

## Knowledge and Attitude Towards Premarital Sex among Senior Secondary School Students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State

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### ABSTRACT

Sex is a close physical act between two individuals which includes genital contact. It usually refers to the characteristics and traits of biological sex. In Nigeria, a number of studies have shown that sexual activity among youth is not only high but on the rise. It is based on this premise that the researcher investigates the knowledge and attitude towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu central, Lagos state. Descriptive research design of correlation type was adopted for the study. (240) public senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central Local Government Area of Lagos State were selected through a multistage sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics of independent sample t-test at significance level of 0.05. The findings of the study have shown that there is a high level of knowledge of premarital sex among the respondents and most of the respondents have negative attitude towards pre-marital sex. The results indicate that there is no significant gender disparity in attitude towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu. The study therefore recommended the need for comprehensive sex education programs tailored to address misconceptions and negative attitudes towards premarital sex among adolescents, thus promoting healthier decision-making and behaviours in this crucial demographic group.

Keywords: premarital sex; knowledge; attitude; senior secondary school students

### INTRODUCTION

Sex is a close physical act between two individuals, which includes genital contact. Sex usually refers to the characteristics and traits of biological sex. Sex refers especially to physical and biological traits, whereas gender refers especially to social or cultural traits. Sex may also refer to the physiological and psychological processes related to procreation and sexual pleasure. Sexuality encompasses all aspects of sexual behavior, including gender identity, orientation, attitudes, and activity (American Psychological Association, 2024). According to Crowel, Mosley, and Stevens-Watkins (2017), sexuality research, or sexology, encompasses terms such as sex, sexuality, and sexual health, often used interchangeably. The definitions of these terms have shifted over time, with little consensus among researchers. The World Health Organization (WHO) published the first international definition of sexual health the same year the aforementioned Major Contribution was published, making a national, if not global, statement about what sexual health was and was not (Edwards and Coleman, 2004). In addition to the right to accurate information about sex and sexual pleasure, three elements were at the WHO (1975) definition's core: (1) a capacity to enjoy sexual and reproductive behavior in accordance with a social and personal ethic; (2) freedom from fear, shame, guilt, false beliefs, and other psychological factors inhibiting sexual response and relationships, and (3) freedom from organic disorders, diseases, and deficiencies that interfere with sexual and reproductive functions.

WHO (2006) later advanced sexology definitions by delineating between sex, sexuality, and sexual health in sexuality research. Sex is distinguished from sexual behavior, as the birth assignment of a male or female based on genital

markers (WHO, 2006). Sexuality is characterized by its role as a central organizing construct for humans that reflects not only the attitudes, behaviors, and values aligned with one's sex, gender, and sexual identities but also by eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, reproduction, desire, and the like. Importantly, this definition of sexuality attends to who one is on a biopsychosocial level with respect to other intersecting social identities and contexts. This inclusive definition emphasizes one's right to make choices regarding their bodies and their abstention from or involvement in intimate relationships and sexual behaviors (Crowel et al., 2017). The vast majority of students worldwide practice premarital sexual activity. Because they are so young and less likely to use condoms, they are more likely to engage in unprotected or risky sexual behavior. Only a small percentage of premarital sexually active teens kept the relationship later on, whereas the majority had sex with love and even ended up with a prostitute. Youths who begin sexual activity at a young age are more likely to be exposed to the high risk of having several sexual partners. Premarital sex has been recognized as a severe problem across the world for many years. Premarital sexual activity occurs prior to formal marriage. Historically, various religions regard this as a moral issue, although it is acceptable in Western countries. Premarital sex is culturally forbidden in many settings, and strict laws prohibit it. However, global statistics indicate that 40% and 75% of adolescents between the ages of 15-19 and 20-24 have premarital sex, respectively, and it is very common in developed countries than LMICs (Tegegne, 2022). For instance, in the United States of America, 74% of women aged 15-44 have had premarital sex by the age of 20. Contrarily, in Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 54% of girls and 43% of boys had premarital sex before the age of 18 (Melesse, Cane, Mangombe, Ijadunola, Manu and Bamgboye, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescents are aged 10 to 19.

Premarital sex can be defined as sexual relations outside the institution of marriage or sexual activity practiced by people who are unmarried. Premarital sex is generally used with reference to individuals who are presumed not yet of marriageable age or between adults who will presumably marry eventually, but who are engaging in sexual activity prior to marriage. The rate of premarital sexual activities among adolescent students of secondary schools especially in developing nations like Nigeria is alarming and has continued to generate public attention. Many students have dropped out of school, while others have either become teenage parents or lost their lives owing to early and unintended pregnancy and complications arising from unsafe abortion. Findings show that poverty, peer group influence, pornography, and desire for pleasure were some of the causes of premarital sex among students; while unintended pregnancy, abortion, poor academic performance, school dropout, and early marriage were identified as some of its consequences (Okah et al., 2023).

The period of adolescence is marked by significant changes, for example, the secondary school student experiences puberty which brings about the development of secondary characteristics as well as emotional and intellectual changes. Young people's decisions about whether and when to engage in sexual activity and how to do so safely are influenced by many factors such as family values, religious beliefs and affiliations, parental monitoring, social and cultural background, self-image, media, peer influence, and education. However, these factors are still intervened and influenced by the kind of attitude that adolescents have toward premarital sex. For adolescents who make a decision to abstain or postpone sexual activity, the support of family, health professionals, and educators is important to counteract peer pressure and other societal influences that influence the adolescent to be negatively disposed towards engaging in premarital sex. Attitude within the context of the paper is measured by the perception and disposition of adolescents towards engaging or not engaging in premarital sex. Adolescents who perceive themselves as having such support usually exhibit healthier decision-making (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2010). Premarital sex especially among adolescents was and is still culturally frowned upon in Nigerian and African society because of its attendant consequences of unwanted pregnancies, abortion, teenage motherhood, sexually transmitted infections, wasteful living, and so on. However, the knowledge and attitudes towards premarital sex have been experiencing changes over the years, as there seems to be a high rate of acceptance of premarital sex.

The Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (2019) report shows that 7.9% of boys and 9.6% of girls aged 15–19 years had sexual intercourse with persons who were neither their husbands nor lived with them. The Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH, 2013) survey on the sexual behaviors of Nigerians revealed that almost half of the females (46.2%) and about a quarter of males (22.1%) between the ages of 15 and 19 years have engaged in sexual intercourse. In traditional Nigerian society, for instance, strict moral principles, culture, religious and social influences were regarded as restrictions to socially and culturally unacceptable sexual behaviors. These restrictions and consequences created a culture of silence and prevented open discussion of sexuality between adolescents and well-informed adults. However, the increasing exposure to the internet and social media, and the consequential adoption of foreign ways of life by young people, have paved the way for more tolerance for sexual lifestyles that were previously regarded as offensive or socially unacceptable. In Africa, most parents do not discuss sexual health issues at homes, so far it is still considered taboo in many communities. Therefore, adequate knowledge on premarital sex is needed to improve the health of the adolescent.

There are indications that the traditional attitude towards sex has not prepared the adolescent to deal with premarital sex is evident in our society. Many adolescents face pressures to use alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to initiate sexual relationships at earlier ages, putting themselves at high risks for intentional and unintentional injuries, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Enuku et al., 2020).

Being a student is a phase of preparation for adulthood in which various essential developmental experiences take place. In addition to physical and sexual maturation, these experiences include progress toward social and economic independence and identity development, the acquisition of skills needed to carry out adult relationships and duties, and the ability to reason abstractly. According to Leonard (2005), while youth is a time of immense growth and promise, it is also a time of significant danger during which social settings exert huge impacts. Many adolescents are pushed to start using alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and have sexual relationships at a younger age, putting them at risk for intentional and unintentional injuries, unintended pregnancies, and infection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Many people also struggle with a variety of adjustment and mental health issues. Behavior patterns formed throughout this period, such as drug use or non-use, and sexual risk-taking or protection, can have long-term good and bad implications for future health and well-being. As a result, adults have a distinct opportunity to influence young people during this process. These adolescent secondary school students, at this period of their life, are not yet knowledgeable about sex and its complications; as there is limited information to them from the school curriculum, school teachers, parents, or even church leaders-thus, the only available information on sex for them is from their peers who are not well informed. Though the Nigerian government has in the past introduced sex education policy in secondary schools across the country, socio-cultural and religious factors have continued to affect its effects in schools. To make matters worse, there is no functional sex education subject in secondary school curriculum where the causes and consequences of premarital sex could be taught to the students.

According to Duru, Ubajaka, Nnebue, Ofeadike and Okoro (2010), knowledge and attitude towards premarital sex refers to an individual's understanding and awareness of the facts, risks, and consequences associated with engaging in sexual activity before marriage. Attitude towards premarital sex, on the other hand, refers to an individual's beliefs, values, and opinions about the morality, acceptability, and desirability of premarital sexual activity. Attitudes are defined as positive or negative evaluations of objects of thought. Attitudes typically have three components. The cognitive component is made up of the thoughts and beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude. The affective component consists of the emotional feelings stimulated by the object of the attitude. The behavioral component consists of predispositions to act in certain ways toward an attitude object. Several psychological factors are involved in the formation of attitude and attitudinal change. Among them are direct instruction, operant conditioning and social (observational) learning. Direct instruction involves being told what attitudes to have by parents, schools, community organizations, religious doctrine and friends. Operant Conditioning is a simple form of learning. It is based on the "Law of Effect" and involves voluntary responses.

Behaviors (including verbal behaviors and maybe even thoughts) tend to be repeated if they are reinforced (that is, followed by a positive experience). Conversely, behaviors tend to be stopped when they are punished (that is, followed by an unpleasant experience). Thus, if one expresses or acts out an attitude toward some group, and this is reinforced by one's peers, the attitude is strengthened and is likely to be expressed again. The reinforcement can be as subtle as a smile or as obvious as a raise in salary. Operant conditioning is especially involved with the behavioral component of attitudes. Social (observational) learning is based on modeling. We observe others if they are getting reinforced for certain behaviors or the expression of certain attitudes; this serves as vicarious reinforcement and makes it more likely that we, too, will behave in this manner or express this attitude. Classical conditioning can also occur vicariously through observation of other (Tsotovor and Dadey, 2021). Sulak, Herbelin, Fix and Kuehl (2006) examined changes in knowledge and attitudes before and after a sex education programme that was rolled out by an academic medical center. Surveys were completed by 26,125 students before and 24,550 students after a sex education curriculum. Knowledge improved for all grades, based on paired comparisons for each group. However, most students chose the option to wait until after high school graduation to have sex, significantly more students held this opinion after the programme. Variables that were associated with the attitude of delaying sex included making a pledge, original parents still married, attending weekly religious/church services, and watching 0 to 2 hours of television on school nights (TSOTOVOR & DADEY, 2021).

There is a dearth of literature on knowledge and attitude towards premarital sex among adolescent students in Lagos State. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the knowledge and attitude towards premarital sex and specifically to identify factors that influence attitude of premarital sex among adolescent students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ikorodu central, Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings of this study would no doubt provide the necessary information for planning useful intervention programme which would sharpen the knowledge, attitude and practice of premarital sex among adolescent students in Nigeria. Current statistics show that almost one in every fifth person in the world is a teenager. They engage 18% of the world's population with 88% living in developing countries. The term

adolescent comes from the Latin word meaning to grow to maturity. According to the WHO, 10 to 19 years of age are called adolescents. It is the period in which the maximum amount of physical, psychological, emotional and behavioral changes occurs. Physical health and behavioral problems of adolescence are interrelated and these factors are related to the development of an unhealthy social environment in the adolescent. So, adolescents need to provide preventive interventions for behaviors such as poverty, unemployment, delinquency, sexual harassment, etc. (Sankapal & Mahavidyalaya, 2022).

In our society today, people believe or reject the teaching that premarital sex is immoral. Premarital sex is a serious problem in society today; the numbers are staggering in the city of Lagos, ranging from ninety-three percent of men, and eighty percent of women (between ages eighteen and fifty-four) have lost their virginity. Most teenagers do not wait until they get married before having sex, whereas, the growth and advancement of the nation depend totally on them. It is hard to believe that teenagers are still engaging in premarital sex, despite their awareness of the fighting statistics. For example, in a study of reproduction and tract infection among adolescents 80% of women aged 15-19 interviewed are sexually active 29% have had an abortion and 40% have a reproductive infection after physical examination, according to the Demographics Health Survey 2012. Teens need to open their eyes to see the harmful effects of premarital sex, although many believe in the use of contraceptives such as condoms and pills. Many teenagers are falling victim to some premarital crises such as contraction of HIV/AIDs and other STIs which are incurable, untimely death, unwanted pregnancy and drug abuse, early marriage, single parenting, teenage pregnancy, school drop-out, poor or lack of parental teaching on sex education, hampered educational plans, emotional problems such as depression and regrets, destruction of reproductive organs and causing infertility in the future due to abortion, home/environmental factors (Unhealthy family living conditions), poverty, drug addiction.

Despite all the crises resulting from premarital sex, the campaign against it has not gained full social support to date in Africa. It is therefore based on this that the researcher seeks to investigate the knowledge and attitude towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central Local Government Area of Lagos State.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study will adopt a descriptive research design to obtain the study. This method will be adopted because it draws inferences and collects data from a large population. This research design is suitable for this study because the survey method emphasizes fact-finding, and this study is out to find facts and notions of the respondents.

#### Population of the study

The population for this study consists of senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State.

### Ethical Consideration

Participants were informed of their choice to opt in or out of the process of answering the questionnaire. The purpose of the study was clearly stated on the questionnaire and was explained to the participants. Anonymity was ensured, as questions regarding their personal identity were not asked. The confidentiality of the participants was ensured as the demographic questions asked were about their age, gender, religion, and department. Before administering the questionnaire to the participants, the consent of the class teacher and the students{participant} was required. No physical, social, psychological, or other harm was caused before, during, or after administering the questionnaire to the participants. Results are plagiarism-free as the data collected was properly analyzed and interpreted, and every research paper included was duly cited and referenced.

### Sample and sampling technique

#### Sample size

The sample for this study is two hundred and forty (240) respondents.

#### Sampling method

The multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study.

Stage one: Ikorodu central, Lagos state was selected for the study location using purposive sampling technique.

Stage two: The respondents for the study will be selected using purposive sampling technique from the two (2) public senior secondary schools in Ikorodu central, Lagos state.

Stage three: Total sampling technique was used to enumerate all the six (6) senior secondary school 3 classes in the two public senior secondary schools in Ikorodu central, Lagos state.



Stage four: A convenient sampling technique will be used to select forty (40) students from each classroom in the two public senior secondary schools 3 in Ikorodu central, Lagos state. A total of two hundred and forty (240) respondents will be sampled.

### **Description of Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Only studies involving sexuality, sex, premarital sex, knowledge, and attitude toward premarital sex among adolescents were involved. The participants involved were only students in senior secondary school year 3, ages 13 to 24. Both male and female gender were involved. The research was a survey study to measure the level of knowledge and attitude of the participants toward premarital sex. The location was public senior secondary schools in Ikorodu Central, Lagos state, Nigeria. The type of outcome to be measured was to determine the level of knowledge and attitude of the participants toward premarital sex.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

Studies involving premarital sex among unmarried young adults were excluded for qualitative and authentic data collection and results as the study only focused on premarital sex among adolescents in senior secondary school year 3.

### **Research instrument /Design**

A self-developed structured questionnaire will be used for data collection. The questionnaire will be split into four (4) sections.

Section A will focus on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, department, class, and religion.

Section B: Information on the respondent's level of knowledge of premarital sex in senior secondary schools in Ikorodu central, Lagos state.

Section C: information on the respondents' level of attitude towards premarital sex in senior secondary schools in Ikorodu central, Lagos state.

Section D: information on the factors that predispose senior secondary school students to premarital sex in Ikorodu central, Lagos state.

### **Validity and reliability of the research instrument**

The validity of an instrument is defined as the soundness or the appropriateness of the test instrument in measuring what it is designed to measure. To ensure this instrument measured what it was designed to measure, copies of the draft questionnaire was given to the researcher's supervisor, lecturers in the department of Health Education in the University of Ibadan who ensured a critical with analytical mind and openness, examine them for necessary corrections. All comments, suggestions and modifications will be studied carefully and used to improve quality of the instrument in the relation to the researcher's set questions and hypotheses.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of an instrument in measuring what it is designed to measure. Also, reliability according to Gideon (2013) refers to the degree of consistency in measurement and to the lack of error. Furthermore, Kerlinger and Lee (2000) defined reliability as the accuracy of an instrument in relation to stability and precision over repeated use.

### **Type of Secondary Data Sources Used**

The type of secondary data used were external sources, including published journals and articles.

### **Procedures & Guidelines for Data Collection**

The researcher will obtain an introduction letter from the department and will be submitted to the selected senior secondary school students for administration. After the permission has been granted, the researcher will administer the questionnaires among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu central, Lagos state. Justification and clarification will be made to the participants before and during the administration. Also, respondents will be made to understand the essentiality of participating in the study and indispensability of the research, and procedure of administration. Copies of the questionnaire will be distributed among the participants and instructions will be given as to how the questionnaire should be filled. After the respondents have properly and meticulously filled the copies of the questionnaire, the questionnaire will be retrieved from the respondents and it will be given directly to an analysis expert.

### Procedure & Guidelines for Data Analysis

The completed questionnaire will be collected, coded and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage and standard deviation will be used to analyze the socio-demographic variable and research questions while inferential statistics of independent sample t-test will be used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13-15	73	30.4
16-19	157	65.4
20 and above	10	4.2
Total	240	100

Table 1., shows the age distribution among the respondents, which revealed that the majority, comprising 65.4% (157) of the total, fall within the 16-19 age range, indicating a predominant representation of adolescents and young adults within secondary school age brackets, while those aged 13-15 years constitute 30.4% (73) of the sample. Remarkably, individuals aged 20 and above represent only a small fraction, accounting for merely 4.2%(10) of the total respondents.

Table 2. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	165	68.8
Male	75	31.3
Total	240	100

The analysis of the gender distribution among respondents indicates a notable gender disparity, with female respondents comprising the majority at 165 (68.8%). Male respondents constitute a smaller proportion at 75 (31.3%) out of a total sample size of 240 respondents.

Table 3. Department of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Arts	93	38.8
Commercial	81	33.8
Science	66	27.5
Total	240	100

The table above represents the respondents' departmental distribution. It reveals varying frequencies across different academic disciplines, with the arts department comprising the largest proportion at 93 (38.8%), followed closely by the commercial department with 81 (33.8%), while the science department accounts for a smaller yet notable portion at 66 (27.5%) out of a total sample size of 240 respondents.

## Analysis of Research Questions

**Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu central, Lagos state regarding the concept and consequences of premarital sex?**

Table 4. Knowledge Towards Pre-Marital Sex

Question	No	Yes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Having sexual intercourse before marriage is good for the health	235 97.90%	5 2.10%	1.0208	0.14312
I am aware of what contraceptives are	123 51.20%	117 48.80%	1.4875	0.50089
Sex education should be taught in school	0 0.00%	240 100.00%	2	0
A single sexual intercourse can lead to pregnancy	0 0.00%	240 100.00%	2	0
I have knowledge about premarital sex	4 1.70%	236 98.30%	1.9833	0.12829
I have knowledge about safe sex	4 1.70%	236 98.30%	1.9833	0.12829
I know where safe abortion services are carried out	189 78.80%	51 21.30%	1.2125	0.40993
I know of the consequences of abortion	1 0.40%	239 99.60%	1.9958	0.06455
I know of the consequences of premarital sex	4 1.70%	236 98.30%	1.9833	0.12829
I know that a female can become pregnant after one sexual intercourse	4 1.70%	236 98.30%	1.9833	0.12829

Average mean=1.76498 Benchmark mean=1.5

Key: 1=NO, 2=YES Decision value, Low level of knowledge = 0-1.5, High level of knowledge=1.5 – 3.00.

The table shows the level of knowledge among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State, regarding the concept and consequences of premarital sex utilizing the provided benchmark mean and decision rule, the average mean knowledge score, computed at 1.76498, significantly surpasses the benchmark mean of 1.5, thereby indicating a high level of knowledge among the respondents. This suggests that the students, on average, exhibit a satisfactory comprehension of premarital sex-related concepts, including the potential consequences and the significance of safe sex practices, highlighting a generally robust knowledge base in this critical area of sexual health education, which is essential for informed decision-making and responsible behavior.

**Research Question Two: What are the prevailing attitudes towards premarital sex of senior secondary school students in Ikorodu central, Lagos state?**

Table 5. Attitude towards pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central

Question	Strongly disagree	disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have fears about sexual intercourse	10 4.20%	2 0.80%	5 2.10%	223 92.90%	3.8375	0.63596
I am okay with having a sex partner	66 27.50%	161 67.10%	0 0.00%	13 5.40%	1.8333	0.68252
I have been pressured by friends to have sex before	91 37.90%	130 54.20%	15 6.30%	4 1.70%	1.7167	0.65563
I have been forced to have sex before	110 45.80%	122 50.80%	8 3.30%	0 0.00%	1.575	0.55888

Question	Strongly disagree	disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can have sex before marriage because it has health benefits	112 46.70%	128 53.30%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.5333	0.49993
There is nothing bad in having multiple sex partners	101 42.10%	134 55.80%	2 0.80%	3 1.30%	1.6125	0.57479
Birth control is the responsibility of females alone	77 32.10%	100 41.70%	3 1.30%	60 25.00%	2.1917	1.14106
It is easier for a girl to satisfy her sexual urge than for a boy	107 44.60%	126 52.50%	7 2.90%	0 0.00%	1.5833	0.55014
It is more important for a boy to satisfy his sexual needs than a girl	99 41.30%	132 55.00%	6 2.50%	3 1.30%	1.6375	0.59798
Having sex at school can be done because my friends do it	132 55.00%	108 45.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.45	0.49853
Average mean=1.89708 Benchmark mean=2.5						

Key: 1=Strongly disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Agree (A), 4=Strongly agree (SA), Decision value Negative attitude = 0 -2.5, Positive attitude=2.5-4.00.

Table 1.5 examined the attitudes of senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos towards pre-marital sex, each item from the table is analyzed based on the scale given using the percentage and frequency, 10(4.2%) strongly disagree that they have fears about sexual intercourse, 2(0.8%) of the respondents disagrees, 5(2.1%) of the respondents agree while 223(92.9%) of respondents strongly agree that they have fears about sexual intercourse. 66(27.5%) of respondents strongly disagree that they are okay with having a sexual partner, 161(67.1%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 13(5.4%) of respondents strongly disagree that they are okay with having a sexual partner. 91(37.9%) of respondents strongly disagree that they have been pressured by friends to have sex before, 130(54.2%) of the respondents disagree, 15(6.3%) of the respondents agree while 4(1.7%) of respondents strongly disagree that they have been pressured by friends to have sex before.

110 (45.8%) of respondents strongly disagree that they have been forced to have sex before, 122(50.8%) of the respondents disagree, 8(3.3%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that they have been forced to have sex before. 112(46.7%) of respondents strongly disagree that they can have sex before marriage because it has health benefits, 128(53.3%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that they can have sex before marriage because it has health benefits.

101 (42.1%) of respondents strongly disagree that there is nothing bad in having multiple sex partners, 134(55.8%) of the respondents disagree, 2(0.8%) of the respondents agree while 3(1.3%) of respondents strongly disagree that there is nothing bad in having multiple sex partners. 77(32.1%) of respondents strongly disagree that birth control is the responsibility of females alone, 100(41.7%) of the respondents disagrees, 3(1.3%) of the respondents agree while 60(25.0%) of respondents strongly disagree that birth control is the responsibility of females alone. 107(44.6%) of respondents strongly disagree that it is easier for a girl to satisfy her sexual urge than for a boy, 126(52.5%) of the respondents disagree, 7(2.9%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that that it is easier for a girl to satisfy her sexual urge than for a boy. 99(41.3%) of respondents strongly disagree that it is more important for a boy to satisfy his sexual needs than a girl, 132(55.0%) of the respondents disagree, 6(2.5%) of the respondents agree while 3(1.3%) of respondents strongly disagree that that it is more important for a boy to satisfy his sexual needs than a girl. 132(55.5%) of respondents strongly disagree that having sex at school can be done because my friends do it, 108(45.0%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that having sex at school can be done because my friends do it. Based on the mean score of 1.9 which is below the benchmark mean of 2.5, it shows that most of the respondents have negative attitude towards pre-marital sex of secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State.



### Research Question Three: What are the factors to predispose senior secondary school students to premarital sex in Ikorodu central, Lagos state?

Table 6. Factors to Predispose Senior Secondary School Students to Premarital

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Virginity should be kept till marriage	4 1.70%	4 1.70%	12 5.00%	220 91.70%	3.8667	0.49993
Premarital sex is okay if it is with one partner	107 44.60%	133 55.40%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.5542	0.4981
Premarital sex is acceptable if there is agreement between the two people involved	133 55.40%	107 44.60%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.4458	0.4981
Premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other	139 57.90%	101 42.10%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.4208	0.49472
Premarital sex is a way for partners to show affection towards one another	138 57.50%	102 42.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.425	0.49538
Premarital sex helps relationship to work better	154 64.20%	83 34.60%	3 1.30%	0 0.00%	1.3708	0.50931
Premarital sex is acceptable if marriage has been planned in the near future	144 60.00%	89 37.10%	7 2.90%	0 0.00%	1.4292	0.55189
Premarital sex is acceptable if wedding date has been fixed	148 61.70%	85 35.40%	7 2.90%	0 0.00%	1.4125	0.54949
Having a sex partner without being married is morally acceptable	150 62.50%	90 37.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.375	0.48513
Premarital sex has nothing to do with morals	142 59.20%	98 40.80%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1.4083	0.49255
Having sex at school age is wrong, it might lead to unwanted pregnancy	13 5.40%	12 5.00%	9 3.80%	205 85.80%	3.6987	0.79997
Average mean=1.855 Benchmark mean=2.5						

Key: 1=Strongly disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Agree (A), 4=Strongly agree (SA), Decision value Disagree = 0 -2.5, Agree=2.5 – 4.00

Factors to predispose senior secondary school students to premarital sex in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State, as evidenced by Table 4.2.3, each item from the table is analysed based on the scale given using the percentage and frequency. 4(1.7%) of respondents strongly disagree that virginity should be kept till marriage, 4(1.7%) of the respondents disagrees, 12(5.0%) of the respondents agree while 220(91.7%) of respondents strongly disagree that virginity should be kept till marriage. 107(44.6%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is okay if it is with one partner, 133(55.4%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is okay if it is with one partner. 133(55.4%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if there is agreement between the two people involved, 107(44.6%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if there is agreement between the two people involved. 139(57.9%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other, 101(42.1%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other. 138(57.8%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is a way for partners to show affection towards one another, 102(42.5%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other.

154(64.2%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex helps relationship to work better, 83(34.6%) of the respondents disagree, 3(1.30%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex helps relationship to work better. 144(60.0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital is acceptable if marriage has been planned in the near future, 89(37.1%) of the respondents disagree, 7(2.90%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if marriage has been planned in the near future. 148(61.7%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if wedding date has been fixed, 85(35.4%) of the respondents disagree, 7(2.90%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex is acceptable if wedding date has been fixed. 142(59.2%) of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex has nothing to do with morals, 98(40.8%) of the respondents disagree, 0(0%) of the respondents agree while 0(0%)

of respondents strongly disagree that premarital sex has nothing to do with morals. 13(5.4%) of respondents strongly disagree that having sex at school age is wrong, it might lead to unwanted pregnancy, 12(5.0%) of the respondents disagree, 9(3.8%) of the respondents agree while 205(85.8%) of respondents strongly disagree that that having sex at school age is wrong, it might lead to unwanted pregnancy.

Based on the mean score of 1.86 which is above the benchmark mean, most of the respondent disagree that factors like premarital sex is okay if it is with one partner, premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other, premarital sex is a way for partners to show affection towards one another to predispose them to sex in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State.

### Analysis of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There will no be significant gender difference in knowledge of premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu.

Table 7. Independent Samples T-Test Summary Table Showing the gender difference in knowledge of premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State

Knowledge towards premarital sex	Gender	Total Number (N)	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Degree of Freedom (df)	Variation(t)	Significance Level (P-value)
	Female	166	12.29	0.82	-0.20	239	-1.811	0.071
	Male	75	12.49	0.78				

As shown in Table 1.7, an independent samples t-test was conducted to assess the gender difference in knowledge of premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in knowledge of premarital sex between female ( $M = 12.29$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) and male ( $M = 12.49$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) students, with a mean difference of  $-0.20$ ,  $t(239) = -1.811$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

These findings, therefore, indicate that there is no significant gender disparity in knowledge of premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu. Both male and female students showed similar levels of knowledge of premarital sex. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which posited no significant gender difference in knowledge of premarital sex is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant gender difference by knowledge of premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State

Table 8. Independent Samples T-Test Summary Table Showing the gender difference in attitude towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State

Attitude towards premarital sex	Gender	Total Number (N)	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Degree of Freedom (df)	Variation(t)	Significance Level (P-value)
	Female	166	30.87	3.65	-0.48	239	-0.947	0.344
	Male	75	31.35	3.60				

As presented in Table 1.8, an independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the gender difference in attitude towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in attitude towards premarital sex between female ( $M = 30.87$ ,  $SD = 3.65$ ) and male ( $M = 31.35$ ,  $SD = 3.60$ ) students, with a mean difference of  $-0.48$ ,  $t(239) = -0.947$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

These results indicate that there is no significant gender disparity in attitude towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu. Both male and female students exhibited similar attitudes towards premarital sex. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which proposed no significant gender difference in attitude towards premarital sex, is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant relationship between knowledge and attitude towards pre-marital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State.

Table 9. Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the relationship between knowledge and attitude towards pre-marital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	P	Remark
Knowledge	17.65	0.81462	240	0.054	0.401	Not Significant
Attitude	18.9708	3.63778				

The analysis of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the relationship between knowledge and attitude towards pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State in Table 9, reveals that despite a mean knowledge score of 17.65 and a standard deviation of 0.81462, and a mean attitude score of 18.9708 with a standard deviation of 3.63778, the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.054 suggests only a very weak positive correlation between knowledge and attitude. With a sample size of 240 and a  $p$ -value of 0.401, indicating the relationship to be not significant, it can be interpreted that while there is a slight tendency for increased knowledge to correspond with slightly more positive attitudes towards pre-marital sex, this association is not statistically.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of research question one indicated the average mean knowledge score, computed at 1.76498, significantly surpasses the benchmark mean of 1.5, thereby indicating a high level of knowledge among the respondent. The finding is similar to Ogunsola (2012), in her study on Abstinence from Premarital Sex: A Precursor to quality and good relationship and marital stability in Nigerian society was of the view that the last half of the 20th century witnessed substantial changes in the practice of premarital partnership among the adolescents due, in part, to the influx of the western culture on the continent of Africa. Obiekezie-Ali (2003), in a study on Sexual Behavior problems of secondary school girls and women empowerment, asserts that this stance that many Nigerian girls are known to start involved in active sex at the early age of thirteen years. Okonkwo and Eze (2000) observed in their study Attitude of Nigerian Adolescents to Premarital Sexual Behavior: Implications for Sex Education that today's situation shows a sharp contrast to the traditional Nigerian societal context in which girls avoided pre-marital sexual experiences for fear of social punishments usually meted out to girls who lost their virginity before marriage.

The findings of research question two indicated that the mean score of 1.9 which is below the benchmark mean of 2.5, it shows that most of the respondents have negative attitude towards pre-marital sex of secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos State. The finding is in line with Anna, and Noeme, 2013 in their study of adolescents' attitude towards premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy reported that 32.4% of their sample claimed that premarital sex is appropriate and that 25% already had premarital sex. According to the report, 61.7% of the respondents having premarital sex had their first experience at the age of 17 years among whom 16% faced the problem by surgical abortion procedure while others managed theirs by taking medication. Mensch, Clark, and Anh (2003) asserted in their study, Adolescents in Vietnam: Looking Beyond Reproductive Health Studies in Family Planning that premarital sexual behavior is not only increasingly accepted by young people but is also becoming prevalent among them and a considerable proportion of young people are engaging in risky sexual activities. Hirsch (2004) both reported that being away from home is associated with an increase in risky behaviour in both developed and developing countries. Adolescents encounter problems as a result of broad changes in lifestyle combined with socio-economic and cultural shock which may have an impact on their attitude towards marriage and sexual life.

The findings of research question three indicated that the mean score of 1.86 which is above the benchmark mean, most of the respondent disagree that factors like premarital sex is okay if it is with one partner, premarital sex is acceptable if both partners love each other, premarital sex is a way for partners to show affection towards one another to predispose them to sex. The finding is similar to Wong et al (2012) in their Premarital sexual intercourse among adolescents in an Asian country: Multilevel ecological factors observe that among adolescents one of the significant factors that is associated with sexual intercourse is lack of confidence to resist peer pressure to engage in sex, and also the perception that one half and more of their friends have already engaged in premarital sex. Viewing phonograph films/videos is one of the reasons why adolescents engage in premarital sex. Pornography is capable of arousing sexual interest. It can also make someone to be sexually abusing people. Pornography can lure people with erotic pleasure. To this effect, Chibuko (1999), stated that watching pornographic films can arouse or push people to even go extra mile in committing evil more than he or she thought. Melgosa (2000) in her study on new life style to adolescents and parent stated that "when drugs and substances

are abused it depresses judgment and makes an addict to do thing, he/she would not ordinarily do if he/she was not under the influence of drugs". In line with the above, Alen (2003) asserts that "drugs could induce sexual desire and alcohol use have been identified as factors which may encourage unintended sexual activities.

The findings of hypothesis one indicated that there is no significant gender disparity in knowledge of premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central. Both male and female students showed similar levels of knowledge of premarital sex. The finding is similar to those of Adekunle, Ahmed, and Ogunlade (2020), who surveyed 2000 secondary school students in Nigeria and found no significant gender differences in knowledge of premarital sex. Statistical analysis of the data revealed comparable levels of knowledge between male and female students, with 68% of male students and 72% of female students demonstrating accurate knowledge. Ibrahim and Aliyu (2018), conducted focus group discussions with male and female secondary school students in Nigeria to explore their understanding of premarital sex. The findings revealed similar levels of knowledge and awareness among participants from both genders, indicating a lack of significant disparities.

The findings of hypothesis two indicated that there is no significant gender disparity in attitude toward premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu Central. Both male and female students exhibited similar attitudes towards premarital sex. Both male and female students exhibited similar attitudes towards premarital sex. The finding is similar to Mohammed and Yusuf (2019) conducted a cross-sectional survey among 1500 secondary school students in Nigeria to assess attitudes towards premarital sex. The results showed no significant gender differences in attitudes, with 70% of male students and 72% of female students Ogunjimi and Adebayo (2017) explored attitudes towards premarital sex among male and female secondary school students in Nigeria using qualitative interviews. The findings revealed that participants from both genders shared similar perspectives and beliefs, indicating a convergence in attitudes towards premarital sex.

The findings of hypotheses three stated that significant relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Ikorodu central. The finding is similar to Adeyemi and Ogunleye (2022), provides compelling evidence of a positive correlation between knowledge of and attitudes towards premarital sex among students in Akungba. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive sex education programs that not only impart factual knowledge but also foster positive attitudes towards healthy sexual behaviors. Oladele and Balogun (2021), further supports the significant relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards premarital sex among students. The predictive nature of the relationship suggests that interventions aimed at increasing knowledge levels may contribute to the development of more positive attitudes towards premarital sex, thereby promoting healthier sexual decision-making among adolescents.

## CONCLUSION

The research sheds light on the knowledge and attitudes towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos, Nigeria. The study reveals a commendable level of knowledge among the respondents, indicating awareness of the subject matter. However, concerning attitudes, the findings suggest a prevalent negative outlook towards premarital sex among the students surveyed. Furthermore, it highlights the factors contributing to premarital sex and its potential effects on the students. Importantly, the study underscores the absence of significant gender disparities both in knowledge and attitudes towards premarital sex among the students. Overall, this research underscores the need for comprehensive sex education programs, its inclusion into the curriculum and adoption into the school timetable, tailored to address misconceptions and negative attitudes towards premarital sex among adolescents, thus promoting healthier decision-making and behaviours in this crucial demographic group.

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, the recommendations proposed are Comprehensive Sex Education Programs - Develop and integrate a comprehensive sexual education curriculum tailored to the needs of senior secondary school students in Ikorodu Central, Lagos. This curriculum should cover topics such as reproductive health, contraception, consent, and healthy relationships, including discussions on premarital sex in a non-judgmental and informative manner. According to the World Health Organization (2023), comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) gives young people accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health, which is critical for their health and survival. Also, Inclusion of Sex Education into the educational curriculum - World Health Organization in its 2023.

Suggestions are made for further studies on the topics or similar topics, which include Comparative Studies - comparing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to premarital sex among senior secondary school students across different regions in Nigeria. This comparative analysis could reveal regional variations in perceptions and practices, highlighting the role of sociocultural factors in shaping attitudes towards premarital sex among adolescents.

Also, Qualitative Research - conducting qualitative research, such as focus group discussions or interviews, to explore the cultural influences shaping attitudes towards premarital sex among adolescents in Ikorodu Central, Lagos. This study could delve deeper into cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal expectations surrounding premarital sex, providing a richer understanding of the context in which these attitudes develop.

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