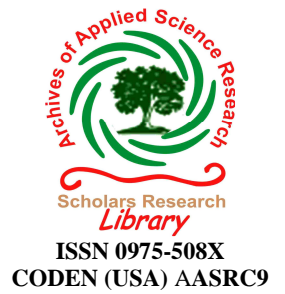




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Methodological approaches to sexuality education in secondary schools in Ilisan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is generally agreed to be the period between the ages of ten and nineteen. Adolescents are at risk of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, poor pregnancy outcomes with consequent disrupted education and career goals. This descriptive cross-sectional study examined institutional behaviours as factors influencing the methodological approaches to sexuality education in semi-urban secondary schools in the study location. All the teachers in the five schools in the locality were recruited for the study. A pretested interviewer administered questionnaire was employed to elicit information in each school. Data were analysed using independent t-test. The mean age of the respondents was 33.94 and 154 (71.3%) of them agreed that there was no deliberate official plans for sexuality education in secondary schools. Sixty-one percent of the participants also agreed that there was no time to handle academics and sexuality issues at the same time, due to the workload, while 154 (71.3%) disagreed that the counselling unit was adequately staffed. A significant difference existed between Christian and Muslim schools in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education. There was also a significant difference between private and public schools in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education. It was therefore recommended that teachers should undergo sex education training, and necessary methodological approaches should be implemented in each school to improve adolescents' sexuality knowledge.

Keywords: Adolescents, sexuality education, institutional behaviours, methodological approaches

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is an important aspect of development during adolescence. Adolescence has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the period from 10 and 19 years of age [1]. Sexual development is an integral and important part of human development and component of health throughout the life-span. Sex education is a major component of comprehensive health education, the goal of which is to help children and adolescents become healthy adults with

responsible health behaviours [2]. Sexuality education is the life long process of building a strong foundation for sexual health and should take place in the homes, schools and faith – based institutions [3]. Several overviews of sexual health programme for adolescents have concluded that sex education can beneficially affect behaviour. Many adolescents do not receive sex education in the schools or at home, only to learn about it on the streets. This leads to massive amounts of mis-information [4].

Sex education is a subject on which many schools, and most parents, remain silent [5]. Rational and scientific programs to instruct young people in sexual matters are both recent and vulnerable. Religious and cultural taboos exert a powerful influence not only on sexual attitudes and behaviours, but even on the discourse of sexuality.

It has been observed that sex education is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy [6]. Sex education is also about developing young people's skills so that they make informed choices about their behaviour, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. It is widely known and accepted that young people have a right to sex education, because this is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Providing sex education helps to meet young people's rights to information about matters that affect them, their right to have their needs met and to help them enjoy their sexuality and the relationships that they form. Effective school based sex education can be an important way to enhance young people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

A researcher opined that sex education should be made an integral part of the school curriculum and taken up seriously. According to him, sex education programme within schools is excellent way forward [7]. It was concluded in another study [8] that sex education campaign using electronic media, schools and health seminars are the most effective ways to transmit information to young people. A suggestion has been made that a child should be brought up in a curriculum that he or she gets accurate information about sex from teachers, parents as well as from the society [7]. It is painful that children get to know about sex from unreliable sources and ill informed classmates. Including sexuality education in the school curriculum would make the children to obtain right information, at the right time, and from the right source. Proper sex education at an appropriate time to vulnerable target group like young students can bring about a healthy change in behaviour and ideas about safe sex.

Sex education is regarded as essential to eliminate the problems associated with young people's sexual health. Several overviews of sexual health programmes for adolescents have concluded that sex education can beneficially affect behaviours. Most United Kingdom secondary schools have teachers designated to deliver sex education as part of the curriculum and this is the most suitable and sustainable mode of delivery [9]. This method is supported by other researchers [10], who opined that sex education should be done in the classroom setting. This is because parents are often too embarrassed to educate their children on sex and contraception, and so society demands that schools do it. Sex education should start in primary schools and be made compulsory in secondary schools. The curriculum should feature contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, and it is important that teaching sex education must not be solely concerned with biology.

This study was conducted to identify the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education in secondary schools. Hence the following research hypotheses were developed:

- There is no significant difference in the pattern of methodological approach to sexuality education between Christian and Muslim schools
- There is no significant difference in the pattern of methodological approach to sexuality education between Private and Public secondary schools

Methodology

This was a descriptive and cross-sectional study of factors influencing approaches to sexuality education in secondary schools in Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria. All the 216 teachers in the 5 secondary schools in this locality were recruited for this research. Their ages ranged from twenty to fifty five and their qualifications from diploma to masters degrees. They were made up of male and female teachers, Moslems and Christians, and of Yoruba and Igbo tribes. A standardized pretested semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents after seeking and obtaining their consent. The data collected were analyzed using independent t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained in this study provides information on the enabling factors that may influence the methodological approaches to sexuality education. The mean score for enabling factors influencing approaches to sexuality education measured on 12.00 point scale was 8.69(SD=1.56) which showed that enabling factors have positive influence on the methodological approaches to sexuality education. Results from this study show that 154(71.3%) of the respondents agreed that there was no deliberate official plans for sexuality education in secondary schools and this may also affect the institutional approaches to it. It was observed that 134(61.1%) of the respondents agreed that there was no time to handle academics and sexuality issues at the same time considering the workload. Results also show that 154(71.3%) of the respondents disagreed that the counselling unit is adequately staffed, while 132(61.1%) of them agreed that peer influence was difficult to monitor and control. These factors will affect the institutional approaches to sexuality education in secondary schools.

Three methodological approaches practiced in the schools to impart sexuality education to students as shown in the results were the seminar/workshop approach, counselling unit in the school, and classroom approach. The study identified that 72(33.3%) of the respondents adopted none of the approaches mentioned, 100(46.3%) adopted one approach which was seminar and workshop approach, 24(11.1%) adopted two approaches which were seminar/workshop and counselling unit approaches, while 20(9.3%) of the respondents adopted all the three approaches. Only 38(17.6%) of the respondents agreed that the school curriculum has adequate provision to meet the sexual health needs of the adolescents as well as their intellectual needs. In bringing sexuality education to adolescents, three important things that must be considered, include their understanding the meaning of human sexuality, abstinence from premarital sexual intercourse and understanding the consequences of pre-marital sex and infidelity. In considering these three important things, only 6(2.8%) of the respondents accepted none, 12(5.6%) accepted, one which was understanding the meaning of sexuality, 14(6.5%) considered two, which were understanding the meaning of sexuality and abstinence from premarital sexual intercourse, while 184(85.2%) accepted the three. The study also observed that 52(24.1%) of the respondents agreed that sexuality education is the prerogative of the parent.

Furthermore, results from the first hypothesis show that there was significant difference in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education between Christian and Muslim schools. The significant difference occurred because the Christian school based its education on wholistic approach and its philosophy of providing qualitative education, emphasizing the balance and harmonious development of physical, mental, social and spiritual environment. Muslim schools are however, somehow rigid by seeing the issue of sex education as a taboo which should not be discussed. Muslim parents of today probably consider sex as a dirty word and are not comfortable in discussing sex education with their children.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the enabling factors variables

Enabling factors variables	Frequency N	Percent %
No deliberate plans for sex education Disagree	62	28.7
Teachers not properly trained in such skills Disagree	88	40.7
No time to teach sex education Disagree	122	61.1
Peer influence is difficult to monitor and control Disagree	84	38.9
School counselling unit is adequately staffed Disagree	154	71.3

*Multiple responses

Table 2: Frequency distribution of institutional approaches to sexuality education

Institutional approaches to sexuality education	Frequency N	Percent %
Avenues for teaching sexuality education		
None	72	33.3
One approach	100	46.3
Two approaches	24	11.1
Three approaches	20	9.3
Curriculum is adequate	38	17.6
Important consideration in bringing sexuality education to youths		
None	6	2.8
One mentioned	12	5.6
Two mentioned	14	6.5
Three mentioned	184	85.2
Parents only should teach sex education	52	24.1

H₀₁: *There is no significant difference in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education between Christian and Muslim Schools*

Table 3: Difference in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education between Christian and Muslim Schools

TEACHERS	Mean	S.D	N	Std Error	Df	t-cal*	t-crit @0.05 level of sig.
Christian	6.72	1.02	204	0.53	214	4.07	1.66
Muslim	4.07	2.07	12	1.08	133	8.25	3.37

The results from the second hypothesis also revealed that significant difference occurred in the pattern of methodological approaches to sexuality education adopted by the private and public schools. The approaches to sexuality education identified in this study were seminar and

workshop approach, counselling unit in the school and classroom activity integrated in subject topics. The reason for this significant difference might be due to the fact that private schools have rules and regulations guiding their teachers, which restrict what they say in the presence of their students and improve methodological approach to sexuality education. Though there are rules and regulations in public schools, teachers are not restricted as to what they say to the students. Also, some private schools can accommodate capacity building program in the sense that they can keep students late after school for workshop or seminar whereas public schools find it may find it difficult to keep students late after school hours, let alone of planning workshop or seminar for their students.

Table 3 shows that the calculated value of t (4.07) is more than t -table (1.66) at 214 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is significant difference in the pattern of methodological approach used for sexuality education in Christian and Muslim schools. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is upheld.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the methodological approaches to sexuality education between private and public schools.

Table 4: Difference in the methodological approaches to sexuality education between private and public schools

TEACHERS	Mean	S.D	N	Std Error	Df	t-cal*	t-crit @0.05 level of sig.
Private school	6.72	1.02	106	0.31	214	5.35	1.66
Public school	5.15	1.23	110	0.37	222		2.00

Table 4 indicates that the obtained value of t of 5.35 is more than the table the value of 1.66 at 214 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, there is significant difference in the pattern of methodological approach to sexuality education adopted in private and public schools

CONCLUSION

The observed gaps in pattern of methodological approaches between Christian & Muslim schools and between private and public schools can be adequately addressed through comprehensive sexuality education programme designed around specific curriculum contents. Moreover the three approaches (seminar & workshop, counselling unit, and classroom approaches) mentioned in this study need to be implemented in each of the schools.

Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that every school should have adequate and knowledgeable staff in the counselling unit to handle adolescents when they present their problems, and confidentiality should be strictly adhered to. The school curriculum should be built in such a way that sex education is accommodated. Furthermore, in bringing sexuality education to adolescents, careful consideration should be given to those important things such as understanding the meaning of human sexuality, abstinence from premarital sex and understanding its consequences and those of infidelity.

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