

Influence of Sexual Attitudes on the Education Participation of Secondary School Girls in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Secondary schooling for girls is associated with much vulnerability. Sexual research is sometimes curtailed by religious and cultural taboos that consider it inappropriate. Given that girls' education participation continues to experience setbacks that have a sexual bearing, research breaching these taboos is justified. Hence, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of sexual attitudes on the education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County (HBC). The study adopted a Concurrent Transformative research design- majorly quantitative with an embedded qualitative bit. The study took place in Homa Bay County. The targeted population was all secondary school girls in HBC. Solvin's formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 393. Respondents were chosen by proportionate stratified sampling method. Additionally, one guidance/counselling teacher, one principal and one area education director from the participating schools were purposefully included in the study to provide complementary qualitative data. Data from female students was collected by means of questionnaires while interview schedules were used to collect data from the rest of the participants. The validity of the test was established through expert input and adaption of tests used in similar studies. A pilot study was conducted to ensure instrument efficiency. Instrument reliability was confirmed by a test-retest test that returned a correlation coefficient of 0.786. The quantitative data was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 24.0. Linear regression was run between education participation and gender norms and the outcome was an equation model. Qualitative data provided evaluative references in the discussion. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was found to be statistically significant ($t= 29.576, p < .001$). Data evidence against the null hypothesis validated the alternative hypothesis. The study found that the sexual attitudes of the majority of the girls in Homa Bay County were inclined towards sexual gratification. The study data revealed that this behaviour undermined girls' education participation. The study recommends that school authorities promote the formation of girls' sexual sobriety peer teams (SSPT) that meet regularly to unpack the potential risks of romantic relationships on their educational participation. Interventions to improve girls' education participation will benefit from these findings. More similar studies are needed to gauge the plausibility of generalizing these findings.

Keywords: Education Participation, Pregnancy, Secondary School Girls, Sexual Attitudes

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents, including girls, often undergo a significant phase of sexual development and exploration, encompassing various aspects such as sexual identity, norms, practices, desires, and relationships (Carroll, 2018; Thurston & Allan, 2018; Tiefer, 2018). Although these experiences are commonly seen as a typical aspect of adolescent growth, they can occasionally result in engaging in unsafe sexual activities, which can have adverse consequences for education, such as unintended pregnancies and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections.

Numerous interrelated factors, such as familial influences, peer interactions, environmental factors, and media exposure, affect adolescents' sexual views and behaviors (Benvenuto, 2018; Michels, 2018) and exert a substantial influence on the formation of sexual attitudes by frequently presenting sexuality in enticing and idealized manners. Research undertaken in the Netherlands (Baams et al., 2015) has demonstrated that the exposure of youth to

sexualized media might result in the development of more permissive sexual attitudes, particularly when the media content is viewed as being genuine.

The issue of pregnancy assumes significant importance within the context of this study since it is commonly identified as a main factor contributing to the disengagement of adolescent girls from educational pursuits. There is a strong correlation between elevated rates of adolescent pregnancy and diminished levels of female educational engagement, particularly among individuals aged 12 to 19. This period coincides with the development of sexual attitudes, which are essential for navigating the challenges posed by adolescent sexuality. Sexual attitudes are shaped by cultural and family beliefs and prior sexual experiences (Irwin & Shafer, 2021; Lutta, 2015).

In Homa Bay County, the study's focal location, informed individuals and community elders have acknowledged the challenges faced by girls in education. These challenges are attributed to factors such as parenting practices, poverty, eroding family values, and a pervasive culture that exposes adolescents to explicit sexual content. Single-parent households were identified as contributing to precocious sexual behavior among females. Moreover, certain members of the community were noted for their exploitative attitudes towards women, particularly schoolgirls, emphasizing the need for comprehensive sex education at home and in schools (Ogolla & Ondia, 2019; Lutta, 2015). This research article addresses the pressing issue of how adolescent girls' sexual attitudes and experiences impact their education, particularly in the context of Homa Bay County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Homa Bay County, the educational participation of girls faces a significant challenge due to the prevalence of romantic relationships and the alarming rate of teenage pregnancies. The statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reveal that in 2019, this county recorded a staggering teenage pregnancy rate of approximately 33%, ranking it as the third-highest in the entire country. This issue of teenage pregnancy is of paramount relevance to our study because it is consistently linked to low levels of educational participation, diminished academic performance, and a high incidence of school dropouts (Ahmed & Bett, 2018; Ouma, 2013). While it is well recognized that the development of pro-sex attitudes is a normal part of adolescent growth (Thurston & Allan, 2018), the failure to manage and restrain these urges forms the crux of our research inquiry. Notably, previous research on teenage sexual relationships has often focused on the outcomes of such relationships, such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but has paid limited attention to the underlying sexual attitudes that render in-school girls vulnerable to engaging in premature sexual activities. This critical gap in existing knowledge underscores the significance of our study. We seek to investigate the intricate interplay between sexual attitudes and the educational participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. By delving into the nuanced aspects of sexual attitudes, we aim to unravel the complex factors that influence girls to engage in early sexual relationships, which, in turn, can have adverse consequences for their pursuit of education and career aspirations.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To determine the influence of sexual attitudes on the educational participation of girls in secondary schools of Homa Bay County.

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

H₀1: Sexual attitudes have no influence on the educational participation of girls in secondary schools of Homa Bay County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was provided by the problem-behavior theory. Problem Behavior Theory was originally proposed by Richard Jessor as a way of predicting teen proneness to deviance or unconventionality (Jessor, 2014). Problem behaviors are behaviors that elicit either formal or informal social responses designed to control them (Jessor & Jessor, 1977, as cited in Jessor 2001). Jessor defined variables that instigate deviance as *risk factors* and those that prevent or reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviors occurring as *protective factors*.

The theory connects with this study in the sense that sexual attitudes that engender proneness to deviant sexual behavior among in-school secondary girls can be explained and understood from a problem-behavior standpoint. In the context of this study, problem behavior theory allows the study to identify schoolgirl behaviors that are in

contradiction to expected behaviors as problem behaviors. Guidance and counseling interventions in schools are provided on the assumption that they enhance the capacity for the girls to practice acceptable behavior and eliminate undesirable behaviors. This approach is based on the fact that the problem behavior theory holds that behavior is the balance between the risk factors and protective factors in an individual's life (Peltzer, 2010).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by a conceptual framework. A conceptual framework represents the researcher's synthesis of the literature on how to explain a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The conceptual framework for this study is presented in Figure 1.

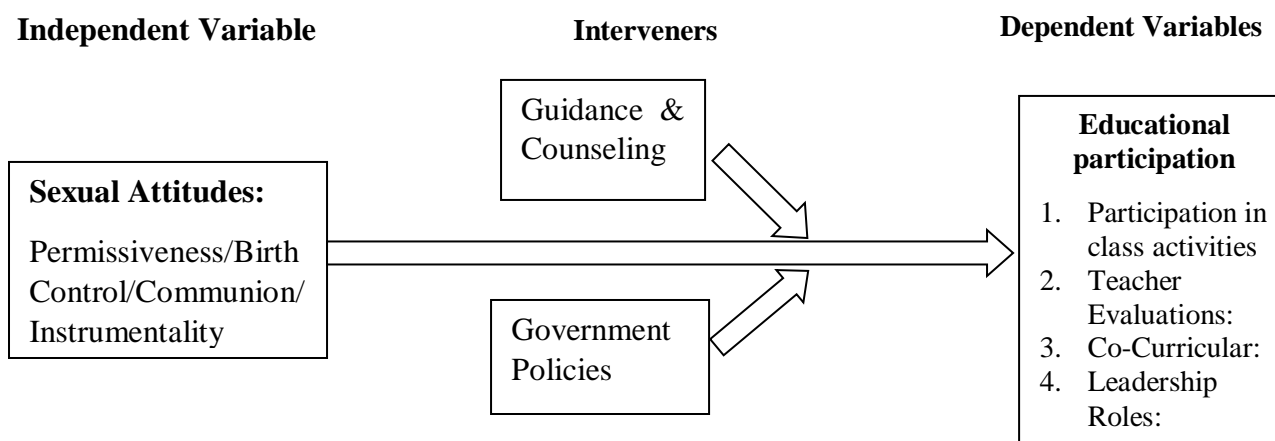


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

In the conceptual framework, intervenors such as government policies and guidance and counselling services help to shape the sexual attitudes of students and in the end, this may have a positive influence on their education participation.

2.3 Literature Review

Peer pressure influences have also been cited as contributing to shaping the sexual attitudes of many adolescents. Many teens rely on their peers for guidance and evaluation of their whole encounter in the world of sex. These observations were collaborated on by Pearson (2018) and Siu-ming et al. (2019). Ouma (2013) mentions in the study that adolescents from broken marriages were much more vulnerable to high-risk sexual behaviors than other categories of adolescents.

Sexual outcomes such as pregnancy contribute greatly to the inequality in education between boys and girls. Ombati and Ombati (2012) claim that Sub-Saharan African girls and women have high illiteracy rates due to unequal and skewed education by gender, geography, class, and area. The article cites political instability and violence, poverty and economic issues, bad cultural norms, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and sexual harassment as major causes of gender imbalance in schooling. This position is equally underscored by Skosana, Peu, and Mogale (2020).

Many researchers support the view that poor performance and involvement in inappropriate sexual behavior are significantly correlated (Sidze et al., 2017; Ogolla & Ondia, 2019; Ogolla & Ondia, 2019). Similarly, Pound et al. (2016) claimed that engaging in sexual acts by teens negatively influences education attainment (Wood et al., 2017). The emotional concerns and energies invested in romantic relationships mean that they have little time or even interest in their education (Gatwiri, 2019). This behavior is in mainstream society often seen as problem behavior (Jessor, 2014).

Early sexual debut has been noted to be associated with many negative effects that affect education participation (Kastbom et al., 2015). Several factors trigger teen pregnancies. Child marriage and forceful sex (Ahmed & Bett, 2018; Bwamoni & Namachi, 2020; Muyaka, 2018) In undeveloped locations, married and unmarried teenagers utilize contraceptives less due to a lack of reproductive healthcare facilities, notably contraceptive education and affordable contraception (Negeri, 2014). Interventions through sex education have conflicting results. Sidze et al.

(2017) examined Kenyan sex education policies and curricula in secondary schools in three geographically and ethnically diverse counties: Homa Bay, Mombasa, and Nairobi. They discovered that the Kenyan government supports sex education, but education-sector policies have primarily pushed an abstinence-only strategy and remained non-committal to recommending contraceptives (Leung et al., 2019).

The Kenyan government has taken steps to improve women's education. In 1994, Kenyan President Daniel Moi ordered that pregnant females be re-enrolled in their schools (Bwamoni & Namachi, 2020). A good initiative, the 'return to school policy, helped many girls finish school. Negatively, it reinforced the idea that 'for the girl, it is good enough to finish school'. Such situations did not require good grades (Dei Jr., 2016; MacNaughton & Koutsoumpas, 2017). Despite this, various studies have indicated that many female adolescents do not return to school after giving birth, resulting in poor education participation (Ikamari et al., 2013; Nash et al., 2019).

Data from the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2014) shows that 1 in every 5 girls between 15 and 19 years old is either pregnant or already a mother. Statistics from the Global Childhood Report (2019) put Kenya as the third-highest country in terms of teenage pregnancy, at 82 births per 1,000 births. The Government of Kenya responded to a widespread outcry about teenage pregnancy and launched a National Campaign Against Teenage Pregnancies through the National Council for Population and Development (2020), seeking an end to teen pregnancy and boosting the education participation of girls in both primary and secondary schools. The campaign focused on galvanizing communities on the need to end teen pregnancies through awareness and advocacy, citing its negative impact on socio-economic growth and the education of girls.

Other interventions were legal. The 2001 Children's Act banned child sex and marriage under 18. Three years later, in 2006, the Sexual Offenses Act criminalized teenage sex with heavy penalties and long jail sentences. Finally, the 2010 Kenyan Constitution guaranteed citizens the right to education under the Bill of Rights. Bursaries and free day secondary schooling are part of the state's attempts to educate all residents up to secondary school (Ouma, 2013). This has had some success, but hidden costs imposed by many school boards and administrators make this right elusive for economically poor girls.

Bwamoni and Namachi (2020) and Chingtham and Guite (2017) found that most African schools have more pupils with sexual relationships. Due to social changes and intellectual stimulation, today's adolescents are different (Kreager et al., 2016). Rath and Wadhwa (2017), as well as Birchall (2018) affirm that most African schools have more pupils with sexual relationships. The trend is shifting; student-adolescent sexual relationships are high and may cause social, health, and academic issues (Momanyi et al., 2019).

Negeri (2014) examined Western Ethiopian youth's risky sexual behavior and risk perception in the context of family and peer factors. The study used comparative, cross-sectional, and qualitative methods. The study found that youth with strong familial connections were less likely to start sexual behavior. It was also discovered that peer pressure to have sex was strongly connected with several sexual partners. The audacity of adolescents to take risks with unprotected sex is also affirmed by the study of Gevers et al. (2013).

It is obvious that the onset of adolescence also coincides with secondary schooling (12-19 years). The psychologist Erick Erickson described adolescence as a phase of identity diffusion (Kar et al., 2015), in which, through trial and error, rewards, and punishments, adolescents gradually grow into either fully integrated personalities or retarded personalities. Peltzer (2010) adds that adolescence is also the period in which adolescents are grappling with developing their sexual attitudes, gender norms, and sexual values in order to relate in an adaptive manner. Pelzer's observations offer an under-explored window to look into the underlying variables that could be influencing the girls' behavior. Therefore, the study will fill this gap by investigating the influence of sexual attitudes on the education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. A good insight into the influence of this variable will place guidance and counseling teachers in a pole position to provide informed guidance and counseling services to their students and empower them to deal with issues related to their sexuality in a non-maladaptive manner. When effectively deployed, such interventions can improve girls' education participation and lead to improved grades that will open lucrative career paths.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a concurrent transformative design, primarily quantitative with a qualitative component, to achieve its research objectives. Focusing on Homa Bay County in Western Kenya due to its higher rates of teenage pregnancy, the target population consisted of approximately 60,000 secondary school girls. The sample population included 21,135 girls from three sub-counties with the highest teenage pregnancy incidences. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to select schools for data collection. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for

students and interviews with school principals, guidance and counseling teachers, and sub-county education directors. The questionnaires covered demographics, education participation, and sexual attitudes, while interviews provided evaluative data. Validity and reliability were ensured for research instruments. Ethical approvals and licenses were obtained for data collection.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Distribution by Age

The ages of the respondents were some of the important demographics of interest in this study. Age is important to evaluate the relevance of the measurement being made about the respondents (Connely, 2013). Age-appropriate norms govern sensitive issues of sexual attitudes. Accordingly, the respondents were asked in the questionnaire to indicate their age based on their last birthday. The results are presented in Figure 2.

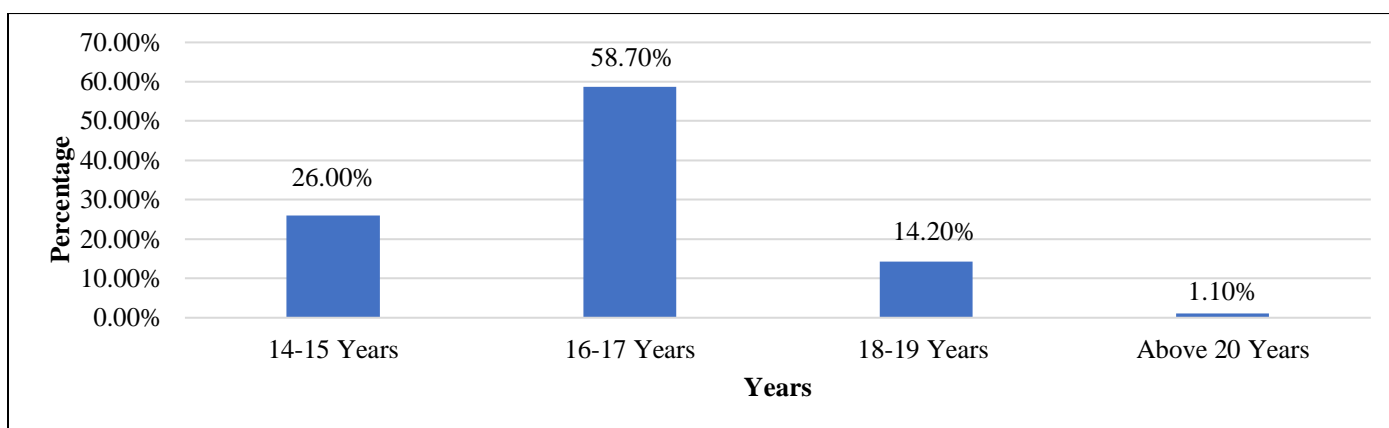


Figure 2
Age Demographics

4.2 Questionnaire Summary Results

After checking for completeness and adherence to the guidelines, the responses were coded, scored and entered into the SPSS version 24 for various tabulations. Table 1 shows the girls’ responses as captured in the questionnaires.

Table 1
Sexual Attitude Factors

Factor	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
S1: I would turn down a sex opportunity if I suspect it would not be safe	58.6	41.4
S2: School life would have fewer problems if girls were allowed to have sex more freely	49.2	50.8
S3: I would like to have sex with many partners	35	65
S4: Unplanned sex is sometimes very enjoyable	56.3	43.7
S5: I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him	88.9	11.1
S6: A girl should share responsibility with her man to avoid pregnancy	63.4	36.6
S7: Birth control is part of responsible sex	67.5	32.5
S8: A sexual experience between two people deeply in love is the ultimate human encounter	60.5	39.5
S9: At its best, sex seems to be the merging of two persons	70.8	29.2
S10: Sex is not an important part of life	34.1	65.9
S11: Sex is usually, an intensive almost overwhelming experience	40.2	59.8
S12: The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself	65.0	45.0
S13: The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself	67.6	32.4
S14: Sex is an emotional union	66.3	33.7
S15: Sex is primarily a physical function	55.1	44.9

Let us consider some of the important responses from above. Most of the girls (88.9%) responded in the affirmative to the question, ‘I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him’. And 11.1% disagreed with the statement. The responses as per school type yielded 94.1% in pure schools endorsing the statement, while a paltry 5.9% dissented. On the other hand, girls in mixed schools had an agreement rate of 79.5%, with 20.5% disagreeing with the statement. The data shows that the majority of the girls are inclined to have sex even with men with whom they have no reputable relationships. Rath and Wadhwa (2019) support this view on the increase in sexual activity among adolescents. While Prendergast et al. (2019) also claim in their study that many young people readily initiate sex once they hit the puberty (13–19) stage as they try to explore their sexual fantasies and romance. Despite the religious and cultural illegality surrounding teen sex; it is nevertheless increasingly being recognized as developmentally normative.

Table 2*Dependent Variable Questionnaire Results*

	Educational participate	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
E1	I always attend all my lessons when I am in school	72.5	27.5
E2	I enjoy group work during learning sessions	82.3	17.7
E3	I submit regularly my homework for marking	67.1	32.9
E4	I often obtain good grades on class tests	43.4	56.6
E5	I never answer questions in class	30.4	69.6
E6	I do corrections where I fail to get it right	61.5	39.5
E7	My Class Teacher Report Card evaluations are generally positive	52.0	48.0
E8	I have always been promoted to the next class	95.4	4.6
E9	I am an active member in at least one school club (e.g., YCS, CU, debating, history club, etc.)	79.1	20.9
E10	I am also active in at least one school sport/game (e.g., soccer, long jump, high jump, netball, etc.)	52.3	47.7
E11	I have represented my school/class/dormitory in some sport activity/game	48	52
E12	I have taken active roles in cheering my school/dorm/class team when they compete	55.2	44.8
E13	I have been given some temporary responsibility by prefects/teachers in cleaning work and others	89.7	10.3
E14	I have held (or still hold) leadership roles in my class/dormitory/games/club	35.8	64.2
E15	I do not mind serving my fellow students in any capacity or office that may be given to me.	49.0	51.0

4.3 Linear Model Regression Diagnostics

Together with the p-value, a number of regression diagnostics were run to check whether there was a linear relationship in the data. Model diagnostics tests such as histograms, scatter plots, and Q-Q plots were conducted to increase the surety of conducting simple regression analysis.

4.3.1 Histogram

A histogram tests the normality distribution of the data. The histogram indicates that the residuals approximate a normal distribution. The histogram diagnostic between education participation and sexual attitude variable is presented in Figure 3.

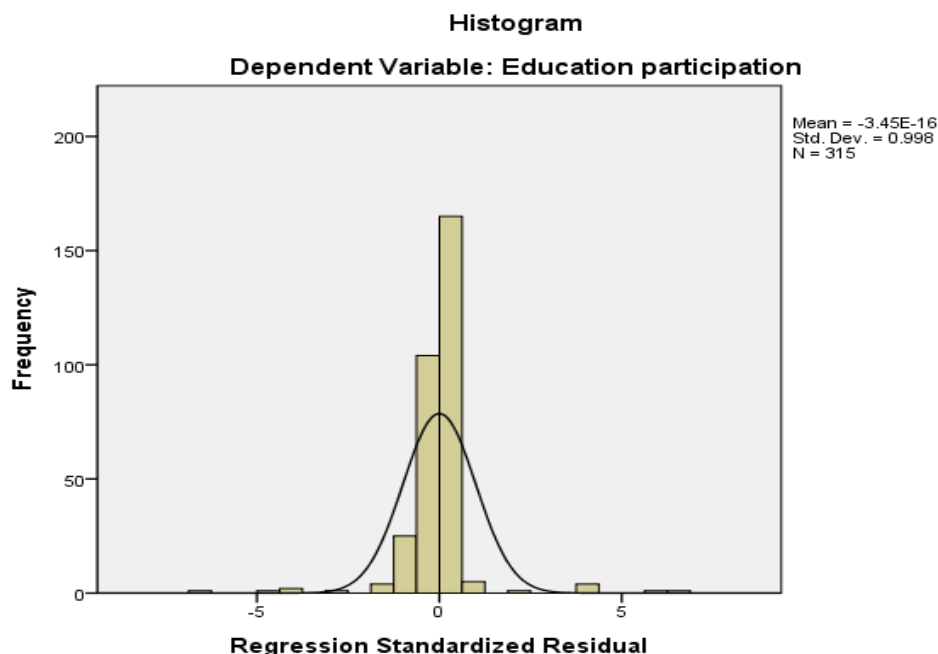


Figure 3
Histogram Plot for Sexual Attitude

Results in Figure 3 show that the plot was exactly symmetrical and bell-shaped, with a few outliers on the right and left sides of the centre. Meaning, the distribution of the dataset was normal, and so, the sexual attitudes variable linearly related to education participation.

4.3.2 Scatterplot

Scatterplots of education participation against sexual values (standardized residual) were plotted to determine linearity. The results are presented in Figure 4.

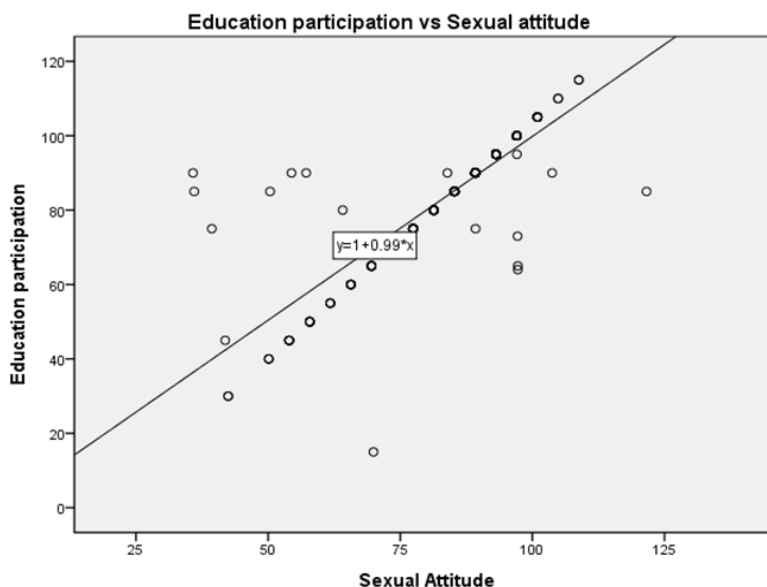


Figure 4
Scatter Plot of Education Participation Vs Sexual Attitudes

The results in Figure 4 showed a linear tendency because most of the points are concentrated along a straight line. Clearly, it gave a strong direction to the fact that education participation (the outcome variable) and sexual attitudes (the predictor variable) linearly relate. The results in Figure 4.2 showed a linear tendency because most of the

points are concentrated along a straight line. Clearly, it gave a strong direction to the fact that education participation (the outcome variable) and sexual attitudes (the predictor variable) linearly relate.

4.3.3 Normal Q-Q Plot:

The plot shows the distribution of the data against the expected normal distribution. The results are presented in Figure 5.

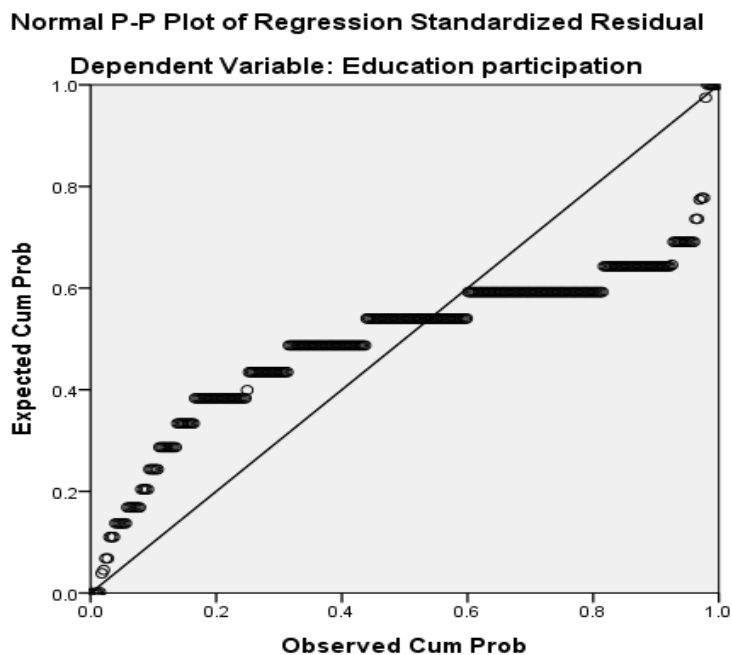


Figure 5
Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

As shown in Figure 5, most of the points are falling or forming a pattern along a straight line in the Q-Q plot, an indication that these numbers truly did come from a uniform distribution. This means that education participation and sexual attitudes are linearly related.

4.4 Regression Analysis

R-squared, also called the coefficient of determination, or the coefficient of determinations for linear regressions, was run to evaluate the scatter of the data points around the fitted regression line. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Model Summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.858 ^a	.736	.736	8.044	.736	874.742	1	313	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Sexual attitude									
b. Dependent Variable: Education Participation									

As shown in Table 3, R-squared being equal to 0.736, or 73.6%, means that the sexual attitudes predictor variable explains about 73.6% of the variation in the girls' education participation. This is above 0.7, so it clearly shows that sexual attitudes have a strong effect size on girls' education participation and certainly reveals that there is a small difference between observed data and fitted values. Therefore, a better-fitting regression model and education participation linearly relate to the sexual attitudes of the girls.



The sums of squares SS-Regression and SS-Residuals are used to form two mean squares, one for regression and the other for residuals. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	56603.619	1	56603.619	874.742	.000 ^b
	Residual	20253.892	313	64.709		
	Total	76857.511	314			

a. Dependent Variable: Education Participation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sexual attitude

The ANOVA results in Table 4 indicate that the mean square regression is greater than the mean square residuals, meaning the null hypothesis that stated that sexual attitudes have no effect on girls’ education participation is rejected at $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$, the significance level. This means the difference between mean square regression and mean square residuals is statistically significant.

The F-test of overall significance was run to establish whether sexual attitudes linearly relate to education participation. The results from the ANOVA had $F = 874.742$, $DF (1-314)$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$; is proof that education participation linearly relates with sexual attitudes. Therefore, the assessment of the existence of a linear relationship between education participation (response variable) and sexual attitudes (predictor variable), through all the model diagnostic tests, revealed that these two variables relate linearly. The p-value output of the simple regression analysis between the education participation response variable, and sexual attitudes predictor variable, was evaluated against a significance level of 0.05 for which the null hypothesis was assessed. The p-value results are presented in the model summary, ANOVA and model coefficients Tables 5.

Table 5
Regression Coefficients

Model		Coefficients								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	18.395	2.294		8.018	.000	13.881	22.909		
	Sexual attitude	1.311	.044	.858	29.576	.000	1.224	1.398	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Education Participation

Results in Tables (3, 4, and 5) show that sexual attitudes linearly relate to education participation. This relationship is statistically significant at $p\text{-value} = 0.000, < 0.05$, the significant level set for assessing the null hypothesis. In this case, the null hypothesis H_0 that ‘sexual attitudes have no effect on education participation’ is declined, and the alternative hypothesis that ‘sexual attitudes have an influence on education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County’ is validated. The regression model equation is given as:

$$\text{Education Participation} = 18.395 + 1.311 * \text{Sexual Attitudes} + 2.294$$

4.5 Discussion

The study findings showed that the majority of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County are inclined towards sexual satisfaction and fulfillment. The data evidence suggests this behavior presents many risks to girls’ education participation as it is often associated with multiple problems, including but not limited to pregnancy. This finding goes against school authorities' expectations. The school leadership group assumes sexual innocence among their female students and that in-school females will focus on schoolwork and extracurricular activities. The school's expectations match the Ministry of Education's policy on secondary school students' sexual activity (Children’s Act 2001 and Sexual Offenses Bill, 2006). These expectations agree with Leung et al. (2019) about sexual innocence in adolescents. The data shows a discrepancy between the Ministry of Education and school officials' assumptions and

reality. A number of reasons for this scenario can be inferred from the study data and are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

The study data identified the sexual media as a significant player in shaping the sexual attitudes of secondary school girls. Both the qualitative and quantitative data found that sexual media strongly influences adolescents' sexual attitudes. School authorities also confirmed this fact, and despite their efforts to cut students' access to communication gadgets such as phones and computers, students continue to outwit them. Sexual media creates images of sexual paradise that distort students' focus on their core function of education. The study data confirms that the sexual media sharpens the sexual appetites of students and makes them restless, a matter also supported by Gervers et al. (2013). As it stands now, school authorities must remain vigilant and counter the unwanted influence of the glamorous media.

The study brought forth another perspective that sharpened sexual attitudes towards sexual gratification. The notion that sex is a conjugal right arose from the respondents. This notion was particularly embraced in rural secondary schools. It was noted that school authorities who delayed granting half-term breaks were put under pressure, particularly by the girls, on the grounds that they needed to satisfy their conjugal rights. Gatwiri (2019) claims that adolescents regard sexual coitus as equal to adult sexual interactions, which are mostly done in marriage. Calling their sexual coitus a conjugal right allows them to overcome legitimate constraints against extramarital sex and the relevant legal proscriptions (Children Act, 2001; Sexual Offenses Act, 2006). It was acknowledged as a new challenge for both principals and guidance and counseling teachers.

Furthermore, drawing parallels between adolescent sex outside marriage and sex within marriage raised pertinent questions that the girls were not bothered with. For instance, kids born from sexual relationships in marriage enjoy certain safeguards and protection, while those born from non-married adolescents are exposed to many social challenges, including shelter and food. All the same, the agitation by unmarried girls to satisfy conjugal rights agrees with several studies that have reported increased sexual activity among adolescents (Irwin & Shafer, 2021). Moreover, the study data also revealed that sex between girls and boys is not often free, as sometimes money and other favors are exchanged. It is possible that other interests drive the habit. Such hidden interests contribute to entrenching sexual attitudes that are prone to sexual fulfillment.

On another front, the study data identified peer pressure as an important player in shaping secondary school girls' sexual attitudes. Girls who have begun sexual relationships share their experiences with novice girls in a way that encourages others to start. Therefore, common sexual notions among adolescent subgroups spread. This assessment matches Kar et al. (2015). Closeness and solidarity between girls in a school environment, especially in boarding institutions, create great potential to pass on common sexual ideas. Boarding school females spend too much time together, swapping sexual images and innuendos. Girls want peer acceptance and recognition, as seen by this tendency. This acceptance offers satisfaction and peer support. Kreager et al. (2016) demonstrated that peer acceptability strongly influences peer behavior, particularly sexual behavior. Interventions designed to counter negative peer influence must equally approach the issues, using qualified peers to drive through an alternative perception that fosters the girls' educational participation interests.

Several teachers reported that girls who are engaged in romantic relationships also exhibit poor discipline. Girls who initiate sex early are at a higher risk of getting into conflict with the law and are likely to abuse drugs or drop out of school. This observation is based on the study of Kastborn *et al.* (2015). Many principals reported indiscipline as a covariation of inappropriate sexual relationships among girls. Early sexual debut disorients the girl's values and attitudes and throws her into a moral turmoil, one that lacks balance and focus on her studies, and very often this has linkages to poor discipline and eventually leads to poor educational outcomes. Scholars such as Siu-ming et al. (2019) concur with this position by stating that youth who have sex become preoccupied with the present and heavily discount future outcomes. Again, this position validates the conceptual framework that guided this study.

The study data supports the view that adolescent sexual attitudes and sexual behavior are generally unresolved, debate-wise. The majority of the school authorities see it as problem behavior. Others see it as normative and part of the developmental process of maturing. The latter see adolescent sexual behavior as consistent with human developmental needs of which meeting sexual drives is one of them (Prendergast et al., 2019). The former focuses on the results of adolescents' sex in terms of unwanted kids and the risks of contracting sexual diseases, including HIV/AIDS. They argue that the social menace that single mothers' kids experience justifies disapproving adolescent sex involvement (Ouma, 2013). Ouma represents a more traditional approach that emphasizes sexual abstinence. In the current scenario, where there are no nationally approved sex education program interventions, it is unlikely that any of these competing approaches will gain prominence over the others.

Homa Bay County, where this study took place, is mostly Luo-inhabited, and therefore, the majority of the respondents are presumed to be from this background. In Luo's cultural view, adolescents are supposed to be brought

up to be disciplined and entertain acceptable sexual attitudes that last up until marriage (Lutta, 2015; Ngore, 2012). Even as society and school authorities continue to tolerate sexual coitus amongst school adolescents, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders need to have a conversation about how to safeguard adolescents' educational goals so that sexual drives do not deprive them of an opportunity to grow towards their desired career development through successful education participation.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study found a significant correlation between sexual attitudes among secondary school girls in Homa Bay County and educational participation. In particular, the study found that the sexual attitudes of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County are prone to sexual gratification. This proneness to sexual coitus, as per the study's data and supported by similar studies, undermines the girls' educational participation, thus leading to poor educational outcomes. Similarly, the study found that erroneous beliefs that see sex as a conjugal right, coupled with peer pressure, spread common sexual ideas, thus making interventions more difficult. The study further found that access to contraceptives as a remedy for premature pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases was limited due to a lack of policy and religious and ethical issues that have yet to be resolved. It is the contention of this study that remedial action needs to be taken to bring more soberness to the girls' sexual attitudes in order to improve the girls' educational participation. This study is unique as it sought to contribute new knowledge on the influence of the underlying latent variable of secondary school girls' sexual attitudes on their educational participation in Homa Bay County. Given the outcry in the education sector about diminishing girls' education prospects as a result of active engagement in romantic relationships with men, the study's findings place school authorities in a pole position to make informed interventions to improve the girl-child education experience in secondary schools in Homa Bay County.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that school authorities promote the formation of girls' sexual sobriety peer teams (SSPT) that meet regularly to unpack the potential risks and costs of premature sex for their educational interests. These teams can be assisted by teachers and other invited experts to reach their goal.

5.3 Limitation of the Study

The generalizability of the research findings is impacted by sample bias, given that they were taken from one county that is predominantly inhabited by people from one ethnic group. Generalizing these findings beyond that ethnic community is a matter that is subject to further study in a different ethnic population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge school principals, sub-county education directors of Homa Bay, teachers, and students who took part in the study as respondents. We equally acknowledge Paul Barasa for sparing time to proofread the manuscript for the purpose of improving its readability. Finally, we thank the MMUST staff in the library for their support and for providing all the necessary backup resource materials.

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