



# Perception of Parents towards Sex Education on Primary School Pupils in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate Perception of parents towards sex education on primary school pupils in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, three null hypotheses were generated to direct the study. Literature review was done according to the variables under study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of one hundred (200) respondents were randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through the simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by the experts in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through test-retest method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was the statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypotheses under study to ascertain whether to reject or retain them. These statistical tools were used because of the nature of the variables involved in the study. All hypotheses were subjected to testing at .05 levels of significance with relative degree of freedom. The results of the analysis revealed that, Perception of parents of sex education, peer group/mass media and sex education significantly relate to pupils' sexuality. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that peer group/mass media should be a proper medium of educating the public on sex education.

**Keywords:** Perception, sex education and pupils

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## INTRODUCTION

Sex education is generally believed to be as old as man and it exists in various forms in our various cultures and sub-cultures. Its foundation is rooted deeply in the sociology, psychology and ethical values existing in our traditional societies. According to Pierre (1998) the most universal ideological basis for sex is that it is perfectly natural and good thing oriented towards pre-creation. The recent upsurge in considering sex more as a means of grafting the body than of raising offspring has led to diverse social problems such as contraceptives, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, child abandonment, child neglect, child abuse, illegitimacy among other. These social vices sometimes stem from the fact that the adolescent initiate sexual activities without understanding the meaning of sex and its implication.

This situation is hardly surprising because in many traditional societies, sex is rightly associated with the origin of life. And since life was regarded as sacred, its sexual origins tended to be regarded with a certain awe and reverence. It was not something for the levity of youth (Esen, 1984, p. 7). For this reason, sex education in some primitive societies could not be considered culturally and socially permissible and acceptable to the extent which stops the youth from “sexual democracy” and permissiveness”.

Traditionally, Nigerian parents believe that the best way to prevent sexual immorality among youths is by keeping them in complete ignorance of sexual issues. As it was, children obeyed their parents’ instructions and both boys and girls cherished chastity. It was a common feature for both the bride and bridegroom to be ignorant about sex until their marriage right although there were some exceptions. Hake (1992) pointed that young people who do not receive sex education at home about positive behavior sometimes receive such knowledge from various sources. He noticed in his study that most young males and females receive this sex information from peers and pornographic magazines. This situation has in some instances led to a false impression about sexual intercourse. In many parts of Nigeria, one of the admirable aspects of family life is the role played towards helping the young one absorb the complexities and responsibilities associated with marriage.

In many circumstances, however, sex education is often constrained to urban settlements because of strict resistance to the programmes in rural communities. Even in urban areas sex education is hardly given a priority among educators. This is because sex is perceived as a sacred practice, which must not be discussed in the open particularly among young people. This is hardly surprising since most culture, due to the strong adherence to deities, while others believe that sexual discussion are against their gods and as such, they try to avoid sex education. In similar way, sex education is perceived merely by most parent and families as a means of corrupting the young people and encourages divorce in marriages (Userie, 2000).

In Nigeria, not much has been formerly done either in school or society to be identified as a modern approach to sex education. This emanates from the fact that sex education appears to be one of the most controversial course of study. Curriculum planners may propose for inclusion in either primary or secondary school curriculum.

Sykes (1971) aptly remarked: There is a spectacle of society so afraid of sexual matters, so ridden by the remnants of puritanism that sexual relationships are too apt to become an exercise in pornographic. He also observed that the society is harnessing a culture which makes sex secretive as well as shameful and unclean to be studied by primary school pupils. There is a preponderance of sexual revolution ushered in by major social changes as urbanization, globalization, advances in science and technology and liberalization of the mass

media which have inclined the youth to express their sexual identify indicating that a new morality governs the sexual relations of young people.

According to Tyler (1989) parents are divided on whether sex education should be taught at the primary school level or not. The anti-sex education campaigners in primary school presumes that sex education is meant for the matured adults who are preparing or are ready for marriage and not little children as low as those in the primary school. They also feel that children would be morally maladjusted should they be corrupted with sex education. However, the proponents of sex education believed that sex education can help inculcate sound moral attitude in the school children thus helping them to be well adjusted to the norms and values of the society. In either case, it must be accepted that changes in human sexuality have precipitated many sexual problems for both the old and the young people. There is thus the need for vibrant programmes of sex education to rescue the ailing situation.

The school must be aware of the drastic changes in human sexuality and its function to ensure that right information is provided to learners at all levels of education. Parents are also obligated to acquaint themselves with the modern trends of sexual activities influencing their wards and must rise to the challenges of educating young people on sexuality. This research work is poised to appraise the Perception of parents of sex education towards sex education in primary school.

The most universal and ideological basis for sex education is precreation. Negative and irresponsible attitude to sex have resulted in abortion, child abuse, child neglect, child abandonment, venereal disease, illegitimacy and unhappy family life. Others include school dropout, teenage pregnancy and armed robbery. This is not only sad but dangerous to modern life. Tradition imposes sanctions in the form of taboos among other restrictions which inhibit or regulate sex and sexuality to the anguish of the youth and curious adults. Modern science and technology have over-exposed children to the experiences of sex and sexuality and many children 'mate out of season'.

Explanation for 'mate out of season' given the fact that sex is an issue that raises great curiosity among adolescents some of them, as a result of the craze to appease such curiosity and know all about what sex entails, involve in sexual relation before they are duly matured (mate out of season), which often times comes with many disadvantages, and mate out of season to have sexual relationship before the appropriate time.

Since sex tends to be a source of adolescent conflict, pre-occupation and problem one of the main institutions that can mediate both traditional and modern experiences in the school. Sadly, sex education is yet to attract required attention to education policy makers and curriculum planners and its introduction to primary school is yet to be accorded priority. A high percentage of parents appears not to have had a clear understanding and conception of sex education.

Opinions are also divided as to who will teach sex education, parents highly believe that sex education should be an inalienable responsibility of the school. Teacher on the other hand feels that parent owes their children the traditional responsibility of inculcating sexual value and positive living. Many parents are increasingly becoming nonchalant on the view that sex and moral education is to be given by the church. Another area or major concentration or concern is the methodology which sex education is supposed to take. This has encouraged the haphazard discharge of sex education curriculum without any sense of consciousness. This situation has logically led to the dis-inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum especially at the primary school level. This regrettable development has created tremendous social, psychological, educational and health related problem which demands urgent attention.

What has led to this study, sex in a modern generation like ours is a word whose meaning is perceived to be well understood by people of all classes, irrespective of age, gender or religious differences. However, there is a common perception among parents and older people which strongly resents talking to younger ones about sex. Sad enough is that most of the things youngest one are exposed to ranging ones are exposed to, ranging from movies, to pictures on the internet or discussions by older people has something sexually related. This triggers a curiosity in the minds of the young's ones towards knowing more about what the world totally entails. It becomes disappointing (to these children) when parents feel reluctant in feeding them with enough information to satisfy their curiosity. This leaves a disturbing effect on the minds of the children. But by and large, these children tries to find out what they need to know about sex often times from people who may want to take advantage of their ignorance, such knowledge from a wrong source may come with diverse negative effects like unwanted pregnancies, wayward living/lifestyle or even the worst of it which is venereal disease. All these would have been averted if parents were willing to give ready information their wards about sex.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Nigeria, a confluence of cultural, religious and geographical factors creates a sensitive environment where issues of sexual and reproductive health have remained highly a taboo for decades (Mack, 2011). Sexual health is an important determinant of productivity and national development everywhere. Yet, the mere mention of "Sex" seems to evoke itchy feelings among both the young and old. Adults in the Nigerian Society have usually refrained from discussing sexual matters with the young. Traditionally, children are brought up with strict discipline and fear and are punished for questioning their parents, especially the girls (Brocato & Dwamena-Aboagye, 2007). Consequently, young people are afraid to ask questions relating to sexual issues as they would be seen as "disrespectful" and "disobedient-" sexual issues are seen as topics for adult discussions only.

The truth of the matter, however, is that due to the emergence of globalization and torrent of sex-related information available to children via media, foreign influence and technology (Lim & Kui, 2006), the culture of silence is impossible to sustain. Parents and teachers involved in sex education have divergent views and this poses a lot of problems. To some, sex education is a strong incest taboo (Macleod, 1999; Kunene, 1988) and should be discouraged. It is perceived by others as one of those social forces that come with modernization to break down the moral fabric of the entire society (Marion & McCabe, 1990). Some also strongly believe that children are too young and not sexually active (O'Regan, 2001). However, children of today constantly surprise their parents with their questions (Hyder & DeLamater, 1997) and gestures. Why won't they, when sexual images confront them every day? Nowadays, it is easy to identify sexual images everywhere: in computer games, on billboards, newspapers, and television. Music videos are so sexually explicit, female dancers are almost naked and with mobile phones and computers everywhere, pornography can be accessed with a click. Again, young people are having sexual intercourse at much younger ages – that is between 8 and 17 years (Ansah-Addo, 2005); sometimes even younger (Naidoo, 2001; Small & Luster, 1994; Stack, 1994). Despite this, parents still see it as a taboo to discuss issues relating to sex to their wards. In view of this, the study intends to review the literature under the following headings

### **Perception of Parents of Sex Education towards the Influence of Sex Education on Pupils**

In most Africa context especially in Nigeria, sex education is seen as a taboo to be talked about. Generally, children are not allowed to have access to sexual health information because the society have the perception that such exposure will corrupt the child and he or she may likely be a victim of early sexual intercourse. In 2002 when the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Education, civil societies and many other International Development Partners drafted and proposed a curriculum on Sexuality Education for both primary and primary schools, it was received with mixed feelings and generated raging controversy especially in Northern Nigeria. Within a very short time, the discussion on its acceptability or otherwise was hijacked by religious leaders and other gatekeepers and was given different connotations and coloration. A recent study carried out in Kano state in Northern Nigeria revealed that parents have a negative perception of sexuality education in schools probably because of their religious belief and socio-cultural norms and values. In contrast, teachers had positive attitude towards teaching sex education in schools. Nevertheless, several studies in Nigeria have validated the introduction of sex education in schools. A cross-sectional study carried out in Kwara State, Nigeria reported that 78% of the respondents suggested that sex education should be made compulsory in schools (Akande & Akande, 2007).

Parents seem to be one of the earliest and most important influences on children's sexual development and socialization. Given that children nowadays have sexual intercourse at an earlier age it is important that parents begin to discuss sexuality in childhood so that they can help their children to make deliberate decisions about having sex and can inform them about safe sex. Parents may be the ideal source of providing children with information about sex because of their long-term involvement in the lives of their children (Perrino, Gonzalez-Soldevilla, Pantin & Szapocnik, 2000).

The attitudes and beliefs of parents form the basic foundation for the values of their children. Although direct communication between parents and children about sexuality is limited in many families, parents may be sources of guidelines for children as they both directly and indirectly transmit their standards of conduct during the socialization process.

Parental attitudes and values concerning premarital sexuality may also affect their own patterns of discipline and childrearing, which, in turn, influence the behavior of their children. Parents with restrictive attitudes toward children sexuality may structure their own activities to provide more supervision of their children and to allow their children less autonomy, which may reduce children sexual behavior (Thornton & Camburn, 1987). Using 10,000 females in the sophomore cohort of the nationally representative High School and Beyond Survey, Hanson et al. (1987) found that attitudes and values of children and their parents played an important role in out-of-wedlock childbearing. When children and their parents endorsed the values and accompanying behaviors that stress responsibility, the children' chances of experiencing an out-of-wedlock childbirth were reduced.

Today's children are much more intelligent, alert, curious and conscious of the fact that their parents and elder stalk some secret behind them. They want to know the secret. If the secret is concealed from them they may take some wrong approach and develop undesirable habits. Parents are so much traditional and orthodox in their outlook that they do not prefer imparting sex-education as a noble work. Sometimes children satisfy their instincts and get mythical information about sex from sources such as servants, friends, relatives, and T.V. programmes etc., these information may be incorrect and could have spurious effect on them. Nigerian society is closed in nature and it follows double standards on the question of sex-education. It generates an utter confusion in the mind of children and sex taboos become a sense of great mysticism in their mind. Children experience a

great deal of anxiety emerging out of poor knowledge about their sexual developments, sex and form misconceptions, children whose parents covers sexual issues are most likely to fall into all sort of unwholesome sexual practices which often times is accompanied by many ugly adverse effects.

### **Influence of Peer Pressure and Mass Media on Pupils Sexuality**

It is human nature to feel the need to belong. Everyone wants to be accepted by others in some way, especially growing children. As a result of this want to belong, they make themselves think that they need to change their attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs in order to gain acceptance from others. Peer pressure is an avoidable problem that our child faces that can be solved if the right measures are taken. Children are not mentally prepared to be able to resist and deny peer pressure from others. A basic assumption is that during adolescence close friends become increasingly important as reference points in guiding various behaviors, including sexual behavior (Billy & Udry, 1985). The influence of the peer group may occur whether through the modeling of peer behavior, whereby the children imitates the behavior of valued others, or through peer expression of normative standards for children conduct such that the children responds to the advice given by significant others. Peer advice regarding appropriate sexual behavior is presumably an outcome of their sexual experiences or the lack of such experiences. Both mechanisms of peer influence may indirectly affect the children's sexual behavior through the formation of the children's own values and preferences for sexual contact (Billy & Udry, 1985).

Peer pressure influences children to do things they would not normally do, most of which are negative. Young people get information about sex and sexuality from a wide range of sources, including each other, their parents, teachers, through the media ,magazines, books and websites. Some of these sources give accurate information while others do not. Myths and misconceptions about sex and sexuality acquired by young people from wrong sources may be carried throughout life and passed on to their own offspring. It has however been documented that when young people are well informed, there is a delay in the age of onset of sexual activities and increased use of preventive measures against STDs and pregnancy amongst those already sexually active. This leads to an overall reduction in teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases sadly enough those who should well in form them tend to shy away or do so with reluctance owing to the believe that teaching children on sex at an early age may get them corrupt. Parents are supposed to show concern about their child's feelings, take an interest in his/her daily activities, manifest love and acceptance, encourage appropriate behavior, help with problems and reinforce accomplishments but when this is not done, the children seek help from their peers who happen to be the second closest allies after their parents, their peers may often time feed them wrong information and ideas about sexuality which may go a long way to affect them negatively in present and later life Generally growing children use different strategies to satisfy their curiosities and queries about sex. If adults round them do not provide proper information about sex, children may either draw the wrong conclusions based upon inaccurate knowledge or they will make up their own explanations.

However, peer pressure can be prevented. If teenagers are taught how to resist peer pressure adequately they can avoid the many negative outcomes that go hand-and-hand with it. If the child are taught how to respond correctly when a peer is attempting to persuade them to do something they do not want to do the child will be more able to resist the peer pressure. Child should be reminded of their own self-worth to boost their self-esteem. If the teen has good self-esteem they will not feel the need to be accepted by others as much. It is

up the adults of the community to assist the child. The responsibility is on the parents, teachers, and other professionals to keep our children on track.

Both children and adults have been reported to believe the media is a central source of information on sex and sexuality for young people (Malamuth & Impett, 2001) considering few programs (from the daily news, to "reality-based" programs, total shows, to family-centered programming) appear immune to stories of a sexual nature. According to an estimate by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), more than twenty million people are exposed to their commercials every day.

Many writers and speakers discretely or pointedly enter individuals' lives through radio, magazines, books, brochures and so on, leaving the individual with many choices about what to do, what to buy and who to be. Most of the time, the media, whether audio, print or visual, has been blamed for affecting the minds of people negatively with very little potential of creating positive change in them. The media poses a great challenge to sexuality education in the sense that it does not necessarily complement the tenets of sexuality education because sexuality messages by the media cannot be devoid of selfish interest and propaganda. Such messages could easily be seen as mere entertainment thereby restraining the potential to impart accurate information about sexual problems.

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The media exposes children every day to articles, pictures and often times videos that says different things about sex. Children therefore tend to learn quickly through the things the media presents, it has been well established that children learn more quickly with pictures and objects they can see, this objects creates a lasting impression on the minds of the children, some of them may at some points attempt to practice scenes of sex they have watched in movies they by involving in unwholesome sexual activities at a very tender age.

At some times printed articles on newspaper and magazines educate children on the use of contraceptives and other birth control pills which boosts their audacities of involving in pre-marital sex without any fear of its consequences. Children are active consumers of messages broadcast on radio and television, printed in magazines, distributed on the Internet, and presented in videogames. As technology has advanced, access to these varying types of media has become common. In most Nigerian households: 98% have at least one television, 70% have more than one television, 70% have cable, and 51% of house hold with children have a computer (Paik, 2001). Wireless resources Such as radio/CD headsets, handheld televisions, portable video game players, and internet access via cellular phone sad to the numerous sources of media access. Much of children' sexual knowledge comes from sexual images, sexual behavior, and sex talk shown in the media.

Brown, Keller, and Stern (2009) argue that traditional media (television, radio, movies), as well as new digital media (the internet, social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace), play an important role in children' sexuality and sexual behaviors. Brown and L'Engle (2009), for example, found that exposure to pornography predicted sexual uncertainty, less contraception use, and earlier sexual debut.

Similarly, Ward and colleagues found that greater exposure and greater involvement with sexually explicit television during adolescence were related to permissive sexual attitudes, higher expectations of sexual activities of friends, and more sexual experiences

(Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999; Ward & Friendman, 2006). For instance, results indicated that the more frequently children viewed prime-time television programs (e.g., *Sex and the City*) and music videos with sexual content the more likely they viewed casual sex as a normal part of dating relationships (Ward & Friendman, 2006). Bleakley et al. (2009) also found, that “using media (i.e., television, movies, music, internet, magazines, and videogames) as a source of sexual information was associated with children’s increased efficacy belief that they could overcome barriers in order to have sex”. In others words, children who received much of their information from the media also saw engaging in sexual behavior as a normal part of adolescence.

### **Effect of Sex Education on Pupils Sexuality**

Sexuality education also referred to as sex education or family life education is a lifelong process of acquiring information forming attitudes, beliefs and values. It encompasses sexual development, reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image and gender roles. Sexuality behaviour amongst young people in Nigeria and indeed Sub Saharan Africa is seriously going through transformation from what it was in the past. This transformation has been attributed to the effect of modernization caused by industrialization, education, exposure and importation of various foreign cultures that were alien to Nigeria and Africa.

This has increased the vulnerability of young people to sexual and reproductive health problems. In recent times the Nigerian youth have been reported to be highly vulnerable to antisocial behaviors’ including unsafe sexual activities. This has been attributed to their great lack of information and knowledge about the implications of their behaviour on their sexual health. There is therefore the need for sexuality education amongst this vulnerable group. It develops young people’s skills so that they make informed choices about their behaviour, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices.

Ikpe (2004) postulated that “Sexuality defines the very essence of one’s humanity including one’s self-image, being male or female, physical looks and reproductive capacity; that is sexuality is a natural part of life. It is about the way we are made, how we feel about ourselves, what roles we play in the society and how we procreate”. Religious and spiritual beliefs influence feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, pre-marital sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception, abortion and masturbation (Greenberg et al 2000). Sexuality education can be seen as yet another religion which is not necessarily different from what already obtains.

Sexuality education has been given various definitions by various schools of thought. AHI (2003) described sexuality education as “a planned process of education that fosters the acquisition off actual information, the formation of positive attitudes, beliefs and values as well as the development of skills to cope with the biological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual aspects of human sexuality.” That is, learning about the anatomy, physiology and bio-chemistry of the sexual response system which determines identity, orientations, thoughts and feelings as influenced by values beliefs, ethics and moral concerns.

It is the interactive relationship of these dimensions that describes an individual’s total sexuality (SIECUS, 1995). Also, sexuality education teaches us that, religious principles, beliefs, rules and regulations and ethical considerations affect our everyday interactions just as our culture, role models in our families and our friends impact us as well. Sexuality education is simply the art of learning how to conform to a certain art of living by being able to reason, examine and monitor oneself in clearly defined terms.



As far back as 1897 a female Swedish doctor, Karolina Wider storm, saw the need to educate the young especially the girls about sexual hygiene as a way of informing and protecting them from sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea and syphilis which were found to be very common during that period. To her, the idea was that, “if girls got to know in good time how pregnancy came about and how sexually transmitted diseases were spread, they would be better able to protect themselves. In this way girls were considered to be able to take responsibility for the sexual health for boys as well as for themselves” (Lena, 2000). Given the controversial nature of sexuality education at that time, the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases was used as the basis of introducing sexuality education in the schools.

Despite all the positive potentials of sexuality education, the major challenges were what form sexuality should take and at what level it should be introduced in the schools. There was also the problem of methodology. Sexuality education was seen as the gospel of the flesh that could lead to sexual espionage, egoism and revelry among the young.

The young recipients of sexuality education were therefore referred to as “victims”. Notwithstanding, serious advocates of sexuality education insisted on driving home the potentials of sexuality education such as building new standards and removing deceptions between people and by the dawn of the 1900s, several events had occurred which changed the way people perceived sexuality hence sexuality education was introduced in most schools. Talking to the young about sexual life became less controversial among the some parts of Nigeria. As children became sexually educated, their chances of falling into risks become reduced and this made them assume a visibly significant part of the society.

The evolution of sexuality education and its introduction in Nigerian schools came about when it became apparent that there was, as there is, an urgent need to address children’ reproductive health, reproductive rights and sexuality issues. The need to prepare the children for their adulthood roles that conform to contemporary life styles has become paramount and success was seen to depend greatly on basic education and information on health care and positive relationships provided the children.

In tune with Karolina Wider storm, such education could empower young women to have a greater control over their sexuality and reproduction to the benefit of social and economic aspects of their lives. It also has the potential to respond to overall life situation of the children, address their holistic well-being and help them achieve their full potential.

The success of the efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria lies in strong political support and the continued strong commitment, team work and skillfulness of prevention teams of donor agencies, NGOs and projects such as The Vision Project and the African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre housed under the Action Health Incorporated in Nigeria. In recent times, the Action Health Incorporated (AHI) has been in the frontline of NGOs complementing government’s efforts in raising awareness about adolescent health issues and setting a new direction for adolescent sexuality education in Nigeria by building on lessons from the past success and constraints, and appreciating the present potentials of sexuality education in strengthening national development efforts for a brighter future.

AHI has viewed sexuality education as an educational process which provides for an articulated and practical study of the various dimensions of human sexuality with the aim of developing in the individual a more rational attitude and responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of life of the individual now and in the future. To borrow the words of International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) it is, “an education process designed to assist young people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood, marriage, parenthood and ageing, as well as their social relationship in the socio-cultural context of family and society” (IPPF, 1987) Throughout human history,

sexuality has also been perceived as a threat to people's health: untreatable STIs and unintended pregnancies were almost always grave risks associated with sexual encounters.

Sexuality education thus fulfills this highly needed function of sexual health promotion. Sex education imperative for boys and girls as it will aid them to have access to sexual health information, make informed decision that will guarantee them a reputable future and acquire life skills to deal with sexuality and relationships in a satisfactory and responsible manner.

Sexuality, rather than morality, has become the custom and children are not excluded from this exposure Undeniably, the issue of sex education in schools has been very controversial with respect to the stage at which it should begin. In his essay, "Sex Education in Ghanaian Society: The Skeleton in the Cupboard," Osei (2009) illustrates how his mother lost her teaching job in 2004 for teaching her class one (1) pupils the parts of the body.

According to him, the Ghanaian government's attitude toward sex education is best described as ambivalent because though the subject is officially part of the school curricula, it is not "effectively taught" in practice. Ankomah (2001) explains that governments want to satisfy the religious critics in the society. In United States, critics have posed some questions about the state's usurpation of parental rights and responsibilities, the adequacy of ethical instruction and the wisdom of imparting sexual information to immature minds (Sanders, 2008). But, the intriguing question is this: do parents find it necessary to introduce their children, especially those at the lower levels of education to sex education? Attitude towards sex education differs from one group to another depending on many factors like dominant perceptions, social belief systems, religious factors, family socialization and cultural set up within which learners grow up (Gallagher & Gallagher, 1996). It also depends on the attitude of teachers who will be responsible for the formal aspects (Nokwe, 1991) and principally parents who are a child's first point of contact and play a vital part in the informal education of the learner. This is why parental attitude on the topic of sex education is very important. Our cultures' hesitant attitude about sexuality is evident in the limitations placed on sex education in primary schools and often in its total absence from the curriculum (Baron & Byrne, 1994).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was essentially an Ex-post facto. The population of this study comprised all senior secondary school students in Cross River State. According to the Research and Statistic Department of Secondary Education Board and the State Ministry of Education (2015/2016 academic session), the total number of Senior Secondary School Students in public and private secondary schools in the state is 2,306. The stratified random sampling technique was used in sample selection. First, the Zone was stratified based on the two Local Education Authorities. A total of 200 students were selected for the study.

The research instrument, which was the researcher constructed the instrument. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement for each statement. In terms of validity three experts in educational measurement, research and evaluation, affirmed, that the entire instrument was suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Using the test-retest reliability method, the reliability index of the instrument was found to be 0.78. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire from the sampled institutions. Through a very rigorous approach, and with the assistance of some persons, all the 200 copies of the

questionnaire were retrieved, and they were all properly completed, thus giving 200% return rate. The following hypotheses were tested in the study.

- There is no significant relationship between Perception of parents of sex education and pupils’ sexuality.
- There is no significant relationship between peer group/mass media and pupils’ sexuality.
- There is no significant relationship between Sex education and pupils’ sexuality.

## RESULTS

In this section each hypothesis is re-stated, and the result of data analysis carried out to test it is presented. Each hypothesis of the study was tested at .05 level of significance.

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between Perception of parents of sex education and pupils’ sexuality. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Perception of parents of sex education; while the dependent variable is pupils’ sexuality. To test this hypothesis, Perception of parents of sex education and pupils’ sexuality was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between Perception of parents of sex education and Pupils’ sexuality (N=200)

Variables	X	SD	r-value
Perception of parents of sex education	21.93	1.12	0.43*
Pupils’ sexuality	21.23	1.85	

\* Significant at .05, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.43 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. With the result of this analysis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between Perception of parents of sex education and pupils’ sexuality was rejected. This result implies that, Perception of parents of sex education has a significant positive relationship with pupils’ sexuality. The positive r implied that the higher the Perception of parents of sex education, the higher the pupils’ sexuality tends to be. On the other hand the lower the Perception of parents of sex education the lower the pupils’ sexuality tends to be.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between peer group/mass media and pupils’ sexuality. The independent variable in this hypothesis is peer group/mass media; while the dependent variable is pupils’ sexuality. To test this hypothesis, pupils’ sexuality was correlated with their peer group/mass media using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between peer group/mass media and Pupils' sexuality (N=200)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value
Peer group/mass media	21.07	1.89	0.87*
Pupils' sexuality	21.23	1.85	

\* Significant at .05, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.87 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between peer group/mass media and pupils' sexuality was rejected. This result indicated that, peer group/mass media has a significant positive relationship with pupils' sexuality. The positive r implied that the more positive the peer group/mass media is the higher pupils' sexuality tends to be. On the other hand the lower their peer group/mass media the lower pupils' sexuality tends to be.

### Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between sex education and pupils' sexuality. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Sex education; while the dependent variable is pupils' sexuality. To test this hypothesis, Sex education was correlated with pupils' sexuality using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between Sex education and Pupils' sexuality (N=200)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value
Sex education	20.47	2.19	0.62*
Pupils' sexuality C	21.23	1.85	

\* Significant at .05, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 3 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.62 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant positive relationship between Sex education and pupils' sexuality was rejected. This result implied that, student's Sex education has a significant relationship with pupils' sexuality. The positive r indicated that the higher the Sex education the higher the pupils' sexuality tends to be. On the other hand the lower the Sex education the lower pupils' sexuality tends to be.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between Perception of parents of sex education and pupils' sexuality. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Akande and Akande (2007) who observed that parents

seem to be one of the earliest and most important influence on children's sexual development and socialization. Given that children nowadays have sexual intercourse at an earlier age it is important that parents begin to discuss sexuality in childhood so that they can help their children to make deliberate decisions about having sex and can inform them about safe sex. Parents may be the ideal source of providing children with information about sex because of their long-term involvement in the lives of their children.

Perrino, Gonzalez-Soldevilla, Pantin and Szapocnik (2000) also noted that the attitudes and beliefs of parents form the basic foundation for the values of their children. Although direct communication between parents and children about sexuality is limited in many families, parents may be sources of guidelines for children as they both directly and indirectly transmit their standards of conduct during the socialization process.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between peer group/mass media and pupils' sexuality. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with view of Billy and Udry (1985) who observed that influence of the peer group may occur whether through the modeling of peer behavior, whereby the children imitates the behavior of valued others, or through peer expression of normative standards for children conduct such that the children respond to the advice given by significant others. Peer advice regarding appropriate sexual behavior is presumably an outcome of their own sexual experiences or the lack of such experiences. Both mechanisms of peer influence may indirectly affect the children's sexual behavior through the formation of the children's own values and preferences for sexual contact.

The result of the third hypothesis indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between Sex education and pupils' sexuality. The finding of this hypothesis is in agreement with the view of Ikpe (2004) who postulated that sexuality defines the very essence of one's humanity including one's self-image, being male or female, physical looks and reproductive capacity; that is sexuality is a natural part of life. It is about the way we are made, how we feel about ourselves, what roles we play in the society and how we procreate". Religious and spiritual beliefs influence feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, pre-marital sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception, abortion and masturbation. Sexuality education can be seen as yet another religion which is not necessarily different from what already obtains.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached:

- Perception of parents of sex education significantly relate with pupils' sexuality;
- Peer group/mass media significantly relate with pupils' sexuality;
- Sex education significantly relate with pupils' sexuality.

## **Recommendations/Implication to Counseling**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Parents should educate their children on sex education and pupils' sexuality;
- Peer group/mass media should be a proper medium of educating on sex education;
- Sex education should be introduced in all level of education;

- Counselling services should be provided in all secondary schools. Where there are already in existence, there should be made functional, efficient and effective in order to expose students to sex education and to help them to adjust in school;
- The guidance counsellor is very important here as it is his place to counsel the students against sexuality.

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