

SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND RELATIONSHIP ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

SOPHIE EMIKE OMOZUAWO

*Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi*

Abstract

This study investigated sexuality education and relationship on academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A point Biserial correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population is 10120 senior secondary students in Rivers State with a sample of 400 students drawn from two schools out of the 291 public secondary school in the state using purposive random sampling technique. Researcher made test instrument titled Sexuality Education Performance Test (SEPT). The instrument was validated by three specialists. The reliability coefficient 0.85 was obtained using Cronbach alpha estimates, which shows that the instrument is reliable. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the aid of three research assistants. The research assistants were trained by the researcher on how to administer and retrieve the questionnaire. This was necessary to ensure that the respondents do not give bias responses that would adversely affect the study. All questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion. Research questions and hypotheses were answered and analyzed using Point Biserial Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Among the findings of the study is that there is no significant relationship between abstinence plus and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State and one of the recommendations was that, teachers should equip students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to abstain from sex.

Keywords: sexuality education, academic performance, Girl- child.

Introduction

Sexual matters are often inadequately explained to persons in need of advice, no matter their age or religious beliefs or taboo. The inadequacy of education of children in application as matters of contraception and intercourse is often based on the notion that this information will encourage promiscuity. Older women and men may be given inadequate advice by doctors and hospitals. Contraception is prohibited in certain countries; abortion is illegal in many countries; masturbation is usually held to be aberrant. Lack of sexual education reinforces existing taboos and leads to sex by trial and error, possible impotence or lack of satisfaction, guilt complexes and where preventive advice is lacking; unwanted pregnancies and abortion become the norm due to ignorance. Sexual subjection may lead to sexual violence and deviancy. Anti-authoritarianism among young people may make them shy of using advice facilities. Findings reveal a lack of preparation even for immediate events such as puberty. A recent study showed that twice as many boys (25%) as girls (12%) had no information prior to the event and were unprepared for the biosocial change of menarche and

spermarche. The median age when information on sex was introduced was 12-13 years for boys as well as girls, and only a minority had early sex education before the age of 10 years.

The primary source of sex education for boys was the teacher (53%) with mothers (5.5%) the next most frequent source, while for girls, mothers (41%) and teachers (32%) were quoted. Fathers played a very small part. As a group, girls were better informed at an earlier age and had knowledge of a wider variety of topics. Boys were found to be much more dependent on teaching at school. The fact that fathers were hardly ever mentioned may reflect the fact that in many societies they spent less time with their children and are less involved in their intimate care. It may however be due to the fact that women relate sex to reproduction and babies which provides an easier introduction to the topic, whereas men may relate it more to pleasure or desire which may be harder to discuss with their children. Not all teachers are naturally adept to sex education, although their skills can be improved with training which should be part of the basic teacher-training syllabus (UIA, 2021).

Sex education according to Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines it as "*education in schools about sex*". Sex education on the other hand is aims to teach people how to navigate matters concerning sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is offered through different avenues, including in schools, community-based venues, and even clinics. However, sex education is high quality teaching and learning about a broad variety of topics related to sex and sexuality. It explores values and beliefs about those topics and help people gain the skills that are needed to navigate relationships with self, partners and community and manage one's own sexual health. Sex education may take place in schools, at home, in community setting or online. Sex education helps people gain the information and skills they need to make the best decisions for themselves about sex and relationships. Planned parenthood is the nation's largest provider of sex education reaching 1.2 million people a year through education outreach (Planned parenthood, 2023).

The CDC (2022) reports that the main topics taught in mandatory sex education courses include:

- transmission (and reducing the risk of) HIV and other **sexually transmitted infections** (STI)
- reducing the risk of **unwanted pregnancy**
- the benefits of **abstinence**
- how to use **contraception** such as condoms
- negotiation and decision-making skills regarding **sexual practices**.

Types of Sex Education: This is based on how individual approach the subject sex education to impact it on the girl-child. These are;

Abstinence-Only Sex Education

The **abstinence-only approach** (sometimes called the **abstinence-centered approach**) to sex education is the most extreme of all the options (apart from, perhaps, having no sex education at all). **Abstinence** is the noun used to refer to the act of **abstaining** from something, which is the choice not to do something. In the context of sex, abstinence refers to the choice not to have sex, usually until marriage. The **abstinence-only approach** has been the most heavily funded form of sex education for the past three decades. As a solution to the dropping rates in the prevalence and quality of sex education, sociologists suggest developing

a more modernized and **comprehensive** sex education curriculum based on greater inclusion of gender diversity, sexual diversity and ethnic diversity.

The cornerstones of the abstinence-only approach are as follows:

- Teaches students that having sex before marriage is morally wrong.
- Teaches students that having sex before marriage can have harmful social, religious, physical, and psychological consequences.
- Does not teach students about safe sexual practices or how to use contraception, often only framing the use of contraceptives in terms of when they *do not* work.
- Uses fear tactics to deter students from having sex before marriage, suggesting that STIs or pregnancy are inevitable outcomes of this.
- Does not address taboo concepts such as masturbation, abortion, or sexual diversity.

Abstinence-Plus Sex Education

The **abstinence-plus approach** to sex education is a more moderate version of the **abstinence-only approach**. The proponents of this approach also advocate for abstinence until marriage, they also provide some information on practicing safe sex. The main aim of this approach is to offer practical decision-making skills to students on how to navigate their sexual expression and health. As a solution to unwanted pregnancies, abstinence-based approaches tend to suggest carrying the pregnancy to term and then giving up the baby for adoption. (You might notice that this is not a solution to the pregnancy at all, but an alternative to raising a child!)

Comprehensive Sex Education

The **comprehensive approach** to sex education is often cited as the most efficient for causing safe sexual practices, reducing STI prevalence, and lowering the risk of unintended pregnancy.

While the comprehensive approach might relay that abstinence is the best way to prevent STIs and unwanted pregnancies, it does not do so using morals or religious ideals. Matters regarding the methods and importance of safe sexual expression are taught using objective, factual information that can be applied to real-life contexts. Unlike the other two approaches, the comprehensive approach teaches students that sex and sexuality are a normal part of human life - as are other 'taboo' occurrences, such as sexual diversity, abortion, and masturbation.

The Importance of Sex Education

Planned Parenthood (2022) stated that sex education gives young people the knowledge and skills they need for a lifetime of good sexual health. They learn how to have healthy relationships, make informed decisions about sex, think critically about the world, be a good ally to those who are marginalized, and love themselves for whom they are.

The Benefits of Sex Education

- Comprehensive sex education improves people's awareness and acceptance of sexual diversity
- a better understanding of sexual diversity
- the development of healthy relationships
- increased media literacy
- fewer unintended pregnancies
- lower likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted infections
- Preventing intimate partner violence and child sex abuse.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study;

1. To what extent does abstinence only sex education relate to academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does abstinence-plus sex education relate to academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does comprehensive sex education relate to academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

These hypotheses were tested in the study

1. There is no significant relationship of abstinence only sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship of abstinence plus sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship of comprehensive sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary school in Rivers State.

Methodology

Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted point Biserial correlation research design. The population consisted of 10120 students in three senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 400 respondents selected with the simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled psychosocial inventing (P1) and Biology and Mathematics Achievement test (BMAT). Data collected were analyzed using point Biserial correlation method for both the research questions and hypotheses with the use of the statistical packaged for social sciences (SPSS).

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that students of nowadays are very anxious about themselves and things that affect their lives. Sexually active teenagers are a matter of serious concern as they indulged in sexual activities such as sex experiment, free married sex, early marriage, unwanted pregnancy, distortion, abortion and termination of unwanted pregnancies due to some following reasons: mass illiteracy, negative socio- cultural and religious practices, ignorance, poverty and gender inequality and discrimination, ignorance, parent-child communication, few peer education. For a child-girl to function optimal in the society, they need good education because educating a girl-child means training her mind, character and abilities so that she can compete fairly across gender.

A girl-child needs to be mentored and taught the proper values that will improve self worth. Education exposes a girl-child to opportunities and helps develop her skills such as body awareness, relationship skills, communication skills, negotiation skills, violence prevention, decision making, self-acceptance, resource identification and human diversity. Is high time we stop allowing religious influence, propaganda and societal stigma to inform how we disseminate vital, factual information to minors regarding sex and human sexuality.

Results

The data and result of each research question and its corresponding hypothesis are presented together on the same table.

Research question one: To what extent does abstinence only sex education relate to academic performance of the girl -child in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship of abstinence only sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary school in Rivers State.

Table 1: Point Biserial correlation on abstinence only sex education relationship on academic performance of the girl child in Rivers State.

Correlations

		Academic Performance	Abstinence Only
Academic performance	Pearson correlation sig (2-tailed)	1	0.73
	N		0.53
Abstinence only	Pearson correlation	400	400
	Sig (2.tailed)	0.7	1
	N	0.53	400
		400	

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2.tailed)

The results shows (0.73) high positive correlation between abstinence only sex education and academic performance girl child in secondary schools in River State. The result means that, as scores on abstinence only increases, there is a corresponding increase on girl-child academic performance. The result also shows that there is relationship between abstinence only and academic performance of girl child in secondary school in Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significant for two tailed test. This is because the P-value (0.53) is higher than ($p > 0.05$) level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted or retained. The result of this null hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between abstinence plus and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research questions two and null hypothesis 2 are presented together and answered in table 2.

Research question 2: To what extent does abstinence plus sex education relate to academic performance of girl child in secondary school in Rivers State?

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship of abstinence plus sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2 Point Biserial Correlation on abstinence plus sex education relate to academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State

Correlation

		Academic performance	Abstinence Plus
--	--	----------------------	-----------------

Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	0.67
	Sig (2) tailed		.183
	N	400	400
Abstinence plus	Pearson correlation	0.67	1
	sig (2 tailed	.183	
	N	400	400

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows (0.67) high positive correlation between abstinence plus sex education and academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State. The result means that as score on abstinence plus sexual education increases, there is a corresponding increase on girl-child academic performance. The result shows that there is no relationship between abstinence plus sex education and academic performance of the girl-child of secondary Schools in Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test. This is because the p-value (0.27) is higher than ($p > 0.05$) level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis is accepted or retained. The result of this null hypothesis is that there is significant relationship between abstinence plus and academic performance girl-child of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question three and null hypothesis 3 are presented together and answered in table 3.

Research question 3:

Hypothesis three: There is no significant relationship of comprehensive sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary school in Rivers State.

Table 3 Point Biserial Correlation on comprehensive sex education and academic performance of girl-child in secondary school in Rivers State.

Correlation

		Academic Performance	Comprehensive sex education
Academic Performance	Pearson correlation	1	0.83
	Sig (2-tailed)		.003
	N	400	400
Comprehensive sex education	Pearson Correlation	0.82	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	400	400

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 shows (0.82) very high positive correlation between comprehensive sex education and academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State. The result means that, as score on comprehensive sex education increases, there is a corresponding increase on academic performance of the girl-child. The result also shows that there is relationship between comprehensive sex education and academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools in Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance for two-tailed test. This is because the p-value (0.82) is higher than ($p > 0.05$) level of significance.

This means that the null hypothesis is accepted or retained. The result of this null hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between comprehensive sexual education and academic performance of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussions of Findings

Discuss of research questions/hypothesis

Research question 1: To what extent does abstinence only sex education relate to academic performance of the girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship of abstinence only sex education and academic performance of girl child in secondary schools in Rivers State.

The result indicates that there is a high positive correlation between abstinence only sex education and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State. When point Biserial correlation was applied, a high $r=.073$ was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. The high positive relationship between abstinence only sex education and academic performance means that as abstinence only sex education increase there is corresponding increase in student academic performance and vice versa. This means that student's delay in the initiation of sexual activity constitutes a positive and desirable outcome, since the likelihood of responsible sexual behavior increases with age. Howard and Mitchell in Silva (2022).

The finding is in line with Columbia (2017) who opined that abstinence is theoretically effective in actual practice, intentions to abstain from sexual activity often fail because the school do not prepare young people to avoid unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. He said that abstinence only until marriage approaches have set back sex education so should be abandon. However, the result is contrary.

Research question 2: To what extent does abstinence-plus sex education relate to academic performance of the girl child in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship of abstinence plus sex education and academic performance of girl -child in secondary school in Rivers State.

The result indicates that there is a high positive correlation relationship between parent educational level and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. When point Biserial correlation was applied, a high $r=0.67$ was found to be statistically significant 0.05 level of probability. The high positive relationship between parent educational level and academic achievement means that as parent level of education increases, there is corresponding increase in student academic achievement and vice versa. This means, the more parents upgrade their skills, knowledge experience and attitude, the greater and effective academic achievement will be. Implicitly the more there is high academic achievement the more there is higher grade attachment, while the underachievement will yield to low academic achievement. The finding of the present study is in agreement conversely, abstinence-only programs have not been proven effective at lowering teen pregnancy or STI rates, increasing young people's knowledge, or even helping them remain abstinent. A congressionally mandated study of four popular abstinence-only programs by the Mathematica found that they were entirely ineffective. Students who participated in the programs were no more likely to abstain from sex than other students and no better protected from teen pregnancy, STIs, and STI.

Research question 3: There is no significant impact of comprehensive sex education and academic performance of girl - child in secondary school in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship of comprehensive sex education and academic performance of girl - child in secondary school in Rivers State

The result indicates that there is a very high positive correlation between comprehensive sexual education and academic performance of Secondary school students in Rivers State. When point Biserial correlation was applied, a very high $r=0.82$ was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability. The high positive relationship between comprehensive sex education and academic performance means that as comprehensive sex education increases there is every tendency that student academic performance will increase. This means that comprehensive sexual education can reduce sexual abuse. The findings of the study is in line with Bridges and Alford (2010) who argued that Schools have a vested interest in keeping students healthy: by doing so, they help students get higher grades and attain their academic goals. Students who are involved in pregnancy or experience STIs or HIV face major obstacles to academic success, but schools have the opportunity to help students avoid these barriers to success. Comprehensive sex education helps students protect their sexual health and avoid these negative outcomes. By providing comprehensive sex education programs, schools support student health and foster their academic achievement. The study is in support with Cavill (2019) who opines that comprehensive sex education should be encouraged because it teaches so much more than pregnancy, sexual violence and sexually transmitted infection prevention especially when coupled with affordable and accessible contraception, affordable and accessible reproductive healthcare and well – resourced community services. In other words comprehensive sex education empowers young people to make informed decisions about their bodies and their choice, which result in lower rates of unplanned pregnancy, lower rates of sexually transmitted infections, delays in sexual debut and increases in protective behaviours including condom use, contraceptive use and resource identification. It also makes people safer. Columbia (2019) stated that comprehensive sex education programmes have favourable effects on adolescent behavior, including sex initiation, number of sex partners, frequency of sexual activity, use of condoms and contraception, frequency of unprotected sexual activity, STIs and pregnancy.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a high positive and no significant relationship between sexuality education and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State. Moreso, the impact of abstinence only, abstinence plus, comprehensive sex education on academic performance of secondary school students can reduce sex and in turn students performance will be enhanced.

Recommendations

1. Teachers' skills can be improved by regular training, seminars and conferences.
2. Schools should assist in shaping student healthy lifestyle by providing knowledge based facts in sexuality education.
3. There should be an adequate monitoring and evaluation on the part of ministry of education.

References

- Bridges,E and Alford,S (2010) Comprehensive Sex Education and Academic Success ;Effective Programs Foster Student Achievement.www.advocatesforyouth.org/publication
- Cavill,K (2019) Benefits of sex education-Reduced sexual harm safer: prostaia Foundation.www.prostasia.org
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). School health profiles: Characteristics of health programs among secondary schools. <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Columbia (2017) Abstinence-only education is a failure, Mailman School of Public Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health* **Emily Bridges**
- Horowitz, J. M. (2022, Oct 26). Parents differ sharply by party over what their K-12 children should learn in school. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Sex education. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Planned Parenthood. (2022).What are the goals of sex education? <https://www.plannedparenthood.org>
- Planned Parenthood (2023).What is sex education? www.plannedparenthood.org
- Silva, M. (2022). The effectiveness of school-based sex education programs in the promotion of abstinent behavior :a meta-analysis. *Health Education Research*. 17(4) 471-481