

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUALITY
EDUCATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ETHIOPE
EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT, DELTA STATE
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Abstract

The study investigated the knowledge, attitude and perception of sexuality education among secondary school students in Ethiopie East Local Government area, Delta State. Four research questions and one hypothesis were raised and formulated respectively. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 18,525, while the sample size was 495 respondents and was drawn through multi-stage sampling procedures. A self-structured questionnaire was used for the study, it was content and face validated by three experts, while the reliability was determined through Split-half method. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages for the research questions while the formulated hypothesis was tested using two sample independent t-tests at 0.05 significant level. The findings revealed that majority of the secondary school students have relatively high knowledge of sexuality education. It was perceived that secondary school students should be exposed to sexuality education at the appropriate time by parents, schools and other major stakeholders of education. Lastly, the study revealed significant difference in knowledge between male and female student on sexuality education. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that: Knowledge of sexuality education should be sustained and encouraged through constant and consistent dissemination of vital sexuality information in media and negative attitudes and perceptions toward sexuality education should be mitigated through the employment of qualified health educators that would help to modify their attitudes during and after lectures in class rooms.

Keywords: Attitude, Knowledge, Sexuality Education, Secondary School

Introduction

Humans are sexual beings, hence, sexuality is a fundamental part of being human. It is beyond the quality of being distinguished by sex. Sexuality encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientations, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction, World Health Organization (WHO, 2015). While sexuality encompasses these areas, not all of them are usually expressed or experienced.

Sexual development and maturity set in at Adolescence. Adolescence is the period of life between childhood and adulthood from ages 10-19, at this stage they are confronted with different challenges that range from emotional to physical, psychological and social change. They experience an upsurge of erotic feelings that may be pleasurable or painful, most adolescents are usually not prepared for the changes and challenges that comes with this phase of their lives. Generally, it is a period where they begin to explore possible new relationships, make decisions, function independently as well as develop abstract thinking, exposing them to emotional and sexual vulnerabilities. Their sexual perception and attitudes are usually formed within this period. Hence, they need appropriate knowledge about their sex and sexuality, Sexuality education becomes imperative.

Adolescents are curious and constantly want to be informed about their sexuality. They seek information about their sex and sexuality from sources they can easily access, either good or bad. As asserted by Harris (2011) there is an exponential growth in media coverage and adolescents' access to literature related to sexuality through the media which affects their sexual attitude and attitude towards sexuality education. Perhaps, this is the reason sexual attitudes and behaviors are changing worldwide among adolescents.

Rapid societal changes such as urbanization, and globalized culture experienced in developing countries like sub-Saharan Africa have an impact on adolescents about their sexual health. In a study carried out by Darroch, Woog, Bankola and Ashaford (2016), it was estimated that 21 million girls between the ages of 15 to 19 in developing countries become pregnant, 12 million give birth and 3.9 million undergo unsafe abortion every year. These problems may be due to lack of knowledge about their sexuality. Proper and appropriate knowledge of sexuality education is a consistent predictor of positive sexual attitude. Sexuality education is a teaching and learning process that aims at promoting good sexual health and behaviour. It contains information about human anatomy, physiology, reproductive rights and health, including family planning that fosters the formation of positive attitude. It can be formal or informal. It is the responsibility of everyone who acts as adolescent guardians to educate them on issues regarding sex and sexuality. At this stage, their daily routine revolves around the home, religious centres, community groups and schools. It is therefore their duty to constantly teach them sexuality education. But unfortunately, sex- related topics come with controversies. In Nigeria, as in most African countries, sex and sexuality matters are usually shrouded in secrecy; neither the adolescent boy nor girl has free access to the knowledge they need on sexuality, and girl-boy relationships are typically hushed up and treated as "taboo" (Esere 2006; Poopla, Agunbiade & Ogunfowokan, 2018). The open discussion of sex-related issues is often seen as immoral or filthy. Parents, teachers, spiritual leaders possibly debate on who to teach adolescent sexuality education, they may end up pointing accusing fingers without taking actual responsibility. Perhaps if they do, such information may be biased.

The situation is not far from what is obtainable in Delta state, those who are

saddled with the responsibilities to educate adolescents concerning their sexuality shy away from it. Studies have shown that for cultural reasons parents find it uncomfortable and 'scared' to discuss sex related issues. The adolescent who relentlessly wants to learn, learns little or nothing from them. In the quest to know more, they seek information from media, magazines, peers, and even pornography, which may consequently 'corrupt' their mindset. These sources are uncoordinated and unreliable, they are not sufficient enough to provide them with the skills they need to make informed decisions. As opined by Opara, Eke and Tabansi, (2012) myths and misconceptions about sex and sexuality acquired by young people from wrong sources may be carried throughout life and passed on to their offspring.

Proper knowledge of sexuality education equips adolescents with life skills that will help them make the right sexual decision. It will increase their knowledge on their sexual rights and promote abstinence. Lack of knowledge is the main reason for risky sexual behaviours. Poor knowledge of sexuality education exposes them to irresponsible relationships, and unsafe sex. For adolescents to manage the challenges and changes they undergo, as well as reduce risky sexual behaviours, they need adequate knowledge. Insufficient and inappropriate knowledge of sexuality education has negative impacts on their health which brings about poor attitude. Caddel and Caddel as cited in Nkiru (2018) ascertained that the amount of education required to change one's attitude toward sexuality varies. The prevalence of sexual-social issues such as premarital sex, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, unsafe sex, and sexual violence among secondary school students may be as result of lack of knowledge.

Various conceptions about sex and sexuality might influence their perception of sexuality education positively or negatively. Whether or not there would be a decrease in social imbalance would be determined by how they view sexuality education and their attitudes and reaction to it (Omolade, Atofojomo, & Olaluwoye, 2018). The school therefore, plays a major role by providing sexual knowledge free from prejudice or bias. The school provides comprehensive sexual education that gives adolescents sufficient sexual awareness to develop positive attitudes, values and beliefs. School-based sexuality education provides necessary and appropriate sexual knowledge, and relevant sexual orientations that will help curb risky sexual behavior, handle controversies and direct them to make good decisions. The school is an ideal place for sexuality education to be taught. A well planned and structured sexuality education without prejudice or bias will have a positive effect on adolescents' sexual health, this will improve their knowledge, attitude and conduct. The attitude and perception of adolescents on sexuality education largely depend on the knowledge they received. Hamilton-Ekeke (2019) opined that, the concerns that arise as a result of inadequate sexuality education and incorrect sexual perceptions among school students are not only numerous, but they also have serious implications for their future and that of the nation as a whole. Therefore, this study evaluated the knowledge, attitude and perception of sexuality education among secondary school students.

Adolescents undergo drastic change and face different challenges regarding their sexuality, many engage in risky sexual behaviours without the awareness of the social and health implications on their lives. It is expected that adolescents are grounded with knowledge pertaining to their sexuality to enable them make right sexual choices but unfortunately, it is not so. Despite the available knowledge of sexuality education at home, religious centres, community groups and in various subjects at school, even when it is inadequately or properly taught, some adolescents still indulge in unhealthy sexual practices.

In recent times, they experience early sexual debut that has resulted to socio-public health problems such as unsafe sex or negative sexual behaviours (Igudia, 2017), early and unintended pregnancy, complications from childbirth, social violence, unsafe abortion, multiple sexual partners, depression, masturbation, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and even death. Most social vices can be attributed to sexual problems adolescent encounter. Limited knowledge, myths and wrong interpretation deduced from various sources are possible reasons adolescents make poor sexual decisions. Inadequate sexuality education has debilitating effect on the health, emotion and social relation of secondary school students, however, from the literature reviewed on this study, none has been done in this locality. Hence, the study intends to fill this gap by assessing the knowledge, attitude and perception of sexuality education among secondary school students in Ethiopie East Local Government area, Delta state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and perception of sexuality education among secondary school students in Ethiopie East Local Government, Delta State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. the level of knowledge on sexuality Education among secondary school students;
2. the attitudes of students in secondary school toward sexuality education;
3. the perception of sexuality education among secondary school students; and
4. if there is a difference in knowledge of sexuality education between male and female students.

Research Questions

This study answered the following questions:

1. What is the knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students?
2. What are the attitudes of students in secondary school towards sexuality education?
3. What are the perceptions of sexuality education among secondary school students?
4. What is the difference in knowledge of sexuality education between male and female students?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested to guide the study at 0.05 significant level:

- There is no significant difference in knowledge of sexuality education among female and male secondary school students

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the 18,525 secondary school students in 24 public schools and 37 private schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area, Delta State. The sample size of this study consists of 495 students in Ethiopia LGA of Delta State. A multi stage sampling procedure was employed in this study as thus: Stage 1: Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select twenty secondary schools. Stage 2: Proportional sampling technique of balloting by replacement was used to select 20% of the students in each school. Stage 3: Systematic sampling technique was used to select the respondent from the selected school, such that the class register of the student was collected and every odd number was selected until the required sample size was achieved. The research instrument used for this study was a self-structured questionnaire titled: Knowledge, Attitudes and Perception of Sexuality Education among Secondary School Students (KAPSESSS). The questionnaire consists of two sections, Section A sought demographic variables of the respondents, while Section B highlighted responses on knowledge, attitude and perception of sexuality education respectively. Section B part 1 is a multiple-choice question on knowledge of sexuality education, which was scored: correct answer= 1, wrong answer = 0. The Likert scale summated rating was used for Section B part 2 and part 3: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) which was scored: SA=4, A= 3, D=2, SD=1.

The content and face validation were done by three experts from the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin city. The experts' valuables suggestions, recommendations and observations were incorporated into the final draft of the instruments. To establish the reliability of the instrument on knowledge, split-half reliability method was used and kuder Richardson 20 was used to analyze the collected data, while the internal consistency of the items on attitude and perception was measured using Cronbach alpha statistics. The instrument was administered to 20 respondents who do not form part of the sample. Items measuring knowledge reported a coefficient value of 0.77 while that of attitude and perception gave a coefficient value of 0.88 which shows the instruments are reliable. The research instrument was administered by the researchers with the aid of two research assistants. The assistant was properly enlightened on how to distribute and retrieve the instrument, to ensure 100% retrieval is achieved. Completed copies of the questionnaire were checked thoroughly to ensure the questions are all responded to. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using frequency counts and

percentages to answer the research questions raised while the two sample independent t-tests were used to test the formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Decision rule for the research question was based on any achievement score between 0-9 was regarded as low knowledge, 10-14 as moderate knowledge and 15-20 high knowledge. On the hypothesis, the probability value (P) was used. If P-value was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected but if P-value is higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis would be retained.

Results

Research Question One

What is the knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students

Knowledge Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	170	34.3
Moderate	167	33.7
Low	158	31.9
Total	495	100.

High: Score of 15-20 Moderate: score of 10-14 Low: score of 0-9

Table 1 reveals the level of knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students. It can be seen that 34.3% of the respondents had moderate knowledge of sexuality education, 33.7% had moderate knowledge and 31.9% of the respondents had low knowledge of sexuality education. This shows that the majority of the respondents have relatively high knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students.

Research Question Two

What are the attitudes of students in secondary school towards sexuality education?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on attitude of students in secondary school towards Sexuality education

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Lack of Sexuality education can result in unsafe practices	104(21.%)	273(55.2%)	68(13.7%)	50(10.1%)
2.	It is not forbidden to have open discussion on sex	93(18.8%)	180(36.4%)	168(33.9%)	54(10.9%)

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
3.	Adolescents have no need to be sexually informed	67(13.5%)	214(43.2%)	123(24.8%)	91(18.4%)
4.	Sexual knowledge plays a major role in encouraging sex	92(18.6%)	171(34.5%)	158(31.9%)	74(14.9%)
5.	It is better to get sexual knowledge from pornographic video	61(12.3%)	164(33.1%)	144(29.1%)	126(25.5%)
6.	Sexuality education teaches the importance of making good sexual decisions	159(32.1%)	228(46.1%)	74(14.9%)	34(6.9%)
7.	I find it easier to talk to my friends about sex than my parents.	99(20.0%)	199(43.2%)	123(24.8%)	74(14.9%)
8.	It is okay to have sex as a teenager	110(22.2%)	178(36.0%)	137(27.7%)	70(14.1%)
9.	Through sexuality education I can learn how to be a responsible adult	170(34.3%)	215(43.4%)	75(15.2%)	35(7.1)
10.	I shy away from having sex related conversations.	92(18.6%)	232(46.9%)	112(22.6%)	59(11.9%)

Table 2 reveals the attitudes of students in secondary school towards sexuality education. The table revealed that 55.25% and 21% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that lack of sexuality education can result in unsafe sexual practices while 13.7% and 10.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 36.4% and 18.8% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that it is not forbidden to have open discussion on sex while 33.99% and 10.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed, 43.8% and 13.5% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that adolescents have no need to be sexually informed while 24.8% and 18.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 34.5% and 18.6% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that sexual knowledge plays a major role in encouraging early sexual debut in adolescence, 33.1% and 12.3% agreed and strongly agreed it is better to get sexual knowledge from pornographic video than from parents and teachers, 46.1% and 32.1% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that Sexuality education teaches the importance of making good sexual decisions while 14.9% and 6.9% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Similarly, 40.2% and 20.0 agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they find it easier to talk to their friends about sex than their parents, 36% and 22.2% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that there is nothing wrong with having sex as a teenager and 46.9% and 18.6% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they shy away from having sex related conversations

Research Question Three

What are the perceptions of sexuality education among secondary school students?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the perception of students in secondary school towards sexuality education

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
11.	Sexuality education will help me in understanding the changes my body undergo.	119(24.0%)	272(54.9%)	61(12.3%)	43(8.7%)
12.	I perceive that the major contributor of sexuality education should be parents.	96(19.4%)	201(40.6%)	167(33.7%)	31(6.3%)
13.	I feel sexuality education should only be taught at school	69(13.9%)	211(42.6%)	153(30.9%)	62(12.5%)
14.	I feel only adults should have conversations about sex and sexuality.	108(21.8%)	214(43.2%)	111(22.4%)	62(12.5%)
15.	I feel exposing adolescents to sexual learning will corrupt their mind.	74(14.9%)	196(39.6%)	138(27.9%)	86(17.4%)
16.	I perceive that sexuality education is all about abstinence from sex till marriage	59(11.9%)	241(48.7%)	150(30.3%)	45(9.1%)
17.	I feel it is generally inappropriate to have open conversation about sex	76(15.4%)	181(36.6%)	174(35.2%)	64(12.9%)
18.	Sexual information should be taught when a child displays problematic sexual behaviour	79(16.0%)	225(45.5%)	139(28.1%)	52(10.5%)
19.	Sex and Sexuality should only be discussed within the walls of marriage	81(16.4%)	179(36.2%)	172(34.7%)	63(12.7%)
20.	Adolescents have no right to sexuality education	86(17.4%)	173(34.9%)	132(26.7%)	104(21.0%)

Table 3 reveals the perceptions of sexuality education among secondary school students. Majority of the respondents, 40.6% and 19.4% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that the major contributor of sexuality education should be parents

while 33.7 and 6.3 respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed, Majority of the respondents 42.6% and 13.9% agreed and strongly agreed that sexuality education should only be taught at school while 30.9% agreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed. Similarly, the table revealed that 43.2% and 21.8.% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that only adults should have conversations about sex and sexuality while 22.4% and 12.5% respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed, 39.6% and 14.9% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that exposing adolescents to sexual learning will corrupt their mind while 27.9% and 17.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 48.7% and 11.9% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that sexuality education is all about abstinence from sex till marriage while 30.3% and 9.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 36.6% agreed that they feel it is generally inappropriate to have open conversation about sex, 45.5% also agreed that sexual information should be taught when a child displays problematic sexual behaviour. In the same vein, 36.2% agreed that sex and sexuality should only be discussed within the walls of marriage and lastly, 34.9% and 17.4% agreed and strongly agreed that adolescents have no right to sexuality education while 26.7% and 21% respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in knowledge between male and female students on sexuality education among secondary school students.

Table Four: Independent sample t-test testing for difference in knowledge between male and female student on sexuality education among secondary school students

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	254	2.63	.443	493	-2.244	0.25	Significant
Female	241	2.72	.383				

Table 4 reveals the independent sample t-test on the difference in knowledge between male and female students on sexuality education among secondary school students. It can be seen that male respondents had a mean score of 2.63 and female respondents had mean score of 2.72. The table also showed a t-value of -2.24, degree of freedom of 493 which shows it was significant at p-value of .025. Testing at an alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was not retained since the p-value is less than alpha value. Thus, there is a significant difference in knowledge between male and female students on sexuality education among secondary school students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that the majority of the respondents had relatively high knowledge of sexuality education among secondary school students. These findings corroborate with that of Clark, Jackson and Allen-

Taylor (2002) who reported that adequate knowledge will lead to a healthy sexual life for adolescents into adulthood, whereas insufficient knowledge will expose the adolescent to negative sexual influences such as multiple sexual partners, alcoholism, and addictions. The finding is contrary to that of Siva, Nesan, Jain (2021) sexuality education has lost its significance as a result of social taboo and cultural disparity, this may in turn lead to poor knowledge about sexual health to young adults.

Findings on research question two indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that sexuality education teaches the importance of making good sexual decisions as well as discouraging secondary school students from unholy and unsafe practices. This finding is in line with that of Omolade et al (2018) who asserted that in Nigeria, rapid advancements in communication through the use of telephones, print media, and new media have improved interpersonal relationships among youths, having significant impact on sexuality issues. On the contrary, Arop, Madukwe, Owan (2019) asserted that many homes consider sex related conversations as taboo, any inquisitive child who eventually asks questions about sex is morally branded “a bad child” and may be disciplined. Such controversies are usually among parents, teachers, and even religious leaders. This confirms the opinion of Poopla et al (2018) that in Nigeria, the issues of sex and sexuality are usually shrouded in secrecy; neither the adolescent boy nor girl has free access to the knowledge they need on sexuality, and girl-boy relationship are typically hushed up and treated as taboo.

The findings of research question three showed that the majority of the respondents perceived that secondary school students should be exposed to sexuality education at the appropriate time by parents, schools and other major stakeholders of education. This is because wrong perceptions about sex and sexuality have driven a great number of adolescents into acts capable of ruining their lives (Adiaha, Abolarin, Johnson, Ndifon, Anabe, Ocheje & Awulu, 2018).

The findings of hypothesis revealed that there was a significant difference in knowledge between male and female students on sexuality education among secondary school students. The difference between boys and girls in their knowledge of sexuality education could be related to the importance parents attached to their female children on matters related to sexuality. As soon as a girl child experiences her menarche and the development of breasts, parents begin to expose them to sexual knowledge which the boys are not privileged to have because the development of their sexual secondary characteristics is internal. This finding is in consonance with that of Adiaha *et al* (2018) who reported that adolescent's students generally hold favourable attitude towards sexuality education, with females holding more favourable attitudes than male. This is also in line with the findings of Olapegba, Idemudia and Onuoha (2013) that in-school female adolescents were particularly higher on responsible sexual behaviours compared to that of males. This therefore, demonstrates that gender is an important contributor to the knowledge attitudes and perception of sexuality education among secondary school students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that majority of the respondents have high knowledge of sexuality education. In relation to attitudes majority of the respondents maintained that, adolescents have no need to be sexually informed, sexual knowledge plays a major role in encouraging early sexual debut in adolescence, it is better to get sexual knowledge from pornographic video than parents and teachers, that sexual knowledge plays a major role in encouraging early sexual debut in adolescence, it easier for them to talk to their friends about sex than their parents, nothing is wrong with having sex as a teenager and lastly they shy away from having sex related conversations. Similarly in relation to perceptions, the study concluded that secondary perceived that parents should be the major contributors of sexuality education, sexuality education should only be taught at school, only adults should have conversations about sex and sexuality, exposing adolescents to sexual learning will corrupt their mind, sexuality education is all about abstinence from sex till marriage, it is generally inappropriate to have open conversation about sex, sexuality education should be taught when a child displays problematic sexual behaviour, sexuality should only be discussed within the walls of marriage and lastly adolescents have no right to sexuality education. Again, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in knowledge between male and female student on sexuality education among secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that

1. Knowledge of sexuality education should be sustained and encouraged through consistent dissemination of vital sexuality information in media
2. Negative attitudes and perceptions toward sexuality education should be mitigated through the employment of qualified health educators that would help to modify their attitudes during and after lectures in class rooms.
3. Both sexes should be exposed to same sexual knowledge since the issue of sexuality is for both sexes.

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