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Gendered Differences in the Teaching of Sex Education among Secondary School Teachers in Auta Balefi, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Sex education in schools has continued to gain support from various stakeholders especially with students and parents alike identifying the school as a viable source of information on adolescent reproductive health. Evidence from literature on the other hand juxtaposes the success of school-based programmes on the relationship that exists or not between the socio-demographic characteristics of teachers and their teaching of sex education. The study was aimed among others at investigating the relationship between socio-demographic factors and the teaching of sex education. Eleven secondary schools with a total of 219 teachers were included in the study. Due to the relatively small population size, the study made use of the entire population. Two hypotheses were formulated to test at 0.05(95%) the level of significance on gender differences and educational qualification in teaching sex education. The result indicated that there is no significant relationship between the sex of teachers and their attitude towards sex education, and that there is no significant relationship between the educational status of teachers and their attitude towards sex education. This is because majority of the teachers have some form of training on sex education which neutralizes personal differences such as sex and educational status. Further findings revealed that 90.5% of the respondents have positive attitude towards sex education and were willing to teach sex education in their various schools. The authors recommend, among others, that continuing encouragement might be necessary to support teachers' interest in teaching sex education.

Keywords: Attitude, sex education, adolescent, sexual and reproductive health

1. Introduction

The success and failure of sex education programmes in schools are most times traced to a wide range of factors; these include poor planning, poor implementation, lack of proper training, lack of adequate resources or even the personal biases of teachers themselves (Madunagu, 2005; Sprintall and Collins, 1995; Adepoju, 2005; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007; Kirby, 2007; Locker, 2001). Several authors have explored the relationship between certain socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, religion, educational qualification, location amongst others and the teaching of sex education in schools (Blenkinsopp et al, 2004; Bhonsle, 2004; Evans et al, 1998; Cohen, Sears and Weaver, 2004; Paulussen, Kok and Schaalma, 1996; Kirby, Laris and Rolleri, 2005; Milton, 2003).

One of such studies was done in Tanzania where the author was able to determine that location (rural an urban) were not significant in the teaching of sex education it was rather the sensitive nature of the content of sex education that impinged on teachers ability to deliver fully in the classroom (Mkumbo, 2012). Another similar study conducted in Lagos showed that teachers were of the opinion that the teaching of sex education and other related topics should be done mostly at home by parents. In this study also, age was a determining factor as the older the teacher, the more willing they were to teach the subject matter, however the educational qualification of the teacher was another intervening variable as teachers with a bachelor's degree were willing to teach irrespective of their age group (Onwuezobe and Ekanem, 2009). Gender came to light in a South African study where it was discovered that teachers were found to have a positive attitude towards sex education which in turn played a significant role in their teaching of the subject matter. It was also discovered that with regards this positive attitude, female teachers had a higher percentage of teachers with such attitude (Ngoloba, 2008). Finally, in a study of the same nature in Botswana, it was discovered by the authors that majority of the teachers were willing to teach sex education in their schools as they were of the view that it would be a step towards reducing the numerous challenges adolescents faced with regard to their reproductive and sexual health. Despite this high level of

enthusiasm, barriers placed by culture and lack of training affected the teaching of same (Kasonde, 2013). It is therefore against this backdrop that this study conducted in Auta Balefi, seeks to investigate such relationships between the socio-demographic characteristics of teachers and their teaching of sex education. In doing this, it is necessary to state that majority of the schools located in the study area were found to be privately owned and not state or public owned. This finding had implications for the results as there is the tendency for such schools to have access to better resources. Also, the study was narrowed down specifically to the relationship between two out of the various socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, gender and educational qualification respectively. This was due to the aforementioned private owned nature of the schools which affected the results on other factors such as religion, skewing them to one side. The major objectives of the study were to explore the relationship between gender and educational qualification of teacher and their teaching of sex education.

2. Methodology

The research was carried out in Auta Balefi; a small sub-urban town located in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, about 26 kilometres from Abuja the Federal Capital City of Nigeria. The study population consisted of all secondary school teachers in Auta Balefi which has eleven (10 private and 1 public) secondary schools with a total number of two hundred and nineteen (219) teachers. Due to the relatively small population size and the accessibility to the population of the study, it was not necessary to draw samples of teachers from each school. Therefore, all the teachers in the 11 schools were included in the study.

A structured questionnaire with both open and closed-ended questions was designed to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was self-administered to the teachers and it comprised of questions on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, content of sex education, and attitude of respondents towards sex education. Questions were designed in such a way that teachers who had positive response towards sex education were seen as having a positive attitude towards that teaching of sex education and those with negative responses were considered as having a negative attitude towards the teaching of sex education in schools.

The data gathered from the field of study was analysed using the descriptive statistics such as simple percentage tables as well as Chi Square to test the hypothesis. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and were presented in tables as percentage and frequency distributions. Out of the 219 copies of the questionnaire administered, 210 were returned and adjudged usable for analysis. This constitutes a 96% response rate.

3. Results

This section covers a description of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the test of hypotheses and discussion of findings.

Socio-Demographic Characteristic	Frequency/Percentage
Sex	
Male	115(54.8)
Female	95(45.2)
Total	210
Age Range	
20 - 24 years	21(10.0)
25 - 29 years	51(24.3)
30 - 34 years	87(41.4)
35 years and above	51(24.3)
Total	210
Educational Qualification	
SSCE	12(5.7)
NCE	76(36.2)
OND/HND	20(9.5)
B.Sc./B.Ed.	76(36.2)
M.Sc./M.Ed.	12(5.7)
PGDE	14(6.7)
Total	210
Marital Status	
Single	92(43.8)
Married	117(55.7)
Divorced	1(0.5)
Total	210
Religion	
Christianity	205(97.6)
Islam	5(2.4)
Total	210

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics
Source: Fieldwork, 2015

From Table 1, it can be observed that 54.8% of the respondents are male while 45.2% are female. Also, 41.4% of the respondents fall within the age range of 30-34 years, 24.3% of the respondents fall within the age range of 25-29 years as well as those that are 35 years and above and 10.0% fall within the age range of 20-24 years. With regard to educational qualification, the modal frequency is a tie where 36.2% respondents have a National Certificate of Education (NCE) as well as a Bachelor's degree, 9.5% are Diploma holders (OND/HND), and 6.7% of the respondents have a Post Graduate Diploma in Education while 5.7% have a Senior School Certificate as well as a Master's degree. Majority of the respondents are either married (55.7%) or single (43.8%). Finally, 97.6% are Christians while 2.4% are Muslims. This finding reveals that majority of the teachers across the 11 secondary schools in Auta Balefi are Christians. This is due to majority of the schools being privately owned.

			Should Sex Education Be Introduced as Part of the School Curriculum?		
			Yes	No	Total
SEX	Male	Count	104	11	115
		Expected Count	104.0	11.0	115.0
	Female	Count	86	9	95
		Expected Count	86.0	9.0	95.0
Total		Count	190	20	210
		Expected Count	190.0	20.0	210.0

Table 2: Attitude*Sex Cross Tabulation
Source: Authors Computation

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.001	1	.982		
Continuity Correction(a)	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.001	1	.982		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.587
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.982		
N of Valid Cases	210				

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis 1
Source: Authors Computation

From Table 2, the calculated chi-square value 0.001 is less than the critical value 3.841. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is no significant relationship between the gender of teachers and their attitude towards sex education. Male and female teachers alike seem likely to have a positive attitude towards sex education. This finding could be as a result of the fact that majority (75.7%) of the teachers have had some form of training on sex education and thus the training has served as a factor that led to a positive attitude towards sex education among teachers irrespective of their sex and has therefore neutralized any individual difference that could influence teachers attitude towards sex education.

			Should Sex Education Be Introduced as Part of the School Curriculum?		
			Yes	No	Total
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	SSCE	Count	11	1	12
		Expected Count	10.9	1.1	12.0
	NCE	Count	70	6	76
		Expected Count	68.8	7.2	76.0
	OND/HND	Count	17	3	20
		Expected Count	18.1	1.9	20.0
	BSc/Bed	Count	68	8	76
		Expected Count	68.8	7.2	76.0
	MSc/Med	Count	10	2	12
		Expected Count	10.9	1.1	12.0
	PGDE	Count	14	0	14
		Expected Count	12.7	1.3	14.0
Total		Count	190	20	210
		Expected Count	190.0	20.0	210.0

Table 4: Attitude*Educational Qualification Cross Tabulation
Source: Authors Computation

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.223	5	.666
Likelihood Ratio	4.352	5	.500
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	1.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

Table 5: Test of Hypothesis 2
Source: Authors Computation

From Table 5, the calculated chi-square value 3.223 is less than the critical value 11.070. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is no significant relationship between the educational status of teachers and their attitude towards sex education. The attitude of teachers towards sex education is not influenced by their educational qualification or status. Teachers within the different categories of educational qualification seem to have the same attitude towards sexuality irrespective of their status. This finding is also because majority (75.7%) of teachers have had training on sex education and the training has served as a factor that led to a positive attitude towards sex education among teachers irrespective of their educational qualification and has, therefore, neutralized any individual difference that could influence teacher's attitude towards sex education.

4. Discussion

The result indicated that there is no significant relationship between the sex of teachers and their attitude towards sex education, and also that there is no significant relationship between the educational status of teachers and their attitude towards sex education. This is due to the fact that majority of the teachers have some form of training on sex education which neutralizes personal differences such as sex and educational status. This study also found that majority of the teachers in Auta Balefi are in support of the introduction of sex education in schools and as such have a positive attitude towards it and also that teachers are of the view that sex education should cover a wide range of topics. This finding confirms the view averred by Mkumbo (2012) whose study revealed that an overwhelming majority of teachers in both rural and urban districts supported the teaching of sex education in schools, and the inclusion of a wide range of sex education topics in the curriculum. Ngoloba () also revealed that the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of sex education in the curriculum were positive and their attitudes impact positively on their teaching of the subject. However, the findings by Ngoloba (2008) also revealed that female teachers hold more positive attitudes towards sex education than male teachers. This is in contrast with the findings of this study which showed that male and female teachers alike have a similar attitude towards sex education.

Furthermore, 48.6% of the respondents are of the view that the responsibility of teaching sex education is for the parents and as such see the home (51.0%) rather than the school (30.5%) as the best place to teach sex education. This finding confirms that of Onwuezobe and Ekanem (2009) where it was discovered that a great number of teachers view the teaching of sex education as the responsibility of the parents (46.1%) and as such sees home (43.7%) as even a better place than school (38.6%) to impart such knowledge. Also from their findings, most of the teachers (55.6%) considered ages 10 – 14 years or Junior Secondary School level as the appropriate period for introducing sex education. This is confirmed by the finding of this study as 55.2% of the respondents indicated Junior Secondary School as the appropriate stage to introduce sex education to students.

With regard to the benefits and perceived risks of sex education, it was discovered that about 52% of the respondents perceived sex education as mostly beneficial in the area of promotion of abstinence. This confirms the findings by Kasonde (2013) that 92% of the respondents in his study agreed that sex education delays sexual debut, but different from the findings by Onwuezobe and Ekanem (2009) where about 68% percent of the teachers perceived sex education as mostly beneficial in preventing unplanned pregnancy. Their findings also revealed that 56% of the respondents were of the opinion that it will promote early exposure to sexual relationship which is confirmed by this study as 55.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that sex education will promote early exposure to sexual relationships.

Finally, whereas Kasonde (2013) showed that lack of training and culture can serve as barriers to sex education, in this study majority of the teachers (75.7%) indicated that they have had some form of training on sex education. This is why the sex and educational qualifications of respondents were not significantly related to their attitudes towards sex education.

5. Conclusion

The study was aimed at finding out the attitude of teachers towards sex education in Auta Balefi and also to see whether certain factors such as sex and educational qualification had any significant effect on teacher's attitude towards sex education.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that a majority of teachers in Auta Balefi have a positive attitude towards sex education in schools and also are willing to teach sex education in their various schools. There is no significant relationship between the sex of teachers and their attitude towards sex education and there is also no significant relationship between the educational qualification of teachers and their attitude towards sex education. In other words, gender and educational qualifications do not have any significant effect on teacher's attitude towards sex education. Training on sex education served as a factor that led to this finding as it neutralized individual differences such as sex and educational qualification.

Also, from the findings, majority of the teachers are of the view that parents and teachers should be responsible for teaching sex education to students. The content of sex education should cover a wide range of topics and it should be introduced to the students at the Junior Secondary School stage. The majority of respondents perceived sex education as mostly beneficial in the area of promoting abstinence while some others were of the opinion that it will promote early exposure to sexual relationship. The effects of sex education as indicated by the respondents on the learner were mainly positive with regard to sexual development. Hence from the findings, it can be concluded that a positive attitude towards sex education leads to a positive attitude towards the teaching of sex education in schools by teachers in Auta Balefi.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it is recommended that continuing encouragement is necessary to support teacher's interest in teaching sex education. Also, there is a need for policy to be matched up with serious action as regards the implementation and sustenance of workable sex education programmes in secondary schools.

The above recommendations, if implemented, will contribute greatly in shaping the attitude of teachers towards sex education and the state of Sex education in the nation in general thereby ensuring adolescent sexual and reproductive health development.

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