SEXUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES AS PERCEIVED BY SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MINNA METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the sexual health knowledge attitude and behaviour relations to human sexuality among secondary school students in Minna metropolis, Niger State. Knowledge about sexuality among the secondary school students has become rampant that it cannot be overlooked. Some secondary school students between the ages of 12-18 years of age were found pregnant and the attitude and practice of the school age on sexuality is becoming alarming in our secondary schools. A sample population of 300 subjects was used for this study. Hypotheses were formulated and tested on the adolescents’ pattern of sexuality, knowledge and practice of sex education and knowledge of reproductive health or biology and knowledge and attitude on contraception. The descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used while the inferential statistics of chi-square (χ2) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the findings indicated that sexual frequency, pattern of sexuality practices among the students were statistically significant while knowledge of contraception reproductive biology as well as hazards associated with unprotected sexual relations was very low among the subjects under study. Recommendations were adduced to help in finding solutions to problems of adolescent sexual activities and how to prevent the hazards associated with unprotected sexual relations.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria like many other countries of the world is currently ravaged with multifarious social problems of which the major ones such as; stress, smoking, alcoholism, adolescent sexual explosion, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), drug abuse and teenage problems, adolescent sexual activity is alarming and on the upwards trend with these attendant consequences on teenage reproductive health (Bawa, 1992).

Semmens and Lamers (1999) described adolescence as a critical period that signal the end of tranquility of childhood and heralds the onset of frustration of early adulthood and passing through successfully depends upon integration of maturation in biological, psychological, sociologic spheres.

Research surveys have indicated adolescent sexual explosion in Nigeria like in other parts of the world. For instance, Saba (1995) revealed that secondary school students in Minna Municipality of Nigeria, seriously engaged in early sexual relation, frequent sexual relation and have many sexual partners. Essien (1974) as reported by Ayangade (1989) indicated that 73% of boys and 34% of the girls were sexual active. Bawa (1992) reported that 250 students between ages of 15 and 19 years became pregnant in just three schools in Minna, Nigeria within three years. However, teenage pregnancy is a common and observable concept within the entire Nigerian society. Raffaelli, M., Campos, R., Meritt, A.P., Sequera, E., Antunes, C.M., Parker, R., Creco, M., Grew, D. and Halsey, N. (1993) asserted that apart from teenage pregnancy, other risk associated with teenage increased practice and behaviour towards sexuality includes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immune Virus (HIV) infections as well as other STDs. Other consequences range from interference with schooling, criminal abortion, abandonment of infants by the roadside, or dustbins, infanticide and sudden deaths from abortion.

Students have shown factors responsible for early initiation into sexual activities. Buga, et al., (1995) identified sexual maturation, early onset of dating and poor knowledge of reproductive biology as some of the factors which hasten early onset of sexual experiences. Apektan (1988) also recognized factors like ensuring survival i.e. survival sex with adult to obtain food, clothes and shelter, qualification for acceptance into peer group, establishing dominance and exerting power as well as a result of coercion.

Because of the aforementioned factors, many people continue to clamour for SEX EDUCATION variously called sexual health education, family life education, reproductive health education and sexual health. Sufficient to say that this has not been imbibed into very many cultures while indiscriminate sexual activities continue to grow with their adverse effects. Whether our society likes it or not, sex education is an inevitable part of the adolescent development (could be formal or informal sex education).

Saba (1995) further concluded in his sexuality concept using Minna Municipality school girls as his population concluded that secondary school girls have many sexual partners. This present study focus on ‘sexuality’ and sex education concept using Minna Metropolis secondary school students as its target population.

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**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of sexual activities, factors associated with early initiation into sexual activities such as knowledge of reproductive biology, attitude and behaviour towards sex education among secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.

**Hypotheses**

In the light of the present investigation, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

1. Secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not significantly perceive to experience early initiation into sexual activity.
2. Secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not significantly perceive and engage in sexual practices with many partners.
3. Secondary school students will not have significantly perceived knowledge of reproductive biology.
4. Secondary school students in Minna metropolis discussion with their peers will not have significant influence on their sexual behaviour.
5. Secondary school students will not have significant knowledge of contraceptives

**METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The study is a descriptive research design which made use of sample survey method. The sample consists of three hundred (300) male and female secondary school students. Simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques were used in the selection of schools to have a fair representation of schools according to number of schools in each of the two local government areas in Minna metropolis (Bosso LGA and Paiko LGA). There were a total of 35 schools in Minna North, where we have Paiko LGA and we have Bosson in South respectively. Thus, 6 schools out of 9 schools were picked from the two zones in the metropolis. However, twenty (20) subjects were studied in each of the fifteen schools selected from Minna metropolis.

The main research instrument was a structure questionnaire. The questionnaire items are the close-ended type designed to test the level of sexual activities, factors associated with early initiation into sexual activity, knowledge of hazards of unprotected sexual relations and knowledge about the use of contraceptives. The questionnaire consists of 27 items, it is divided into 5 sections, Section A elicit information on personal data (age, religion, sex and marital status) while Section B contains information of social knowledge and C contain attitude and practice as it was perceived by secondary school students in Minna metropolis. Other records were elicited for information. The descriptive statistics of chi-square ($\chi^2$) was used to accept or reject the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Validity and Reliability**

For the purpose of this study, face validity was used, the instrument was face validated by the head of the department of Physical and Health Education, College of Education, Minna. The corrections and suggestions made by the validator was used to prepare the final suggestion of the instrument.

A pilot study was conducted in Niger State College of Education, Minna. Sixty students representing 20% of the prospective respondents were used. The essence of the pilot study was to find out the usefulness or the reliability of the instrument. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire as well as to make comments or recommendations on the item on the questionnaire. A test-retest method was employed to test the instrument. The results obtained from the first and second administrations were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients. The value obtained was 0.82.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Distribution information indicates that 40% were males and females were 60% (180). It was observed that there were more females than males in the enrolment of the selected schools for this study. The age distribution of the respondents was between 10-13 years. 114 (38%) from 14-16, 161 (53.7%) were from 17-19 and 0 (3%) of the respondents were 20 years and above. Majority of the respondents fell between the age range of 17 – 19 years, 161 (53.7%).

**Hypotheses Testing**

H01: Secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not significantly perceive to experience early initiation into sexual activity.

Table 1 Frequency Percentage Distribution of Respondent and Chi-square Table on Early Initiation into Sexual Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at first sexual activity</th>
<th>9 years</th>
<th>10-13 years</th>
<th>14-16 years</th>
<th>17-19 years</th>
<th>20 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency observed (Fo)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentages</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency observed (Fo)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 9.46, Df = 4, P>0.05$

The table shows that out of the total 300 respondents, 152 (50.7%) had their first sexual relation between 14-16 years of age, 50 (15.7%) has theirs between 17-19 years. These shows that 250(83.4%) of the total respondents had their first sexual relations between ages 10-13 years.

The table also reveals that a calculated $X^2$ value of 186.49 is greater than the table value of 9.49 at 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, the alternative hypothesis of “secondary school students in Minna metropolis significantly experienced early initiation into sexual activity” is accepted.

H02: Secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not significantly perceive and engage in sexual practices with many partners.

Table 2 Frequency, Percentage Distribution of Respondents and Chi-square Table on Number of Sexual Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Sexual Partner</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>5-10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed frequency (Fo)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected (Fw)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 11.07, Df = 5, P>0.05$

Table 2 shows that 99(33%) had no sexual partners at all. All other respondents had varying numbers of sexual partners. The $X^2$ analysis shows that the calculated value of 95.56 is greater than the table value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

H03: Secondary school students will not have significantly perceived knowledge of reproductive biology.
knowledge of contraceptive pills.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

When the data was subjected to chi-square analysis, the calculated x² value of 8.38 was returned which is higher than the table value of 7.81 which stated that secondary school students in Minna Metropolis significantly engaged in early sexual activity with many partners was rejected (x² = 11.07, Df 5, P>0.05). The findings support the views of Saba (1995) and Gomez (1983) who found that students in Minna municipality of Nigeria significantly engaged in early sexual relations and early adolescents' initiation into sexual activity.

Also on sex matters discussion with close friends which could encourage them to engage in sexual relations, 83(27.7%) strongly agreed, 144(8%) agreed and 47(15.7%) while 26(8.6%) strongly disagreed.

When the data was subjected to chi-square x² analysis, the calculated x² value of 8.38 was returned which is higher than the table value of 7.81 which Df 3 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the results obtained from tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, it could be seen that four of the hypotheses were rejected and the last one which stated that secondary school students in Minna Metropolis will not have a significant knowledge of contraceptive pills was accepted.

The result of the first hypothesis corroborates that of Rafelli, et al., (1993) who revealed that some children even between the ages of 9 – 11 years were reported to be pregnant. The findings of the study also corroborate with that of Saba (1995) and Gomez (1983) who found that students in Minna metropolitan municipality of Nigeria significantly engaged in early sexual relation and early adolescents' initiation into sexual activity.

The second hypothesis which states that secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not significantly practice sexual activity with many partners was rejected (x² = 11.07, Df 5, P<0.05). The findings support the views of Saba (1995) which stated that secondary school students in Minna municipality significantly had many sexual partners.

Table 3 Frequency, Percentage Distribution of Respondents and Chi-square Table on Knowledge of Reproductive Biology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of age of menarche (10-16 years)</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uterus as origin of menstrual flow</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy cannot take place between 7-17 days after menstruation</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age that boys can first become fathers (20-24)</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testis: production site of sperm</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 9.49, Df = 4, P<0.05

From table 5 above, 130(43.3%) and 116(38.7%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively on the definition of contraceptive as any preventive device while 35(11.7%) and 19(6.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. On examples of contraceptive mentioned such as condom, oral pills, cervical cap, vaginal creams and form, diaphragm IUP, 138(46.7%) and 118(39.3%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively with example mentioned while 28(9.3%) and 16(5.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

The computed x² analysis revealed that the calculated value of 4.6 is lower than the table 12.59 with 6 Df at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

HO5: Secondary school students will not have significant knowledge of contraceptive pills.

Table 4 Frequency, Percentage Distribution of Respondents, Chi-square, Table on Sex Education Knowledge and Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex matters discussion takes place with close friends (in and out of school)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>23(6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex matters discussion with close friends could encourage them to engage in sexual relation</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47(15.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 7.81, Df = 3, P<0.05

Table 4 shows responses of subjects on their knowledge of reproductive biology. 244(81.3%) and 56(18.7%) indicated Yes and No respectively on knowledge of menarche age, 22(74%) and 78(23.6%) indicated Yes and No respectively on knowledge of uterus as origin of menstrual flow, 128(42.7%) and 17(57.3%) answered Yes and No respectively on knowledge that pregnancy cannot take place between 7-17 days after menstruation. Also 202(27.13%) and 98(32.7%) answered Yes or No respectively on the knowledge of age that boys can first become fathers i.e. 20-24 years while 225(75%) and 75(25%) indicated Yes or No respectively on knowledge of testis as sperm production site. The result shows that calculated x² value of 125.53 is greater than the table value of 9.49 at degree of freedom of 4 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the null hypothesis is reject.

HO4: Discussion of sex matters with peers will not have significant influence on their sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.

Table 5 Frequency Percentage Distribution of Respondents and Chi-square Table on Knowledge of Contraceptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Fo</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of contraceptives as any preventive device</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of contraceptive mentioned</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1368
Oakley, et al., (1995) reported that the range of lifetime number if sexual partners of the adolescent were from 1.21, in the same vein Buga, et al., (1996) found out that there was indiscriminate sexual practice and behaviour among adolescents which he also described as universal problem.

The third hypothesis states that secondary school students in Minna metropolis will not have significant knowledge of reproductive biology. The null hypothesis was rejected ($x^2 = 9.49, Df 4, p>0.05$). The findings of this shows that the students of secondary schools in Minna metropolis have significant knowledge of reproductive biology. The findings of this study supports that of Buga, et al., (1996) who identified poor knowledge of reproductive biology as one of the factors responsible for early initiation into sexual activities. Also, Oakley, et al., (1995) revealed that majority of the sexuality active adolescents have an abysmally low knowledge of reproductive biology.

Discussion of sex matters with peers will not have significant influence on sex matters and behaviour among secondary school students in Minna metropolis showed that the null hypothesis was rejected ($x^2=7.81, Df 3, p>0.05$). The findings support that of Saba (1995) which revealed that much of sexuality information of youngsters is obtained from peer groups which make sexual activity among the young people in Africa neither a rare for an isolated occurrence.

The fifth hypothesis which states that secondary school knowledge in Minna metropolis will not have significant knowledge contraceptive pills was also rejected ($x^2 = 12.59, Df 6, P>0.05$). The findings of this agreed with that of Dicken, et al., (1983) from New York that births to adolescents 15 years and younger increased by 61% from 1960-1977 due to non use of contraceptive due to ignorance i.e. knowledge of contraceptives. Also, Greydamus (1981) asserted that there are several millions of sexually active youths resulting in a million adolescence pregnancies annually as well as STDs because they are unaware of specific means of prevent to reduce their risks for pregnancy or STDs.

Recommendations

The sexual practice, attitude and knowledge among selected secondary schools in Minna metropolis has been investigated. The findings revealed that the students experienced early initiation into sexual activity. They have significantly many sexual partners, the students had significant knowledge of reproductive biology, discussion of sex matters with peers had significant influence on sexual behaviour and practice of secondary school students but the students did not have significant knowledge of contraceptives. Based on these findings of the study, it is hereby recommended that:

1. Sex education should be fully entrenched in the curriculum of all institutions at all levels. Human sexuality should be taught shortly before reaching adolescent stage (9-12) years.
2. Knowledge of contraception and family planning services should be extended to adolescence without bias to minimize hazards of unprotected sexual relations among them.
3. Parents should feel free to discuss human sexuality issues with their children more so that they are natural phenomenon.
4. Sex education unit should be created in the Physical and Health Education Department of all Universities to train experts who would be able to handle the subject effectively and efficiently with adolescents.
5. Federal government should encourage public education on human sexuality through the use of media i.e. print and electronic media.

References


