

# ATTITUDINAL DISPOSITION OF PARENTS TOWARDS THE SEX EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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## Abstract

*This paper is an empirical work aimed at determining the attitudinal disposition of parents towards the introduction of sex education into the primary school curriculum. An effort of this nature becomes imperative so as to ascertain the acceptance parents will determine the success or otherwise of the implementation process of this programme. Research questions and hypotheses were drawn based on some factors that were perceived to affect parental dispositions on sex education while a single instrument was developed, validated and used for the purpose of data collection. This was administered on one hundred and fifty (150) parents. The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical methods. The findings showed that many parents within the study sample had misconceptions about the programme and did not perceive it as relevant for societal progress. Certain religious considerations appeared to have been responsible for this situation. Our traditional belief system seemed not to have posed any impediments to the acceptance of this programme. However, generally the need for awareness and enlightenment campaigns was agitated for to improve on the acceptance status of parents towards the implementation of the programme and guarantee its success.*

## Introduction

Sexual perversion constitutes a serious problem of young men and women in our contemporary time. This can be attributed to the fact that the society has become so permissive and perverse with so many adults now freely indulging in sex with reckless abandon. Thus, the incidents of unwanted pregnancies and the risks of contracting sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) including infection with Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) which results in AIDs, sexual violence and coercion including rape abound. Anikweze and Orji (1978) agreed that this permissiveness has become so precarious thus leading to social deterioration in the bonds of conformity of social norms. This has led to the rejection of the acceptable virtues which were previously imbibed while abstinence has been compromised.

As a result, adolescents now engage in sex freely without minding the

consequences. Olayinka (1987) had earlier pointed out that the sexual problems of adolescent has reached a worrisome height when he said that secondary schools and higher institutions of learning in Nigeria are indeed plagued with incessant problems of moral laxity, indecent photographs and pornographic films of sexual intercourse and unwanted pregnancies. This problem is today compounded with the manner of indecent dressing by mostly young girls in higher institutions. It was in order to provide solution to the sexual problems of adolescents at the early stage that a sexuality Education Curriculum was planned for and developed for the lower and upper primary school by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Education and other collaborating agencies.

The sexuality Education curriculum by perception is meant to provide remediation in the Multi-dimensional sexual problems of the adolescents in Society. This can guarantee a save and healthy productive force for the future which the government of the day has a responsibility for. Sexuality issues in developing societies are often perceived as those not opened for discussion let alone for the benefit of adolescents. This is rooted in the cultural practices of most societies in Africa and considered as the exclusive preserve of adults who even do not discuss such in the open. Most people consider sex as evil, dirty and degrading and thus do not seem to want to sincerely, honestly and joyfully look into the various issues that make-up; influence and improve a person's sexuality status. Generally, there is something wrong with the way people are brought up to view sex and as a result sex has and is being abused. This attitude of people towards sex has led to its abuse where they subscribe to the wrong conceptions about it. Parents have presented the most difficult conditions of inhibitions of sexuality matters to their children at home as well as in school. These have tended to be predicated perversely on religious and some traditional beliefs. It shows that most parents have not come to the proper understanding of the purpose of sex. Some parents hold the misconception that sex is only for procreation while they consider it outside the context of procreation as selfish and carnal. They hold that sexuality matters should only be engaged in, for the purpose of child bearing. It is because of these factors that sex education programmes are often opposed and not given recognition.

Many parents do not understand the importance of Sexuality Education to the adolescence period. This must have been responsible for the ignorance and rejection of sexuality matters pertaining to adolescents. Parental dispositions are often based on various factors, which include religion, traditional beliefs and educational attainment levels. These factors certainly become crucial in perceptions even when viewed in the understanding of their issues outside sex. However, it should be understood and perceived that sex is one of the most dramatic problems of the adolescent life. Thus, they need proper guidance to understand the complexities of their sexuality, together with feelings that go with it and to understand and appreciate the health and social issues involved, to achieve the necessary competencies and responsibilities in the expression or control of their sex-related needs. In many situations, these adolescents gets involved in relationships, which sometimes they are ill-prepared for. The consequences of these relationship are often quite enormous. This effort is thus to examine the attitudes of parents towards the sex education programmes in Nigeria and also to draw up measures that will serve as inducements for creating parental attitudinal acceptance of such programmes.

### **Research Questions**

*The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:*

- 1 What information do parents have about sexuality education?
- 2 What are the religious factors of parents that impede the introduction of sexuality education?
- 3 What are the traditional factors of parents that impede the introduction of sexuality education?

### **Research Hypotheses**

*To guide the study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:*

- 1 There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who were Muslims and Christians towards the introduction of sex education.
- 2 There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who were illiterate and literate towards the introduction of sexuality education.
- 3 There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who were perceived to hold strong traditional beliefs and those who did not towards the introduction of sex education.

## **Method and Procedure**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted the survey method, which is also considered as a descriptive research. It was a cross-sectional survey where information was collected from the target population at one time.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consisted of 150 parents drawn from Jos cosmopolitan city and its environs. The population comprised of Muslims and Christians, literate and illiterate parents as well as non-adherents of Islam and Christianity. The population was stratified to include parents who were Christians, Moslems and non-adherents of either Christianity or Islam but of traditional beliefs. Stratification of this nature was necessary so as to include respondents with the perceived attitudes to be part of the sample population. The parents were identified and located through their children who were found in the many primary schools in the Jos metropolitan city and its environs. These primary schools were those owned by the government, private individuals as well as religious organizations. Teachers in these schools served as research assistants and helped in the identification of parents through their children. They also administered the questionnaire on the parents.

The researcher ensured that only parents with suitable attitudes for the work were included in the sample. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of parents based on the identified factors. The identified parents were assumed to be information-rich on the research topic.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

For the purpose of data collection, a self-designed questionnaire was developed, validated and used. The questionnaire, parents Attitudinal Disposition Questionnaire on Sex Education (PADQSE) is a 20-item, 5-point Likert Scale type questionnaire. The PADQSE consist of two sections which are A and B. Section A is made up of the biodata of parents while section B consist of the major attitudinal dispositions of parents on sex education which were measured on the 5-point Likert Scale. For the purpose of data analysis, the mean score, standard deviation and the test statistical methods were used.

## Presentation of Results

### Research Questions

RQ1: what information do parents have about Sexuality Education?

Table 1: A table of percentage (%) showing the Types of Information that parents Have about sexuality Education.

SS	Variables (Information)	SA	A	UND	D	SD	TOTAL
1	Sex education is a Western concept that can destroy the moral standard of the youths.	34 (22.6%)	5 (3.3%)	7 (4.6%)		104 (69.3%)	150
2	Sex education will encourage premarital sex among the youths.	96 (64%)	4 (2.6%)	10 (6.6%)	15 (10.5%)	25 (16.5%)	150
3	If achievement of abstinence among youths is the benefit of sex education.	20 (13.3%)	10 (6.6%)	2 (1.3%)	31 (20.6%)	87 (58%)	150
4	Sex education is limited to child – birth	106 (70.6%)	12 (8%)		32 (21.3%)		150
5	Sex education can guarantee a productive force in future	23 (15.3%)	20 (13.3%)	9 (6%)	-	98 (65.3%)	150

In table 1, the respondents agreed that sexuality education is not a western concept and cannot destroy the moral standard of children. 104 of the 150 parents representing (69%) disagreed with the negative statement. 96 of the parents representing 64% of the population believed that sex education would encourage premarital sex among the youths. Abstinence cannot be achieved by sex education as 87 (58%) of the population disagreed with the statement. However, 106 (70.6% of the population agreed that sex education is limited to child birth. (98 (65.3%) parents did not have the information that, sex education can guarantee a productive force in future. The finding that a larger population of the parents perceived sex education as not a western concept which does not erode the moral standard of children may not be unconnected with the high population of literate parents in the study sample who have read and appreciated the abundant literature concerning sex education.

The finding that sex education will encourage pre-marital sex among the adolescents may be linked to the belief that it will promote sexual experimentation as Afolabi (2003) said that the teaching of sex education in the classroom will expose children to the machinations of strange but with fundamentally opposed value system. This position was supported by Bhayat (2003) with the reaction that even psychologists have argued that sexual education will lead to sexual experimentation. That juvenile mind is adventurous which tries to experiment any ideas acquired. This may lead to increase in the rate of fornication and adultery. This finding can be understood and appreciated with the context of the information that parents have which relate to abstinence and the benefit which sex education can guarantee a productive population for the future.

RQ2: What are the religious factors that inhibit the introduction to sexuality education?

Table 2: A Percentage Table showing the Factors that Inhibit the Introduction of Sexuality Education.

SN	Variables (Religious factors)	SA	A	UND	D	SD	TOTAL
1	Religious doctrines and practices do not hinder sexuality education.	18 (12%)	-	-	10 (6.6%)	122 (81.3%)	150
2	Sexuality education should be taught only in churches and mosques	103 (68.6%)	-	3 (2%)	37 (4.6%)	7 (4.6%)	150
3	Only religious instructors can positively teach sexuality education in schools.	120 (80%)	10 (6.6%)	-	14 (9.3%)	6 (4%)	150
4	Sex education will negatively interfere with the spiritual upbringing of the child.	125 (83.3%)	-	6 (4%)	3 (2%)	16 (10.6%)	150

In table 2, a larger percentage of the sample asserted that religious doctrines and practices are hindrances to the implementation of sex education as 81.% responded negatively to statement. No wonder, 68.6% agreed that sex education should be taught in churches

and mosques while suggesting that only religious instructors can conveniently teach sex education in school. In furtherance to this position, 83.3% of the parents' population responded that sex education is likely to interfere with the spiritual upbringing of the children. This position adds credence to the perceived general religious feelings. The responses appeared to have transcended religious differences of Islam and Christianity

RQ 3: What are traditional factors that impede the introduction of sexuality education?

Table 3: A percentage Table showing the Traditional Factors Impeding the Introduction of Sexuality Education.

S/N	Variables (Traditional factors)	SA	A	UND	D	SD	TOTAL
1	Sex education has no place in our traditional system	37 (24.6%)	10 (6.6%)	-	14 (9.3%)	89 (59.3%)	150
2	It can erode the moral standard of the adolescents in society.	43 (64%)	29 (22.6%)	20 (6.6%)		58 (38.6%)	150
3	It can promote promiscuity among adolescents.	66 (44%)	19 (12.6%)		20 (13.3%)	45 (30%)	150
4	It is a taboo to expose adolescents to sexuality matters.	55 (36.6%)	21 (14%)	16 (10.6%)	7 (4.6%)	51 (34%)	150

In table 3, 89 of the parents representing (59.3% said sex education has a place in our culture while 58 (38.6%) said that it cannot erode the moral standard of the youths. 43 (28.6%) however said that sex education can erode the moral standard of the adolescents. 66 of the population which is (44%) agreed that it can promote promiscuity among adolescents while 55 (36.6%) said it is a taboo to expose adolescents to sexuality matters. These reactions of parents though mixed, only add credence to their dispositions revealing their fears as to the motive and likely impact of the programme on society.

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESES ONE:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who were Muslims and Christians towards the introduction of sex education

Table 4: A summary of t-test Analysis showing the Attitude of Muslims and Christians towards the Introduction of Sex Education.

Categories of groups	N	X	SD	t-cal	Critical value	Decision
Muslim parents	82	3.7	1.02	7.24	1.96	Rejected
Christian parents	68	4.3	1.6			

\* 0.05

In table 4, the t-cal of 7.24 is greater than the critical table value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and showed that Muslim and Christian parents had different attitudes towards the introduction of sex education in schools. The Christian parents who had a mean of 4.3 seemed to have favoured the introduction of sex education than Muslim parents which showed they had better positive attitude. This findings is in agreement with that of Adetunji (2003) that discovered Christian parents with positive attitude to the issue of sex education.

The supposedly low mean score of Muslim parents as compared to that of Christian parents could be attributed to their perception that sex education could destroy the youths moral standard and thus raise the incidents of unwanted pregnancies and induce the urge for abortion. Kareem (2002) stated that all should reject the sex education programme as it will corrupt the youths. Mohammed (2002) while rejecting the programme said it will pervert morality and Ladan (2002) labeled it as an American influence in the Nigeria School curriculum.

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS TWO:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who were literate and illiterate towards the introduction of sexuality education.



Table 5: A summary of t-test Analysis showing the Attitude of parents who Literate and illiterate towards the introduction of sex Education

Categories of groups	N	X	SD	t-cal	Critical value	Decision
Literate parents	59	3.5	1.3	-2.55	1.96	Accepted
Illiterate parents	91	4.1	1.56			

\* 0.05

In table 5, t-cal of  $-2.55$  is less than the 1.96 critical table value and thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. The interpretation is that a significant difference does not exist in the attitude of parents who were literate and those were not towards the introduction of the sex education programme in the Nigerian school curriculum. This result could be adduced to the fact that both categories of parents are well-informed on issues performing to sexuality. The availability of improved communication services like television could have raised the enlightenment level of even the illiterate parents to appreciate the necessity for sex education

**Research Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents who held strong traditional beliefs and those who did not towards the introduction of sex education

Table 6: A summary of t-test Analysis showing the Attitude of parents who held Strong Traditional Beliefs and Those who did not in the Introduction of sex education.

Categories of groups	N	X	SD	t-cal	Critical value	Decision
Hold strong traditional beliefs	21	2.9	1.32	-4.4	1.96	Accepted
Hold weak traditional beliefs	129	3.4	1.7			

\* 0.05

In table 6, t-cal of  $-4.8$  is less than the table value of  $1.96$ , which shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. The interpretation is that there is no significant difference in the opinions of parents who held strong traditional beliefs and those who did not towards the introduction of sex education. This is a confirmation that our traditional value and beliefs do not contradict the emerging modern culture.

Development in our society is not only modifying norms and values, it is also removing obnoxious traditions and repugnant cultural practices. This finding came in spite of the responses of significant part of the population drawn from the rural settlement of local government area.

### **Implications of the Findings**

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made:

- 1 There are grave misconceptions among parents of the value and benefits of sex education to the child. Government and non-governmental organizations should mount enlightenment campaigns to remove these misconceptions in order to pave way for a successful sex education programme in Nigerian schools. The benefit of the programme to the future of this country cannot be underestimated. It can improve the health status of the Nigerian child and guarantee a vibrant productive force for the nation.
  - 2 Religious organizations have a more crucial role to play in order to down-play on the negative misconceptions about sex education.
- In table 4, adherents of the Islamic faith who constituted a population size of 82 with a mean score of 3.7 responded negatively to the need to introduce sex education in Nigeria schools. The adherents of Christianity though of a lower population of 68 and a mean score of 4.3 responded positively towards the need to introduce sex education in schools when compared to the performances of Muslims in this test. Generally, there is need to step-up awareness campaigns in places of worship for the success of this programme.

- 3 The campaign for the acceptance of sexuality education should transcend cultural and traditional considerations. Parents who hold strong traditional beliefs are likely to create impediments in their acceptance status.

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