexual issues, having peers who are experienced sex and fall in love and access religious and life skill education .

Data in Table 2 shows that, poor academic performance, depression, loss of self-respect, unwanted pregnancy, rejection, Hiv/AIDS and drug abuse are the problems of problems associated with premarital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area of Edo state. The findings of this study agrees with the findings of Gage and Meekers (2004) noted that illegal abortions, risk of HIV infections and school dropout are the bad consequences of pre-marital sex in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings of this study agrees with the views of Hutterth and Hayes (1997) they reported that young girls between ages 14 and 20 in Dakar sold sex with seven or eight clients per night and 40% did not know anything about condoms. This suggests double tragedies for the girls because they may incur unwanted pregnancy and get infected with STDs. The authorities further maintained that, the dire consequences of premarital sex could become a springboard for other challenges such as school dropout, poor health conditions, and permanent deformity, which may resort from sexual activities. Other consequences are stigmatization, isolation, self-guilt, poor self-concept, negative self-image, teenage motherhood, single-parenting, depression, poor academic performance, loss of self-respect to mention a few.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that, peer pressure, involvement in gang activities, smoking and drug abuse, viewing of pornographic films/video are the causes of premarital sex among secondary school students in Egor local government area.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Advocacy and public enlightenment should be carried out routinely by health educators in public secondary schools with regards to the dangers of premarital sex.
2. Sex education should be taught in secondary schools
3. Parents as a matter of responsibilities should monitor what their children watch, particularly in the social media, prints and electronic media, including their friends.
4. Schools should employ the services of guidance and counsellor, that will help to correct or direct students with one form of deviant behaviours and the other.

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