

Influence of Environment and Religion on the Attitude of Parents towards Premarital Sex

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex. A total of one hundred and twenty participants (parents) randomly drawn from churches and mosques in Enugu State were used for this study. A 21-item inventory developed and validated for use in Nigeria was used for data collection. The design used for this study was a cross-sectional survey design, while a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for statistical analysis of data collected. The result of the second hypothesis tested revealed that religion has significant effect on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex. Result of the first hypothesis showed that environment has no significant effect on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex. Also, there was no interaction effect of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex. It was concluded that religion without environment has significant influence on attitude of parents towards premarital sex. Based on the above development, both individual and governmental organizations should come up with a legislation that will make our environment free from any form of premarital sex, while those religions that preach against premarital sex should be encouraged to sustain the tempo in order to eradicate premarital sex in our society.

Keyword: Environment, Religion, Parents, and Pre-marital Sex

INTRODUCTION

Sex is the drive originating at puberty towards genital union between man and woman with the biological purpose of procreation, with emphasis on physical stimulations and gratification such as kissing, romancing, embracing, caressing,

and direct genital contact of fundamental biological significance for all creative sexual activity characterized with breathing, drinking, eating in the sense that it helps to perpetuate human and animal. From this biological point of view, no human or animal society can survive

without sex. Sex before marriage is conceptualized as pre-marital sex, and could be said to originate from adolescence during which children are involved in heterosexual relationship in response to hormonal changes that accompany puberty [1]. Adolescents engage in pre-marital sex to satisfy the urges from within and the curiosity that accompany it. Many factors have been found to facilitate pre-marital sex, they include courtship and dating. Courtship is one of the social activities of those adolescent that begin relationship many years before contemplating marriage. Involvement in courtship signifies that the adolescents is following a normal growth course, hence parents look up to the time their children will grow to it.

Some factors have been identified to facilitate pre-marital sex like dating, peer group influence, custom, etc. [2] felt that dating enables adolescent to temper his moods and perceptions of the opposite sex. According to [3], dating is a social engagement between two people of the opposite sex with no commitment beyond

the expectation that it will be pleasurable to both. For instance, it can be observed that most girls like to be seen with boys who are members of the University clubs as they believe that they are member of the higher class. Another factor that encourages pre-marital sex is peer group pressure, and this implies that most adolescents indulge in pre-marital sex because of the group influences. Many do it to avoid being treated as inferior boys/girls in the group. Others get involved in order to measure up with their peers, for instance, if a boy/girl is not participating in pre-marital sex, the friends will be calling him or her all sorts of name and on the part of the boy or girl to avoid it, and they will succumb to that pressure. Another factor which is curiosity is a key variable in enhancing pre-marital sex. The adolescents after watching pornographic film and picture, and hearing of the sweet experience of others are tempted to do it. Some children engage in pre-marital sex out of the youthful exuberance which makes them very inquisitive to engage in it [4].

Moreover, poverty/greed is a major reason why people engage in pre-marital sex. People engage in pre-marital sex in order to make ends meet. This means that it is done for the sole purpose of alleviating or solving their economic problems, and on the other hands, people do it to satisfy the idiosyncrasy and for personal aggrandizement towards acquiring material things.

However, it is crystal clear that premarital sex has adverse effect on the victim/society and it is very pertinent to highlight the pre-marital sex which includes unwanted pregnancy, infection or sexually transmitted diseases, economic/social deprivation, and infidelity. Unwanted pregnancy and infections/sexually transmitted diseases are the major problems of pre-marital sex. Unwanted pregnancy may lead to abortion which may also lead to perforation of the uterus and intestine that may cause excessive bleeding which may lead to shock or death. Infection on the other hand may be acute and later develop to septicemia, and then death. Infection may

cause impotency and infertility in both male and female, and death may occur due to the complication of unwanted sexually transmitted disease [4].

In addition, economic/social deprivation is another problem of pre-marital sex. In this case, if a young girl gets pregnant as a result of pre-marital sex, it will amount to economic sabotage in the sense that if the girl is a student, she will stop schooling for at least one year and if she is working, she will be unproductive, and will also be a burden to her parents. On the other hand, the girl will be deprived of her social activities due to her pregnancy, because the young man that impregnated the girl may not own up fatherhood. Following this development, therefore the child will be regarded as bastard and is deprived of some traditional rights that other children enjoy in the society. For example, the child may be deprived of the right of inheritance of properties like land, wife, kingship, etc. Finally, infidelity is another problem of pre-marital sex. There is a tendency of pre-marital sex leading to

extra-material affairs. In this case, the girl is so engrossed in it that she cannot abstain from men and vice-versa. This might cause divorce between the couple.

Having articulated these factors that lead to premarital sex and the consequences, it is pertinent to find out actually the role our environment and religion play in our attitude towards premarital sex. Attitude we know is one of the basic determinants of behaviour, and are influenced by a lot of factors which environment and religion are part of.

Operational definition of terms

- ❖ Environment: Environment in this study refers to urban and rural areas sampled.
- ❖ Religion: this refers to Christian and Muslim parents sampled.
- ❖ Pre-marital sex: This means having sexual relationship before marriage.

People have tried to explain why premarital sex, being a social problem, seems to be a puzzle. Many people have tried to explain why people engaged in it. Psychologists in particular believe that

there must be a cause for any action, hence they postulated many theories. Instinct theory of motivation is one way of explaining why organisms act in the genetically predetermined disposition to behave in a particular way when confronted with certain stimulations. Contemporary ethnologists suggest that instinctual behaviours follow an inborn act that is subject to modification in the face of environmental demands. The basic assumption of this theory holds that sex is instinctual and inherent in man and this implies that hormonal changes which begin at puberty are instincts which cause sexual disturbance, and the adolescent in response to this, engage in premarital sex to satisfy their sexual urge [5]. Incentive theory of motivation offers a very different view of motivation, rather than focusing on the internal state of the organism, incentive theorist examined the external stimuli in the environment that “pull” the organism in particular direction. These external stimuli are called incentives, and the principal assumption of this theory is that

organisms are aware of the consequences of their behaviour and they will approach positive incentives and avoid negative incentives. Incentives theory is concerned with the environmental influences that either reward or punish the behaviour of an organism [6]

Sex is powerful motivation of behaviour and it is necessary for survival of the species. When and how an organism engages in sexual behaviour depends upon an interaction of genes, hormones and experiences.

Environment and Premarital Sex

Empirically speaking, numerous factors have been found to be associated with premarital sex among adolescents, such as environment and religion.

Different environments have different views on premarital sex, depending on the marital systems. Evidence shows that human sexual relationship is strongly determined by environmental differences as a result of some sort of restrictions and permissions on sexual behaviour such as premarital sex, by some societies. [7] reported in her study that premarital

sex and adultery were allowed in Turu cultural environment of Tanzania. She further emphasized that promiscuity was said to be the order of the night as well as in the day. [2] reported that people in the Kassel province of Democratic Republic in Congo, boys and girls engage in sexual relationship very early, in fact, often before puberty. [8] examined the influence of environment on attitude of mothers towards premarital sex among children. Sixty (60) children in a metropolitan Canadian City on the coast were used for the study. Analysis of variance, one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data collected, and the result showed that environment had a positive influence on the attitude of parents towards premarital sex. Also, [9] examined the influence of educational level and environment on parental attitude to premarital sex. Result showed that environment had a significant influence on parental attitude to premarital sex among adolescents. Those in the urban areas were into premarital

practices more than their rural counterparts.

Religion and Premarital Sex

Religion has influence on premarital sex, although this fact is decreasing if evidence from a study by [10] is to be taken into consideration. In his study of sexual behaviour among Nigerian university students, it was revealed that religion, did not have a strong influence on premarital sex, although, it had a strong influence on the frequency of premarital sexual intercourse. Religion brought about a reduction in the rate of occurrence. All religion organizations in Nigeria preach against premarital sex, but it does not stop people from engaging in it. We have heard of cases of the clergy, church leaders, and official members indulging in sexual activities. Though religion is a barrier to premarital sex, its role in sexual behaviour cannot be under estimated. Time Magazine in 1989, once reported that Reverend Eldern Durban, after listening to strong reactions to the Presbyterian Church sermons that included the phrase “sex is for pleasure

as well as procreation” expressed a fundamental version of why religious belief system must include sexual behaviours in the scope. Roberts [11] investigated the impact of religious practices on attitude of adults towards premarital sex among children. A total of 100 representatives sample of the U.S adult population were used. Analysis of variance was used in analyzing the data. The result indicated a clear significant influence of religious practices on attitude of parents towards premarital sex. Also, [12] in his study on the effect of religion on the attitude of parents towards premarital sex, reported that religion showed a significant effect of religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex.

Western and non Western societies alike use religion as a source of positive and negative supernatural functions against certain types of sexual behaviour.

Critical observations have shown that in the olden days particularly in Nigeria, our environment did not favour premarital sex in any form. That was when people

had fear and respect for the customs and cultures of the land. Parents saw premarital sex as a forbidden practice and never supported or encouraged any attempt by their adolescent children to embark on such evil practice. Parents monitored the activities of their adolescent children closely and cared for them. , Young boy's and girl's virginity were broken by their wives and husbands. Young girls took cover at the sight of their "would be husbands". Boys also covered their faces at the sight of any lady that called them "husbands". Boys and girls took to their heels and also reported to their parents at the mention of any form of sexual relationship to them by the opposite sex.

Those adolescents that engaged themselves in premarital sex were punished by their guardian or parents. Some were chased out of the house, denied food thoroughly beaten; pepper poured into their private parts, their movements outside the house for some times restricted, etc. Those measures were applied by the parents or guardian

to control the premarital sex practices of their adolescent children, and such measures or control helped to bring sanity in our environment. In addition, religion also seemed to play a vital role in checking premarital sex among the adolescents. At that time, in some religious organizations, the adolescents were taught about the evil implications of one involving him or herself in premarital sex. The adolescents had fear of God as a result of such preaching, and avoided premarital sex for the fear of the wrath of God falling upon him or her. During that time, there was nothing like early or unwanted pregnancy among the adolescents, and the adolescents respected their religion and cultural practices of their people.

However, in the recent times, things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold. The adolescents are indiscriminately engaging in premarital sex. Various religions have shifted away from being moral preaching institutions to money making institutions, thereby neglecting their main primary duty of

modifying people's behaviour. As a result of the above development, early or unwanted pregnancy becomes the other of the day. No month has passed without several cases of unwanted pregnancy in our society today. Parents are all out of their homes in search of money and left their adolescent children at the mercy of the "wolves" that are looking for those they will devour. In recent times, pre-marital sex is too common; to an extent that hardly could somebody find an adolescent who is still a virgin in our society today.

Some studies have shown that in some countries of the world, environment and religion have been found as variables that have significantly influenced parents' attitude towards premarital sex, while in other countries, the variable factors were found to be non significant (on attitude of parents towards premarital sex).

Therefore, in view of the above development, the researcher was moved by it to find out whether such factors like environment and religion have significant

influence on attitude of parents towards premarital sex.

Based on this development, the aims of this study were:

1. To investigate the influence of environment on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex.
2. To investigate the influence of religion on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex.

Therefore, this study addressed the following questions;

1. Is there any significant influence of environment on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex?
2. Is there any significant influence of religion on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex?

Hypotheses:

- 1) Environment will significantly influence attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex.
- 2) Religion will significantly influence attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex.

METHODS

Participants

A total of one hundred and twenty (60 urban and 60 rural) participants were drawn from Enugu metropolis (urban) and Obollo-Afor (rural) in Enugu State using available random sampling technique. In the urban area, forty-five (45) Christian

and fifteen (15) Muslim parents were sampled, while in the rural area, forty (40) Christian and twenty (20) Muslim parents were sampled. Their ages ranged between 24 and 62 years and their educational qualifications were B.Ed as the highest and WAEC as the least.

Instrument

A 21-item inventory with a likert type format designed by [7] and validated for use in Nigeria by [10] was used to measure the individuals' attitude towards pre-marital sex. This format has five point scale with Strongly Agree (SA)-5 points, Agree (A)-4points, Undecided (Un)-3points, Disagree (D)-2points, and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 point. In the inventory, the participants were asked to fill section A which contains the demographic information of the participants, and section B where they were asked to tick in the column of the items that best reflected their attitude towards it.

Procedure

A total of 128 copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed to the participants who agreed to fill the questionnaire in their various churches and mosques, and were also asked to fill and return the questionnaire. This exercise lasted for a period of three weeks and two days with the help of two research assistants. Out of the 128 copies distributed, only 120 copies were correctly filled, returned and used for this study, while the other 8 copies wrongly filled were discarded.

Design/Statistics

The design for this study was a cross-sectional survey design, while a 2 x 2

(two-way) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data generated.

RESULTS

A summary table of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex

Source of variance	Sum of Square	Df	Variance Estimate	F	P<
Environment (Row)	72.07	1	72.07	0.62	.05
Religion (column)	6206.4	1	6206.4	53.50	.05
Interaction (Environment vs Religion)	114.08	1	114.08	0.98	.05
Within cell	6620.77	116	57.08		
Total	13013.32				

Result shows that there was no significant influence $F(1,116) = 0.62$, $p < .05$ of environment on attitude towards premarital sex. Following this development, the first hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant influence of environment on attitude towards pre-marital sex did not agree with this result, it is hereby rejected.

There was a significant influence $F(1,116) = 53.50$, $p < .05$ of religion on

attitude of parents towards premarital sex. As a result of this, the second hypothesis which stated that there will be significant influence of religion on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex was accepted. Finally, there was no interaction effect $F(1,116) = 0.98$, $p < .05$ of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that the first hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant influence of environment on attitude of parents towards premarital sex was rejected. This is because, the result of this study showed that environment has no significant influence on attitude of parents towards premarital sex. This means that the type of environment one finds him/herself does not determine the person's attitude towards premarital sex. [8] study on the influence of environment on attitude toward premarital sex disagreed with the result of this finding. This study found that environment showed a significant influence on attitude towards premarital sex. The difference observed here could be as a result of differences in cultural practices and personality characteristics of the participants used by the different researchers. Also, [9] result of their study on influence of educational level and environment on parental attitude to premarital sex did not agree with the

result of the current researcher. Their result showed that environment had a significant influence on parental attitude towards premarital sex. This could also be as a result of cultural variations between the participants used by the various researchers for the studies.

The second hypotheses tested which stated that there will be a significant influence of religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex was accepted. This is because religion was found to have significant influence on attitude of parents towards premarital sex. The result of [11] study on the impact of religious practices on attitude of adults towards premarital sex among children, agreed with the result of the current researcher. Also, the result of [12] study on the effect of religion on the attitude of parents towards premarital sex agreed with the current researcher's finding. The agreement in the results of the researchers here could be as a result of the general belief that religion does not

support any form of sexual relationship outside marriage.

Finally, the study also revealed that there was no interaction main effect of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex.

Implication of the finding

It is now obvious that religion without environment has significant influence on attitude of parents towards premarital sex among the adolescents. Based on this, therefore, both individual and governmental organizations should

organize their environment in such a way that premarital sexual relationships are discouraged, while the various religion organizations should be encouraged to sustain the tempo of preaching against premarital sexual relationships. These if applied, will stop or reduce the rate of unwanted pregnancies and deaths resulting from abortion among the adolescents in our society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The researcher wishes to recommend that future researchers on the same area should increase the number of participants and also, use another category of people for cross validation.
2. Government of all levels should come up with legislation restricting premarital sex among the youths.
3. All religions organizations should sit up in preaching against premarital sex.
4. Parents should be strictly watchful over their children's movement and dressing styles, so that they will not be victims of premarital sex.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of environment and religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex. Opinions of parents living in urban and rural areas,

as well as Christian and Muslim parents, were sampled using questionnaire. The result of the first hypothesis tested showed no significant effect of environment on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex, and as a result, the hypothesis which stated that there will be significant effect of environment on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex was rejected. The result of the second hypotheses tested indicated that religion had a significant effect on attitude of parents towards pre-marital sex.

Following this development, the hypothesis which stated that there will be significant effect of religion on attitude of parents towards premarital sex was accepted. Finally, it was also found that environment and religion combined did not affect attitude of parents towards premarital sex. Conclusively, based on the findings of this study, religion has been found to be one of the variable factors that has affect on attitude of parents toward premarital sex, while environment does not.

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