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KNOWLEDGE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of the knowledge of sexual behaviour of adolescent boys and girls on reproductive health in Federal Government Unity Secondary schools in Nigeria. A survey research design was used for this study. The population for this study consists of students in senior classes. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from thirteen Federal Government Unity secondary schools selected from six geo-political zones in Nigeria through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. A total of 576 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents in SS1, SS2 and SS3 in Federal Government Unity Secondary Schools in Nigeria. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that, the knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent boys' and girls' sexual behavior in Federal Government senior secondary schools were not different from each other. The differences only emanated from the respondents' views on the on-set of puberty and time of initiation into premarital sex. It was recommended that; there is the need for school authorities to train students as peer educators on reproductive health programs.

Keywords: Influence, Knowledge, Reproductive Health, Unity Schools, Sexual behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Reproductive health refers to a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes (WHO, 2021). Reproductive health education plays a pivotal or an important role in shaping the sexual behaviours of adolescents, who are categorized to be in a critical stage of physical and emotional development (WHO, 2O21). Sexual behaviours are diverse array of activities that can be classified as sexual behavior: masturbation, oral-genital stimulation (oral sex), penile-vaginal intercourse (vaginal sex), and anal stimulation or anal intercourse (Brown, 2013). Sexual behaviours may also include activities to arouse the sexual interest of others or attract partners. Individuals engage in sexual behaviors for a variety of reasons, differ in their acceptability based on societal norms, and change across the lifespan. Sexual behavior includes a wide variety of activities individuals engage in to express their sexuality. Abstinence and celibacy are terms used for individuals who do not engage in certain or any sexual behaviors. Kissing and touching are sexual behaviours that stimulate the erogenous zones of one's partner. Masturbation is a sexual behaviour referring to stimulation of one's genitals to create sexual satisfaction (Brown, 2013).

Adolescents comprise of a substantial portion of the Nigerian population, and their reproductive health is a matter of national concern. According to the World Bank, Nigeria had an estimated population of over 206 million people in 2021, with adolescents (aged 10-19 years) constituting approximately 23% of the total population (World Bank, 2021). Giving this demographic reality, it is crucial to assess the level of knowledge regarding reproductive health among adolescent boys and girls in federal government unity secondary school schools. Several studies have highlighted the correlation between comprehensive reproductive health education and positive sexual behaviors among adolescents. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) emphasizes the importance of empowering young people with accurate information about their sexual and reproductive health rights to enable them to make inform decisions (UNFPA, 2020). Moreover, research by Bearinger Sieving, Ferguson, & Sharma (2007) shows that, adolescents who receive comprehensive sexual education are more likely to engage in safe sexual practices and have healthier relationships in adulthood.

In some African societies, adolescent men and women have different interest, motivations and strategies for engaging in premarital sexual relationships for various reasons, which include the enhancement of their marriage prospects, proving their fertility to their future husbands, and for financial benefits (Meeker, 1994).

Adolescent boys on the other hand are more likely to engage in sexual relationships before marriage for sexual experience and sexual satisfaction. Having multiple partners is often a means for a male adolescent to gain social status and respect among his peers. Because of these differences, adolescent boys and girls have different patterns of sexual behavior and therefore, are exposed to different reproductive health risks, Aderibigbe & Araoye, 2008). Nnachi (2003) observed that in terms of behavioural problems, sexual abuse appeared to be one of the most serious offence committed by the youth on children and adolescents. Obiekezie-Ali (2003) was of the opinion that many Nigerian girls are known to start involvement in active sex at the early age of thirteen years.

Okonkwo and Eze (2000) were of the view that, today's situation shows a sharp contrast to the traditional Nigerian societal context in which girls avoided premarital sexual experiences for fear of social punishments usually meted out to girls who lost their virginity before marriage. In the context of Federal Government Unity Secondary Schools in Nigeria, understanding the knowledge of reproductive health among adolescent boys and girls is imperative for promoting safe and responsible sexual behaviors (Ayedemi, 2022). It could be observed in Nigeria, as a country, which faces significant challenges related to adolescent sexual health, which include early pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and lack of awareness about contraceptive methods (John, 2022).

This study strives to investigate the knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent boys and girls on their sexual behavior in Federal Government Unity Secondary Schools in Nigeria. By examining their awareness of topics such as puberty, contraception, STIs, consent, and gender equality, the study seek to gain insights into the factors that influence their decisions related to sexual activities. Understanding the gaps in knowledge and identifying the misconceptions prevalent among adolescents is essential for designing targeted and effective sexual education programs.

Purpose of the Study: To examine the knowledge of sexual behaviour of adolescent boys and girls on reproductive health in Federal Government Unity Secondary schools in Nigeria.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the knowledge of sexual behaviour of adolescent boys and girls on reproductive health in Federal Government Unity Secondary schools in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study made used of survey research design. The population for this study consists of adolescents in the one hundred and four (104) Federal Government Unity schools in Nigeria. The population was stratified into six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, which are; North-East (NE), North-West (NW), North-Central(NC), South-West(SW), South-East(SE) and South-South(SS). The States were grouped into each zone. This means that NE had 6 States, the NW had 7 States, NC had 7 States, SW had 6 States, and SS had 6 States. Also, the schools were grouped under each of the zones. Thus, NE had 15 schools, NW had 18 schools, NC had 25 schools, SE had 12 schools, and SW had 18 schools while SS had 16 schools. In this technique, Ejifugha (1998) suggested 12 percent of the samples to be drawn in a population that is not too large. Thus, in the North East, 2 schools were selected, North West, two (2) schools were selected, North Central, had (3) schools selected, South East, had (2) schools selected, South West, had (2) schools selected, and South-South, had (2) schools selected. A simple random sampling technique using fish-bowl method was used to select the samples. This shows that, in North East, two (2) schools with two (2) States were selected for the study. Also, the North West had two (2) schools and two (2) States, North Central, three (3) schools and three (3) States, South East, two (2) schools and two (2) States, South West, two (2) schools and two (2) States and South - South had two (2) schools and two (2) States were selected. This therefore, showed that, a total of 13 Schools and 13 States were used for the study. To select the subject, 12% of the population of Federal Government senior secondary schools in each of the zone was selected for the study. Thus, the thirteen schools selected had a population of 4,792 students in which a total of 576 students formed the twelve percent of the study population. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher and vetted by jurors which were distributed to the students in SSI, SSII and SSIII in their respective classes in each schools selected. The administration and collection of questionnaire was done by the researcher and five (5) trained research assistants.

RESULTS

The demographic analysis of the respondents is as follow:

Table I: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Class	SS I	182	31.6
	SS II	213	37.0
	SS III	181	31.4
	TOTAL	576	100
Gender	Male	290	50.3
	Female	286	49.7

	TOTAL	576	100
Age	Below 15 years	176	30.6
	15-17 years	356	61.8
	18 years & above	44	7.6
	TOTAL	576	100

Table 1 indicated the respondents' classification of which SSI, 213 (37.0 %), 182 (31.6%) were SSII and 181 (31.4 %) were SSIII. Furthermore, 290 (50.3%) were males and 286 (49.7%) were females. Most of the respondents 356 (61.8 %) were between age 15-17 years, 176 (30.6 %) were below 15 years and the remaining 44 (7.6 %) were 18 years and above.

Table II: Mean scores of the respondents on opinion of sexual behaviour

Variables	**No**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Std Error**
It is a common practice amongst adolescents to have boyfriend/girlfriend.	576	4.04	1.25	0.05
Being together of a boy and a girl in an exclusive environment promotes immoral behavior.	576	4.19	0.96	0.04
Embracing and kissing are common practices between boys and girls.	576	3.84	1.27	0.05
Parents frown when their wards are found in an exclusive environment with the opposite sex.	576	4.31	0.91	0.04
Parting among students may encourage immoral practices and behaviors.	576	3.98	0.98	0.04
Parents do warn their wards against pregnancy while in school.	576	4.49	0.81	0.03
To discourage sexual immorality amongst students, pregnant students are sent away from the school.	576	4.45	0.87	0.04
Intimacy of student with teachers encourages sexual behaviors.	576	3.71	1.14	0.05
Students learnt some immoral behavior through the internet.	576	4.43	0.83	0.04
Failure to adhere to the acceptable dress code may place students at the danger of being harassed sexually.	576	4.44	0.80	0.03
Aggregate mean score		**4.19**	**0.99**	**0.04**

Table II shows that, the respondents were in agreement with the opinions of male and female adolescents in Federal Government senior secondary schools in Nigeria on sexual behavior with an aggregate mean score of 4.19. In response to the research question, and from the aggregate mean scores of 4.19 therefore, the respondents were in agreement to the variables investigated in table II.

Table III: Two sample t-test on knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent

Gender	Mean	Std.Dev.	Std. Error	t-value	DF	P	t-critical
Male	4.1768	0.42969	0.02528	0.608	574	0.543	1.96
Female	4.1986	0.42643	0.02535				

r (574) = 1.96, P=0.05

Table III shows that, the opinions of the adolescent boys and girls about their knowledge of reproductive on sexual behavior were not significantly different. The t-calculated (0.608) in the test was less than t-critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. This means that, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference between the knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent boys' and girls' sexual behavior in Federal Government senior secondary schools in Nigeria was hereby retained.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study further revealed that knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent boys' and girls' sexual behaviors were not significantly different. This was in contrast with the views of Aderibigbe and Araoye (2008) that men are more likely to engage in sexual relationships before marriage for sexual experience and sexual satisfaction. Having multiple partners is often a means for a young man to gain social status and respect among his peers. Because of these differences, adolescent men and women have different patterns of sexual behavior and therefore, are exposed to different reproductive health risks. The study was supported by Olokor (2012) that, in Nigeria, adolescents aged 10- 24 constitute 31.7% of the total population of 151.87 million in 2009, with nearly equal proportion of males and females (50.1% males versus 49.9% females). The population of males tends to be higher in the younger age groups. While [4] in a study conducted in Nigeria, said adolescents constitute 18% of total population of 126 million in the year 2003. That as many as 50% of these adolescents have initiated sexual activity with the first sexual intercourse at age ranging from 14 to 18years across the geographical zones. Also 14% of the females and 26% of the males engaged in risky sexual practices, which include sex with non-marital partners, transactional sex, multiple partners, and sex with more than one non-marital partners and non-use of condom while Ogunsola (2012) said the last half of the 20th century witnessed substantial changes in the practice of premarital partnership among the adolescents which may be due to the influx of the western culture in the continent of Africa. Olayiwola (2010) agreed that pornography is a highway to masturbation as the adolescent males and females that watch pornography later practice masturbation. Pornographic materials feed the adolescents with wrong information. It is disturbing to parents, schools and the society that quite a number of adolescents in schools are exposed to pornographic materials. Also, Olugbenga and Fasuba (2005) concurred in their study on adolescent sexuality and family life education conducted in Ile-Ife, that, students discussed the issue of boyfriend / girlfriend in the class as if they are discussing a topic in a particular subject, they exchange love letters and meet themselves openly in the nooks and crannies of the school without fear. Some students leave their houses to school in their uniforms but without getting to school at all. They move around in the mufti they hid in their

bags before leaving their homes. So instead of coming to school, they end up in an arranged place known to the opposite sex student who will not come to school either. The finding was in contrast to the study of Isarabhakdi (1997) that, peer influence is stronger in males than females because males are supposed to initiate love or sex and boys are more free than girls to live on their own and, most likely, to experiment with sex. Also, Olayiwola (2010) opined that, most of the adolescents of today see sex as fun, cool and hype. Most of them go into romantic relationships very early in life. The male adults have not helped the situation as they pressurize most of these teenage girls into having sex. As a result of pre-marital sex or promiscuity, adolescent girls become pregnant prematurely and this condition usually affects their education and may have serious effects on their health.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the influence of the knowledge of sexual behaviour of adolescent boys and girls on reproductive health in Federal Government Unity Secondary schools in Nigeria. It discovered that the knowledge of reproductive health of adolescent boys' and girls' sexual behaviors was not significantly different. It is an ugly trend that some students leave their houses to school in their uniforms but without getting to school at all. They move around in the mufti they hid in their bags before leaving their homes. So instead of coming to school, they end up in an arranged place known to the opposite sex students who will not come to school either. It is a necessity to curb this social vice among these secondary school students. Again, there is need for school authorities to train students as peer educators on reproductive health programs; most especially on puberty stage of development in order to guide against sexual behaviour that could affect their future development.

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