

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in South East Zone of Nigeria. The population of this study comprised 137, 095 in-school adolescents in senior secondary II in public secondary schools. The sample of the study was 1200 senior secondary II in-school adolescents. Two research questions and one hypothesis were formulated for the study and the study adopted correlation survey design. Two instruments, namely: School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ) with reliability coefficient of 0.82 and Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (SBQ) with reliability coefficient of 0.78 were developed by the researchers and used for data collection in the study. The research questions in the study were answered using mean, standard deviation,

simple regression analysis while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained indicated that School environment of in-school adolescents in South East Nigeria are extra-curricular activities, counseling setting and methodology of teaching, among others; in-school adolescents' sexual behaviour in South East Nigeria are attraction to their opposite sex and enjoying sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol, among others; Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among others, Teachers and counselors should give the in-school adolescents proper and adequate sexuality education to help them avoid risky sexual behaviour.

Keywords: Relationship, Adolescents, School Environment, Sexual Behaviour, Southeast Nigeria.

Introduction

School environments comprised of structures, people and functional factors of educational establishment which provides academic and moral characteristic for overall development of a person. Policy programs (such as the Health Promoting School model and Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child initiative) promote the school environment as a key factor for improving student health and well-being (Langford et al., 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015). While commonly used as settings for interventions to promote sexual health, observational studies indicate that the school environment is itself likely to be a social determinant of young people's sexual health (Patton et al., 2016). Students with stronger attachment (Greene et al., 2018; Oman et al., 2013; Paul et al., 2000; Rink et al., 2007; Steiner et al., 2014), involvement (Lauritsen, 1994), pro-school attitude (Bonell et al., 2005; Henderson et al., 2008), and relationships (McNeely & Falci, 2004) in school report reduced sexual risk behaviors and outcomes in terms of early sexual debut, failure to use contraception, pregnancy and STIs. Further, school-level studies suggest that students who attend schools with higher aggregate levels of positive attitude towards school (Kim, 2015), expectations of higher education (White & Warner, 2015) and attendance (Resnick et al., 1997) report delayed sexual debut. Petersona, Allenb. Vinerc & Bonella (2020), postulate in their studies on effects of the school environment on early sexual risk behavior that based on direct measures of engaging school environments, they found some evidence that school-level commitment and belonging may reduce the likelihood of early sexual debut and student-level measures of engagement with the school environment were more strongly associated with reduced risk of sexual behavior. In particular, relationships with teachers appeared to be most consistently associated with reduced sexual risk behavior, across school- and student-levels, time points and outcomes, (Petersona et al, 2020).

Barry (2005) stressed that adolescents are directly influenced by the type of school that they attend and school factors include; school structure, school composition and school climate. School environment is defined by Booth and Okely (2005) as the physical environment such as facilities and equipment, school policies (e.g time allocated for physical education and sports) and school practices (e.g. making facilities available, allocation of staff to teaching, physical education and sport and barriers to participation. School environment is a combination of social and physical environment that creates the classroom experience. It

includes classroom experience, classroom management procedure as well as the way the space is organized, furnished and maintained (Barry, 2005).

Operationally, school environment encompasses a broad range of educational concepts; it includes the physical setting, the psychological environment created through social contexts such as school rules and regulations, extra curricula activities, peer influences, cultural values of the school, counselling practice and numerous instructional components related to teacher characteristics and behaviours.

School environment seems to be a very important factor in adolescent sexual behaviour. A study carried out by Pilar and Boreeth (2008) on school environment and adolescents' well being beyond academic shows that school environment affects all aspects of adolescent development including sexual behaviour. Another study carried out by Jeremiahs and Twa (2002) on the influence of school environment on the sexual activities and academic achievement of an in-school adolescent, found out that school environment has strong influence over the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescent. Factors in the school environment that can influence the sexual behaviour of an adolescent can be found among male and female teachers that practice premarital relationship, extramarital relationship among couples and character of students in co-educational schools. Anyanwu, (2007) also reported that adolescent school environment affects the sexual behaviour of adolescents. This is because adolescents look up to their models for example. Therefore, if in a school environment where adolescents spend most of the day, they will grow up to see premarital sex as normal and therefore go ahead to practice it. The above view of Anyanwu disagreed with Collins (2004) assertion that whether adolescents become sexually active or not depends on their attitude. According to the researcher indulging in sexual behaviour does not have anything to do with environmental factor. This relationship between school environment and adolescent sexual behaviour has not been established in South East Nigeria. Based on the foregoing view, this study is set to find out if there is any relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of in-school adolescent in South East Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

There is substantial evidence both in literature and observations to buttress the deteriorating situation of in-school adolescents with respect to sexual behaviour. Cognizant of the illicit sexual behaviours among adolescents which have persistently and seemingly become a norm contrary to established societal values. This is no doubt worrisome, as it is problematic. The question then arises as to whether parents, teachers and counsellors are actually playing the important role of inculcating positive (sexual) values in the adolescents, yet risky and illicit sexual behaviour among in-school adolescents continues to skyrocket on daily basis. It is a truism that both parents and the school constitute dual factors designed by society to actuate proper upbringing of adolescents. Unfortunately, the collective engagement of these factors remains far-fetched compared to the rising incidences of risky sexual behaviour among in-school adolescents. For example, in south east Nigeria, researchers revealed that 76 percent of the students had heterosexual intercourse and Enugu State Secondary school girls aged 13-18 years showed that 17 percent of the girls are sexually active and out of these, 35 percent have multiple sexual partners. Most of them also engage into homosexuality, bisexuality, oral and anal sex. The consequences of such sexual behaviours are far reaching as it is problematic.

Available evidence among adolescents in South East Nigeria also have shown that sexual behaviours resulted in several cases of death due to abortion, high rate of school dropout, suicide, low self esteem as well psychological trauma, emotional damage and depression, more so, in-school adolescent are exposed to such problems as HIV/AIDS, STDS, uterine cancer and more so there is rising incidence of unintended pregnancy among in-school adolescents.

Worried by the existing state of act as it posses threats and challenges to the society at large, there is need to fill a gap in knowledge, this study is set to ascertain if school environment is actually a determinant of sexual behaviour of in-school adolescent in south east Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out whether school environment is a determinant of sexual behavior of adolescents in South Eastern, Nigeria. Specifically the study seeks to:

- (1) Determine what constitute school environment of in-school adolescents.
- (2) Determine sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents.
- (3) Determine the relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows.

- (1) What constitute school environment of in-school adolescents?
- (2) What are the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents?
- (3) What is the relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between school environment and sexual behavior of adolescents.

Research Method

The study adopted a correlation research design. This design according to Nworgu (2006) seeks to establish the extent of relationship between two or more variables and also determine the direction and magnitude of such relationship. Nworgu further states that the design also permits the selection of a sample from the population and using the information generated to make inferences or generalizations to the entire population provided the sample exhibits representativeness in the study. The study was carried out in South East, Nigeria. South East, Nigeria is made up of five states namely, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The South East, Nigeria, share boundaries with Benue and Cross River State on the East, Delta and Edo States on the west, Rivers and Akwa Ibom State on the south, Kogi and Benue on the North. The population of this study comprised 137,095 in-school adolescents in senior secondary 2 students in the public (state) secondary school in South East Nigeria. The instruments for data collection were two. The instruments are School Environnent Questionnaire (SEQ) and Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (SBQ). School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ) had 16 items built

on a four point rating scale that sought information from the students about the constituent of school environment. Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (SBQ) also contained 20 items on sexual behaviours with four point response format of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Foundations, and one from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) all from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with the reliability index of 0.82 and 0.78 established using Cronbach's Alpha reliability formula. The research questions were answered using mean, standard deviation and simple linear regression. In using mean, real limit of numbers were used whereby 0.00-0.49 indicates strongly disagreed, 1.00-1.49 indicates disagreed, 2.0-2.49 indicates agreed, 3.00-4.00 indicates strongly agreed. T-test was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significant. The null hypothesis was rejected when t-calculated was greater than t-tabulated, otherwise not rejected when t-calculated was less than t-tabulated.

Data Analysis and Results

The analyzed data were presented in table 1, 2, 3 and 4 in accordance with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study.

Research Question One

What constitute school environment of in-school adolescents?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Constitute School Environment of In-School Adolescents

S/ N	Item Statements on School Environment	N=1200		
		\bar{x}	SD	Dec.
1.	I learn quickly in a friendly school environment than very strict environment.	3.94	0.23	SA
2	I enjoy extra curriculum activities in my school and this influences my life positively.	4.00	0.00	SA
3	I enjoy the counseling setting of my school counselor.	3.97	0.17	SA
4	I enjoy the teaching method of my teachers.	3.53	0.50	SA
5	My school has very strict rules and regulations and this influences my life positively.	4.00	0.00	SA
6	I often comprehend to my teachers teaching method when they use instructional materials.	3.92	0.26	SA
7	The norms and values in my school have great positive impact on my self-esteem.	4.00	0.00	SA
8	Preaching on assembly grounds has great positive impact in my personality.	3.95	0.21	SA
9	My teacher's behaviour impresses me and it adds more values to my life.	3.98	0.12	SA
10	My school usually have opening mass every term and this influences my spiritual life positively.	3.97	0.17	SA

11.	My school conducts seminar every session on the effect of immorality and this has great impact on my life style.	3.47	0.50	A
12.	My principal is strict to rules and this influences my life positively.	3.50	0.50	SA
13.	Most of my teachers like dressing indecently.	2.92	0.41	A
14.	My school makes lots of noise and I learn fast in such environment.	1.96	0.21	D
15.	My school is loose to rules and regulation and I appreciate it.	1.04	0.21	D
16.	My teachers hardly come to class to teach and this has affected my reading habit.	1.96	0.21	D
Grand Mean		3.38	0.23	A

\bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA= Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D= Disagreed; SD= Strongly Disagreed

The result in **Table 1** shows the mean ratings of respondents on what constitute school environment of in-school adolescents. The mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on item numbers 1-10, and 12, ranging between 3.50 to 4.00 and 0.00 to 0.50 respectively, revealed that the respondents Strongly Agreed (SA) on the items highlighted above as those items that constitute school environment of in-school adolescents. The mean ratings on item numbers 11 and 13, which ranges between 3.06 to 3.47 with standard deviation values ranging from 0.24 to 0.50, revealed that, respondents also Agreed (A) on the items highlighted above as constitute of school environment of in-school adolescents. Besides, respondents Disagree (D) on items 14-16, with the mean ratings and standard deviation values of 1.96, 1.04, 1.96 and 0.21, 0.21 and 0.21 respectively. On the Grand mean score of 3.38 with standard deviation value of 0.23 respondents Strongly Agreed on items in table 3 as constitutes of school environment of in-school adolescents in South East Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What are the sexual behaviours of in-school adolescents?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Sexual Behaviour of In-School Adolescents

		N=1200		
S/ N	Item Statements on Sexual Behaviour	\bar{x}	SD	Dec.
1.	I am always attracted to my opposite sex during erotic discussion with him.	3.46	0.69	SA
2.	I enjoy having sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol.	3.37	0.70	SA
3.	I often have sexual intercourse.	3.44	0.70	SA
4.	Oral sex is more enjoyable than sexual intercourse.	3.43	0.67	SA
5.	Romance increases my sexual urge.	3.43	0.70	SA
6.	I am always sexually active if I take sexual stimulating drug.	3.48	0.65	SA
7.	I enjoy anal sex more than oral sex.	2.14	0.80	A
8.	I enjoy having sex with the same sex partner more than the opposite sex.	2.16	0.77	A

9	Touching a partner's breast stimulates me.	3.48	0.64	A
10	I often use contraceptive during intercourse.	3.44	0.68	A
11.	I enjoy having sexual intercourse with more than one person at a time.	2.03	0.96	A
12.	I often reach organism through having sex with the same sex partner.	2.01	0.81	A
13.	I enjoy using sex toy to satisfy my urge.	3.45	0.67	A
14.	I get stimulated quickly when my breast are been romanced.	3.48	0.69	A
15	I like watching pornographic films because it stimulates my sexual organs.	3.49	0.68	A
16	I love to engage into multiple sexual relationships.	1.98	1.04	D
17	Having sex with more than one person is ideal for youths.	1.92	0.85	D
18	Having sex with members of the same sex is the in thing.	2.02	0.90	A
19	Adolescent enjoy masturbation.	3.36	0.89	SA
20	I hate having sexual intercourse because it irritates me.	2.02	0.90	A
Grand Mean		2.88	0.77	A

\bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA= Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D= Disagreed; SD= Strongly Disagreed

The result in **Table 2** shows the mean ratings of respondents on what is the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents. The mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on item 1-6 and 19 ranging between 3.36-3.48 and 0.65-0.89 respectively revealed that respondents strongly Agreed (SA) on the items highlighted above as the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents. Meanwhile, the mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on item numbers 7-15, 18 and 20 ranging between 2.01-3.49 and 0.64-0.96 respectively, revealed that, respondents Agreed (A) on the items highlighted above as the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents. However, on item numbers 16 and 17, the mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents ranges from 1.92-1.98 and 0.85-1.04 respectively. This shows that respondents Disagreed (D) on the items highlighted above as the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents. Meanwhile, on the Grand mean score of 2.88 with standard deviation value of 0.77 respondents Strongly Agreed (A) on items in table 2 as the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in South East Nigeria.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents?

Table 3: Simple regression Analysis of school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.120 ^a	.014	-.017	.1994054

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Environment

To answer this research question, the scores from the responses of the school environment were correlated with their responses on sexual behaviour of adolescents. The result in **Table 3** shows that the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.12. This means that, there exist a direct positive relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents. Table 3 also shows that, the coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.12 is 0.01.

Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no significant relationship between school environment and sexual behavior of adolescents.

Table 3: Special t-test Analysis of School Environment and Sexual Behaviour of Adolescents

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized t Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	2.820	.310	9.082	.000
	School Environment	.018	.092	.006	.846

a. Dependent Variable: Sexual Behaviour

In order to test hypothesis 1, regression analysis was used. The result in **Table 4** shows the t-value of 0.194 with associated exact probability value of 0.846 was obtained. This probability value of 0.846 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found not significant because 0.846 is greater than 0.05. The null hypothesis which stated that; there is no significant relationship between school environment and sexual behavior of in-school adolescents was not rejected. Inference drawn was that, school environment has no significant relationship with the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in south east Nigeria. There is no statistically significant relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed the following:

1. School environment of in-school adolescents in South East Nigeria are extracurricular activities, counseling setting and methodology of teaching, among others.
2. In-school adolescents' sexual behaviour in South East Nigeria are attracted to their opposite sex and enjoying sexual intercourse under influence of alcohol, among others.
3. There exist a direct positive relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents, and a weak contribution of school environment on sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents.
4. There is no statistically significant relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study. They are discussed under the following sub-headings:

1. Constituents of School Environment among In-School Adolescents.

2. Constituents of Sexual Behaviours of In-School Adolescents.
3. Relationship between School Environment and Sexual Behaviour of Adolescents

Constituents of School Environment among In-School Adolescents

In sequel with the research question on what constitute school environment among in-school adolescent, respondents agreed that friendly school environment, extracurricular activities, counselling setting, methodology of teaching, teachers positive behaviour, norms and values of their school boost their self-esteem, hence, constitutes school environment of in-school adolescent in South-East, Nigeria. The above findings tally with the observation of Palliso and Jeremiah (2005) on the aspect of environmental factors as one of the variables influencing or shaping the sexual behaviour of adolescent.

The finding from the present study also corroborates that of Eva and Ewa (2005) since both studies emphasis the perception of school environment in relation to sexual behaviour of adolescents. Meanwhile, Eva and Ewa report that female students are exposed to variety of inappropriate and/or unacceptable behaviour of sexual nature or based on sex in the school environment. Findings of this study differ from the findings of Eva etal (2005) since the current study also highlighted the constituents of school environment of in-school adolescents and while, Eva and Ewa study only finds the relationship between school environment and sexual behavior.

Constituents of Sexual Behaviour among In-School Adolescents

In line with research questions on what constitute sexual behaviour among in-school adolescent. Respondents from this study agreed that they are attracted by their opposite sex, enjoy having sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol, enjoy masturbation, watching pornographic films, engaging into foreplay as this increases their sexual urge, and these constitutes sexual behaviour of In-school Adolescents in South-East,

The present finding is in an accord with the result of Kasier (2003) which reveals that young people are more concerned about sex and sexual behaviour than any other sexual issues in their lives. Again, adolescents feel great pressure to have sex. The present study is consistent with that of Kasier, (2003) in the area of adolescents engaging in sexual behaviour. The present study also stated that adolescent enjoy sexual intercourse which is in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Onyia (2000) in the area of adolescents having sexual intercourse. Hence, there are differences from the previous study in the area of male and female having unprotected sex which the present study did not indicate.

Present study indicated that adolescence enjoy sexual intercourse. The findings of the present study also concurred to the findings conducted by Beth, Anne, Rex and Kim (2001). The result of the findings indicated that a considerable percentage are initiating into sexual activity by early or middle adolescence, with 21% of adolescent males having engaged in sexual intercourse by age 15. The present study lend credence to Petard, Courtois, Rusch, (2008) who noted that perception of peers is associated with a higher frequency of sexual initiation and commitment, including oral sex. The present study indicated that adolescents enjoy oral sex, hence, the similarity.

These findings confirm that sexual behaviour is peculiar to adolescence period since the adolescents start experiencing marked changes in their sexual structure in response to puberty. The period makes the individuals conscious of their sexes, and become attracted to each other, especially opposite sex. Some of them, though not all develop desire and passion for opposite sex friendship and these pushes them into engaging into sexual behaviour.

Relationship between School Environment and Sexual Behaviour of Adolescents

In line with research question two, the findings reveal the three exist a direct positive relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents, and weak contributions of school environment on sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents. There is no statistically significant relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents. The current study aligns with the study conducted by Eva and Ewa (2005) who indicated that female students are exposed to variety of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of sexual nature or based on sex in the school environment. Hence, students are exposed to variety of inappropriate sexual behaviour in the school environment. This simply means that the current study is in line with the study of Eva and Ewa (2005) as having direct positive relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents. However, the present findings of the study confirm an opinion expressed by Ekwueme (2012). According to Ekwueme, their findings indicated that environmental factors influences adolescents sexual behaviour including watching of bad films.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have two implications for the researchers, adolescents, parents (family), government, guidance/counsellor and society at large. These implications are discussed as follows:

1. Since, the constituents of school environment of In-school Adolescents were determined, Government should ensure that school environment becomes friendly. The school should operate on very strict rules and regulations.
2. There exist a direct relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of in-school adolescent, hence, government and school management should provide an enabling environment so as to ensure good conducts among in-school adolescent.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to find out the relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents in South Eastern zone of Nigeria. To guide the study, two research questions were posed and one hypothesis were equally formulated and tested at 5% probability level. A correlational survey research design was adopted for this study. This study was carried out in Public (state) owned secondary schools in South East Nigeria, which consists of Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Abia, and Imo States. The sampled size for this study consists of 1200 senior secondary II in-school adolescents.

This sample was drawn using multi stage sampling technique. First, the area was stratified into five strata: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states respectively. However, the researcher randomly selected three states from the strata Ebonyi, Anambra and Enugu. From each of the States randomly selected, one education zone was randomly selected, and in each education zone, two local government areas were also randomly selected. Again, from each

of the randomly selected local governments, two secondary schools were selected randomly making it a total of four secondary schools from the two local governments. This gave a total of four secondary schools from each of the state selected and total of twelve secondary school from the three states randomly selected. Thus, from each of the selected schools hundred SS2 were selected thereby giving a total sample of 1,200 students.

There existed a direct positive relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents but no statistically significant relationship between school environment and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made with a view to improving the sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents.

1. Teachers and counselors should give the in-school adolescents proper and adequate sexuality education to help them avoid risky sexual behaviour.
2. More school counselors should be employed and retrained through in-service training programmes, capacity building workshops and refresher courses on sexual behaviour counseling.
3. The school authority should print and provide school guidance counselors with adequate materials (furniture for administrative and counseling conveniences; file cabinet for record keeping, notice board for information dissemination; log book; advertisement forms to enlighten students on service in counseling centre, files; counseling records; registration form; request form for counseling interview, case report sheet, consultation form, and appointment slip.) to carry out their functions effectively.
4. Religious leaders and community leaders should be co-opted into committee that will enlighten the in-school adolescence on the disadvantages of engaging in sexual behaviour.
5. Proper and adequate Sexuality education should be incorporated into secondary school curriculum; this will go a long way in enhancing the scope of in-school adolescents on the best way to avert immorality and sexual behaviour.
6. Parents should also be educated through seminars, and workshop on the best way to train the in-school adolescents knowing full well their challenges.
7. Government should ensure that school environment becomes friendly. The schools should be operated on a very strict rules and regulations.
8. Researchers should develop e-counseling model or cyber-counseling for the modification of risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. This model might be the quickest and most effective method of modifying sexual behaviour arising from engagement in internet communication. This can occur between a counselor and in-school adolescent through email, video conferencing, online chat, messaging, or internet phone.

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