



# **Prevalence and Socio-Demographic Determinants of Non-Consensual Sex Experiences among Undergraduate Students of Public Universities in Port Harcourt**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Non-consensual sex is scarcely reported especially among university students. This study investigated the prevalence and socio-demographic determinants of nonconsensual sex among students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Methods:** The study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional design and a multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted and a sample size of 1000 was determined. A structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. Data was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical

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Product for Service Solution (SPSS) version 25.0 using statistical tools such as percentage and binary logistic regression at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results:** The result showed that the prevalence of non-consensual sex was 459 (47.0%), with students with high peer group influence 212(48.8%), students who stayed with guardians 72(65.5%), and high social support 242(50.4%). There was a significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the perpetrators, type of parenthood and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State. There was no significant relationship ( $p > 0.05$ ) between peer group influence, the existence of a social support system and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences.

**Conclusion:** It was concluded that the socio-demographic determinants were family parenthood, peer pressure and social support. It was therefore recommended among others that, during their students' union week, the student union government should dramatize the preventive strategies against non-consensual sex with more emphasis on the vulnerability of younger and female students.

*Keywords: Non-consensual sex; policy advocacy; attempted rape; sexual abuse; reproductive health; universities.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) defined nonconsensual sex as “any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurring with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading humiliating or offensive environment” [1]. It is generally held that women are always victims of nonconsensual sex and the perpetrators are the males, especially in African society. In the African setting, Nigeria alike, females are received on more likely to be recipients of nonconsensual sex by their male counterparts [2].

Cook et al. reported that more women than men had experienced nonconsensual sexual activity [3]. The tertiary school students in Rivers State are made of male and female students who may have nonconsensual sexual experiences and may differ between the male and female students. Being male or female further has a correlation to knowledge and perception of so many phenomena including non-consensual sex. Emeka reported that female involvement, knowledge and perception of non-consensual sex far outweigh that of the males [4]. Tertiary institution students in Rivers State could have the contrary since socio-demographic determinants of social and cultural practice have recently changed. Hence students in Rivers State may not differ in knowledge, or prevalence of non-consensual sex with respect to gender. However, apart from age and gender, the educational level of the guardian/parent or who the students live with could have a strong part to play or students'

experiences, knowledge and prevalence of non-consensual sex.

Reports suggested that some of the contributing factors of nonconsensual sex in Nigeria include age, marital status, sex, socioeconomic status, educational level, drug use and year of study [5]. The aim of the study was to investigate the prevalence and socio-demographic determinants of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of the study consisted of all full-time public university students based on 2017 to 2021 academic sessions in Rivers State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study as two public tertiary institutions out of three were randomly selected. A sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. To increase the power of the study, take care of the attrition rate and decrease the error margin, the sample size was increased to 500. However, this sample size was used for each of the selected public tertiary institutions, giving a total of one thousand (1000) as the sample size in the study.

### 2.2 Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection titled non-consensual sex scale [6]. Reports and perpetrators of non-consensual sex data were gathered using a modified Campus Climate Survey on sexual assault and

misconduct by the Association of American Universities [6].

### 2.3 Validity of the Instrument

A copy of the research questions, hypotheses and modified questionnaire were given to the three experts in monitoring and evaluation in order to develop a standard questionnaire for the study with face and content validity. They were allowed to go through the questionnaire and make suggestions and criticisms where appropriate. The suggestions and/or criticisms were noted by the researcher and used to modify the instrument.

### 2.4 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the split-half method. This was done by administering 50 copies of the instrument split into two halves (25) to undergraduate students of Niger Delta University in Bayelsa State, which is close to the study area. From a single administration, two sets of scores were generated for each respondent based on odd and even numbers.

Kuder-Richardson formula 21(K-R21) was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the questions with dichotomous options which yielded a 0.81 reliability index, while Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the questions that have multiple options (polychotomous) and 0.89 reliability coefficient was obtained. This showed that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

### 2.5 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of two assistants in each of the two universities by briefing them on the aim and objectives of the study as well as their duties in terms of distributing the questionnaire, providing assistance with regards to clarifying any issues on the questionnaires and finally retrieving the duly completed copies of the questionnaire. Ethical protocol from the head of administration of the tertiary institutions was followed. An informed consent was also obtained from the respondents to elicit voluntary participation in the study. Data collection was done between August and October 2022 for a period of twelve weeks at the various sampled universities in Rivers State.

The predetermined criteria for select participants for this study included full-time students 16 years of age or older.

### 2.6 Method of Data Analysis

Correct data entry and analysis were done using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) computer software version 25. The data entered into the computer were subjected to descriptive and inferential (Logistic regression) statistical analysis.

## 3. RESULTS

The sample size for the study was 1000 but the analysis was based on 977 because the researcher was not able to retrieve all copies of the questionnaire; the return rate was thus given as 97.7%. Of the 977 subjects, 518(53.0%) of the students reported that they had never experienced unwanted sexual gestures, while 459(47.0%) reported that they had experienced unwanted sexual gestures. Thus, the prevalence of non-consensual sex among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was 47.0%.

Table 1 showed that the forms of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities including forced to view sex movies and pictures, and threatened to blackmail for refusal to demand sex 518(53.0%) each, threatened to fail an examination for refusal of sex 517(52.8%), offered materials things e.g. money, recharge card for sex enticement hugged without consent 517(52.8%), made to have sex discussion forcefully 513(52.5%), intimidated because of sexual matters and forceful sex 497(50.9%), unwanted touch on any part of the body 461(47.2%), unwelcomed jokes about sexual issues 439(44.9%), and hugged without consent 257(26.3%).

Table 2 shows that the highest perpetrators of unwanted touch on the breast were boys/girlfriends 314(32.1%), neighbours 280(28.7%) and roommates 263(26.9%). The highest perpetrators of forced kissing included boy/girlfriends 398(40.7%), neighbours 139(14.2%) and lecturers 127(13.0%). The result revealed that on average, most of the perpetrators of non-consensual sex experiences were boyfriend/girlfriend 352(36.0%), following neighbours 164(16.8%), roommates 134(13.7%) and lecturers 90(9.21%).

**Table 1. Percentage distribution showing the forms of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Forms of non-consensual sex</b>	<b>Yes F (%)</b>	<b>No F (%)</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Hugged without consent	257(26.3)	720(73.7)	Low
2	Unwanted sexual gestures	375(38.4)	602(61.6)	Low
3	Touched on the breast or any other part of the body in an inappropriate way	350(35.8)	627(64.2)	Low
4	Brushed body in an unwelcomed manner	421(43.1)	556(56.9)	Low
5	Kissed against wish	343(35.1)	634(64.9)	Low
6	Offered material things e.g. money, recharge card for sex enticement	506(51.8)	471(48.2)	High
7	Forceful sex	497(50.9)	480(49.1)	High
8	Insisted to have sex	432(44.2)	545(55.8)	Low
9	Forced to watch sexually explicit materials i.e. blue film, magazine	502(51.4)	475(48.6)	High
10	Threatened to fail examination for refusal of sex	460(43.2)	517(52.8)	Low
11	Threatened to blackmail for refusal to demand for sex	459(47.0)	518(53.0)	Low
12	Unwelcomed jokes about sexual issues	439(44.9)	538(55.1)	Low
13	Intimidated because of sexual matters	497(50.9)	480(49.1)	High
14	Unwanted touch on any part of the body	461(47.2)	516(52.8)	Low
15	Made to have sex discussion forcefully	464(47.5)	513(52.5)	Low
16	Forced to view sex movies and pictures	459(47.0)	518(53.0)	Low

**Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution showing the perpetrators of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State**

Items	Perpetrators Frequency (%) N=977							
	Boy/girl Friend	Brother/ sister	Aunty/ uncle	Lecturer	Course mate	Stranger	Neighbor	Room mate
Unwanted touch at the breast	314(32.1)	4(0.4)	4(0.4)	86(8.8)	15(1.5)	11(1.1)	280(28.7)	263(26.9)
Unwanted touch at buttock	398(40.7)	84(8.6)	6(0.6)	85(8.7)	98(10.0)	17(1.7)	174(17.8)	115(11.8)
Forced kissing	398(40.7)	40(4.1)	67(6.9)	127(13.0)	87(8.9)	9(0.9)	139(14.2)	110(11.3)
Forced to view sex photos or videos	412(42.2)	22(2.3)	39(4.0)	178(18.2)	66(6.8)	24(2.5)	128(13.1)	108(11.1)
Forced embrace	312(31.9)	102(10.4)	32(3.3)	79(8.1)	125(12.8)	90(9.2)	127(13.0)	108(11.1)
Forced and had sex with	333(34.1)	60(6.1)	23(2.4)	89(9.1)	162(16.6)	66(6.8)	133(13.6)	111(11.4)
Unwanted sex gestures	344(35.2)	97(9.9)	68(7.0)	52(5.3)	72(7.4)	68(7.0)	161(16.5)	115(11.8)
Starred in a sexual way	413(42.3)	42(4.3)	91(9.3)	68(7.0)	45(4.6)	12(1.2)	164(16.8)	142(14.5)
Forced to have sex but people intervened	412(42.2)	77(7.9)	54(5.5)	46(4.7)	63(6.4)	40(4.1)	146(14.9)	139(14.2)
Fondling of the private part without permission	324(33.2)	89(9.1)	52(5.3)	106(10.8)	73(7.5)	30(3.1)	177(18.1)	126(12.9)
Unwanted touch at the genitalia	317(32.4)	68(7.0)	124(12.7)	66(6.8)	55(5.6)	61(6.2)	153(15.7)	133(13.6)
Unwanted sexual comment about body parts	303(31.0)	51(5.2)	138(14.1)	67(6.9)	59(6.0)	39(4.0)	174(17.8)	146(14.9)
Sending messages on sms, WhatsApp and messengers	296(30.3)	58(5.9)	88(9.0)	126(12.9)	20(2.0)	42(4.3)	182(18.6)	165(16.9)
<b>Average Total</b>	352(36.02)	66(6.75)	60(6.14)	90(9.21)	72(7.37)	39(3.99)	164(16.8)	134(13.72)

From Table 3, 212(48.8%) of students with high peer group influence had a high prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences. Thus, this means that there is a relationship between high peer group influence and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences and peer group influence among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State.

The result revealed that a high prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences was found among students who stayed with their guardians 72(65.5%), followed by those with both parents 266(47.1%) and students with single parents 121(40.1%). Hence, non-consensual sex experiences are associated with undergraduate students of Rivers State public universities who live with their guardians.

The result revealed that a high prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences was seen more

among students with high social support 242(50.4%). Thus, students with high social support had more experiences of non-consensual sex.

On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed a significant relationship between perpetrators and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 6). The result showed that coursemates were 2.58 times more likely to be the perpetrators of non-consensual sex (OR=2.58, 95%CI: 1.61-4.13) compared to the boy/girlfriends. Lecturers were about 1.12 times more likely to be the perpetrators of non-consensual sex (OR=1.50, 95%CI: 0.53-4.21) compared to boys/girlfriends. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between perpetrators and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was rejected.

**Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of the relationship between prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences and peer group influence among undergraduate students of public universities**

Peer group influence	Prevalence of non-consensual sex		Total	Decision
	Yes	No		
	F (%)	F (%)		
High	212(48.8)	222(51.2)	434(100)	Low
Low	247(45.5)	296(54.5)	543(100)	Low
<b>Total</b>	<b>459(47.0)</b>	<b>518(53.0)</b>	<b>977(100)</b>	<b>Low</b>

**Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities based on type of parenthood**

Family parenthood	Prevalence of non-consensual sex		Total	Decision
	Yes	No		
	F (%)	F (%)		
Single parent	121(40.1)	181(59.9)	302(100)	Low
Both parents	266(47.1)	299(52.9)	565(100)	Low
Guardian	72(65.5)	38(34.5)	110(100)	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>459(47.0)</b>	<b>518(53.0)</b>	<b>977(100)</b>	<b>Low</b>

**Table 5. showing the frequency and percentage distribution of the relationship between the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences and the existence of social support among undergraduate students of public universities**

Existence of social support	Prevalence of non-consensual sex		Total	Decision
	Yes	No		
	F (%)	F (%)		
High	242(50.4)	238(49.6)	480(100)	High
Low	217(43.7)	280(56.3)	497(100)	Low
<b>Total</b>	<b>459(47.0)</b>	<b>518(53.0)</b>	<b>977(100)</b>	<b>Low</b>

On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed no significant relationship between peer group influence and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $p>0.05$ ) (Table 7). The result showed that students who had low peer group influence were 1 time more likely to have a higher prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences (OR=1.04, 95%CI: 0.86-1.26) compared to students who had high peer group influence. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was accepted.

On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed a significant relationship between the type of parenthood and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $p<0.05$ ). The result showed that students who have both parents were 1 time more likely to have a higher prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences (OR=1.12, 95%CI: 0.95-1.32) compared to students who have single parents. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between type of parenthood and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was rejected.

**Table 6. Binary Logistic Regression showing the relationship between perpetrators and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State.**

Perpetrators	Prevalence		Total	df	X <sup>2</sup>	P-value	Odd Ratio (OR)	95% CI lower-upper
	Yes	No						
Boy/girlfriend	148(47.1)	166(52.9)	314(100)	7	34.289	0.00	Ref	
Brother/sister	4(100)	0(0.0)	4(100)				.95	.75 - 1.21
Aunty/Uncle	3(75.0)	1(25.0)	4(100)				.100	.013-. 78
Lecturer	24(27.9)	62(72.1)	86(100)				1.50	.53- 4.21
Coursemate	6(40.0)	9(60.0)	15(100)				2.58	1.61- 4.13
Stranger	10(90.9)	1(9.1)	11(100)				.33	.03- 3.20
Neighbour	143(51.1)	137(48.9)	280(100)				.00	.00-0.00

\*Significant ( $P < 0.05$ )

**Table 7. Binary Logistic Regression showing the relationship between peer group influence and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State.**

Peer group influence	Prevalence of NCS		Total	df	X <sup>2</sup> value	P value	Odd ratio (OR)	95%CL Lower-Upper
	Yes F(%)	No F(%)						
High	212(48.8)	222(51.2)	434(100)	1	0.23	0.63*	Ref	
Low	247(45.5)	296(54.5)	543(100)				1.04	0.86- 1.26

\*Not Significant ( $P > 0.05$ )

**Table 8. Binary Logistic Regression showing the relationship between type of parenthood and prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State**

Family parenthood	Prevalence of NCS		Total	df	X <sup>2</sup> value	P-value	Odd ratio (OR)	95%CI Lower-Upper
	Yes F(%)	No F(%)						
Single parent	121(40.1)	181(59.9)	302(100)	2	12.61	0.00*	Ref	
Both parents	266(47.1)	299(52.9)	565(100)				1.12	0.95- 1.32
Guardian	72(65.5)	38(34.5)	110(100)				0.52	0.35-0.78

\*Significant ( $P < 0.05$ )

**Table 9. Binary Logistic Regression showing the relationship between the existence of a social support system and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State**

Existence of social support	Prevalence of NCS		Total	df	X <sup>2</sup> value	P-value	Odd ratio (OR)	95%CI Lower-Upper
	Yes F (%)	No F (%)						
High	242(50.4)	238(49.6)	480(100)	1	0.03	0.85*	Ref	
Low	217(43.7)	280(56.3)	497(100)				0.98	0.82- 1.17

\*Not Significant (P > 0.05)

On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed no significant relationship between the existence of a social support system and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences (p>0.05). The result showed that students with a low existence of a social support system were 0.02 times less likely to have a higher prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences (OR=0.98, 95%CI: 0.82-1.17) compared to students who have a high existence of a social support system. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between the existence of a social support system and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was accepted.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study in Table 1 revealed that the prevalence of non-consensual sex among undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was 47.0%. The prevalence was reported low because it is lesser than the average of 50%, but the proportion of students who experienced it is substantial enough. University students are meant to have a series of educational experiences that make them better citizens of their nation and not to be exposed to unwanted sexual activities but, the reverse is the case. By implication, this could cause a distraction to their academic pursuit for which they are in school, with the result of poor academic performance. This finding is in consonance with that of Odu and Olusegun and Olamide et al. which showed that less than 50% of the respondents experienced non-consensual sex including rape and attempted cases of date rape [7,8]. The finding of this study is also in support of that of Mekuria et al., Idoko et al., and Adebola et al. which showed that less than 50% of the respondents experienced forceful sexual intercourse (rape) in their lifetime, caressing breasts or genitals [9-11]. This similarity found between the present study and previous ones could be attributed to the homogeneity of the study respondents as they were both carried out

among students who are all in a learning environment.

This prevalence is however at variance with that of Oshiname et al. where the prevalence of non-consensual sexual experiences was higher than 50% [12]. This variation might be attributed to the difference in the study location and sample size between the two studies, the sample size used in the previous study was higher than that of the present study. Also, the previous study was focused on female students only whereas the present study covered both sexes.

The findings of this study are similar to that of Akanle [13] as well as that of and Mekuria et al. [9] where it was found that the forms of unwanted sexual experiences found among students were unwanted sexual comments, gestures or talk suggesting invitations for sex; suggestive remarks of sexual intercourse; unwanted embraces; unwanted fondling; unwanted kiss; touching of one's buttock and forced sexual attempt. The results of this study also corroborate with that of Haileye which revealed the same forms of non-consensual sex [14].

The finding of this study revealed that the highest perpetrators of non-consensual sex experiences were boys/girlfriends, neighbours, roommates and lecturers. This could be as a result of the fact that the respondents are freer sexually with their boy/girlfriends than every other person hence, their emergence as the highest perpetrators. The finding of this study is in support of that of Mekuria et al. who reported that the common perpetrators of unwanted sexual experiences among students were girls or boyfriends who are mostly schoolmates [9]. The finding of this study is also in line with that of Ajuwon et al., Shimekaw et al. and Dukers-Muijers et al. who indicated that, of all the sexually experienced participants who reported experiencing unwanted sexual activities, instances of sexual penetration and assault was perpetrated by someone known



to the survivor as an intimate partner or girl/boyfriend [15-17].

On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed no significant relationship between peer group influence and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $P>0.05$ ). This is in contrast with that of Omorogiuwa whose study on non-consensual sex among university students in Nigeria showed that social factors including peer pressure are associated with non-consensual sex in the sample area [18]. The finding of this study is in line with that of Mezie-Okoye et al. whose study on sexual violence among female undergraduates in a tertiary institution in Port Harcourt revealed that the circumstances leading to abuse were visiting, attending a party or social gathering prior to victimization (19). The result revealed that a high prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences was found among students who stayed with their guardians 72(65.5%), followed by those with both parents 266(47.1%) and students with single parents 121(40.1%). On bivariate analysis, the findings of the study showed a significant relationship between the type of parenthood and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $p<0.05$ ). This is consonance with that of Omorogiuwa whose study on non-consensual sex among university students in Nigeria showed that social factors including parenthood are associated with non-consensual sex in the sample area [18].

The result revealed that a high prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences was seen more among students with high social support 242(50.4%). However, the tested hypothesis showed no significant relationship between the existence of a social support system and the prevalence of non-consensual sex experiences ( $p>0.05$ ). Akinbode and Ayodeji carried out a study on experiences, prevalence and psychopathology of non-consensual sex in some selected higher institutions in Lagos, South-West Nigeria and the associated chi-square value ( $X^2 = 58.05$ ,  $P<0.5$  and contingency correlation = 0.343) provided significant support for this pattern and trend of non-consensual sex among young adults when a social contact is private [19]. The finding of this study is also in agreement with that of Mezie-okoye et al. whose study on sexual violence among female undergraduates in a tertiary institution in Port Harcourt revealed that the circumstances leading to abuse were social gathering prior to victimization [20].

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the prevalence of non-consensual sex among the undergraduate students of public universities in Rivers State was statistically low, and the socio-demographic determinants were family parenthood, level of study, peer pressure and social support. The forms experienced were being forced to view sex movies and pictures, threatened to blackmail for refusal to demand sex, threatened to fail an examination for refusal of sex, offered materials things such as money, recharge card for sex enticement hugged without consent, made to have sex discussion forcefully, intimidated because of sexual matters and forceful sex, unwanted touch on any part of the body, unwelcomed jokes about sexual issues and hugged without consent.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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