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Influence of gender and school location on sexual behaviors among secondary school students in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to examine the influence of gender and school geographical location on sexual behaviours (Attitudinal act peripheral act and actual sexual act) among adolescents in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The research design was a non experimental descriptive survey. The sample size was 440 senior secondary school students from 11 public secondary schools in Cross River State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 260 students from 7 schools in urban areas and 180 students from 4 schools in rural areas. For the analysis of data, chi-square test analysis was used to test the relationship between variables at $P < 0.05$ significant level and the result showed a statistical relationship of $P < 0.05$ significant level between gender of urban school children and sexual behaviours. There was no significant relationship between the gender of rural secondary school students and their sexual behaviours and lastly, school geographical location significantly influenced adolescents sexual behaviours, when the calculated X^2 of 24.79 was greater than crit. X^2 5.991. Based on the above, it was recommended that: (i) secondary school students residing in rural areas should be more exposed to information on sexual matters especially in this era of HIV/AIDS. (ii) A well developed sexuality education programme should be included in secondary school curriculum.

Keywords: Gender, school, location students, sexual behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual behaviours of adolescents are centred around the sexual experience or practices of both boys and girls. The experiences or behaviours include sexual intercourse and non sexual intercourse experiences such as attitudinal act and peripheral act like masturbation, petting and kissing. Most of the young people in our society whose sexual behaviours are of serious concern are the ones found in secondary schools. This is where some of these young people terminate their academic dreams and mortgage their future because of one careless, ill-advised or poorly timed sexual or other behaviours.

In Nigeria, and indeed Africa as a whole, sexual practices among unmarried adolescents were in the past regarded as taboo. The story today is however different as adolescents now get freely involved in various forms of sexual behaviours. In her study on knowledge and practice of human sexuality among Cross River University of Technology students in Calabar, Nigeria ⁽¹⁾highlighted that 60% of the students experienced their first intercourse as early as fourteen (14) years. Only one female student out of 400 in that study reported being a virgin. Also in a study conducted by ⁽²⁾ on prevalence of STIs among attendees at lead city University Medical Centre in Ibadan south east, the result showed that out of 200 samples examined, 195(97.5%) were infected with various etiologic agents and 5(2.5%) had growth of staphylococcus. In recent years, there have been frightening reports by ⁽³⁾ on rapid spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) among sexually active youths aged 15 – 24 years. A large number of these youths are found in secondary schools. The reports also stressed that sexual intercourse accounts for about

80% of all infections within this age group and among adults. The study of sexual behaviours is a difficult one, since it has to do with one's private concerns. However, some empirical studies do exist.

An elaborate research on sexual health experience of adolescents in three towns in Ghana by⁽⁴⁾, the researchers used 704 never married youth aged 12 – 24 years. The result showed that 52% of overall respondents had sexual intercourse. The result also showed that young women were more likely than men to be sexually experienced (56% versus 48% respectively). The same study reported that (61%) of the respondents agreed that someone-especially adolescents, can get sexual satisfaction with partner without having penetrative vaginal sex. Among such non-contact experiences or behaviours listed included kissing, fondling and toughing. In a study on temperament, values and sexual behaviours among secondary school students in Cross River stated,⁽⁵⁾ listed sexual behaviours as follows: attitudinal act, peripheral act e.g. masturbation, petting, kissing and actual sexual act.

Gender identity is an inner sense or feeling of being a man or woman. Gender role is seen as learned behaviour that a particular society subscribes to man or woman. Gender role and power imbalances play a major role in mediating sexual relations. In a study reported by⁽⁶⁾ on non-consensual sex among youths, it was discovered that sexual coercion or forceful sexual intercourse ranged from non-contact forms such as fondling to attempted rape among youths. The result also showed that 57% of male students, and 74% of out of school apprentices agreed with the statement that a man has the right to have sex with a woman on whom he has spent a lot of money.

In another study on adolescent awareness of reproductive health,⁽⁷⁾ discovered that gender significantly influences reproductive health knowledge, girls were more aware of reproductive health than boys, girls were more vulnerable than males to reproductive health problem. Still on gender influence,⁽⁸⁾ conducted a research study on changing gender roles in India, the result showed that majority of the males were exposed to social expectations which have a strong influence on their sexual family life and reproduction.

In the pursuit of global epidemic programme on HIV/AIDS,⁽⁹⁾ conducted a research in Rwanda, the result reported that both urban and rural dwellers had over 11% infected youth aged 12 – 24 years. It was reported that among the teenagers, infections was actually higher in rural areas than urban cities. By implication, since 80% of HIV/AIDS infections were said to occur among rural dwellers. It could mean that the youths infected in the rural areas were more sexually active or involved than their counterparts in urban cities.

Thus, the environment an individual dwells or stays can affect his/her behaviour positively or negatively. Also the life style of urban dwellers may quite be different from the life style of rural dwellers. The urban dwellers many benefit from abundance of informations available, while rural dwellers may not have such privilege. Thus, influence of geographical location on human behaviour is to be expected.

The trend of adolescent sexual behaviours has attracted parents, religious leaders, policy makers in government, school authorities and many other social organizations in the country. The various people concerned have been involved in curbing these sexual behaviours among the adolescents in Nigeria through media campaigns with slogans such as “sex is worth waiting for, Zip up” among others. Some others have organized workshops and seminars, but these seem to be yielding very little results. This is why a research on influence of gender, and school locations on sexual behaviour is necessary. Furthermore, it is hoped that the result of the study will be significant to adolescents, parents and future researchers who may want to improve on this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of gender and school location on adolescent sexual behaviours in southern Cross River State, Nigeria

HYPOTHESIS 1

- (1) Gender of urban secondary school students do not significantly influence their sexual behaviours (i.e. Attitudinal act, peripheral act and actual sexual act).
- (2) There is no significant influence of gender of rural secondary school students on their sexual behaviours.
- (3) There is no significant influence of school geographical location on adolescents sexual behaviours

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

The research design adopted in his study was non experimental descriptive survey design.

Setting

This design allows a larger population to be studied through a representative sample, as Calabar Municipality and Akpabuyo representing urban and rural areas respectively in southern Cross River State, Nigeria were used for the study.

Participants

The study drew a sample of 440 senior secondary school students from eleven public secondary schools in the state using stratified random approach. Seven schools were randomly selected from Calabar Municipality with 260 students randomly selected from those schools, while remaining four schools were from Akpabuyo Local Government Area with 180 students randomly drawn from schools under study.

Instruments

The validated tested instruments was subjected to a test-retest reliability, whose reliability coefficient for the various scales ranges from .69 to .72. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers and the data collected were subjected to analysis. Using descriptive and inferential statistical tools like simple percentage and chi-square statistical test at $P < 0.05$ significant level with SPSS version 15.

Human right and ethical consideration

Subjects were chosen according to criteria, questionnaire was administered after informed consent was obtained. Researchers explained the purpose and objective of the study to the students in groups and reassured them of the protection of their privacy and also assured them that any information obtained would be strictly confidential.

Limitation of the study

The study is concerned with sexual behaviours, respondents' expressions on these sensitive issues brought about variations which could not be controlled.

RESULTS**Table 1: Chi-square analysis of the influence of gender of urban secondary school students on adolescents' sexual behaviours n = 260**

Gender difference in urban schools	Sexual behaviours			Total	Cal X ²	Crit. X ²	df
	Attitudinal act	Peripheral act	Actual sexual act				
Males	40(40.2)	25(36)	45(33.8)	110	12.35*	5.991	2
Females	55(54.8)	60(49)	35(46.6)	150			

Significant at 0.05; df 2.

The result presented in table 1 showed that the calculated X² value of 12.35 is greater than the critical X² value of 5.991 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that gender of urban students does not influence their sexual behaviour, is rejected.

Table 2: Chi-square statistical analysis of influence of gender of urban secondary school students on their sexual behaviour n = 180

Gender	Sexual behaviour			Total	Cal X ²	Crit. X ²	df
	Attitudinal act	Peripheral act	Actual sexual act				
Males	30(26.6)	30(28.9)	20(24.5)	80	2.59	5.991	2
Females	30(33.4)	35(36.1)	35(30.5)	100			

Not significant at 0.05; df 2.

The result of the analysis in table 2 showed that the calculated X² of 2.59 is lower than the critical X² of 5.991 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degrees of freedom. Based on this, the null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, rural area male and female students do not show any significant difference in their sexual behaviour. This may be as a result of lack of exposure on issues affecting their reproductive health and non inclusion of reproductive health education in their academic curriculum.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of influence of secondary school geographical locations on sexual behaviours n = 440

School location	Sexual behaviour			Total	Cal X ²	Crit. X ²	df
	Attitudinal act	Peripheral act	Actual sexual act				
Urban	80(76.8)	120(100.5)	60(82.7)	260	24.79*	5.991	2
Rural	50(53.2)	50(69.5)	80(57.3)	180			

**Significant at 0.05; df 2.*

The result revealed that at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degrees of freedom the calculated X^2 value of 24.79 is greater than the critical X^2 value of 5.991. Based on this, the null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, secondary school geographical location significantly influence adolescents sexual behaviours.

DISCUSSION

The result of the findings revealed that there was a significant influence of gender on sexual behaviours as female students do not involve in actual sexual act as their male counterparts. The findings tend to confirm what⁽⁷⁾ revealed in related study which revealed that females were more aware of reproductive health problem than males, since the females were more vulnerable to reproductive health problems than their male counterpart. The study is also supported⁽⁶⁾.

Examination of the second hypothesis indicated that rural students do not show any significant gender influence towards their sexual behaviours. This outcome are clear indication that they were not exposed to reproductive health issues as their urban counterparts. This study is supported by⁽⁸⁾.

The third hypothesis indicated a significant difference between school geographical location and adolescents sexual behaviours. This result corroborates an earlier result on the distribution pattern of sexual behaviours of students in urban and rural areas.

The finding agreed with the findings of research work on HIV/AIDS by⁽⁹⁾ which showed higher HIV/AIDS infections among rural youths than urban youths. Thus, these results have shown that the environment an individual lives can affect his/her sexual behaviours. The youths in urban areas are exposed to a lot of information on sexual matters particularly the current dreaded HIV/AIDS, than their rural counterparts and are also involved in programmes such as girls power initiative which is being organized by a non-governmental organization sponsored by world health organization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the freedom to discuss sex or report on one's sexual behaviour is still limited. This is derived from the researchers doubt on the high percentage of respondents who reported Never to frequency of involvement in the sexual acts selected for the study.

The students in rural communities are also ignorant as regards issues and matters on sexual activities/behaviours, thereby predisposing them to sexually transmitted infections including the dreaded HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusion of the study.

(1) Parents should be helped to deliberately break the culture of silence and discuss sexual matters freely with their children. Students residing in the rural areas should be more exposed to information on sexual matters especially in this era of HIV/AIDS

(2) Educational planners at all levels of education in Nigeria should see the need to include reproductive health education in the formal academic curriculum.

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