



PREDICTIVE INFLUENCE OF PAEDOPHILIC TENDENCY ON THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population comprised 148,712 undergraduate students enrolled in federal universities in South-East Nigeria during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 1,148 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using the researcher-developed Paedophilic Tendency Scale (PTS) and the adapted Sexual Behaviour Scale (SBS). The instruments were face-validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A pilot study established reliability coefficients of 0.76 for the PTS and 0.85 for the SBS using Cronbach's alpha. Data were collected through Google Forms and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple linear regression was used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that paedophilic tendency significantly predicted the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates, accounting for 47.1% of the variance in sexual behaviour. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The study concluded that paedophilic tendency is a significant psychological predictor of sexual behaviour among university undergraduates. It was recommended that universities strengthen counselling and psychological support services, implement comprehensive sexuality education programmes, and establish confidential referral mechanisms to promote healthy sexual behaviour and early psychological intervention among students.

Keywords: Paedophilic Tendency, Sexual Behaviour, University Undergraduates, Predictive Power.

Introduction

Among the psychological variables that may influence sexual behaviour among university undergraduates is paedophilic tendency. Although paedophilic interest is generally discussed within clinical and forensic psychology, emerging literature suggests that examining a typical sexual interest within non-clinical populations may provide insight into broader patterns of sexual cognition, impulse regulation, and sexual decision-making. Paedophilic tendency refers to the presence of self-reported atypical sexual thoughts, fantasies, or attractions directed toward prepubescent children, although such tendencies do not necessarily imply a clinical diagnosis or engagement in sexual offending behaviour. Rather, they represent psychological inclinations that require careful ethical and scientific consideration. Individuals reporting atypical sexual interests may experience greater difficulties with sexual self-regulation, impulse control, and healthy sexual



functioning, potentially increasing their vulnerability to problematic sexual behaviours. Consequently, examining paedophilic tendency within undergraduate populations may contribute to a better understanding of psychological factors associated with unhealthy sexual behaviour.

University education represents a critical stage of emerging adulthood during which young people experience increased independence, identity exploration, and exposure to diverse social environments. Most undergraduates are at an age characterized by heightened sexual curiosity and hormonal changes, while simultaneously enjoying greater freedom from parental supervision. These developmental changes, combined with peer influence, unrestricted internet access, and evolving social norms, may shape their sexual attitudes and behaviours. Although many students navigate this developmental period responsibly, others may engage in behaviours that are detrimental to their physical, psychological, and academic well-being.

Sexual behaviour encompasses a broad range of actions, thoughts, and emotional experiences related to sexual expression and intimacy. According to Fisher (2022), sexual behaviour refers to the various ways individuals express sexual feelings, attraction, and intimacy through physical, emotional, and digital interactions. These behaviours include activities such as kissing, sexual intercourse, masturbation, flirting, sexting, and the consumption of sexually explicit materials. Walton and Bhullar (2018) similarly described sexual behaviour as observable activities associated with sexual arousal, gratification, or sexual exploration, including both solitary and interpersonal sexual practices. Simon (2017) viewed sexual behaviour as relatively consistent patterns of sexual expression influenced by biological drives, personal beliefs, social experiences, peer relationships, and cultural expectations. Consequently, sexual behaviour among university undergraduates can be understood as the range of sexual actions and expressions influenced by biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors.

As noted by Chukwuma (2026), sexual behaviour among undergraduates may be categorized as either healthy or risky. Healthy sexual behaviour involves consensual, responsible, and respectful practices that promote physical health, emotional well-being, and healthy interpersonal relationships. The World Health Organization (2022) stated that healthy sexual behaviour should be voluntary, free from coercion, based on mutual respect, and supported by informed decision-making regarding sexual activity, contraceptive use, and partner selection. Within the university environment, healthy sexual behaviour includes respecting personal boundaries, practising safe sex, communicating openly with partners, and avoiding behaviours that may endanger oneself or others (Bártová et al., 2021). In contrast, risky sexual behaviours include unprotected sexual intercourse, having multiple sexual partners, coerced sexual activities, compulsive consumption of pornography, and other behaviours that expose individuals to sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, psychological distress, or academic difficulties. In Nigeria, where cultural and religious values generally promote sexual restraint before marriage, students often experience tension between societal expectations and personal desires, making healthy sexual decision-making particularly important.

Among the psychological factors that may influence undergraduate sexual behaviour is paedophilic tendency. Paedophilic tendency refers to the presence of atypical sexual thoughts, fantasies, attractions, or inclinations directed toward prepubescent children, although such



tendencies do not necessarily imply clinical diagnosis or offending behaviour. These tendencies exist on a continuum and require careful ethical and psychological consideration. Emerging evidence suggests that individuals who report atypical sexual interests may also experience broader difficulties in sexual regulation, impulse control, and sexual decision-making, thereby increasing the likelihood of engaging in problematic sexual behaviours. Understanding these tendencies within non-clinical undergraduate populations may therefore contribute to identifying psychological risk factors associated with unhealthy sexual behaviour.

Another psychological factor receiving increasing scholarly attention is pornographic addiction. Pornographic addiction refers to compulsive and repetitive consumption of sexually explicit materials despite experiencing negative personal, social, academic, or psychological consequences. Excessive pornography use has been associated with distorted sexual attitudes, unrealistic expectations of intimate relationships, impaired emotional regulation, compulsive sexual behaviours, and diminished academic functioning. Given the widespread accessibility of internet-enabled devices among university students, problematic pornography use has become an important issue warranting empirical investigation within higher education settings.

Despite increasing research on undergraduate sexual behaviour, existing studies have primarily focused on demographic characteristics, peer influence, substance abuse, religious affiliation, and exposure to digital media. Comparatively fewer studies have examined the predictive contributions of deeper psychological factors such as paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction. Furthermore, available findings remain inconsistent. While some studies reported that paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction independently predict unhealthy sexual behaviour, others found weak or non-significant relationships. The interaction between these variables remains insufficiently understood, particularly within the Nigerian cultural and educational context where stigma surrounding sexual issues often limits research, reporting, and access to psychological support services.

Although considerable research has examined sexual behaviour among university undergraduates, most studies have concentrated on demographic characteristics, peer influence, substance use, family background, religiosity, and exposure to digital media. Comparatively little empirical attention has been devoted to the predictive contributions of paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction, particularly when both variables are examined simultaneously. Existing findings remain inconsistent, with some studies reporting significant relationships between these psychological variables and sexual behaviour, whereas others found weak or non-significant associations. Furthermore, evidence from Nigeria, especially South-East Nigeria, remains limited despite the region's increasing concerns regarding risky sexual practices among university students. This paucity of empirical evidence creates an important gap in the literature and limits the development of evidence-based counselling interventions and institutional policies aimed at promoting healthy sexual behaviour among undergraduates. Consequently, this study investigated the predictive power of paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria.



Research Question One

What is the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on sexual behaviour of university undergraduates?

Hypothesis

There is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates.

Research Method

The study adopted a correlational survey research design to investigate the predictive relationship between paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction (predictor variables) and university undergraduates' sexual behaviour and school adjustment (criterion variables). The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the degree and direction of the relationships among the variables without manipulating them.

The study was carried out in South-East Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The population consisted of 148,712 undergraduate students enrolled in federal universities during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 1,148 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Although Taro Yamane's (1967) formula produced a minimum sample size of 399, the sample was increased to improve representativeness and enhance the reliability of the findings.

Data were collected using four instruments: the researcher-developed Paedophilic Tendency Scale (PTS) and Sexual Behaviour Scale (SBS). The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A pilot study involving 50 undergraduate students outside the study area was conducted, and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.85 were obtained for the PTS and SBS respectively, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

The questionnaires were administered electronically through Google Forms with the assistance of students' representatives who shared the survey links across various social media platforms. Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple linear regression was used to answer the research question while multiple regression was employed for hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The strength of the relationships was interpreted using the guidelines proposed by Schober et al. (2018).



Presentation of Results and Interpretation of Data

Research Question One: What is the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on sexual behaviour of university undergraduates?

Table 1: *Regression analysis of the Predictive power of paedophilic tendency on sexual behaviour of university undergraduates*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	N
1	.687 ^a	.471	.471	10.14662	1148

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pedo_Tend

b. Criterion Variable: Sex_Behav

Hypothesis: There is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates.

Table 2: *Test of significance for the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates.*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.102	.919		10.996	.000
	Pedo_Tend	1.763	.055	.687	31.965	.000

The result in Table 1 presents the regression analysis of the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.687, indicating a strong positive relationship between paedophilic tendency and sexual behaviour among university undergraduates. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.471, indicating that paedophilic tendency accounted for 47.1% of the variance in students' sexual behaviour, while the remaining 52.9% of the variance may be explained by other factors not included in the model. These findings indicate that paedophilic tendency is a strong predictor of sexual behaviour among university undergraduates.

The test of significance further revealed that paedophilic tendency significantly predicted the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates ($\beta = .687$, $t = 31.965$, $p < .001$). Since the probability value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates, was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that paedophilic tendency significantly predicts the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of the data, the study found that paedophilic tendency significantly predicted the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates. Specifically, paedophilic tendency accounted for 47.1% of the variance in students' sexual behaviour ($R = .687$; $R^2 = .471$; $\beta = .687$; $t = 31.965$;



$p < .001$), indicating a strong positive predictive relationship. The null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates, was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that paedophilic tendency significantly predicted the sexual behaviour of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria. The regression analysis showed that paedophilic tendency accounted for 47.1% of the variance in students' sexual behaviour ($R = .687$, $R^2 = .471$), indicating a strong positive predictive relationship. The hypothesis test further confirmed that this predictive relationship was statistically significant ($\beta = .687$, $t = 31.965$, $p < .001$). This suggests that higher scores on the measure of paedophilic tendency were associated with higher levels of sexual behaviour among the university undergraduates studied.

The finding indicates that paedophilic tendency is an important psychological variable associated with undergraduate sexual behaviour. Although the study does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship, the significant predictive relationship suggests that atypical sexual interests may be associated with broader patterns of sexual expression and sexual decision-making among university students. This highlights the importance of considering psychological factors, alongside social and environmental influences, when seeking to understand sexual behaviour in higher education settings.

The finding is consistent with the study of Klein et al. (2015), who reported that elevated sex drive and hypersexual behaviour were significantly associated with stronger paedophilic interests. Although their study was conducted in a different population, the results similarly suggest a relationship between atypical sexual interests and patterns of sexual behaviour. The finding also corroborates that of Briken et al. (2017), who found that individuals reporting paedophilic tendencies exhibited significantly higher levels of sexual compulsivity. Furthermore, the finding is broadly consistent with the systematic review by Schippers et al. (2023), which indicated that individuals with paedophilic tendencies may continue to demonstrate sexual interest in adults, suggesting that atypical sexual interests can coexist with broader sexual expression. Collectively, these studies support the present finding that paedophilic tendency is significantly associated with sexual behaviour.

The implication of this finding is that psychological characteristics may contribute to variations in sexual behaviour among university undergraduates. Consequently, university administrators, counsellors, psychologists, and other stakeholders should strengthen preventive mental health services, sexuality education, and confidential counselling programmes that promote healthy sexual attitudes, responsible sexual behaviour, and appropriate psychological support for students experiencing sexual or emotional difficulties.

Conclusion

The study concludes that paedophilic tendency is a significant predictor of sexual behaviour among university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria. The findings indicate that paedophilic tendency accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in students' sexual behaviour, highlighting



the importance of psychological factors in understanding sexual behaviour among undergraduates. The study therefore underscores the need for evidence-based counselling and preventive interventions aimed at promoting healthy sexual development and responsible sexual behaviour within universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University authorities should strengthen counselling and psychological support services by providing confidential assessment, guidance, and intervention programmes that promote healthy sexual attitudes, responsible sexual behaviour, and appropriate coping strategies among undergraduates.
2. University counselling centres should organize regular sexuality education programmes, seminars, and workshops to educate students on healthy sexual relationships, responsible decision-making, consent, and the consequences of risky sexual behaviours.
3. Mental health professionals, counsellors, and student affairs personnel should collaborate to develop early identification and referral mechanisms for students who exhibit problematic sexual thoughts, compulsive sexual behaviours, or related psychological difficulties, while ensuring confidentiality and ethical practice.

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