



## Assessment of Knowledge of Sex Education and its Importance among Students of Selected Secondary Schools in Ilesa, Osun State

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### ABSTRACT

Sex education is a lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values about gender aimed at building a strong foundation for sexual health and well-being. A cross sectional study was carried out to assess the level of knowledge and perceived importance of sex education among students of selected secondary schools in Ilesa, Osun State. A total of 171 students were selected from Ilesa Grammar School and St. Anthony secondary school in Ilesa through convenience sampling. The data collected from the students was analyzed and interpreted. The results showed that the mean age of the students was  $15.7 \pm 1.474$  years. About 75.6% of students had knowledge about sex education while 68.3% understood the importance of sex education. There was a weak positive correlation between students' knowledge of sex education and their perception of its importance ( $P < 0.05$ ). There was an association between importance of sex education and some socio-demographic factor such as age, sex and ethnicity. The findings of the study indicated that the selected secondary school students in Ilesa exhibited good knowledge of sex education and its importance. Socio-demographic factors such as age, sex and ethnicity significantly influenced the students' perception of sex education.

### Keywords:

Sex Education,  
Sex Education  
Importance,  
Sex Education  
Knowledge,  
Sexual Health,  
Sociodemographic  
Factors,  
Secondary School  
Students

### INTRODUCTION

In the past, the concept of sex education placed much emphasis on the care associated with childbirth and the act of procreation (Onyeonoro *et al.*, 2011). Emerging population growth, civilization, industrialization and health concerns have led to a paradigm shift and conceptual revolution. This has significantly altered traditional description of sexuality and caused the rethinking and re-identification of the relationship between sexuality and human activity and behavior. It has also greatly impacted sexual orientations, patriarchy, sexual relation, family information and reproduction (Nigharin *et al.*, 2019; Ademuyiwa *et al.*, 2022). Beyond this, sex education helps young people to explore and nurture positive values regarding their sexual and reproductive health (Osadolor *et al.*, 2022).

The roles of schools in sexual education cannot be underestimated. Schools are involved in the design of comprehensive curricula aimed at bringing about the socially desirable attitudes,

practices and personal conduct on the part of the children and adults that will best protect the individual as a human and family as a social institution (George *et al.*, 2022). A Nigerian study published in year 2001 by International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health (Valentile *et al.*, 2001) has shown that 80 percent of patients with abortion complications are adolescents. This assertion was based on the fact that a good number of teenage females reported first sexual intercourse before age 15. This adolescent health dilemma has been attributed to a lack of information and knowledge about the implications of their behavior and their sexual health and the general warfare of the nation (Seiler-Ramdas *et al.*, 2020).

Within the national framework, the knowledge of sexual education varies from one area to another. Access to sexuality education depends on a number of factors including level of education, school system and extent of socioeconomic development (Haruna, 2020; Adeniyi *et al.*, 2024; Adetunji *et al.*, 2022; Adetunji *et al.*, 2022).

Children raised in developed areas are more theoretically likely to have access to sexual education than those who were raised in typically rural communities. In Nigeria, there are discrepancies in trainings between private and public secondary schools with many parents preferring private schools (Usman *et al.*, 2022). Ilesa is a less industrialized town in Osun State with population of over 350, 000 people (Fatubarin, 2008; Adeniyi and Oni, 2016; Adeniyi and Agoreyo, 2018). The aim of the study was to assess knowledge of sex education and its importance among students of selected public and private secondary schools in Ilesa, Osun state.

The objectives of the research were to determine:

- (1) The level of knowledge of sex education among the selected secondary school students in Ilesa, Osun State
- (2) The relationship between the level of knowledge of sex education among the selected secondary school students in Ilesa, Osun State and their perception about its importance

The relationship between importance of sex education and some socio-demographic factor such as age, sex and ethnicity

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research design

The research design was a descriptive cross-sectional survey aimed at evaluating the knowledge of sex education and its importance among students in Ilesa Grammar School and St. Anthony Secondary School Ilesa, Osun State.

### Research Setting

The research setting was Ilesa Grammar School and St. Anthony secondary School Ilesa. Ilesa Grammar School is located in Ilesa East Local Government, it is owned by the state government of Osun State. St. Anthony secondary School is located in Ilesa West Local Government Area. it's a day and boarding Private school. Permissions were obtained from the two schools.

### Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria include being students of Ilesa Grammar School and St. Anthony Secondary School, Ilesa, Osun State, being able to read and write

### Target Population

The target population for this research study was secondary school students in Ilesa Grammar School (public school) and St. Anthony secondary School (private school) in Ilesa.

### Sample size and Sampling technique

A total of 171 respondents were selected using multistage sampling technique. Two schools was selected using

purposive sampling, while a convenience sampling technique was used in administering the research instrument to the participants of the study due to inability to access the entire students.

Sample size was determined using Yamane's Formula (Yamane, 1967)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n= sample size, e= marginal error (0.05), N= Total Population of senior secondary school students in Ilesa Grammar School (180) and St. Anthony secondary school (120) Ilesa.

### Instrument for data collection

The instrument that was used for this study was self-designed questionnaire consisting of question Items divided into four sections: Sections A-D.

Section A: Respondent's socio-demographic data.

Section B: Respondent's knowledge of sex education.

Section C: Respondent's opinion on importance of sex education.

Section D: Factors influencing teaching of sex education. Both face and content validities were conducted on the questionnaire

### Method of data collection

The researcher administered self-designed questionnaire to the students to collect data.

The respondents were informed, verbal consent was gained, and the questionnaires were distributed, filled and retrieved respectively.

### Method of data analysis

Data gathered was analyzed using SPSS, Descriptive statistics which includes frequency, percentage, bar chart and pie chart.

### Ethical consideration

Ethical approval and permission were received from the selected Secondary Schools before the commencement of the study. Written consent was also obtained from each participating student.

### Statistical Analysis

All quantitative data were expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean (SEM) using SPSS 21. Categorical data were expressed in percentage. Statistically significant differences were accepted at  $p<0.05$ . Relationships between variables were determined using Pearson Correlation (continuous data) and chi square (categorical data).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio demographic and economic characteristics of students

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>		
<b>Mean age:</b>		
<b>15.7± 1.474</b>		
12-14	38	22.0
15-17	113	65.9
18-20	20	12.1
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	83	48.8
Female	88	51.2
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	121	70.7
Islam	50	29.3
Traditional	0	0.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Yoruba	129	75.6
Hausa	8	4.9
Igbo	25	14.6
Others	9	4.9

Table 1 shows the socio demographic characteristics of the secondary school students. The mean age of the students was  $15.7 \pm 1.474$ . Eighty three students (48.8%) of the respondents were males while 88 students (51.2%) were females. Also, it was discovered that 38 students (22.0%) of the respondents were within the age range of 12 to 14 years as. 113 students (65.9%) falls within age bracket 15 to 17 years. 20 students (12.1%) were within the age bracket 18 to 20 years. On the basis of religion, 121 students (70.7%) identified as Christian. 50 students (29.3%) practiced Islam while none identified as Traditional religion. 129 students (75.6%) were Yoruba. 8 students (4.9%) were Hausa. 25 students (14.6%) were Igbo and 9 students (4.9%) did not belong to Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo.

#### Knowledge of secondary school students on sex education

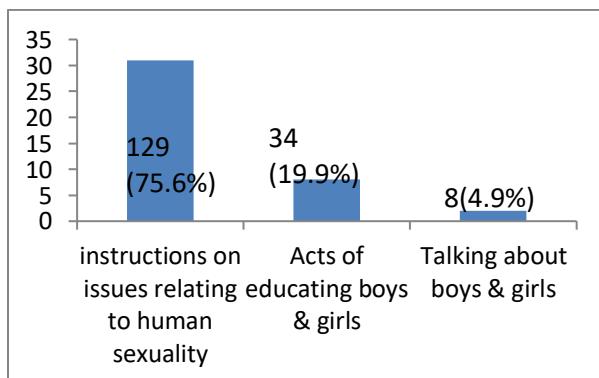


Fig 1: Students' descriptions of sex education

The bar chart in figure 1 reveals both the frequency and percentage distribution of students regarding the meaning of sex education. One hundred and twenty nine students

representing 75.6% of the respondents claimed that sex education means instructions on issues relating to human sexuality, 34 students representing 19.9% felt that sex education is an act of educating boys and girls while 8 students (4.9% of students) claimed it means talking about boys and girls.

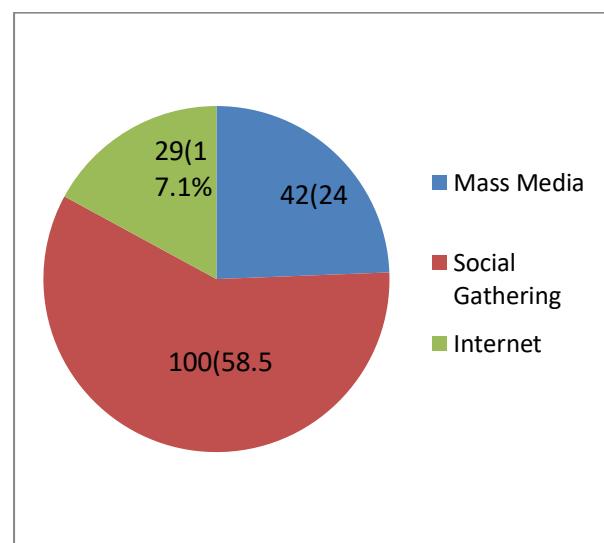


Figure 2: Source of information regarding sex education. The pie chart in figure 2 shows both the frequency and percentage of students concerning source of information regarding sex education. 100 students (58.5%) obtained information concerning sex education through social gathering. 42 students (24.4%) obtained information concerning sex education through mass media. 29 students (17.1%) obtained information through internet.

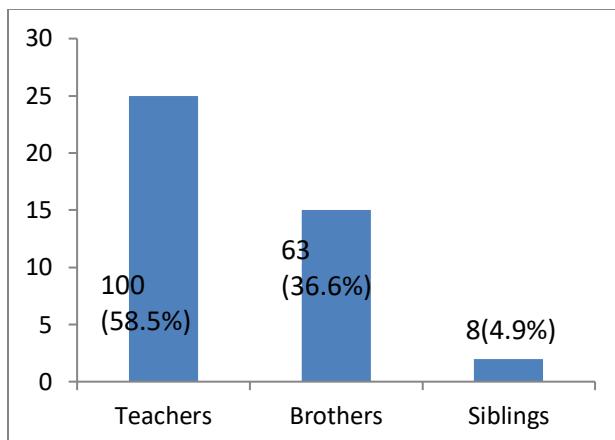


Figure 3: Perception about who is appropriate to teach sex education

The bar chart in figure 3 reveals both the frequency and percentage distribution of students regarding who is appropriate to teach sex education. 100 students (58.5%) indicated that the appropriate sex educators were teachers, 63 students (36.6%) indicated the appropriate sex educators were siblings while 8 students (4.9%) claimed that the appropriate sex educators as siblings.

Table 2: Perception of secondary school students on sex

Students' knowledge about sex education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Have you heard about sex</b>		
YES	163	95.1
NO	8	4.9
<b>Premarital sex has effect on adolescents</b>		
YES	154	90.2
NO	17	9.8

Table 2 revealed that 163 students (95.1%) have heard about sex while 8 (4.9%) have not heard about it. Also, 154 students (90.2%) felt that premarital sex has effects on adolescents while 17 (9.8%) felt it has no effect on adolescents.

#### Importance of sex education among secondary school students

Table 3: Perception of students on the importance of sex education

Importance of sex education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex education should be included in curriculum</b>		
YES	142	82.9
NO	29	17.1
<b>Sex education is good for secondary students</b>		
YES	138	80.5
NO	33	19.5
<b>Agree that teachers should teach students of opposite sex on sex education</b>		
YES	125	73.2
NO	46	26.8
<b>Think students will be comfortable being taught sex education</b>		
YES	121	70.7
NO	50	29.3

Table 3 showed that 142 students (82.9%) agreed that sex education should be included in curriculum while 29 students (17.1%) disagreed. 138 students (80.5 %) agreed that sex education is good for secondary students while 33 students (19.5%) disagreed. 125 students (73.2%) agreed that teachers should teach students of opposite sex on sex education while 46 students (26.8%) disagreed. 121 students (70.7%) thought students will be comfortable being taught sex education while 50 students (29.3%) disagreed.

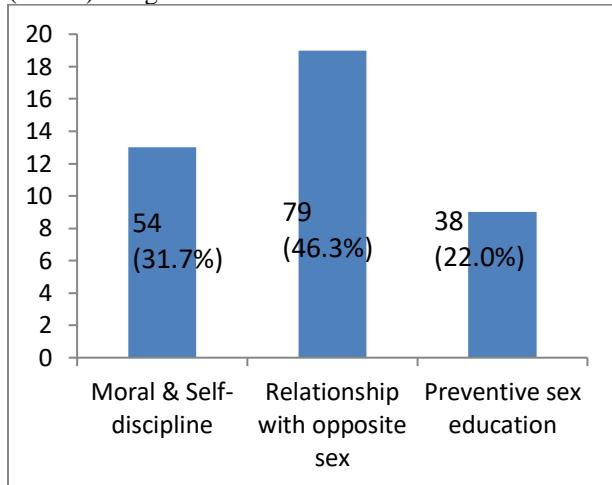


Figure 4: Perception about which sex education topics students should know

The bar chart in figure 4 reveals both the frequency and percentage distribution of students regarding sex education topics students should know. 79 students (46.3%) chose 'relationships with opposite sex', 54 students (31.7%) chose 'moral and self-discipline'. 38 students (22.0%) chose 'preventive sex education'.

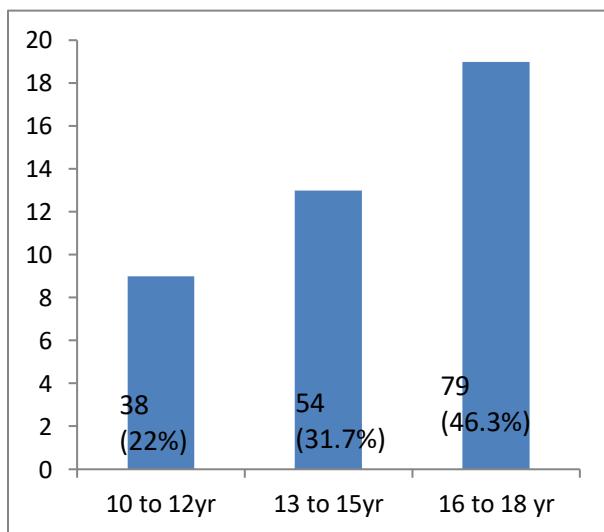


Figure 5: Perception about appropriate age for teaching of sex education

Figure 5 indicates the frequency and percentage distribution of students regarding the appropriate age for sex education teaching. 38 students (22%) chose 10 to 12 years. 54 students (31.7%) chose 13 to 15 years. 79 students (46.3%) chose 16 to 18 years.

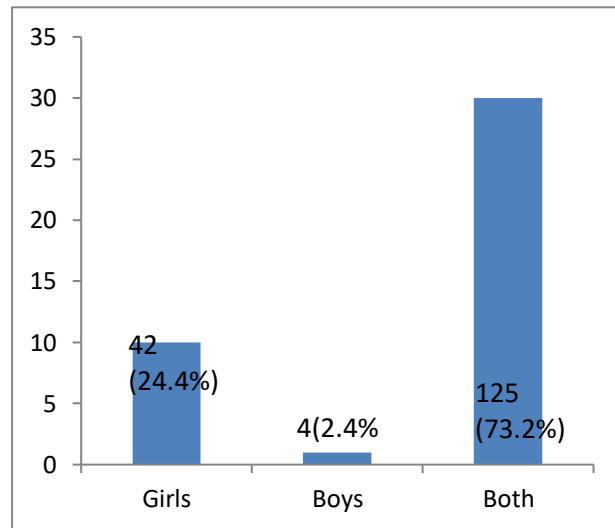


Figure 4.6: Perception about the gender that should have more sex education

Figure 6 indicated the frequency and percentage of students concerning the gender that should be more educated. 42 students (24.4%) claimed that girls should be more educated. 4 students (2.4%) claimed that boys should be more educated. 125 students (73.2%) claimed that both boys and girls should be more educated.

#### Attitude of secondary school students towards sex education

Table 4: Attitude of secondary school students towards sex education

Attitude	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total that agree	Total that disagree
Teaching of sex education is time consuming, stressful and demanding	33(19.5%)	50(29.3%)	63(36.6%)	25(14.6%)	83(48.8%)	88(51.2%)
Teaching of sex education is against my religion belief	21(12.2%)	8(4.9%)	75(43.9%)	67(39.0%)	29(17.1%)	142(56.1%)
Teaching of sex education can help students to know more about their puberty and post-puberty life	46(26.8%)	117(68.3%)	5(2.44%)	4(2.44%)	163(95.1%)	9(4.9%)
Teaching of sex education can help students to make good decisions about their relationship life	63(36.6%)	96(56.1%)	8(4.9%)	4(2.4%)	159(92.7%)	12(7.3%)

Table 4 shows that 51.2% of students disagreed that teaching sex education is time-consuming, stressful, and demanding. Eighty-two point nine percent (82.9%) disagreed that sex education is against their religious beliefs. Ninety-five point one percent (95.1%) agreed that sex education helps students understand puberty and post-

puberty life, while 92.7% agreed it helps students make informed decisions about relationships.

#### Relationship between knowledge of sex education and importance of sex education

Table 5 shows that there was a weak positive correlation between students' assessment on knowledge of sex education and importance of sex education.

Person Correlation (r)		Importance of sex education
Knowledge of sex education		0.156*
Importance of sex education	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 160

\*P represents statistical significance at P<0.05

#### Relationship between students' attitude to sex education and importance of sex education

Table 6 shows that there was a positive correlation between students' attitude on sex education and importance of sex education.

Pearson correlation (r)		Students' attitude on sex education
Importance of sex education		.428*
Students' attitude on sex education	1	160

\* represents statistical significance at  $P < 0.05$

**Relationship between students' socio-demographic feature and the importance of sex education**

	Pearson Chi-Square	Degree of freedom	Significant value
Age	220.866	42	0.000
Sex	16.987	6	0.009
Religion	11.141	6	0.084
Ethnic group	.44.881	18	0.000

Table 7 indicates that the importance of sex education was significantly associated with age, sex, and ethnicity, but not religion.

Over the years, sex education, an act of teaching students about sex and sexuality, has emerged as one of very many controversial topics in school systems both in primitive settings and developed community settings. There is no doubt that many parents and guardians are pertinently overwhelmed by the delusion of possible contamination of their wards by eroticisms and erotic distractions. However, the importance of sexual education in secondary school cannot be overemphasized. The study was designed to investigate the knowledge and importance of sex education among secondary school students in selected secondary schools in Ilesa.

The mean age of the respondents was  $15.7 \pm 1.474$  years and this was consistent with the reported mean age of respondents in studies conducted by Ademuyiwa et al., (2022) on the 'knowledge and attitude of sex education among secondary school students in south-western Nigeria'. It also concurred with the reports of Kumar et al., (2017) on 'perception of adolescents towards sex education'.

Similar to the study of Ademuyiwa et al., (2022), a very large proportion of the secondary school students (75.6%) had a good knowledge of sex education. However, the finding of the study contradicted with that of Ajibade et

Table 7: Chi-Square Test of Socio-Demographic Factors and Sex Education Importance

al., (2023) on 'knowledge and opinion toward sex education among selected secondary school in Ejigbo Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria'. The authors reported that secondary school students showed a poor knowledge and opinion toward sex education in which sex education was described as acts of corrupting the youths and teaching students bad things. In the study, majority of the students reported that their major source of sex education related information is social gathering and a large percentage preferring that sex education teaching be conducted by teachers.

A previous study by Gebretsadik and Weldearegay, (2016), a significant relationship was reported between level of education and knowledge of reproductive and sexual rights of youths. In the present study, a significant weak correlation was found between knowledge of sex education and importance of sex education. The finding of the study indicated that an increase in knowledge demonstrated a huge potential of causing an increase in importance of sex education.

In the study, majority of the respondents (68.3%) demonstrated high perception regarding importance of sex education. The finding indicates that the students

understood the relevance of sex education and the need to make informed decisions about their sexual life and break all the taboos revolving around sex and sexuality. Another finding of the study is the significant positive correlation between attitude towards sex education and importance of sex education. A study by Kassa et al., (2016) showed there was a statistically significant relationship between the knowledge of sex education and the attitude. The relationship between attitude towards sex education and importance of sex education established by the present study indicated there was an interaction between attitude towards sex education and students' perception importance of sex education.

Furthermore, correlational analyses between socio-demographical factors (independent variables) and students' perception on importance of sex education indicated that age, sex and ethnicity have strong influences on student's perception on sex education but not religion. A study by Vanderberg et al., (2015) claimed that US-born Hispanic women exhibited higher tendency of reporting sexually transmitted illnesses education than white women by parents. In the present study, it was found that students' perception on importance of sex education correlated positively with age, sex and ethnicity. However, there was no significant association between students' perception of sex education importance and religion.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicated that the selected secondary school students in Ilesa, Osun State exhibited a high knowledge and a positive perception on the importance of sex education. Students' perception of the importance of sex education was significantly related to their knowledge of sex education and attitude towards sex education. Socio-demographic factors, such as age, sex, and ethnicity, significantly influenced students' perception of the importance of sex education. Future studies should highlight the roles of other sociodemographic factors on sex education and teenage pregnancy prevention among youngsters.

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