



## ADOLESCENTS KNOWLEDGE OF SEX EDUCATION AND MORAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN ADO-EKITI, EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

The study investigated adolescents' knowledge of sex education and their moral sexual attitude in Ado Ekiti. Specifically, it investigated adolescents knowledge about sex education, identified the risk associated with sexual activity among adolescents, examined the attitude of adolescents toward sex education, determined the importance of sex education and how it can influence the moral sexual behaviour of adolescents' in Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study was descriptive design of the survey type. The sample consisted of 200 adolescent students. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select sample for the study. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire designed by the researchers. The face and content validity was ascertained through experts in Psychology, Test, Measurement and Evaluation, while test-retest method was used to ensure the reliability which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.89. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics of t-test. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that it is important to impact knowledge about sex education on adolescents. From the study, it was evident that knowledge of sex education affects the level of morality among youths. The rapid change in body proportion excites the youths and encourages them to implore pornographic behaviours which invariably affect their moral thinking by engaging in fantasy. Conclusively, sex education should be part of school curriculum in order to educate adolescent. Parents should develop effective communication skill with their children, make friends with them and have positive attitudes toward sex.

**Keywords:** adolescent, sex, sex education, sexual attitude, morality, knowledge

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period when young people are experiencing series of changes in themselves and adjusting to these rapid changes in their bodies and how they function. This period is a period when adolescents need information and assurance about what is happening to them. In this situation, some adolescents may feel confused about what they are supposed to do including making sense of evolving relationship with families and peers; coping with new sexuality feelings and trying to access conflicting information about who they are and what is expected of them. The period of adolescence occupies a unique stage in everyone's life. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence has been described as a stage among human beings where a lot of physiological as well as anatomical changes take place resulting in reproductive maturity in the adolescents. Many adolescents manage this transformation successfully while others experience major stress and find themselves engaging in behaviours (such as sexual experimentation, exploration and promiscuity) that place their well-being at risk. This could be a primary source to the risk of HIV/AIDS in instances of unprotected/ indiscriminate sexual activity.

Adolescents have little knowledge about sexual and reproduction health, and know little about the natural process of puberty, sexual health, pregnancy or reproduction. Sex is a word that so many youths in the society may not find comfortable to discuss. Sex is seen as physical activity between two people in which when they touch each other's sexual organs it could lead to sexual intercourse (Achilia, 2002). Early sex training among the youths is very vital because young people have the right to be exposed gradually to proper and responsible education on fertility awareness and ideas about sex education. Encyclopedia of education defines sex education as the teaching of human sexuality and the state and function of being a sexual person and a way to helping children grow into adulthood without getting into sex related troubled. Sex education is about developing the adolescents' skill, help them to mature and guide them to follow the right track and protect them against abuse, exploitation, and unwanted pregnancies and possibly assist them to know some right choices. The biological, physiological, and physical changes in adolescent make them to ask many questions regarding sex and sexuality and many times, there would be no enlightened person to give an appropriate answer. In some societies, discussing such matters is a taboo and in some cases, those who attempted answering do it haphazardly.

Agujiobi (2003) asserted that many youths today experience embarrassment after having been left in darkness from childhood and happens to stumble into the fact of life. Some girls attain the age of puberty without undergoing any form of sex education, such girls experience shock at the first appearance of menstrual flow. Most of the young adolescent girls do not have adequate sex education, their age grades could possibly deceive them to have sexual affairs with them and in the process they can become pregnant and find it difficult to get out of it. They can complicate the issue by visiting quacks and sometimes death may result in the process. Sex education should be an

integral part of the learning process beginning in childhood and continuing into adult life, it is a lifelong learning process. It should be for all children, young people and adults, including those with physical challenges or emotional difficulties. Sexual education ought to encourage exploration of values and moral values, consideration of sexuality and personnel relationships and the development of communication and decision making skills. It should foster self-esteem, self-awareness, a sense of moral responsibility and the coping strategy skills that can help to avoid and resist sexual urge/desire.

Majority of the knowledge gathered about sex education sometimes are from friends, family, media, magazines and literature and internet movies. Most of this source of sex education may be unhealthy and therefore defeat the purpose of sex education for young ones. Development of good parent-child communication about sexuality could be a great advantage and part of socialization from home without necessary waiting to transfer the responsibility to the school.

Sex education covers issues relating to human sexuality, including emotional relations and responsibilities, human sexual anatomy, sexual activity, sexual reproduction, age of consent, reproductive health, reproductive rights, safe sex, birth control and sexual abstinence. Sex education that covers all of these aspects is known as comprehensive sex education. Common avenues for sex education are parents or caregivers, formal school programs and public health campaigns. Kirby (2007) defined sex education as involving a comprehensive course of action by the school, calculated to bring about the socially desirable attitudes, practices and personal conduct on the part of children and adults, that will best protect the individual as a human and the family as a social institution. He explained further that sex education may also be described as sexuality education which means that it encompasses educating on all aspect of sexuality, including information about family planning, reproduction( fertilization, conception and the development of the embryo and fetus, through to childbirth), plus information about all aspects of one's sexuality including: body image, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, values, decision making, communication, dating, relationships, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and how to avoid them and birth control methods.

United Nations Population Fund (2010) reviewed that gender-focused curricula that integrate gender equality into the learning material were substantially more effective in reducing risky behaviours than programmes that did not consider gender. Research has also shown that delay in sexual initiation, use of condoms and practice contraception has been a result of young people adopting egalitarian attitudes about gender roles. These individuals were also found to be less likely engaged in violent relationships and have a lower rate of STIs including HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancy. By emphasizing rights and tender issues, this programs help reduce gender-based violence and bullying, promote safe schools, empower young people to advocate for their own rights, and advance gender equality.

Sex education is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationship and intimacy. Sex education is also about

developing beyond people's skills so that they can make informed choices about their behaviours and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. It is widely accepted that young people have a right to sex education. This is because it is means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases. Providing an effective sex education helps to meet young people's right to information's 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. To contribute to adolescent's full social and economic potential, young people need the knowledge and skills to make choices about when to have sex and how to protect themselves from infection and unintended pregnancies.

Sex education aims at supporting and protecting sexual development. It gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information, skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships and take responsibility for their own and other people's sexual health and well-being (WHO, 2010).

Sex education circular have been endorsed by various governmental agencies, educational organizations and teenage advocacy groups as the most effective educational method for reducing teenage pregnancy and helping prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among adolescent. Numerous surveys have suggested increased sexual experimentation by increasing numbers of teenagers at younger ages each year. Sex education also help equip adolescents with the skills to be able to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information, and to discuss a range of moral and social issues and perspectives sex and sexuality, including different cultural attitudes and sensitive issues like sexuality, abortion and contraception. It must be noted that most of the sex educations seems not prevent masturbation, pornography, homosexuality, sexual intercourse and others which are regarded as moral sexual behaviour.

National Institutes of Health (2018), emphasized that the potential benefits of sex education cannot be realistically discussed without initially rooting out the fears and myths which prevent the active promotion of good programs. The truth of the situation is that knowledgeable and informed adolescents are more likely to postpone sexual relations until they feel emotionally ready and are able to take the necessary precautions against pregnancies and venereal diseases. It is essential that sexuality programs be taught with values. When teaching contraception, the instructor needs to convey some basic guidelines, sex education should be taught from the perspective that it is wrong to take advantage of another individual. The function of a moral education is to encourage people to strive toward the universally accepted ideals of this democratic and pluralistic society and to offer facts which facilitate responsible decision making.

Van Keulen, Hofstetter, Peters, Meijer, Schutte and Van Empelen (2015) reviewed that good-quality sexuality education does not lead to young people having sex earlier than is expected based on the national average. This has shown in research studies in Europe, including Finland, Estonia and in research from other countries around the

world. Good quality sex education can however lead to later sexual debut and more responsible sexual behaviour. Sex education and an open attitude towards sexuality do not make it easier for pedophiles to abuse children. The opposite is the case, when adolescents learn about equality and respect in relationships, they are in a better position to recognize abusive persons and situations. In the absence of this, children and young people can look for and receive conflicting and sometimes damaging messages from their peers, the media or other sources (UNESCO, 2009).

Various social and technical developments during the past decades have triggered the need for good quality sex education, which can enable young people to deal with their sexuality in a safe and satisfactory manner. Examples of this kind of developments are: globalization and the arrival of new population groups with different cultural and religious backgrounds; the rapid spread of new media, particularly the internet, internet pornography and mobile phone technology; the emergence of HIV and AIDS; increasing concern about STIs, abortion; infertility; the sexual abuse of children and adolescents and changing attitudes towards sex and changing sexual education among young people (WHO, 2010).

World Health Organization (2010) defines sexuality as a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviour, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, physiological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors. The way information is put across to the children varies as their gender differences prevalent.

Studies have further indicated that teachers' morality helps the students to develop basic skills. Teachers play significant role in promoting, encouraging and controlling good conduct of the students. Teacher establishes moral which encourages students to respect one another and satisfaction of excellence (Jawondo, 2006).

Parents and other family members play critical roles in shaping adolescent sexual behaviour through their parenting practices, sexuality communications and modeling of risk reduction strategies. Greater parental monitoring and less of parental permissiveness are consistently related to later sexual initiation, less frequent sexual intercourse, less risky sexual behaviour, fewer sexual partners and less unwanted pregnancy. Sex education could also help them to develop assertive skills that could guide them against some sexual immoral that can doom and mar future.

Sexual immoral behaviour in the society where this research is domicile includes not only sexual intercourse but also acts of sexual gratification with another other than one's marriage partner. Hence, the society does not see sex education only in the context of preventing sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies but rather preventing youths from any immoral sexual behaviour that could lead to the act of reckless sexual intercourse or other activities. By the standard of the bible the word of God, from 1 Corinthians 6: 18, we are warned to flee from sexual immorality. All other

sin a man commits are outside his body, but he who commits sexually immorality sins against his own body.

Rules about sexual behaviour are very common cross-culturally. There is considerable variation across cultures about what constitutes appropriate sexual behaviour. In some cultures, much of the morality that goes on about sex might have come in order to discourage promiscuity, and thereby increase paternity and encourage parental investment. Across all lives of culture and community, sexuality is policed by a set of norms that are usually enforced by moral discourse. This could affect all aspects of sexuality, morality will dictate what society holds as 'normal and appropriate when it comes to sexuality, how to exhibit it, who is doing it and the forms of doing it.

This study could become interestingly necessary in view of the increased cases of masturbations, pornographies and homosexuality, Prevalent sexual intercourse and others among the adolescents that extended to unwanted pregnancies and abortions with their grieve of consequences. These moral sexual attitudes are aberration and unacceptable to the moral culture of Ekiti State, Nigeria with reference to Ado-Ekiti. Therefore, it is considered as sexual immorality and acultural problem to the State. Teenage pregnancy has health hazards and adolescents are not in a stage to handle pregnancy, child birth or become a parent. Sexual education may need to speak about all of the sexual contact in an open and honest forum. It must ensure that youths are informed and able to express their sexuality in a healthy way for themselves and others.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Many sexual behaviours are observed as being expressed by adolescents today which reflects their state of moral behaviour recklessness. These sexual behaviours like, masturbation, viewing of pornographies, homosexuality, public kissing and caressing and other moral sexual behaviour. The method of impacting sex education which the society (Ekiti) regarded as immoral often times results in sexual intercourse. The consequences of these could be unintended pregnancies, dropping out of school, abandoned children, abortions that may even claim lives. In most cases they are contacted with venereal diseases such as HIV/AIDS, STD most of which have adverse effect on their health and lives.

On daily basis both printed and electronic media report cases of rape, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV/AIDS and abuse of contraceptives filtered around, which may be that sex education have not really affected the lives of adolescents. These negative sexuality behaviours of adolescents may be as a result of ignorant, lack of information on sexuality, or due to inability of the teachers to effectively teach sex education in the schools.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate adolescent knowledge of sex education and their moral sexual behaviour in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The study also examines the

attitude of adolescents towards sex education; determine the importance of sex education and how it can influence their sexual behaviour.

## 2.2 Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) There is no significant difference between knowledge of sex education among male and female students.
- 2) There is no significant difference between sex education and moral sexual behaviour on gender bases.

## 2.3 Research Method

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive research design of the survey type. It is descriptive because it involves collection of data using appropriate instrument to describe the existing situation. The population for the study consisted of all public secondary school students in Ekiti State. A sample of 200 secondary school students between ages 11-16 were selected using stratified sampling technique to select on gender bases. The instrument used for this study is questionnaire designed by the researchers. The face and content validity was ascertained by experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and Tests, Measurement and Evaluation. While the reliability was determined by using test-retest, and reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained which was considered high, tis indicates that the instrument was found reliable. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants. The instrument was collected immediately at the point of administration to avoid loss and misplacement. The data collected were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using frequency count, percentage, t-test. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Testing of Hypothesis

#### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between knowledge of sex education of male and female students.

**Table 1:** t-test comparison of knowledge of sex education among male and female students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>	Remark
Male Knowledge of Sex Education	84	36.14	2.19	178	9.72	8.94	Reject Ho
Female Knowledge of Sex Education	96	38.69	3.18				

Table 1 shows that t-cal (9.72) is greater than t-tab (8.94) at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there are differences in the knowledge of sex education between male and female students.

## Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between sex education and moral sexual behaviour on gender bases.

**Table 2:** t-test comparison of sex education and moral sexual behaviour on gender bases

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>	Remarks
Male Moral Sexual Behaviour	84	49.52	11.64	178	9.02	12.84	Accept Ho
Female Moral Sexual Behaviour	96	41.85	14.40				

Table 2 shows that t-cal (9.0) is lesser than t-tab (12.84) at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is lesser than the t-tab, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that male students are not differing from the female counterparts in terms of moral sexual behaviour.

## 4. Discussion

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between knowledge of sex education among male and female students. The result was in consonant with Kim (2007) who stated that female parents are more likely to open sex education talk with their female child even though they doubt their competence and skills to impact such knowledge.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between morality among male and female students. This implies that male students are not differing from their female counterparts in terms of morality. Jawondo (2006) supported this finding that morality encourages students to respect one another and satisfaction with class work in order to achieve standard of excellence. Morality is not restricted to male or female but a general misconduct and a breakdown of moral standard and values.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that female students are more conscious of sex education than their female counterparts. Also, male students are not differing from their female counterparts in terms of morality. Sex education should be introduced in the school which should start from primary school and brings about the age appropriate topics as they go through the secondary school. Sex education should contain a package of information about life skills, reproductive health, safe sex, pregnancy and STI's including HIV/AIDS. The study also concludes that adolescent boys and girls need sound and correct knowledge about sex. On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Sexual fantasy should be discouraged among youths while chaste and self-discipline should be encouraged.

- 2) Sex education should be inculcated into Nigerian secondary school curriculum and should be taught as a subject with the inclusion of some sexual behaviours that are dangerous and immoral.
- 3) Morality and values should be propagated and taught among Nigerian youths.
- 4) Parents should give their children enough information about sex education as soon as the child is due for it.
- 5) The society should encourage adolescents to practice the knowledge acquired through sex education, while presenting positive view towards teaching of values and morals in order to help adolescents hold sex till marriage.
- 6) The health workers, non-government agencies and religious leaders should also organize programmes on sex education from time to time.

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