

**INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON
UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTION OF COURTSHIP AND
ITS' RELATIONSHIP WITH PRE-MARITAL SEX**

BY

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INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTION OF COURTSHIP AND ITS' RELATIONSHIP WITH PRE-MARITAL SEX

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of demographic factors on undergraduates' perception of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex using the University of Abuja, Abuja as case study. Demographic factors identified in the study were family background, university environment, peers and social media. These factors were examined to determine their influence on the perception of undergraduates' toward courtship and pre-marital sex. Questionnaire was constructed to test the hypotheses formulated. Simple percentage statistical tool was employed to analyse the variables. Based on the findings, it was discovered that family background, peers, university environment and social media have direct impact on students' perception of courtship and subsequently, their engagement in risky sexual behaviours. Recommendations were made to address the problems associated with pre-marital sex among undergraduates in Nigeria.

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1.1 Background to the Study

University campuses offer a unique environment for students either to pursue a traditional courtship style or engage in a courtship style that is driven by pre-marital sexual intercourse. Several studies have been carried out on what influences students choice of courtship style in the university (Bogle, 2008; Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; and Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2009). These studies indicate that young men and women are more frequently engaging in casual sex or what is known as 'campus courtship' or 'hooking up' than the traditional courtship where lovers are not to engage in pre-marital sex. Hooking up carries a level of ambiguity but has been generally defined as a sexual encounter, anything from kissing to having sex, especially between young men and women without implying any marital commitment.

The large percentage of divorces each year, non-marital pregnancies and pre-marital sex has all dramatically changed the traditional family structure. Courtship which was a trend that has been present for decades in Nigeria became popular as a result of western education. Courtship among undergraduates has changed the realm of male and female interaction as it used to be in the traditional African society. Prior to the colonial era, men had to call upon women and be invited to visit the woman's home under strict supervision from the family. This type of courtship was a form of traditional courtship that had very clearly delineated guidelines that, men and women were expected to follow. However, western education has totally redefined how young men and

women court before getting married. The university environment provides the opportunity for young individuals to go out to places away from the watchful eyes of the family and community members and engage in another kind of campus courtship popularly known as 'hooking up'.

Several demographic factors such as the mass media, the social media, internet, peers, changing family traditions, money, the university environment, among others affects how young men and women participate in courtship alongside modern social changes. The influence of these demographic factors on undergraduates' sexual behavior, particularly in the areas of courtship and its relationship with premarital sex, deserves scholarly attention.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature regarding the impact of demographic factors on undergraduates' perception of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex is limited. This research seeks to fill the vacuum by examining whether demographic factors with special reference to peers, university environment, family background and the social media have any significant effect on undergraduates' perceptions of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine the influence of demographic factors on the perceptions of undergraduates towards courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex. The general aim is expressed in the following specific objectives which are to:

1. Assess undergraduates' perceptions of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex
2. Examine undergraduates' perceptions of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex
3. Investigate how the family background influence the perception of university students towards courtship
4. Examine how the social media influence the perception of university students towards courtship
5. Examine how the university environment influence the perception of university students towards courtship
6. Examine how peers influence the perception of university students towards courtship

1.4 Justification of the Study

This study proposes to investigate undergraduates' perception of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex. This is justified because perceptions are known to affect behavior. Undergraduates' sexual behavior, especially in relation to pre-marital sex could be as a result of their perceptions toward courtship. The study therefore sets out to investigate how demographic factors influence this perception through the existing literature and the testing of the formulated hypotheses.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed by this study:

- i. To what extent does undergraduates' perception of courtship affect their desire to engage in pre-marital sex?

- ii. Would there be any significant relationship between family background and undergraduates' perception of courtship?
- iii. Does the university environment have any impact on undergraduates' perception of courtship?
- iv. Would there be any significant relationship between the university environment and undergraduates' perception of courtship?
- v. Would there be any significant relationship between social media and undergraduates' perception of courtship?
- vi. Would there be any significant relationship between peers and undergraduates' perception of courtship?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no significant difference between undergraduates' perception of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex.

Ho₂ There is no significant difference between family background and undergraduates' perception of courtship

Ho₃ There is no significant difference between university environment and undergraduates' perception of courtship

Ho₄ There is no significant difference between social media and undergraduates' perception of courtship

1.7 Significance of the Study

A major concern in Nigerian universities today is the issue of unwanted pregnancy, high rate of abortion, reported cases of HIV/AIDS, etc all of which negatively affects the smooth running of individual

academic programme. One of the ways to find solution to this problem is to address the issue of students' perception of courtship and pre-marital sex. Going by this, it becomes important to discuss the perception of young adults toward courtship and subsequently pre-marital sex.

The study is therefore significant for the following reasons:

1. This study will be useful to both male and female undergraduates who are either into courtship or are intending to start afresh.
2. It will also help young people in understanding each other during courtship which important for those who intend to get married.
3. Since this study examines the perception of students toward courtship, it will assist them to make informed decisions in their relationship.
4. Lastly, it will assist other researchers who might want to conduct similarly study.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the influence of demographic factors on undergraduates' perception of courtship and its relationship with pre-marital sex using the University of Abuja, Abuja as case study. Two hundred (200) students from different faculties will be randomly selected for the study. The study covers a four year period, 2008 to 2012.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

Relative to this study, definitions to the following terms are provided in order to clarify each in the context of the topic:

Courtship- is the period in a couple's relationship which precedes their engagement and marriage, or establishment of an agreed relationship of a more enduring kind.

Hooking up- is a term associated with the normative sexual behavior of university students today while historically it was perceived as a one-night stand or labeled as casual sex.

Marriage- also called matrimony or holy wedlock is a social union or legal contract between people (a man and a woman) that creates kinship. In Nigeria, marriage is recommended or compulsory for two opposite sex.

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