



SEXUAL INFORMATION SOURCES AND RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

STEPHEN USHIE AKPA, BLESSING BASSEY ANAM AND LEVI UDOCHUKWU AKAH

Email: ushiesteven@yahoo.com, [blessingsfavour20151ond@gmail.com](mailto: blessingsfavour20151ond@gmail.com), leviakah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted correlational survey design to establish the relationship between sexual information sources and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. It was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A sample of 395 female students in public secondary schools in the study area were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. One instrument titled "sexual information sources and risky sexual behaviour (SISRSBQ) was developed by the researcher with the help of research experts and used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire, established using Cronbach Alpha which ranges from 80 to .87. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that formal education, social media sources of information significantly relate to risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. It was concluded that the risky sexual behaviours of female students depend their formal education, social media sources of information. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended amongst others that schools should develop curricula that not only provide accurate sexual health information but also teach critical media literacy skills. This would help students discern credible sources from unreliable ones on social media platforms.

KEYWORDS: Sexual information sources, Sexual behaviour, Female secondary school adolescents, Formal education, Social media.

INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing a significant public health crisis due to the increasing number of reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in many underdeveloped and developing countries, including Nigeria.

STDs are a global public health concern that can be contracted through unprotected sexual intercourse. These diseases involve the proliferation of microorganisms within the genital tract after transmission through sexual contact. While some STDs are curable, others are incurable but modifiable diseases or infections

Stephen Ushie Akpa, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Faculty of Science Education
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

Blessing Bassey Anam, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Faculty of Science Education
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

Levi Udochukwu Akah, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Faculty of Science Education
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

(Ibok, Ogebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong, Collins, 2024; Ntibi, & Effiong, 2021). The sexual health of female secondary school adolescents is a critical area of concern, as it significantly impacts their overall well-being and future opportunities. Despite the increasing access to information through various media, many adolescents still lack accurate sexual information, leading to misconceptions and risky sexual behaviors. Inadequate sexual sources of information contributes to higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancies, and emotional distress among adolescents (Ibok, Ogebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong, Collins, 2024). The sources of sexual information available to these young women—ranging from peers, family, and school-based education to online resources—vary widely in reliability and comprehensiveness. This inconsistency can lead to confusion and misinformation, affecting their sexual decision-making (Akah, & Akpa, 2021; Akah, Owan, Uduigwomen, & Akpa, 2022).

Female secondary school adolescents are at a crucial developmental stage where they seek to understand their sexuality, yet they often face significant barriers to accessing accurate and reliable sexual health information. The lack of comprehensive sexual education in schools has been identified as a primary factor contributing to misinformation and risky sexual behaviors among this demographic (Ibok, & Ntibi, 2020; Akah, & Akpa, 2021). Many educational institutions fail to provide comprehensive sexual education, focusing instead on abstinence-only programs. Lack of comprehensive education leaves adolescents ill-equipped to make informed decisions about their sexual health. A study by Kohler et al., (2015) found that adolescents who received comprehensive sexual education were more likely to engage in safe sexual practices. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at improving sexual health outcomes for female secondary school adolescents. This study aims to explore the sources of sexual information available to these adolescents and the resultant behaviors, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address these challenges (Ibok, & Ntibi, 2020; Ataben, Olofu, & Ifeoma, 2024; Nanjwan, Ogar, & Ani, 2020).

Formal education sources of information is a School-based sexual education programs that includes discussions about contraception and healthy relationships can reduce rates of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adolescents. It is also a structured and recognized channels through which individuals can gain knowledge and skills about sexual behaviour. However, the review also noted that many programs fail to adequately address the specific needs of female students, limiting their effectiveness (Ntibi, & Ibok, 2018; Ogar, Ibok, Odey, Joseph, Unimuke, & Ungie, 2023; Meremikwu, Ibok, Inah, Benimpuye, Arikpo, Etura, 2023).

Adebayo and Odukoya (2016) conducted a study on the role of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) in shaping the sexual behavior of adolescents and found that students who received CSE were more likely to engage in safe sexual practices and had better knowledge about sexual health compared to those who did not receive such education. Ekanem and Effiong (2021) explored various sources of sexual information among female adolescents and found that many relied on peers and the internet, which often provided inconsistent and inaccurate information. The study revealed significant knowledge gaps regarding reproductive health, indicating that formal education plays a crucial role in providing reliable information. Nwankwo and Okeke (2022) investigated the influence of peer pressure on sexual behavior among female secondary school students and found that formal education provided essential knowledge about sexual health, peer influence often overshadowed this education, leading to early sexual initiation. Obi, Akinyemi, and Eze. (2021) conducted a study to highlighted the importance of parental involvement in reinforcing the sexual education received in schools and found that adolescents with supportive parents who discussed sexual health issues were more likely to apply the knowledge gained from formal education. Akanbi, Oduwole, and Adebayo. (2022) examined barriers to accessing sexual health information in educational settings and found that stigma, cultural norms, and inadequate resources hindered effective sexual education delivery.

The study advocated for policy changes to improve access to reliable information and services, emphasizing that formal seduction should be supported by a conducive environment for learning about sexual health. Bassey and Bassey (2023) explored how socioeconomic factors influenced access to sexual education and health resources. Their research indicated that female adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often faced greater challenges in receiving comprehensive sexual education, which adversely affected their sexual health outcomes. Comprehensive sexual education is vital for providing accurate information, external factors such as peer influence, parental support, and socioeconomic status significantly affect the outcomes.

Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and exchange content and information with others. It facilitates communication, interaction, and collaboration among individuals and groups. Social media sources of information is the use of platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to share accurate sexual health information, promote safe practices, and address common myths. This organization uses social media to provide resources and discussions about sexual health, consent, and relationships (Meremikwu, Ibok, Adie, Idoko, Tawo, Arikpo, 2022; Kauffman 2018). Aizawa, (2022) stated that various influencers and educators on Instagram provide sexual health information through engaging posts and stories, often targeting younger audiences. According to McNair, (2019), channels like "Sexplanations" provide educational videos about various aspects of sexual health and behavior. Dijkstra, Veenstra, and De Winter (2015) opined that social media platforms serve as valuable channels for disseminating information about sexual behavior, particularly among younger audiences. Bowers, and Kauffman (2023) stated that the use TikTok to create short, informative videos about sexual health topics aimed at younger audiences. A study conducted by Hurst et al. (2018) found that female secondary school students often turn to platforms like Instagram and Snapchat for sexual health information. The study also indicated that while social media can provide valuable insights, it also poses risks due to the prevalence of

misinformation and unrealistic portrayals of relationships and sexuality. A study conducted by Taddeo and Floridi (2020) who examined the impact of misinformation on social media regarding sexual health and found that female adolescents frequently encountered misleading information about sexual practices and health, which influenced their perceptions and behaviors. The researchers emphasized that the lack of critical media literacy among adolescents exacerbated the risks associated with relying on social media for sexual health information. Best, Manktelow, and Taylor. (2019) conducted a study on the role of peer influence in shaping sexual behavior through social media and found that online interactions often reinforced peer norms regarding sexual activity. Female adolescents reported feeling pressure to conform to the sexual behaviors depicted by their peers on social media, which sometimes led to risky sexual practices. The study highlighted the need for educational interventions that address both online and offline behaviors. A study conducted by Smith, Brown, and Johnson (2021) found that targeted social media campaigns could effectively disseminate accurate sexual health information. The researchers noted that engaging content tailored to adolescents could improve knowledge and encourage safer sexual behaviors, suggesting that social media platforms can be harnessed for positive health outcomes.

A study conducted by Ybarra, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (2019) found that female adolescents often felt uncomfortable discussing sexual health issues on social media due to fears of judgment or exposure. This reluctance to seek information online can lead to reliance on less reliable sources, reinforcing the need for safe spaces where adolescents can discuss sexual health issues openly. Chae (2022) examined how socioeconomic and cultural factors influence the use of social media for sexual health information and found that female adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to access reliable sexual health information online, which affected their sexual decision-making. The findings underscore the importance of considering contextual factors when evaluating the impact of social media on sexual behavior. Social media can facilitate access to sexual health education, it also poses risks related to misinformation and peer pressure.

Addressing these challenges through targeted educational initiatives and promoting media literacy which is essential for fostering healthier sexual behaviors among adolescents. The work is supported by **Social Learning Theory** (SLT) propounded by Bandura in the year 1977 which stated that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others. The relevance of this theory to this study is because formal education, social media sources of information are channels through which female adolescents obtained direct instruction, even without motor reproduction or direct reinforcement which can either influence their sexual behaviour either positively or negatively.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between sexual information sources and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria

Specifically, the study seek to established

- i) the relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents
- ii) the relationship between social media information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- i) There is no significant relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents
- ii) There is no significant relationship between social media information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents

METHODOLOGY

The study area was in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. The research design used for this study was the correlational survey design. The correlation survey design was used to established the relationship between the variables of study. The population of this study comprised all the senior female secondary students in Calabar Municipality. According to information obtained from the Ministry of Education Board (2024), there are 1,615 female

senior secondary school students in 16 public schools in Calabar Municipality. The simple random sampling techniques was used to select a 8(50%) public schools out of 16 public schools of which a sample size of 395 representing 24.458% of the entire population were selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Sexual information sources and risky sexual behaviour (SISRSBQ)". The instrument was developed by the researcher with the help of the two experts in Measurement and Evaluation Department and two experts in human kinetic department. The questionnaire contained two sections A and B. Section A was designed to elicit information from respondents' demographic variables such as name of school while section B is an 35 items four points scale designed to measure the sub-variables of the study. Each item required the respondent to indicate the frequency of his or her various opinions under strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. For positively worded items, strongly Agree was assigned 4 points; Agree was 3 points; Disagree was 2 points; Strongly Disagree was 1 point. Negatively phrased questions were scored in reverse order to avoid confusion. The face and content validity were established by using two experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation; in the faculty of Education, and two experts in human kinetic department both from University of Calabar. The expert certified that the instrument (questionnaire), was face and content validity and could be used for the study. To established the reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) through Cronbach alpha reliability, a trial testing was done using 40 female students in four schools who were was not part of the public secondary schools used to examine the internal consistency which give the reliability indices ranges. 80 to .87 which indicated that the research instrument was reliable. The hypotheses formulated to guide the study were appropriately tested using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance for the two hypotheses.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The result of the analysis is presented in tables 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. The independent variable in this hypothesis is formal education while the dependent variable is risky

sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of between is formal education and sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction. The results are presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents (N= 395)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Formal education	395	23.987	3.987	.765	.000
Risky sexual behaviour	395	43.897	5.986		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =393

The result presented on Table 1 shows the high positive significant relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents ($r=.765$; $p=.000$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more formal education the female students acquirer, the more they avoid risky sexual behaviour tend to be. On the other hand, lesser formal education they acquirer, they they involve in risky sexual behaviour tend to be.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between social media information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. The independent variable in this hypothesis is social media source of information while the dependent variable is risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents.. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of between is social media source of information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction. The results are presented on Table 2

Table 1: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between social media source of information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents (N= 395)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Social media information	395	25.129	3.432	.799	.000
Risky sexual behaviour	395	43.897	5.986		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =393

The result presented on Table 1 shows the high positive significant relationship between Social media information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents ($r=.799$; $p=.000$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance.

The positive r-value indicated that the more they sought positive information on social medias, the more they avoid risky sexual behaviour tend to be. On the other hand, sought negative information on social media information,, they more they involve in risky sexual behaviour tend to be.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between formal education and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. This is in line with Adebayo and Odukoya (2016) who conducted a study on the role of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) in shaping the sexual behavior of adolescents and found that students who received CSE were more likely to engage in safe sexual practices and had better knowledge about sexual health compared to those who did not receive such education.

The finding agreed with Ekanem and Effiong (2021) who found that formal education plays a crucial role in providing reliable information. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Nwankwo and Okeke (2022) who found that formal education provided essential knowledge about sexual health, peer influence often overshadowed this education, leading to early sexual initiation. Obi, Akinyemi, and Eze. (2021) also found that adolescents with supportive parents who discussed sexual health issues were more likely to apply the knowledge gained from formal education. The finding agreed with Akanbi Oduwole, and Adebayo. (2022) who found that stigma, cultural norms, and inadequate resources hindered effective sexual education delivery. The study advocated for policy changes to improve access to reliable information and services, emphasizing that formal education should be supported by a conducive environment for learning about sexual health.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between social media sources of information and risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Hurst et al. (2018) who found that female secondary school students often turn to platforms like Instagram and Snapchat for sexual health information. The study also indicated that while social media can provide valuable insights, it also poses risks due to the prevalence of misinformation and unrealistic portrayals of relationships and sexuality. According to Kauffman (2018), social media sources of information is the use of platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to share accurate sexual health information, promote safe practices, and address common myths.

The finding agreed with McNair, (2019) who opined that channels like "Sexplanations" provide educational videos about various aspects of sexual health and behavior. The finding is in line with Dijkstra, Veenstra, and De Winter (2015) who opined that social media platforms serve as valuable channels for disseminating information about sexual behavior, particularly among younger audiences.

The finding is in consonance with Best, Manktelow, and Taylor. (2019) who found that online interactions often reinforced peer norms regarding sexual activity. Female adolescents reported feeling pressure to conform to the sexual behaviors depicted by their peers on social media, which sometimes led to risky sexual practices. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Ybarra, Mitchell, and Finkelhor, 2019. who found that female adolescents often felt uncomfortable discussing sexual health issues on social media due to fears of judgment or exposure. The finding also agreed with Chae (2022) who found that female adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to access reliable sexual health information online, which affected their sexual decision-making.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between formal education, social media information, and risky sexual behavior among female secondary school adolescents is complex and multifaceted. While formal education provides a foundational understanding of sexual health and promotes safe practices, social media serves as an influential platform where adolescents seek information, share experiences, and form perceptions about sexuality. However, the quality and accuracy of the information available on social media can vary significantly, leading to the potential for misinformation and risky behaviors. Adolescents often navigate these two sources of information—formal education and social media—simultaneously, which can either reinforce positive behaviors or contribute to confusion and risk-taking. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that formal education, social media sources of information significantly relate to risky sexual behaviour among female secondary school adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following were recommended

i) Schools should develop curricula that not only provide accurate sexual health information but also teach critical media literacy skills. This would help students discern credible sources from unreliable ones on social media platforms.

ii) School administration should encourage open dialogues about sexual health in educational settings. Creating safe spaces for discussion can empower adolescents to share their experiences and concerns, reducing stigma and promoting healthier behaviors.

iii) Health educators and organizations should leverage social media to disseminate accurate sexual health information. Engaging content, such as videos and infographics, can capture adolescents' attention and provide reliable information.

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