

RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students in Ekiti state, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Three hundred undergraduate students were randomly selected across three higher institutions in Ekiti State. Ekiti state university, Ado-Ekiti, Federal polytechnics, Ado-Ekiti and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekti. A self-structured questionnaire was used for data collection and out of 300 questionnaires distributed, 293 were returned and analyzed. The analysis reveals that 34(11.6%) had two sexual partners in the last twelve months and 60 (20.5 %) had more than two sexual partners. 119 (50.6%) engaged in unprotected sex at one time or the other within the last twelve months and 8 (2.7%) have unprotected sex regularly and, 107 (36.5) respondents are either presently cohabiting with opposite gender or have done it before. The study found no significant difference in sexual behaviours among male and female undergraduates in Ekiti State. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that risky sexual behaviour is highly prevalent among students of tertiary institutions. The study recommended that further research is needed to confirm the real causes of risky sexual behaviour among undergraduates and potential consequences.

Keywords: *Risky Sexual Behaviour, Undergraduates, Tertiary Institutions, Multiple Sex Partners*

Introduction

Risky sexual behaviour refers to acts of having sex with multiple partners, inconsistent condom use, having sex on impulse, or for commercial purposes and having sex under the influence of substances such as alcohol and hard drugs (WHO, 2021). Risky sexual behaviours continue to be a global public health problem due to numerous consequences' such as unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV, cervical cancer, increase rate of abortions and its consequences, infertility and many other physical and psychological effects (Okafor, et al., 2022).

The burden of risky sexual behavior in Nigeria is high and

increasing for example, Oluwatoyin, et al., (2022) found more than half of the respondents in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria having sex with multiple partners and engaging in multiple abortions. Some researchers have established a close link between risky sexual behaviour and poor parental involvement in sexual communication (Oluwayemi & Akinyemi, 2025; Wight & Fullerton, 2018). Financial hardship, which make sex for money very common (Okafor, et al., 2022, peer influence (Oluwatoyin et al., 2022), low self – esteem (Adeyemi et al., 2020) and substance use (Okafor 2022; WHO, 2023), with lack of access to youth-friendly reproductive-health services, and limited comprehensive sexuality education (UNICEF, 2022). Other

causes in literature include cultural norms, (Oluwatoyin, et al., 2022), gender inequalities, and media influences, increase exposure to sexually explicit content and romanticized portrayals of sex on social media and televisions (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016; Ewemooje et al., 2024).

Drug abuse especially abuse of alcohol and other drugs have been found by researchers to be closely associated with risky sexual behaviours in young people. Other researchers have also indicated that youths who use drugs are also found to be involved with risky sexual behaviours such as engaging in unprotected inter-course, having multiple sexual partners, exchanging sex for money and/or drugs, and combining sex and substance use (Omisore, et al., 2022). The issue of sexually transmitted diseases especially HIV in Nigeria is enough to prevent youths from participating in risky sexual behaviours but where youths act on impulse or under the influence of drug, it will be very difficult to control risky sexual behavior.

Although, studies on risky sexual behavior exist in literature, but it seems there are fewer researches related to sexual behavior in Ekiti state and especially among undergraduates. For this reason, the index study is necessary to determine the risky sexual behavior of undergraduate of tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The result of this study may be an eye opener for health educators to plan program related to prevention and treatment of risky sexual behaviours among youths and adolescents

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the commonly practiced risky sexual behaviour among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State
2. To determine the types of risky sexual activities common among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State
3. To determine if there is significant gender difference in the practice of risky sexual behaviour among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State Nigeria

Research Questions

- i. What are the commonly practiced risky sexual behaviour among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State?
- ii. What are the types of risky sexual activities common among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in practice of risky sexual behaviours among male and female undergraduate students in Ekiti state

Methodology

The study was a descriptive research. The study population comprised of all undergraduate students of public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State of Nigeria. The sample size was made up of 300 students randomly selected from three institutions of higher learning in Ekiti state. The institutions include Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Federal polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti. (BOUESTI)

A self-designed questionnaire titled "Sexual behaviours of undergraduates in Ekiti State (SBUEKS) were used to elicit information from respondents. The instrument consisted of demographic

data such as age, sex, Institutions and level of education, other questions were designed to elicit information on sexual behaviours such as number of sexual partners, and frequency of and types sexual intercourse, with, regularly, sometimes, rarely, and never. Validity of the instrument was done by giving the draft of the questionnaire to expert to vet. The reliability of the questionnaire was done using Cronbach Alpha statistic with a coefficient of 0.71 which indicated that the instrument had good internal consistency and was adequate for the study. The

researchers visited the campuses for the study to administer the questionnaires with the help of two research assistants who are experienced in similar exercises, copies of the questionnaire were collected back immediately and 293 copies retrieved. The data collected were sorted, coded and entered into SPSS spread sheet for descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive analysis of frequency counts and percentages were used while inferential statistics of t-test was used to test the generated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Demographic variables of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Total	Percentages
Sex	Male	151	51.5
	Female	142	48.5
Age (years)	18-21	165	56.3
	22-25	101	34.5
	26-30	27	9.2
Current Level of study	100	95	32.4
	200	84	28.7
	300	63	21.5
	400	43	14.7
	500	08	2.7

Table 1 showed that out of the 293 respondents, 151 (51.5%) were male while 142 (48.5 %) were females. The most prevalent age category was 18-21years with almost 60% in that age range. On current level of at school majority of the

respondents were in 100 level of education with 32.4%

Research Question 1: What are the commonly practiced risky sexual behaviour among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 2: Sexual Behaviours of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Total	Percentages	Mean	SD
Do you have a sexual partner (s) in the last one year?	Yes	94	32.1	1.64	.482
	No	199	67.9		
How many sexual partners do you have in the last one year?	None	197	67.3	3.70	.460
	One	34	11.6		
	Two	50	17.0		
	Three or more	12	4.1		

How often do you engage in sex in the last one year?	Never	183	62.4	3.67	.473
	rarely	40	13.7		
	Often	14	4.8		
	Regularly	56	19.1		
Why do you engage in sexual activities	For self-satisfaction	63	57.3	3.83	.357
	For money	17	15.5		
	To please my sex partners	23	20.9		
	No reason	7	6.3		

Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents (67.9%) claimed not to have any sexual partner in the last one year. Also, 34(11.6%) of the respondents having two sexual partners and 50 (17.0%) and 12(4.1%) have more than two sexual partners in the last one year. On frequency of engagement in sex, 62.4% never engage in sex in the last one year, 13.7% do it rarely, 4.8 % do it often

and 19.1 do it regularly. Furthermore, on reason for having sex, among 110 who are sexual active 57.3% do it for self-satisfaction, 15.5% do it for financial reasons, 20.9% do it to please sex partners and 6.3% do it for no reasons.

Research Question 2: What are the types of risky sexual activities common among students of Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 3: Types of risky sexual activities

Variables	Categories	Total	Percentages
How often do you have sex without using condom in the last twelve months	Never	174	59.4
	Rarely	37	12.6
	Sometimes	59	20.1
	Regularly	23	7.9
How often do you engage in oral sex in the last one year?	Never	162	55.3
	rarely	34	11.6
	sometimes	72	24.6
	Regularly	25	8.5
Do you live with your boyfriends or girlfriend on the campus	Never	186	63.5
	I have done it before	74	25.2
	I am presently cohabiting	33	11.3

Table 3 revealed the frequency counts and percentages of the involvement of the respondents in unprotected sex as follows; out of total number of 293 respondents, those who engage in unprotected sex regularly were 23(7.8%) those who do it sometimes were 59 (20.1%) those who do it rarely were 37 (12.6%) and those who never have engaged in unprotected sex were 174 (59.4%).

For oral sex, those who engage in oral sex regularly were 25(8.5%) those who do it sometimes were 72 (24.6%) those who do it rarely were 34 (11.6%) and those who never have engaged in oral sex were 162 (55.3%) Concerning cohabitation with opposite gender, more than 36% of the respondents have either done it before or doing it as at the time of data collection

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in practice of risky sexual behaviours among male

and female undergraduate students in Ekiti state

Table 4: T-test Analysis of difference in sexual behavior of male and female students

Group	N	Mean	SD	Sig	95% confidence interval of the difference	
Male	151	3.56	.797	.000	Lower	Upper
Female	142	3.76	.583		1.43	1.54

Table 4 shows that the confidence level is 95% (P- 5%) the lower and upper confidence level ranges between 1.43 and 1.54 and the significance of 2 tailed tests is .000 meaning that the null hypothesis is true and it is therefore not rejected. There is no significance difference between male and female practice of sexual behaviours.

Discussion

The study investigated risky sexual behaviours among students of tertiary institutions in Ekiti state. Although a good number of students are not involving with risky sexual behaviours yet, this study found high prevalent of risky sexual behaviours among the sexually active students. The notable proportions of students report having multiple sexual partners, engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse, and cohabitation with opposite-sex partners. All these implies that many young adults in tertiary institutions continue to adopt sexual practices that expose them to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancies, and related psychosocial challenges.

This study corroborate the findings of other researchers in Nigeria such as the finding of Ewemooje et al., 2024; Idoko & Enebe, 2023)) in Federal University of Technology in South-West Nigeria

who found two out of seven students engaging with multiple sexual partners. Also, in a similar study, Ajuwon et al., 2024 found high prevalent of risky sexual behaviours among undergraduates in Ibadan. All these findings underscore the seriousness of the matter and revealed that whatsoever is the present ongoing public health programmes related to prevention of STIs, HIV, unplanned pregnancy and other related campaign need a serious review and readjustment for better achievement.

The relatively high prevalence of unprotected sex (50.6% having engaged in it at least once within the last year) further underscores the risk environment within which undergraduates operate. This suggests that although knowledge of condoms and STIs is generally high among university students, consistent condom use remains low, possibly due to misconceptions about safety, perceived trust in partners, or spontaneous sexual encounters.

Cohabitation was also prevalent among respondents, with 36.5% reporting that they currently cohabit or have cohabited with an opposite-sex partner. Cohabitation among undergraduates has been linked in previous literature to increased frequency of sexual activity, reduced condom use, and

increased social pressure to maintain partner satisfaction, all of which may heighten risky behaviours. The presence of such patterns in this study may reflect broader social and economic trends, and cultural shifts in attitudes toward premarital relationships.

Interestingly, the study found **no significant difference in risky sexual behaviours between male and female undergraduates**, suggesting that both genders are increasingly engaging in similar sexual practices. This contrasts with earlier evidence that typically shows higher levels of risky sexual behaviour among males. The convergence observed in this study could indicate changing gender norms, greater sexual empowerment among females, or increased social acceptance of female sexuality.

These findings have important implications for sexual health interventions in higher institutions. Often, the focus of many programmes is on sexual abstinence but it is obvious that such focus may not adequately address the contextual factors causing increased risk-taking among undergraduates, such as increased autonomy of students of tertiary institutions, peer pressure, poverty and financial stress, cohabitation, and relationship dynamics. There is need for better sexual health interventions that will incorporate behavioural counseling to enhance behavioural changes which may help in reducing risky sexual behaviours among students of tertiary institutions

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