

PERCEPTION OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON TEACHING OF SEX EDUCATION IN SHONGOM LGA OF GOMBE STATE.

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Abstract

Adequate knowledge of adolescents about sexual issue will determine their behaviour concerning relationships, inadequate knowledge and misconception of sexuality has been responsible for their risky sexual behaviours. To this end, the researcher investigates on the perception of Senior Secondary School Students on teaching of sex education in Secondary Schools in Shongom LGA of Gombe State. To achieve this purpose ex-post facto research design was used. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire using Likert rating scale. The questionnaire contained (6) sections. Section A contained six (6) statements on personal data of the respondents. Section B contains item related to the teaching of sex education in secondary schools. Section C contains 6 items on students religious and cultural belief in the teaching of sex education, Section D contains 6 statements on perception of students about the contribution of sex education in the enhancement of reproductive health knowledge and Section E contains the 6 items on inclusion of sex education to the secondary school curriculum. The questionnaire thus developed was administered to a total of (500) student from six Local Government Areas which was randomly selected from the three wards in Shongom LGA of Gombe State. The data thus collected was statistically analyzed at Institute of Agricultural Research. t- test was used to determine the extent of teaching sex education in secondary schools in State. Each hypothesis was tested at an Alpha level of 0.05. The result of the study revealed that sex education is not taught as a subject of its own in Shongom LGA of Gombe State Secondary Schools. The study also showed that the male and female students want sex education to be included into the secondary school's curriculum. Based on the findings in this study, the researcher recommended that sex education should be made compulsory from junior secondary school up to tertiary level of Nigerian educational system.

KEYWORDS: Perception, senior secondary, school students, teaching, sex education

Introduction

The concept of sex education and its introduction in junior secondary schools has witnessed much controversies and misconception by many teachers, parents, the society and students. The concept of sex education which is sometimes called sexuality education or sex and relationship education attracts a plethora of definitions from different people. According to Peter (2023), sex education is “the systematic attempt to promote the healthy awareness in the individual on matters of his/her sexual development, functioning, behavior and attitudes through direct teaching”. Similarly, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) Ali (2019), sees sex education 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 skills to cope with the biological, psychological, socio-cultural, and spiritual aspects of human sexuality'. From these definitions, it can be deduced that sex education is a deliberate, planned and organized learning experience in the aspect of human sexuality which is intended to equip young people with the requisite skills and adequate knowledge which will enable them to develop positive attitude on sex related issues as well as to take rational decisions in line with societal expectations. It is important to note that sex education was not just incorporated into social studies for knowledge acquisition but to help young people develop attitudes, values, goals and practices that are based on sound knowledge which will enable them to express their sexual and mating impulses in a manner that is socially and ethically acceptable as well as personally satisfying (Bulus 2012).

Sex education is one of the most controversial and politicized aspects of the school curriculum. It engages adults with distinct cultural, religious, political and economic agendas in heated and acrimonious debates in which student voices are largely unheard. Religious fundamentalist coalitions have had considerable success in creating a climate in which even moderate approaches to sex education can appear radical. To them mentioning sex or sex matters is generally regarded as taboo. Parents, teachers and religious leaders are reluctant to discuss even the simplest aspects of the subject with youth. Sunday (2020) argue that teens and adolescents will be curious and they will search for information. If they have nowhere or no reliable sources to go to they will go to more available and unreliable sources.

According to Daniel (2015), information regarding sex and sexuality is no longer a preserve of a chosen few. It is evident that young people get (doctored or edited or even incorrect) information about sex and sexuality from a wide range of sources including each other, through the media including advertising, television and magazines as well as leaflets, books and websites (such as www.avert.org) which are intended to be sources of information about sex and sexuality. Some of this will be accurate and some inaccurate. In the views of Filibus (2020), sex education therefore should include finding out what young people already know, adding to their existing knowledge and correcting misinformation, because without correct information, young people can put themselves at greater risk.

Secondary school students are exposed to a variety of risky sexual behaviours such as early sexual initiation, experiencing, multiple sexual partners, unprotected sex, having sexual intercourse with the same sex, the use of substances like alcohol or drugs and involved in sex, having sex with older age partners and non-regular partners such as commercial sex workers (CSW) owing largely to flawed sex education strategies and improper perceptions by the victims Nani (2022) found out that male students are more exposed to sexuality and sex education programmes compared to their female counterpart. This was attributed to the outgoing nature of male than the more highly guided females.

Statement of the Problem

It has been established in literature that the social and cultural environment of most African communities are governed by 'culture of silence' when it comes to discussing sexual issues, owing to the fact that sexual related topics are regarded as taboo in African culture. The culture of silence created a communication gap between children and their parents in the family and it accounted for the reason why children were punished for misbehaviours and could not question

their parents (Bala 2020). Most adolescents do not seem to be comfortable talking about sexuality with their parents (Haruna, 2019). Misconception that children should not be educated on their sexuality remains a challenging issue as the social milieu in many traditional communities still constrains such communication. Some religious beliefs also support this view.

Nigeria today is witnessing, an alarming rate of increase in problems associated with adolescent sexual development and manifestations. Among these problems are sexual perversions or risky behaviours like multiple sex partners, unprotected sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, rape, prostitution and sexual harassment. Incidences of unintended pregnancies that call for induced abortion, high mortality rate among girls, premature pregnancy resulting in Vesico Virginal Fistula (VVF) are some of the effects of the indulgence in the afore-mentioned risky sex behaviours. Personal discussion with students has revealed that many teenagers in senior secondary schools had confessed to having sexual intercourse before the age of 12 years. Risky sexual behaviours have been observed together with a number of other behaviours including delinquency, substance use, and other indices of sexual activity in general. The researchers speculate that all these anomalies stem from faulty perceptions of senior secondary schools students on sexuality and sex education leading to the prevalence of risky sexual behaviours among them. The problems of this study is to find out the perceptions of female students in *Shongom* LGA of Gombe State on sex education.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out the perceptions of female students in Shongom LGA of Gombe State on sex education. While the specific objectives are as follows:

1. to determine the perceptions of female and male students on sex education.
2. to examine the prevalence of risky sexual behaviours among female secondary school students.
3. to evaluate the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues

Research questions

1. What are the perceptions of female and male students on sex education?
2. What are the prevalence of risky sexual behaviours among female secondary school students?
3. What are the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues?

Hypothesis

1. **H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about the teaching of sex education in secondary schools in Shongom LGA of Gombe State.
2. **H₀₂:** There is no significance relationship between sex education and risky sexual behaviours among female's students in Shongom LGA of Gombe State.
3. **H₀₃:** there is no any significant role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues

Methodology

The Research design adopted in this study is the ex-post facto (after the fact) design. This design is used when a researcher intends to describe conditions that already exist, and attempts

to determine reasons for the existing differences in behaviour or status of groups of individuals (Samuel, 2022). The population for this study comprised of all the senior secondary school students in Shongom LGA of Gombe State. As at the time of this study, the number of Senior Secondary School Students selected for the study was three thousand seven hundred (3,700). (in Shongom LGA of Gombe State). The researcher used stratified random sampling techniques to draw sample from the population. The state was divided into three senatorial zones of which Two hundred and fifty (250) students were randomly selected from the population of sixteen thousand seven hundred. In sampling from population Gani (2023) method was used in this study it stated that if representativeness is to ensured 20% from a population of 1000 to 3000,10% from a population of 4000 to 7000, 3% from a population of 17000 to 20000 are recommended. The instrument used in this study is the questionnaire POFSSSEQ. The investigator studied literature on sex education. Based on this, thirty (30) questionnaire items were prepared which was organized in three different sections namely; Section ‘A’ contained six (6) statement on personal data of respondents. Section B contained six (6) statements on teaching of sex education. Section C contained six (6) statements on religion. and cultural belief towards teaching of sex education. Section D contained (6) statement on sex education in secondary school curriculum. The five point Likert Scale which is an interval scale of measurement i.e. Strongly Agree, Agreed, Undecided, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed was used to stratify responses of the respondents. The score for responses were interpreted as follows: 5 Points for Strongly Agreed,4 Points for Agreed, 3 Points for Undecided 2 Points for Disagreed 1 Point for Strongly Disagreed

The Likert Scale was chosen because it is appropriate for determining what an individual believes, feels or perceives about phenomenon. The researcher and two (2) research assistants after obtaining permission from the relevant authorities will visited the selected schools and gave copies of the questionnaire to the students randomly selected as samples for the study one (1) week will be giving to the researcher to collect back the information by most schools because it was during examination period.

Results

What are the perceptions of female and male students on sex education?

The main issue here perceptions of female and male students on sex education. In Table 1: the opinion of the students on the teaching of sex education is scored in means and standard deviations along the five point scale.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the students on teaching of sex education

Perception of sex education	Mean	S. D
1. Sex education is taught in my school	1.0548	0.2380
2. Sex education is not taught in my school	3.8119	0.7727
3. Sex education is not taught as a subject but incorporated in to biology	4.0286	0.5690
4. Knowledge of sex education will expose me to sexual	2.1357	1.4568

Activities		
5. Knowledge of sex education will delay sexual activities	3.1452	1.3110
6. Adolescents in secondary school should be sexually		
	2.9095	1.3719
Educated		
Average Mean Score	2.84766	0.9532

From the response in items on table 1, the students were unanimous about the fact that sex education was not taught in the selected school. This means that the students were aware of the rudiment of sex education as a subject. If there anything the students could be said to have be emphatic about in the table, it is the fact that sex education is not taught in the selected schools. This is indicated in item 3 with a mean score of 4.0286 which imply that the students agreed that sex education is not taught as a subject but incorporated in part of biology. On the impact sex education could have on them, they didnt agree that such knowledge would likely expose them to sexual activities but at the same time they were not sure whether such knowledge would delay their sexual activities. These indicated in the mean scores for items 4 and 5 respectively. Ironically, the students did not agree that adolescents in secondary school should be sexually educated. This is indicated with a meanscore of 2.9095 for item 6 in the table.

Research Question 2 What are the prevalence of risky sexual behaviors among female secondary school students?

The assessment here is not mainly based on the students’ attitudinal disposition but on the prevalence of risky sexual behaviors and the perceived attitude of the parents as well as that of the larger society where the students live. The religious consideration both bythe individual students, the parents and that of the society were all considered in this section. The opinion of the students on how their parent attitude and belief affect the acceptance of the teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools are expressed in mean and standard deviation(SD) in Table 2. In the table, a mean score of 3.5 and above was indicate agreement while a mean score of 3.4 and below signifies disagreement with the suggested opinion of the item.

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of students on effect of parent’s belief on acceptance of sex education in the selected secondary schools.

Parent belief and sex education	Mean	S. D
1. My parents used to discuss about sex with me	1.8619	1.0880
2. My parents do not discuss about sex with me	3.8333	.9896
3. My religion do not permit the discussion of sex education	3.9857	.3906
4. My religion see the discussion of sex education as immoral	3.9643	.4216
5. My religion permits the teaching of sex education	1.2738	.5974

6. It is our cultural belief that sex education will hasten sexual activities	3.9810	.6099
Average Mean Score	3.1566	0.6785

From table 2 above the mean score of item 1 in the table, there was unanimous agreement among the students on the fact that their parents do not discuss with them about sex. On the contrary, the students presented a consensus opinion which clearly indicated that the parents do not discuss with them anything relating to sex. This is indicated with a mean score of 3.833 for item 2 in the table. Religion is another barrier to the issue of sex as indicated with the mean scores for items 3, 4 and 5 in the table. In item 3, for example, the students were unanimous about the restriction of their religions on matters relating to sex and in item 4, the students were of the opinion that their respective religions regard any discussion on sex education as immoral. The general opinion of the students is that their respective religions do not permit the teaching of sex education. This opinion was further affirmed by the cultural belief indicated in item 6 which the students agreed present a pessimistic posture to sex education. In the item, the students were in agreement with the notion that their respective cultural belief was that sex education will hasten sexual activities among the school children.

This means that cultural belief play a major role in the acceptance of the teaching of sex education in Shongom LGA of Gombe State Secondary Schools.

Research Question 3: What are the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues?

This question dwelt on the students’ awareness of the role sex education could play on the enhancement of reproductive health knowledge. The opinion of the students is presented in mean and standard deviation in the Table 3: Mean score for agreement is expected to be above 3.4 in the table. Mean score lower than 3.5 is therefore regarded as disagreement with the suggested item.

Table 3: Mean score and standard deviation of students the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues

students the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issues	Mean	S. D
1. Teaching sex education in secondary school will go along way in preventing sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS	2.6167	1.0894
2. Sex education cannot reduce the problems of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents	3.0667	1.5434
3. Sex education in secondary school would reduce the problem of vasico vaginal fistula (VVF) in our society	3.3452	1.2291
4. Sex education in secondary school will help adolescents in the area of unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion	2.3381	1.1226
5. Unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion cannot be reduce by teaching of sex education in the secondary school	4.0286	1.1029
6. Sex education in secondary school will reduce adolescents sexual health problem	2.8119	1.2961
Average Mean	3.3463	1.3058

The students did not agree that teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools could enhance reproductive health knowledge. In item 1, the mean score is 2.6167. This means that the students disagreed with the suggested notion that the teaching of sex education in secondary school will go along way in preventing sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. In the same vein, the students did not agree that the teaching of sex education can reduce the problem of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents in the study area. This is indicated with a mean score of 3.0667 which means that the students were undecided about the opinion that sex education cannot reduce the problems of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents. This uncertainty of the students is further reflected in item3 with a mean score of 3.3452 on the problem of Vasicco Vaginal Fistula (VVF). In item 3, the students were not sure that the teaching of sex education could in any way reduce the problem of VVF among young female girls in the society. In item 4, the students completely disagreed with the suggested opinion that the teaching of sex education in secondary school will help adolescents in the area of reducing the problem of unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortions. The mean score for the item (4) is 2.3381. Thus in item 5, the students agreed that unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion cannot be reduced by teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools the mean score for the item (5) is 4.0236. The students’ response as indicated with a mean score of 2.8119 in item 6 of the table did not agree that the teaching of sex education in secondary school will reduce adolescents’ sexual health problem in the area

Test of Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about the teaching of sex education in secondary schools in Shongom LGA of Gombe state.

H02: There is a significant difference between the perception of male and female students about the teaching of sex education in secondary schools in Shongom LGA of Gombe state.

Major Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between male and female students’ perception about the teaching of sex education in Shongom LGA of Gombe state secondary schools. To test this hypothesis, all the components of the sex education assessed in the study were combined and tested with the level of the students’ classes. The one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in the test because of the multiple levels of the independent variable. The analysis of variance model is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation scores by classes of students

Classes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
SSS 1	136	3.1271	.27014	.02316
SSS 2	148	3.1011	.27381	.02251
SSS 3	136	3.1219	.25538	.02190
Total	420	3.1163	.26638	.01300

The result of the test in Table 4. revealed no significant difference between the students in their opinion on the issue of sex education in the secondary schools. The observed

f-value is 0.386 it is lower than the critical value of 3.00 at the same degree of freedom and the level of significance observed in the test is 0.681 ($P > 0.05$). This means that the null hypothesis stated showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students on the perceptions of sex education in Shongom LGA of Gombe state secondary schools could not be rejected.

The mean scores of the different classes on the sex education in the selected secondary schools are presented in Table 4..

Table 5: Analysis of variance on sex education by classes of senior secondary school students

Source of Variations	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.055	2	.027	.384	.681
Within Groups	29.677	417	.071		
Total	29.732	419			

Authors Computation

The mean scores by the students from the different classes in the table could be approximated into the same magnitude. This accounted for the no significant difference observed in the test. The mean clearly indicated that the students were undecided about most of the issues raised in relation to sex education in the selected schools.

There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching of sex education in Shongom LGA of Gombe state secondary schools.

This hypothesis was tested with the two-sample t-test because of the two independent groups (males and Female) involved in the test. The overall opinion of the students on the issues relating to sex education in the selected schools were compared here by sex of the students as indicated in Table 5.

Table 6 Two sample t-text on teaching of sex education by sex of students

Sex	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t-value	Df	P
Male	219	3.0791	.26721	.01806	3.010	418	.003
Female	201	3.1567	.26015	.01835			

t-critical = 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance

The result in the table 6 revealed significant difference between the male and female students on the teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools. The observed t-value is 3.010 while the critical value is 1.96 at the same degree of freedom (df). The observed level of significance (P) is 0.000 ($P < 0.05$). This means that the null hypothesis stated showed that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the teaching of sex education in Shongom LGA of Gombe state secondary schools could be rejected. The female differs from the male on the teaching of sex education in the selected schools. Going by the mean scores, the female tended to be more positive on the teaching of sex education than the male students.

Discussions

One of the major objectives of this study was to investigate students' perception on teaching of sex education as a subject in Shongom LGA of Gombe state secondary schools. With the forgoing analysis of the collected data within this chapter, it was observed that students in the selected secondary school do not have adequate knowledge of sex education. From the observation in Table 1, the students were unanimous about the fact that sex education was not taught in the selected school. With this observation, the students could be said to have some rudimentary awareness of sex education as a subject. But this knowledge was not adequate. One reason that could be advanced for this observation is that the students did not seem to know the impact sex education could have on them they did not agree that such knowledge would likely expose them to sexual activities. At the same time they were not sure whether such knowledge would delay their sexual activities. This finding is consistent with Victor (2020), where it was opined that something is missing in our educational system and that is sex education. In relating that of knowledge of sex education, Dan (2012), stated that the lack of such knowledge is creating problems for many of our youths, their parents and the entire society. Such problems it was opined in the report included unplanned marriage, abortion and its resultant consequences.

The lack of the knowledge of sex education by the students in this study is not only due to the non-inclusion of the teaching as a subject but also partly due to the attitude of the parents who do not think it fit to discuss such issues with their children. This observation is in line with Ola (2018), where it was pointed out that the traditional practices which protect adolescents from receiving education on sexual matters in the belief that ignorance will encourage chastity. In a similar report, Ibrahim (2017), reported that in the African setting, sex is looked upon as a taboo and that parents are uncomfortable talking about it in the presence of their children. This attitude of the parents helps to perpetuate the ignorance about sex education among children.

Religious and cultural beliefs are other factors that tended to have contributed to the observed ignorance of the students about sex education in the selected schools. In the analysis of Table 2, it was observed that apart from the inability of the parents to discuss sexual matters with their children, most students were of the view that their religions do not permit such matters to be discussed. There was a consensus among the students their different religion did not encourage to discuss issue relating to sex and they were unanimous about the restriction of their religions on matters relating to sex. From the expressed opinion of the students, their respective religions do not permit the teaching of sex education.

Further affirmation was given in their opinion on the restriction of the parents' beliefs on sexual matters which clearly indicated that cultural belief plays a major role in the acceptance of the teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools. This observation is consistent with Fada (2011) where it was opined that society and culture control both the biological and psychological components of sexuality. This observation is in line with Ade (2015) where it was reported that in Nigeria, cultural heterogeneity, multi-culturalism, ethics, social status and other traditions perpetuate rules and norms that affect the perceptions of parents. That this serves as the catalyst against the successful implementation of sex education in the country.

The role of sex education in the enhancement of reproductive health knowledge was another area where the knowledge of the students on the benefit of sex education was not clearly indicated. The students did not agree that teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools will in any way help in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. This could be attributed to lack of awareness of the components of sex education by the students. Exhibiting the lack of awareness, the students did not agree that the teaching of sex education can reduce the problem of Vaginal Fistula (VVF). The students completely disagreed with the suggested opinion that the teaching of sex education in secondary school will help adolescents in the area to reduce the problem of unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortions and reduce adolescents' sexual health problem in the area. This finding is consistent with Julius (2013), where it was reported that adolescents were at high risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases because of their lack of information and access to sex education. It was observed that most of the students were of the opinion that sex education should be included in the school curriculum. This is actually a positive development on the part of the students. This is because from the observations in this study, there are many constraints to the teaching of sex education from the students' perspectives. These included among others religious restrictions, parents' beliefs and attitude of parents towards such subject. This finding is consistent with Harris (2011), where it was reported that sex education is generally considered as important but with a number of its components highly controversial whenever they are associated with cultural and religious issues.

The expressed opinion of the students in the study could be attributed to the lack of proper awareness of the main component of sex education as a subject. In the first place, the students have not been exposed to sex education and their parents hardly expose them to matters relating to sex. Their knowledge is therefore limited to what they were able to pick up from peers and other sources of information.

Summary

This study investigated the perception of students on teaching of sex education in secondary schools within Shongom LGA of Gombe state. Among the major variables investigated were teaching sex education in secondary, effect of Religious and cultural beliefs, student perception on the role of sex education in adolescent sexual issue and their views on the inclusion of sex education as a subject in the secondary school curriculum. A structured questionnaire was administered to the students. The students' opinions were assessed on a five-point scale. To effectively carry out the investigation, the study was divided into five chapters.

Summary of Findings

Some of the major findings observed in the study are as follows:

1. That sex education is not taught as a subject in the selected secondary schools.
2. That religious and cultural belief have negative impact on the teaching of sex education in the selected secondary schools.
3. That there is no significant difference between male and female student in their opinion about the role of sex education in the sexual issues.
4. That the male and female students want sex education to be included into the secondary school curriculum

Conclusion

This study presented the perception of students towards the teaching of sex education in some selected secondary schools within Shongom LGA of Gombe state. The analysis of the data collected in relation to the subject revealed that: The students have very limited knowledge of sex education. Among the constraints encouraging this limited knowledge were religious restriction, cultural belief and parents' attitudes towards issues pertaining to sexual matters. Students from different religious background had the same opinion on the restriction of their religion on matters relating to sex and sexuality among adolescents. No significant difference was observed between the male and female students from the different classes in the selected schools in their opinion on the teaching of sex education in the selected schools. Though the students did not really have adequate knowledge of the subject, they were in favour of its inclusion into the secondary school curriculum in the state. The age of the students did not have significant impact on their opinion about the teaching of sex education in the selected schools. It was observed that the male and female students did not really know the role sex education could play in the adolescent sexual issues and other health related problems as they relate to youths in the study area. Significant difference was not observed between the male and the female students on this role that sex education could play. This limited knowledge of the students was attributed to the low awareness of sex education and the accompanied constraints of religious and parent's cultural beliefs.

Recommendations

Based On the findings in this study, the researcher recommends as follows:

- 1 That sex education should be made compulsory from junior secondary school up to tertiary level of Nigerian educational systems
- 2 That the structure of the subject should be done in such a way that the religious and cultural beliefs of the people are protected.
- 3 That such a syllabus should not be devoid of the religious connotations that will endear it to both parents and students of the different religious groups.
- 4 That teachers should take into consideration the different religious and socio-cultural views of students when discussing matters of adolescents' sexuality.

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