KNOWLEDGE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON SEX EDUCATION IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

A serious concern is being expressed currently in Southwest, Nigeria on sex-related deviant behaviors such as rape, unwanted pregnancies occasioning the death of youths, and the sterility of married youths as a result of physical damage to the reproductive system earlier in life. Hence, this study investigated the knowledge of secondary school students on sex education. A description design of the survey type was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of one thousand, six hundred and twenty (1,620) students selected from twenty seven secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria through random sampling technique. A structured-questionnaire titled: “Knowledge of Students on Sex Education Questionnaire’ (KSSEQ) was used to collect data for the study. The question raised was answered with description statistics, such as percentages, mean scores, standard deviation while t-test and ANOVA statistics, used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed a significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among student of various religions. Therefore encourages to give appropriate information on sex education to the young ones. Also there should be no disparity on the type of sex education given to male and female students at home by parents or in the school by teachers.
Keywords: Knowledge, Sex Education, Gender, Religion.

Introduction

The entire world or Southwest, Nigeria in particular seems to be currently faced with a lot of social problems that are sexually related. These problems include sexually transmitted diseases, rape, unwanted pregnancy, unlawful abortion and others which may lead to death in some cases. Babalola, (2016) observed that this issue has equally attracted the attention of individuals and societies all over the world. It is observed that the increase in the population of youths coupled with the influx of technology appears to have given rise to immoral behaviours among students, Parents, teachers, religious bodies and other social and educational organizations equally expressed concern on how to handle the problems.

Sex education, according to Adepoju (2005), is an orientation given to children on the processes and consequences of sexual activities. It is a systematic training and instruction that a person receives on sexual activities and issues connected to sex. Amaechi (2004) sees sex as one of the most universal and powerful force in a society. From observation, interest in sex appears to start from early infancy. This assertion could be supported by the habit of children’s interest in playing with their genital organs. However, the curiosity about sex as exhibited by children at this stage is most often regarded as a sign of great danger, therefore parents rebuked these children or gave them wrong information in a state of hush and embarrassment. Ogunbameru (2006) observed that lack of information on issues relating to sex has made many of the young ones to be unprotected in their sexual exploration thereby endangering their lives. This attitude has also been observed to intensify children’s curiosity in sex related issues in a much greater force with negative consequences. Therefore, there is a need to break the silence and remove the veil of unnecessary secrecy surrounding sexual issues between
parents and their children with a view to ensure better perspectives and appropriate sexual behaviours among secondary school student.

Parents, teachers and concerned adults are becoming more disturbed by the increasing incidence of teenagers pregnancy, consequent drop out from school, incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and causes of Human Immune Deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) infection among the young school age children. For instance, in the South Western part of Nigeria, the subject of sex is considered sacred and not intended to be loosely discussed, especially by the young ones. Oyinloye (2014) observed that when a child carelessly talks about sex, the parents could reprimanded the child for talking about a subject considered sacred. Most Senior Secondary School students are in adolescence period of their growth. This is a period when students in secondary schools need the right information about the rapid changes in their bodies as well as the right attitude to deal with them. It is equally a period of making sense of the evolving relationships with families and peers, coping with new sexuality feelings and trying to access conflicting information about who they are and what is expected of them. Adegoke (2003) described this stage as a period when lots of physiological as well as anatomical changes take place resulting in reproductive maturity. Sandtrock (2005) supported this view by noting that during adolescence, the lives of male and female persons become wrapped in sexuality. To him, the adolescence period is a time of sexual exploration for students and sexuality is a normal aspect of human development, hence, information on it should not be presented as scary and sinful for students.

Kriby (2001) observed that many students in secondary schools manage the transformation in adolescence successfully while others experience major stress and also find themselves engaging in negative sexual behaviors such as sexual experimentation, exploration and promiscuity that place them at risk. Hence, the
question of who gives knowledge about sex and what attitude the students in secondary schools are expected to exhibit on the issue becomes a concern. Sexual behavior being an important universal issue requires a serious attention most especially about the knowledge relating to its practices. However, this is not the case in all cases, probably because all societies regulate sexual activities in their unique ways. For instance, in consideration with the culture of the Southwest, Nigeria, it is imperative to teach young people about sex education in a way that will not only reflect the value of the family and society, but also enhance the sustainability of such culture. Therefore, students in secondary schools appear to be a critical group of people in a society that need protection from the danger and implication of risky sexual behaviours through early and adequate knowledge on sexual issues.

Observations from research findings such as Sandtrock (2005), Ogunbameru (2006) and Oyinloye (2014) indicated that sex education is one of the major determinants of future stability in families and the nation. This is because it encompasses a wide range of biological, sociological and psychological knowledge. Hence, there is a need for awareness on sex education in schools, churches and other institutions, mostly on the growing concern over teenage pregnancies, abortion, venereal diseases, increased promiscuity and sexual difficulties. Most religious organizations in Southwest, Nigeria perceived the teaching of sex education in secondary schools as a license for moral decadence among the youths. Some religious doctrines forbid children mentioning such words like vagina and penis, publicly. Edewor (2002) reported that teachers brought up in such manners skip topics like reproduction, sexual transmitted diseases, and premarital sexual relationships when teaching and these happened to be important areas of knowledge of human beings.
In Southwest, Nigeria, there seems to be high rates of sexual immoralities among the youths. Sexual immorality as a social menace has become a cankerworm which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society and hence the youths are at risk of sexual and other relatives problems due to lack of knowledge on sex education. It appears enough information has not been presented to students on sex education as in other areas of education in the Southwest, Nigeria. Sexual ignorance then seems to be the causes of many social problems such as unwanted pregnancies, illegal abortion, abandoning of unwanted babies, rape, unplanned marriages, divorce and the HIV/AIDS scourge that has become a daily occurrence in the society.

Observation have shown an increase in rate of school drop-outs among secondary school students in the area which in turn has constituted social menace materially, social and economically, Also many of the secondary schools students are plagued with incessant problems of moral laxity, such as, indecent dressing and other moral decadence. Some parents do neglect their legitimate duty of imparting knowledge of sex-related issues on their children because doing that is seen as a taboo. Religious bodies hardly consider it worthwhile to initiate sex education programmes for youths in their places of worship, hence, they are left to acquire information through trial and error techniques from unguided avenue, This results in negative consequences for the youths when they become sexually active. Based on all these concerns, this study investigated the knowledge of secondary school students on sex education and examined the influence of gender and religion on this with a view to determining the level of their knowledge on sex education,

**Research Question**

The following research questions were raised for the study:
1. What is the level of secondary schools students’ knowledge of sex education?

**Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the knowledge on sex education between male and female students.

2. There is no significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of various religions.

**Method**

A descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for this study. The sample was made up of 1,620 students selected through multistage sampling procedures. Twenty seven secondary schools were selected through stratified random sampling technique. Thirty (30) male and thirty female students were also selected from each of the selected schools as participants for the study. A questionnaire titled: ‘knowledge of Students on Sex Education Questionnaire’ (KSSEQ) was constructed and used for the study after validation. A reliability coefficient of 0.64 was obtained through test retest method. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire and 1557 copies were retrieved from the total of 1620 students by the researcher. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

**Results**

**Table 1:** What is the level of secondary school students’ knowledge of sex education?

Descriptive analysis on the level of secondary school students’ knowledge of sex education.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (0.69,80)</td>
<td>81.84</td>
<td>12.037</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (69.81-93.86)</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>74.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (93.7 – 140.00)</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>1575</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that out of 1575 sampled students, 110 representing 6.98 percent, had low level of knowledge, moderate level were 1168, representing 74.16 percent, while those with high level of secondary school students’ knowledge of sex education was moderate. To determine the low level, the standard deviation score was subtracted from the means score (81.84 – 12.037 = 69.803). The moderate level was determined by the mean score of the responses (81.84) while the high level was determined by adding the means score and the standard deviation score (81.84 +12.037 = 93.87).

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the knowledge of sex education between male and female secondary school students.

This hypothesis investigated whether the sex of students in secondary schools could result in differences in their knowledge of sex education. To test this, mean score of male and female students were subjected to t-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** t-test analysis on the difference between male and female students’ knowledge of sex education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>T_cal</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>82.40</td>
<td>12.263</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>1.915</td>
<td>0.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>81.24</td>
<td>11.769</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result in Table 2 reveals that $t_{cal}$ (1.914) was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was not rejected. The means that there is no significant difference in the knowledge of sex education between male and female secondary school students. Hence, there is no significant gender difference in the students’ knowledge of sex education.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in knowledge of sex education among students of various religions.

To investigate whether the religion of students could result in differences in their knowledge of sex education, the score of students who are Christians, Muslims and Traditional were subjected to ANOVA analysis of variance at 0.05 level of significance as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** ANOVA showing difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of various religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>$F_{cal}$</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1123.542</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>561.771</td>
<td>4.037</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>21620.926</td>
<td>1554</td>
<td>139.164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217384.468</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result in Table 2 reveals that $F_{cal}$ (4.037) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant
difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of various religion. In order to locate the source of pair wise significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of various religion. Scheffe Post-hoc-test was carried out as depicted in Table 4.

**Table 4: Scheffe Post-hoc analysis showing secondary school students knowledge of sex education by religion.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4.946</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>3.884</td>
<td>222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>1.062</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that there is significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of different faiths which Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion

**Discussion**

The result revealed that the level of senior secondary school students knowledge of sex education was moderate. This perhaps was made possible due to advancement in media technology as students tend to acquire information on sex education with ease through the internet, television, phones and other media source. The results further showed that there is no difference in the knowledge of sex education between male and female secondary school students. The reason for this might be due to their exposure to the Western world through the internet and other available sources which doesn’t discriminate access.

The result also revealed that there is significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among students of different religions. This findings is in
consonance with Babalola (2016) who noted that Islam endorses any form of beneficial knowledge, be it Islam or Christianity, helps children to cultivate good moral behavior and attitude towards life as well as self purification, self actualization and socialization. However, this finding is at variance with Alonge’s (2007), who found out that there is no significant difference in the knowledge of sex education among various religions. He submitted that both Christianity and Islam do not see the need for sex education in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study concluded: that secondary school students; knowledge of sex education in Southwest Nigeria is moderate; that gender did not influence the knowledge of secondary school students on sex education which could be due to exposure of students to Western education; and that religion of the students influenced their knowledge of sex education in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria because different religion have different codes of sexual morality which regulates sexual activities.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made,

1. Properly guided sex education should be given to students irrespective of their gender or religious belief.

2. Religious organization should be encouraged to intensify sermons/messages on appropriate sexual conduct and also give information on sex to the young ones. If the youth are well informed, there is the likelihood that incidences of unhealthy sexual exploration and teenage pregnancy would be reduced.
References


