

PRE-MARITAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AS CORRELATE OF MARITAL COMMITMENT AND AFFECTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN BENUE SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

The study examined pre-marital sexual behaviour as a correlate of marital commitment and affection among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District. Two questions were framed and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational survey design was adopted using a sample population of 331 respondents out of a population of 2,304 married couples in Benue South Senatorial District. Disproportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to arrive at 331 respondents. A 40-item instrument developed by the researcher was validated by three experts. Cronbach's alpha reliability technique was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument with a coefficient index of .91. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was implored to analyze data for answering research questions while Regression analysis statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that premarital sexual behaviour relates to marital commitment and affection among married persons. The study recommended that: Intending couples should be mindful of their pre-marital sexual behaviour since it has been proven through research to enhance marital failure. By this, they (intending couples) could maintain and sustain their marital commitments. Sex workers, unmarried persons and other stakeholders should be informed through the media that pre-marital sexual behaviour significantly relates to marital affection among couples thereby resulting to distrust. Indulging in it will be a straight line to marital failure.

Key words: Pre-marital sexual behavior, marital commitment, affection and married persons

Introduction

Marriage is a sacred institution that must be well prepared for. Failure to plan before entering the union is planning to fail. Every wedlock is bound to either succeed or fail depending on the attitudes and inputs of the spouse involved especially at the pre-marital stage. Marriage failure is a common feature in the Nigerian society and worldwide. According to Bratterand King (2008) marriage failure refers to the common process whereby the relationship between married couple corrodes such that they cannot ordinarily restore their relationship. Thus, marriage failure can be referred to poor exhibition of commitment, affection, marital responsibilities and empathy by couple as well as the breach of domestic anticipation. These often lead to divorce or dissolution of marital relationship.

Sex is a most beautiful gift of the nature to humans. However, regarding premarital sex, every teen and engaged couples perhaps have common question of "Is it right to have premarital sex?" The idea of premarital sex is different from one another some think that it is right and is a natural process to have premarital sex and some others think that it is however, a crime (Cavendish, 2010). Premarital sexual behaviour or sex before marriage is the sexual activity practiced by people before they are married. The Bible considers premarital sex as fornication. Fornication is sexual intercourse between people who are not married to each other. Fornication comes from Latin *fornicari* that means vaulted, which become the nick name for brothel, because prostitutes operated in a vaulted underground cavern in Rome. Alternative terms for premarital are non-marital sex, youthful sex, adolescent sex and young-adult sex (Cavendish, 2010).

Premarital sexual relations refer to the various types of sexual behaviour that involve intentional stimulation of the sexual areas that occur before a marriage (Noroozi, Taleghani, Merghati-khoei, Tavakoli, & Gholami, 2014). According to Abdissa, Addisie, and Seifu (2017) premarital sexual relations refer to sexual intercourse engaged in by persons who are not married to each other. It is generally used in reference to individuals between adults who will presumably marry eventually, but who are engaging in sexual activity prior to marriage (Ramesh, 2008). Ajiboye, Aina, Oyebanji and Awoniyi (2014) asserted that premarital sex is the involvement in sexual intercourse by persons who have not taken marital vows or culturally recognized as having been enrolled in marriage institution. It can be referred to as a deviant act that portrays a departure from societal norms that attract social disapproval which is likely to elicit negative sanctions. The researcher observes that when students of different ages, nationalities, ethnic and religious backgrounds and status are brought together in higher institutions of learning, opportunities exist for sexual relationship to occur. However, pre-marital sex is a violation of sexual norms and values of a society. Premarital sexual behaviour, as it relates to commitment and affection is of concern to the researcher. In the light of this, the present study focuses on pre-marital sex as it relates to commitment and affection among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District.

Commitment refers to the desire of an individual to maintain or improve the quality of his or her relationship for the joint benefit of the participants. It is evidenced in a desire (associated behaviour) not only to continue in the relationship, but also to improve, sacrifice and invest in the said relationship, this is aimed towards linking personal goals by such couple to the relationship as well as seeking the welfare of partners (Surra & Hughes, 2007). Success in marriage may require a high degree of motivation, the desire to make the marriage work and willingness to expend time and effort. Waite and Gallagher (2000) observe that prior cohabitation before marriage may lessen marital commitment because the sexual relationship that existed between the cohabiting partners prior to marriage may make married persons lose trust, love and affection for each other.

Affection refers to that show of love and kindness often exhibited between married persons. According to Fernandez (2010), affection refers to the disposition or state of mind or body that is often associated with a feeling or type of love. Affection may be a critical element in marriage as it is an inevitable requirement before the commencement of the relationship and necessary for the sustenance of the union. It seems to be the heart of intimate human relationship and the foundation on which all other relationships are built. This however, could be affected by pre-marital sexual behaviour, which may lead to marital failure. It suffices to say that premarital sexual history may reduce affection and relate to

subsequent marital failure. On the other hand, experience of sex before marriage may also have a direct effect on subsequent marital satisfaction by altering people's perception of sex and becoming a cause for jealousy and fights between spouses (Kelly & Bazzini, 2011). This may eventually form part of stress among married persons and could lead to marriage failure.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the dynamics of culture and human relationships have led to many influences, manifestations, happenings and occurrences in marital failure within the African society. These could lead to the high rate of divorce (Borgatta & Edgor, 2000). The changing moralistic views of our society that are associated with sexual revolution are thought to have influenced the changes in pre-marital sexual behaviour. As a result of this, pre-marital sexual behaviour is on the increase and like a plague to marriages which is reflected in the increasing number of failed marriages. It is to this background that the current study examines pre-marital sexual behavior as a correlate of commitment and affection in Benue South Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

The alarming rate of marital failure in Nigeria, particularly in Benue South Senatorial District in recent years calls for serious concern. This is evident in the number of divorce cases heard in courts as well as the implications felt in the larger society through unplanned pregnancies, increase in cases of child abandonment as well as increase in cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) alike. This could be blamed on pre-marital sexual behaviour which often leads to divorce. Ebeunuwa-Okoh (2018) observed that the Magistrate, Area and Customary Courts have recorded more cases of divorce in recent time. It is speculated that the consequences of pre-marital sexual behaviour may be damaging on the emotional level, profound sense of guilt, shame and regret which seem to cause marital failure. In Benue South Senatorial District, the researcher observed that pre-marital sexual behaviour may be considered as an acceptable and harmless behaviour by a good number of people, especially among the non-married ones. The risk behind this issue as it relates to marital failure may be enormous (Adama, 2016).

More worrisome is the fact that marital failures often affect married persons and the society thereby leading to divorce. Concerns have also been expressed by stakeholders that pre-marital sex may increase the probability of acquiring Sexual Transmitted Infection (STIs) including Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is also worrisome that young men and women who have pre-marital sex may put their spouses at risk of acquiring transmitted infection even if spouses did not engage in pre-marital sex themselves. The researcher observed in the study area that, married persons often accuse each other of extra-marital affairs. Could these extra-marital affairs be as a result of pre-marital sexual behaviour? However, there may be high rate of marital failure in Benue South Senatorial District as a result of lack of commitment and affection among couple.

Available studies have focused on developmental implications of early marriage in Nigeria such as Igwe (2009) and that of (Omaje, 2013) on critical issues in marriage failure. There are relatively little or no studies on the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and marital failure in Benue South Senatorial District. This study attempts to fill this gap by building on existing studies to find out if pre-marital sexual behavior is a correlate of commitment and affection, hence, the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine perceived relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and marital failure in Benue South Senatorial District. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine perceived relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and commitment among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District.
2. Investigate perceived relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and affection among married persons.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District?
2. What is the relationship between pre-marital sexual behavior and affection among married persons?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and marital commitment among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District.
2. There is no significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviour and affection among married persons.

Research Method

The design adopted for the study was correlational survey. It is a design that seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables. The area of this study is Benue South Senatorial District of Benue State. It is located in Benue State axis and it comprised nine Local Government Areas, namely: Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Okpokwu and Otukpo. The population of the study comprised 2,304 married persons in Benue South Senatorial District. A well-structured 20-items questionnaire was used to elicit responses from respondents. The questionnaire was titled "Pre-marital Sex Behaviour Questionnaire (PSBQ). In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out. Thirty married persons were selected from Apa and Agatu. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 30 married persons. The reliability index for the instrument in respect of the two cluster contained in the questionnaire was found to be 0.76 and 0.83 respectively. The data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequencies. Mean scores, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) were used to answer the research questions. PPMC was used because it measures the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an interval scale. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Multiple regressions was used because it predicts a continuous dependent variable from a number of independent variables

Results

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The data analyzed and interpreted were presented according to the sequence of the research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couples in Benue South Senatorial District?

Table 1: Relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District

Variables	N	Mean	Std	(r)
Pre-Marital Sexual Behaviour	331	40.09	7.325	.610
Marital Commitment	331	12.77	2.633	

Table 1 above showed the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District. The data revealed that pre-marital sexual behaviours had a mean score of 40.09 and standard deviation of 7.325 while the marital commitment had mean score of 12.77 and standard deviation of 2.633. The correlation coefficient was .610, which implied that pre-marital sexual behaviours has a positive relationship with marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and affection among couple?

Table 2: Relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and affection among couple

Variables	N	Mean	Std	(r)
Pre-Marital Sexual Behaviour	331	40.09	7.325	.766
Affection	331	13.45	2.380	

Table 2 above showed the relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and affection among couple. The data revealed that pre-marital sexual behaviour had a mean score of 40.09 and standard deviation of 7.325 while the affection had mean score of 13.45 and standard deviation of 2.380. The correlation coefficient was .766, which implied that pre-marital sexual behaviours has a positive relationship with affection among married persons

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District.

Table 6: Regression analysis of relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District

Predictors	R	R ²	df	F	β	(t)	P
Constant	.610	.371	1, 329	195.442		11.612	.000

The result from Table 6 indicated significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District [R=.610, R²=.371, F (1, 329) =.195.442; p<.05]. The result showed that pre-marital sexual behaviours accounted for 37.1% of the total variance in marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District. Therefore, 62.9% could be accounted for by other variables not entered in the present study. The result also revealed that pre-marital sexual behaviours have significant relationship with marital commitment among couple in Benue South Senatorial District (β =.610, t=-13.980, p<.05).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital affection among couple.

Table 7: Regression analysis of relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital affection among couple

Predictors	R	R ²	df	F	β	(t)	P
Constant	.766	.587	1, 329	466.779		5.631	.000
Marital Affection					.766	21.605	.000

The result from Table 7 indicated significant relationship between pre-marital sexual behaviours and marital affection among couple [R=.766, R²=.587, F (1, 329) =.466.779; p<.05]. The result showed that pre-marital sexual behaviours accounted for 58.7% of the total variance in marital affection among couple. Therefore, 41.3% could be accounted for by other variables not entered in the present study. The result also revealed that pre-marital sexual behaviours have significant relationship with marital affection among couple in Benue South Senatorial District (β =.766, t=-21.605, p<.05).

Discussion of Finding

The findings of the study were discussed based on the purpose of the, research questions and hypotheses. The study found out that pre-marital sexual behaviours have significant relationship with marital commitment among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District and the moderately positive linear relationship was found to be significant. This is in line with the submission of Taiwo, Okon and Eze (2006) who posited that engaging in pre-marital sexual behaviour as none married couple always reduce marital commitment. This also corroborated the view of Waite and Gallagher (2000) who observed that prior cohabitation before marriage may lessen marital commitment because the sexual relationship that existed between the cohabiting partners prior to marriage may make couple lose trust, love and affection for each other. This buttressed the position of Kline et al (2004) who observed that premarital behaviours like kissing, caressing, use of pills, flirty behaviours, smoking, illicit dating, reckless social life of clubbing and sexual intercourse have been linked to more physical violence in marriage and lower dedication of husbands to their wives. This also supported the view of Brown (2004) who observed that premarital sexual

behaviours lead to lower level of marital quality and ultimately, higher rate of divorce as a result of lack of commitment.

Similarly, the study found out that pre-marital sexual behaviours have significant relationship with affection among married couple in Benue South Senatorial District and the strong positive linear relationship was found to be significant. This corroborated the view of Wunderer and Schneewind (2008) who argued that pre-marital sexual behaviours once engaged in has a relationship on marital affection among couple. The study also agreed with the position of Kelly and Bazzini (2011) who asserted that experience of sex before marriage may have a direct effect on subsequent marital satisfaction by altering a person's perception of sex and becoming a cause for jealousy and fights between spouses. This concurs with the view of Coleman (2001) who argued that premarital sexual behaviours reduce the level of affection among couple. The findings also corroborated to Jolin (2007) who inferred that possible breakup of marriages is mostly as a result of pre-marital sexual behaviours.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The study established the fact that there is a relationship between pre-marital sexual behavior, marital commitment, and affection among married persons in Benue South Senatorial District. This means that there is bound to be issues of marital commitment, and affection, among married persons who have indulged in pre-marital sexual behaviour within Benue South Senatorial District. The researcher recommends among others that: Intending married persons should be mindful of their pre-marital sexual behaviour since it has been proven through research to enhance marital failure. By this, they (intending married persons) could maintain and sustain their marital commitments. Sex workers, unmarried persons and other stakeholders should be informed through the media that pre-marital sexual behaviour significantly relates to marital affection among married persons thereby resulting to distrust. Indulging in it will be a straight line to marital failure.

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