

Assessment of the Female Secondary Students' Attitude towards Information on Personal Sexuality Skills in Ebonyi State of Nigeria

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Abstract

Recent study has revealed the absence of formal programme of sexuality information in Ebonyi state secondary schools. Undoubtedly, this would create a gap in information flow on the all-round important sexuality life enhancing skills among the students. In this study therefore, assessment of the female secondary students' attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills in Ebonyi State of Nigeria was determined. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study while the population comprised 63,793 female students in Ebonyi State Secondary Schools. A multistage sampling procedure involving clustering, stratification, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 1080 female students as sample for the study. Two specific objectives and corresponding number of research questions were used for the study. One null hypothesis was formulated and was tested using ANOVA at 0.5 level of significance. Instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire tagged Attitude towards Information on Personal Sexuality Skills Questionnaire (ATIOPSSQ). To estimate the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha's Co-efficient was used and a reliability of $r = 0.71$ was established. Result of the study revealed after assessment that attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills among female secondary students in Ebonyi State of Nigeria was positive. It was also found that religious affiliation of the female secondary students had significant influence on their attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills. The study therefore concluded that since female secondary students in Ebonyi state of Nigeria favoured receiving information on personal sexuality skills, all efforts should be made to offer them the highly desired sexuality education. It was thus recommended amongst others that government, policy makers and NGOs should organize periodic comprehensive personal sexuality skills education in both primary and post primary schools in order to promote sexual health behaviours among the students.

Keywords: Assessment, Attitude, female secondary students, information, personal sexuality skills, implication for sexual health education.

Introduction

Sexuality is the very essence of a person's humanity including his self-image, being male or female, physical looks and reproductive capacity. It includes not only sexual behaviour and genders but also values, attitudes, beliefs, feelings about life, love and the people (Adepoju, 2005a).

The youths like every other group ought to be informed about their sexuality early enough so as to enhance their sexual decision makings later in life (Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 2014). Regrettably, most youths especially adolescents, most of whom are secondary students, are left uninformed or misinformed about sexual health and issues (Adegboro, 2013).

In African countries, Nigeria, in particular, matters relating to sexuality are usually shrouded in secrecy. Neither the primary school students nor their secondary counterparts have free access to information bordering on sexuality (Adamu, 2013). There are no separate formal programmes of sexuality education in Nigeria secondary school curriculum. It is either they are integrated or correlated with other school subjects. In effect, this does not pave way for adequate information dissemination and full coverage of the broad sexuality components of which personal sexuality skill belongs (Obande-Ogbuinya, 2015).

Personal sexuality skill consists of values, self-esteem, goal setting, decision making, communication, assertiveness and negotiation (Action Health Incorporated, 2003). The use of personal sexuality skills for instance negotiation in resolving sexual conflicts among young girls enables them to make risk-taking decisions such as whether to have or not to have sexual intercourse,

types of parties to attend, alcohol/drug use, use of condoms and other contraceptives use, stealing and being violent (Health Library, 2011).

Information on personal sexuality skills involves transmission and impacting of knowledge on values, self-esteem, goal setting, decision making, communication, assertiveness and negotiation. It is considered to be very important in the life of a young female student. Arguably, the girl-child most times, seems to be at the receiving end on matters arising from any sexual misadventure (Action Health Incorporated, 2003). Conversely in Nigeria, a female secondary student lacks all-encompassing personal sexuality skills information that she ought to get from school. When such information is lacking, a young girl may resort to obtaining sex information from peers, older siblings and media. She may end up being sexually victimized with its damaging effects from unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), (Action Health Incorporated, 2003).

Some of the sexuality challenges may be averted by enabling the young girls have access to comprehensive information on personal sexuality skills. This can be achieved by creating a space in secondary school time table through a subject tagged sex education. It has been described as a planned process of education that fosters the acquisition of factual information, the formation of positive attitudes, beliefs and values as well as the development of human skills to cope with the biological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual aspects of human sexuality (Action Health Incorporated, 2003). Through such forum, sexual information such as correct skills can be inculcated into the girl-child and thus enhances her skills in negotiating sex and issues bordering on premarital sex, condom use, contraception and sexually transmitted infections (Action Health, 2003 and Obande-Ogbuinya, 2015).

Basically, information on personal sexuality skills contains facts on values, self-esteem, goal setting, sexual decision making, communication, assertiveness and negotiation (Action Health Incorporated, 2003).

Possession of right attitude among the recipients of sexuality education for efficient and effective sexual health information acquisition is highly solicited for optimal personal sexuality skill knowledge and practice. Attitude refers to favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction towards something or someone exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings or intended behaviour (Arnold, 2012). Assessment on the other hand refers to the act of making judgement about something (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2016). In the present study, Assessment of the female secondary students' attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills invariably refers to making judgement about their attitude i.e. their affective feeling of liking (positive attitude) or disliking (negative attitude) towards receiving information on values and value clarification, self-esteem, goal setting, sexual decision making, communication, assertiveness and negotiation.

As stated by Alleydog (2014), attitude affects behaviour. In the present study, any attitude shown by the students at the end of the study, would elicit the best sexual health intervention strategy to bring about positive change in sexual behaviour of young girls. In a study by Fraser (1997) and Hsu, Lien, Lou, Chen and Wang (2010), female adolescents showed positive attitude towards personal sexual communication skills and sexual decision making respectively. These were enhanced through sexual empowerment course. The risks of STDs and pregnancy tend to be primary influences in the female adolescents' positive attitude towards receiving information on sexual decision-making (National Association of Social Workers, 2013). On the other hand, Kaiser Family Foundation (2000) identified parents, and teachers as influencing the attitude of younger females between ages 12 and 14.

In furtherance to other factors, religion has been found to weld major influence in reducing the likelihood of adolescents engaging in early sex by shaping their attitudes and beliefs about sexuality issues. A strong relationship existed between religiosity and female adolescent's sexual attitude, skills and behaviour. Accordingly, religious commitment is more important than religious affiliation in affecting adolescents' sexual attitude, skills and behaviour (Odimegwu, 2005). In Onwuezobe and Ekanem (2011) Study, religion was regarded to be of primary influence or at least among the most powerful forces in establishing and maintaining sexual attitudes and regulating sexual behaviours. The same study found that greater percentage of teachers in the study exhibited willingness to teach sex education despite their religious backgrounds. According to the study, the

teachers' religious backgrounds did not negatively affect their willingness to impact sexuality education to their students.

In Ebonyi state of Nigeria where the study was done, the female secondary students who are between the ages of 11 to 15 or even higher, just like their contemporaries in other parts of the country, lack some of the life skills that can help them cope with relationship issues with the opposite sex (Obande-Ogbuinya, 2015). Conversely, the female students, due to their location (area of study) with varying religious groups and their teachings exhume timidity, naiveness and inferiority complex in dealing with the opposite sex. Some of the students, lack the skill to assertively affirm their unwillingness to have premarital sex with their boyfriends. Probably for fear of their boyfriends leaving them for other girls, some of them timidly engage in premarital and unprotected sex regardless of the physical, biological and social health consequences. On the other hand, the various religious teachings and beliefs may have significant impact on the girls' attitude towards sexuality education. To the female secondary students in Ebonyi State, the intended outcome of the assessment of their attitude ought to be favourable or unfavourable in order to elicit necessary health intervention as the case may be. Based on the foregoing, the present study investigated attitude of female secondary students in Ebonyi state towards receiving information on personal sexuality skills and also to assess how religious affiliation of the female students influences their attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills,

Research Questions

- (1) What is the attitude of the female secondary students in Ebonyi state towards information on personal sexuality skills?
- (2) How does religious affiliation of the female secondary students influence their attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills?

There is no significant difference in the attitude of female secondary school students towards information on personal sexuality skills based on religious affiliation ($p < .05$)

Method

A descriptive survey was carried out among 1,080 female secondary school students that were selected through multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, three education zones in the state were chosen namely, Abakaliki, Onueke and Afikpo. In the second stage, six schools were selected from each zone using simple random sampling technique. The process resulted to a total of eighteen female secondary schools. The third stage was purposive selection of 10 SS III students, 10 SS II students, 10 SS I students, 10 JSS III students, 10 JSS II students and 10 JSS I students. The reason was to ensure equal representation of the classes. This procedure yielded a total of 60 female secondary students selected from each of the sampled secondary schools.

For data collection, the instrument used, was a self-structured questionnaire titled: Attitude towards Information on Personal Sexuality Skills Questionnaire (ATIOPSSQ) developed to provide data for answering the contents of the research questions. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 70 female secondary students that were not among the study population who had their schools at Enugu, were used. Data collected from the students were subjected to exploratory factor analysis which reduced the number of items from 12 to 4 useable items. The questionnaire was arranged in two sections, A and B. Section A contained information on the respondent's religious affiliation while section B consisted of 4 items containing pieces of information on personal sexuality skills. The response was on a four-points scale indicating degree of agreement and disagreement as thus: strongly Agree (SA)= 4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. A criterion mean of 2.50 was set for the study. The criterion was derived by adding up the scale values and dividing the sum by the number of scale options as thus: $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.50$. The method is in line with Olaitan's, 1983 criterion adapted from Likert's scaling. It could be used to classify the constructs under study for the purpose of description as was used by Nwimo and Onwunaka (2012). In this regard, a mean of score 2.50 and above was adjudged a determinant of positive attitude towards personal sexuality skills among the female secondary students in Ebonyi state while a mean score below 2.50 was adjudged to portray a negative attitude towards personal sexuality skills among the female secondary students in Ebonyi state.

To validate the instrument, 5 experts in health education department were used to give face and construct validity to the ATIOPSSQ. For test of reliability, data collected from the 70 female students that were not part of the study were used and it yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.71 which was considered higher than Ogbazi and Okpala's criteria of 0.60 acceptable for good instruments.

To gain access to the study population, permission was sought and granted from the principal of each of the selected schools before the data collection. Attached to each copy of the ATIOPSSQ was a consent note explaining the purpose of the research, method of responding plus assurance of confidentiality.

The 1080 copies of the ATIOPSSQ that were administered were returned but 1036 were properly completed and thus utilized for analysis. The Researcher and the Assistants' one-by-one strategy of scrutinizing the entire completed instrument made it possible for the discovery of 44 copies of the instrument that were improperly filled and thus discarded. To answer the research questions, means and standard deviations were used to describe the respondents' attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze data in order to ascertain the differences in attitude of the respondents towards information on personal sexuality skills based on religious affiliation. An alpha level of 0.05 was set for the ANOVA. The entire data analysis was done using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) with version 20.0 for windows.

Results

Research question 1

What is the attitude of the female secondary students in Ebonyi state towards information on personal sexuality skills?

Table 1: Attitude of Female Secondary Students towards Information on Personal Sexuality Skills

S/N	Information on personal sexuality skill	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1.	Female students most often are uncomfortable discussing sexuality issues in an open manner.	3.10	1.13	Positive
2.	Girls have the right to refuse any person's request for any type of sexual behaviour.	2.92	1.19	Positive
3.	Failure to be assertive in sexual situations may cause teenage pregnancy among girls.	2.80	1.18	Positive
4.	Teenage girls who date need to learn to negotiate decisions about sexual behaviours	2.73	1.19	Positive
	Grand mean	2.89	0.92	Positive

The data presented in Table 1 show that items 1, 2, 3, and 4 had the mean scores of 3.10, 2.92, 2.80 and 2.73 respectively. From the data, all the items scored above the criterion mean of 2.50 with the grand mean of 2.89 while the standard deviation for all the items was 0.92. It can be deduced from this, that the female students in Ebonyi State secondary schools have positive attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills.

Research Question 2

How does religious affiliation of the female secondary students influence their attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills?

Table 2: Influence of Religious Affiliation on the Female Secondary Students' Attitude towards Information On Personal Sexuality Skills

Variables	Religious Affiliation					
	Christianity(979)		Islam(23)		Traditional(34)	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
Attitude of female students towards information on personal sexuality skills	2.93	.90	2.76	.57	1.75	1.04

The data presented in Table 2 show that in determining the influence of religious affiliation on the attitude of the female students towards information on personal sexuality skills, Christian and Islam's religious affiliates showed positive attitude by scoring above the mean of 2.50. Christianity showed most positive attitude by a mean score of 2.93 followed by the Islam with a mean score of 2.76. However, the traditional students showed negative attitude as revealed by a mean score of 1.75.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the attitude of female secondary students towards information on personal sexuality skill based on religious affiliation.

Table 3: Test of ANOVA Based On Religious Affiliation of the Female Secondary Students

S/N	Information on personal Sexuality Skills	F – value	p-value
1.	Female students most often are uncomfortable discussing sexuality issues in an open manner.	25.843	.000
2.	Girls have the right to refuse any person's request for any type of sexual behaviour.	38.09	.000
3.	Failure to be assertive in sexual situations may cause teenage pregnancy among girls.	19.597	.000
4.	Teenage girls who date need to learn to negotiate decisions about sexual behaviours	14.325	.000
Cluster	Attitude of female secondary students towards information on personal sexuality skills	*28.149	0.000

p > 0.05 (significant difference)

Table 3 shows the test of analysis of variance (ANOVA) based on religious affiliations of the female secondary students in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The analysis indicates that there is significant influence of religion on the respondents' attitude towards information on personal sexuality skills when the value of F, 28.149 is greater than the p-value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion

Attitude of the Female Secondary Students in Ebonyi State towards Information on Personal Sexuality Skills

Research question one focused on finding out the attitude of the female students in Ebonyi state secondary schools towards information on personal sexuality skills. Results in Table one indicated that the attitude of the female secondary students in Ebonyi state towards information on personal sexuality skill was positive. In other words, the female students favoured receiving information on values, self-esteem, goal setting, sexual decision making, communication, assertiveness and negotiation (Action Health Incorporated, 2003).

The result of the study was in line with Auslander, Perfect, Succop and Rosenthal (2014), which revealed that young girls showed positive attitude to sexual assertiveness aspect of personal sexuality skills. It was also found by Hsu, Lien, Lou, Chen and Wang (2010) that female adolescents in China showed positive attitude towards another aspect, sexual decision making which was enhanced through sexual empowerment course. The positive attitude towards sexual decision making, assertiveness and right for refusing of request for any type of risky sexual behaviour might have

stemmed from fear of contracting STI, being pregnant while in school and/or being driven away by parents due to pregnancy. The National Association of Social Workers (2013) had discovered that the risks of STDs and pregnancy tend to be primary influences in the female adolescents' positive attitude towards sexual decision-making.

Furthermore, the result of the study may have been prompted by the fact that parents, teachers and religious advisors whom the adolescent girls communicate with most often, act as primary influences on the development of positive attitude towards sexual decision-making of younger females between ages 12 and 14 (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000). Indisputably, the influence of parents in traditional religion may have also accounted for the negative attitude exhibited by the respondents affiliated to traditional religion towards information on personal sexuality skills. May be, given to the fact that these group of respondents are not exposed to Christian and Islamic religious influences which although emphasize purity and submissiveness, would uphold the use of assertiveness and negotiation by young girls to refuse sex and in resolving other sexual conflicts more than the traditional religion which emphasizes conformity and non-confrontational approach to sexual conflicts, the students affiliated to traditional religion displayed negative attitude to personal sexuality skills.

The influence of Religious affiliations of the Female Students on their Attitudes towards Information on personal Sexuality Skills

The result of summary of test of ANOVA in Table 3 indicated that there was significant influence of religious affiliations on the respondents' attitude towards personal sexuality skills. The result of the study supported Donnelly, Duncan, Goldfarb and Eadie (1999) investigations on sexuality attitudes and behaviors of self-described very religious urban students in middle school. It was found that the Christian and Islamic sampled students showed permissive and liberal attitude to any aspect of sexuality information. The result of the study also concurred with Arland and Camburn (1989) study, where religious involvements and adolescent sexual attitudes and behavior were found to be strongly correlated. Young people who attend church frequently and who value religion in their lives showed willingness to sexuality information but the least permissive attitudes and less experienced in sexual behaviours. Probably, that may have led to the negative attitude shown by the traditional religion students by their mean score of 1.75 below the criterion mean of 2.50. The traditional Affiliates may not be keen in keeping with the teachings against sexual immorality as their Christian and Islamic Counterparts.

The reason for the positive attitude shown by the Christian and Islamic students notwithstanding their religious affiliation is not far-fetched. Major religious groups through their doctrine, inform her followers on issues pertaining to sexuality such as avoidance of premarital sexual immorality, adultery, fornication among others. Sugh (2011) had earlier revealed religion and spiritual beliefs as enhancing positive attitude and having influence on adolescents' feelings about morality. The result however refuted McCree (2001) study which found that religiosity was unrelated to students' attitude to personal sexuality skill information and behaviour. The result may have been triggered by the long gap between the two studies and also by the belief that personal sexuality skills are matters of personal decision and determination to adopt or not to adopt.

Conclusions

Female students in Ebonyi state secondary schools indicated positive attitude towards receiving information that borders on personal sexuality skills. It invariably means that the secondary school girls in Ebonyi state favour receiving information on sexual assertiveness, sexual negotiation and decision makings. However, while the Christian and Islamic religious groups favoured receiving the information, the traditionalists were not in support. Accordingly, result of the null hypothesis rejected that there is no significant difference in the female students' attitude based on religion. Attitude of the female students actually differed based on religion.

Implication of the Study

The findings of the study imply that health educators, parents, educators, care givers, religious leaders and peers may have been providing some skeletal informal instruction on personal sexuality skills. Such sexuality information informal in nature, might have been imparted to the students before

coming to the school and could have been from uninformed sources hence their show of positive attitude so as to be more equipped with formal and factual sexuality instruction.

The findings of the study also imply that notwithstanding the absence of a codified subject on sex education in secondary schools, the integration of sex education components in subjects like health education, biology, home economics and integrated science might have contributed to the positive attitude shown by the female students towards getting information on personal sexuality skills.

The result of the test of the null hypothesis implies that the female students' attitude towards information on personal sexuality skill differed based on their religious affiliation. It thus underscores the fact that efforts should be made to urgently meet up with the sexuality information needs of the students regardless of their religion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for the health educators, public educators, peer educators, policy makers, curriculum planners and other interest groups in the area of adolescent health.

1. There is need for urgent personal sexuality skills' education intervention by all stake holders in order to promote sexual health behaviours among the young ones.
2. In providing Personal sexuality skill education, health educators, peer educators, health agencies and care givers should ensure the inclusion of rightful skills of exercising assertiveness and negotiations in times of sexual behaviours and decision making.
3. Health educators and various school of thoughts should mount health education intervention programmes for different age groups and genders for personal sexuality skills sensitization and acquisition. This would enhance sexual health among the young ones and help to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STIs.
4. In disseminating personal sexuality skill information to the youths, policy makers and curriculum planners should ensure that culture and religion are taught along. They would all go a long way in causing desired change in sexual behaviour of the adolescents.

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