

## **SEXUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

*Sexuality is part of man's everyday life and is the very essence of his humanity that encompasses his physical attributes, self-image, his/hers view of what is feminine or masculine. As such, it impacts and influences the actions of the human race which is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practice, role and relationships. This study focuses on the sexuality and educational achievements of students in secondary schools taking a case study of public secondary schools in Rivers State. The research was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. A sample size of 400 students comprising 200 female and 200 male students selected through stratified random sampling from a population of 99,840 students in public secondary school in Rivers State. A 15- itemed questionnaire tagged "Sexuality and Educational Attainment of Students Questionnaire" (SEAAQ) was employed for data collation. Validity and reliability was established by experts and the reliability index coefficient of 0.81 obtained through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. For the purpose of the research, the research question was analyzed employing mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance employing re-test. The study established amongst others that; insecurity regarding sexual orientation, risky sexual attitudes, premarital sexual activities impact the educational attainment of students negatively. it was therefore recommended that parents should instill moral values on their children at home, encourage their children to discuss sexuality and sexual activities with them, counseling should be made available for students to allow them express themselves better.*

### **Introduction**

Sex has been identified as a trait that every society associates with. It is biological in

nature and identifies being male or female. Sexuality therefore can be termed as the cultural manner of living out the pleasures of our body (Weeks, 2003). It refers to the

way humans choose or are prepared to take pleasure in or reject our sexual desires (Ikpe, 2004). It must be emphasized that sexuality does not only refer to sex but rather encompasses every other activity and process that surrounds sex. Izugbara (2008) posits that it adds to the human description or the self and their relationships with one another. Sexuality influences the family, neighborhood and the nation and this has seen sexuality impact policies in some countries designed to suit the sexuality peculiarities of today's society. Ikpe (2004) opines that all through history, sexuality has been in a "state of flux" always reacting to prevailing conditions of political, societal and health undertones. Hence, even within the Nigerian traditional society, sexuality has continued to alter as a result of other development in the society.

Scholars have emphasized that sexuality and gender are intricately related so one of them cannot be discussed without mentioning the other (Nagel, 2003; Ikpe, 2004). Gender is usually employed to describe the societal circumstances of being male or female and sexuality is a critical result of this dualism. Gender refers to the meanings that are culturally linked to being feminine and masculine; and these determine personal identities across a broad spectrum. According to

Zevallos (2016) The term "Cis-gender" refers to individuals whose body biological meets with their personal "gender identity" whereas transgender which refers to a situation where an individual biological body does not meet their "gender identity". Various societies in Nigeria had in the pre-colonial era exhibited philosophies regarding sexuality which at that point were traditionally seen as moral or immoral. During that period, it was considered a forbidden to talk about sex or any sex related issue. This further emboldened the practice that saw issues surrounding sexuality was filled with silence and discretions even amongst parents and their kids. According to researches, issues surrounding sexuality is on the rise now, societies are becoming more open and vocal about sexuality. This has translated in the rise in sexual relationship in most Nigerian schools. This surge in sexual relationship by youths has dire consequences for societal, health and academic achievement for these youths (Anochie & Ikpeme, 2001). This view is supported by Mlyakado (2013) who opines that as a result of sexual activities by students they are increasing cases of poor academic performance, pregnancies that are unplanned and school dropouts.

The need to attain good education is important to all adolescents in secondary

school. The evidence from other nations can assist in the understanding of existing relationship that exists between academic attainment and adolescent sexual activities. According to Sabia & Rees (2009) a series of researches carried in the US has indicated that teenagers who do not engage in sexual activities have a higher probability of graduating from high school and attending college when compared with the colleagues who were sexually active. Although it must be highlighted that the socio-cultural, economic, educational and technological developments of countries such as the US varies from the Nigerian state. It however offers a base for the study and understanding of the academic attainment and sexual behavior of students in different contexts including Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sexuality has continued to evolve over the years generating debates amongst scholar, regarding issues such as gender classification due to rising agitation for transgender and LGBT recognition, increase in pre-marital sex as well as high risk sexual activities that encourages the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Available records in developing countries such as Nigeria indicates that there is a growing level of LGBT activities in Nigeria, high risk sexual activities and pre-

marital sexual activities amongst students which goes contrary to the customs and morals of the African culture. The rising rate of globalization of the western culture, lack of parental guidance and counseling, erosion of traditional African norms, the influence of the internet are some of the influences behind this rise which has the potential to impact on educational attainment as a result of the social stigmatization and emotional and physical distraction they may could be exposed to as a result of this practices. In terms of high risk sexual activities alone, it is estimated that between the ages of 15-24 they are about 60% of persons living with HIV in the world (UNAIDS, 2006).

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

1. If insecurity regarding sexual orientation impacts the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. If premarital sexual activities impacts the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. If sexual risk behavioural impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

## Research Questions

1. To what extent does insecurity regarding sexual orientation impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. Does premarital sexual activities impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Does sexual risk behaviour impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinion scores of female and male students on the extent insecurity regarding sexual orientation impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinion scores of female and male students on the influence of premarital sexual activities on educational attainment amongst secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinion scores of female and

male students on the impacts of sick risk behavior on educational attainment amongst secondary school students in Rivers State.

## Methodology

This study was limited to investigating sexuality and educational attainment of secondary students in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The state is one of the richest oil producing states in the Niger Delta with a population of approximately 5, 198,716. The study consisted of senior secondary students of all public secondary schools in Rivers State numbering about 99,840 students (Rivers State Secondary Schools Board, 2018). Through stratified random sampling method a sample size of 400 comprising 200 male and 200 female students was selected for the research. Employing the Taro Yamen's formula for sample size:

$$S = \frac{N}{(1 + Nx^2)}$$

The research instrument for the study was a self-designed instrument titled "Sexuality and Educational Attainment of Students Questionnaire" (SEASQ) that was divided into two parts. Part A was used to generate demographic information such as name and age while Part B contained a 15-structured item that had its mode of response patterned after the four

point likert scale: Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. A criterion mean of 2.5 was adopted and the instrument validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument ascertained through test-retest method and the results obtained correlated employing

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics which had a co-efficient of 0.81. The research questions were thereafter answered employing mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistical tool.

## Result Analysis

**Research Question One:** To what extent does insecurity regarding sexual orientation impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard deviation on the extent insecurity regarding sexual orientation impacts the educational attainment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

S/No	Items	Male Students n=397		Female Students n=397	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1	Social Prejudice towards sexual orientation hindered educational performance.	3.28	Agreed	2.08	Disagreed
2	Emotional instability caused by stigmatization from sexual activities impacted educational attainment.	2.59	Agreed	2.64	Agreed
3	There is a relationship between sexuality and absenteeism from school	2.66	Agreed	2.76	Agreed
4	Experience of sexual abuse limits school attendance	2.58	Agreed	2.46	Disagreed
5	Identification of sexual transmitted threaten educational attainment of students	2.45	Disagreed	2.28	Disagreed
		13.56		12.22	
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.71		2.44	

Table 1 indicates that male and female students sampled from the study on items

1-5. The responses of the male students produced mean scores of 3.28, 2.59, 2.66 and 2.58 for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and were

agreed while item 5 with mean score of 2.45 was disagreed. On the other hand, the responses of female students generated mean scores of 2.64 and 2.76 for items 2 and 3 and were agreed while items 1, 4, 5

with means scores of 2.08, 2.46 and 2.28 were disagreed for being below the criterion mean of 2.50 used for decision making.

**Research Question Two:** Does premarital sexual activities impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the impact of sexual risk activities on educational attainment amongst senior secondary students in Rivers State

S/No	Items	Male Students n=397		Female Students n=397	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
6	There is lack of concentration in class due to previous sexual activities	2.33	Low Extent	2.64	High Extent
7	There is distraction in the class from sex mates	3.02	High Extent	2.70	High Extent
8	Students can't come to school due to previous sexual exposure	2.07	Low Extent	2.47	Low Extent
9	There is no time to do assignments because of sexual activities with peer group	2.32	Low Extent	2.38	Low Extent
10	Sexual affairs reduces the time available for school related activities	3.04	High Extent	3.70	High Extent
		12.78		13.89	
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.56		2.78	

Table 2 establishes that the responses of the female students for items 6-10 had means scores of 2.64, 2.70, 2.47, 2.38 and 3.70. Items 6, 7 and 8 with mean scores of 2.64, 2.70 and 3.70 were considered to be high impact since their mean score is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50 while items 9 and 10 with mean scores of

2.47 and 2.38 have low impact. On the other hand, the responses of male students for items 6-10 indicated mean scores of 2.33, 3.02, 2.07, 2.32 and 3.04. Items 7

and 10 with mean score of 3.02 and 3.04 were high impact since their mean score is above the criterion mean of 2.50.

**Research Question Three:** Does sexual risk behaviour impact the educational attainment amongst senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation on how sexual risk behaviour impacts the educational attainment amongst senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

S/No	Items	Male Students n=397		Female Students n=397	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
11	Sexting in the class reduces the level of attention in the classroom	3.33	Agreed	3.57	Agreed
12	Having multiple sexual partners limits interest in education	3.75	Agreed	3.22	Agreed
13	Having unprotected sex results to emotional imbalance in the classroom	1.95	Disagreed	1.67	Disagreed
14	Exposure to pornographic materials limits available time for educational activities	3.03	Agreed	1.82	Disagreed
15	Sexual body contacts in the class could result in lack of attention during learning	2.74	Agreed	2.63	Agreed
		14.80		12.91	
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.96		2.58	

Table 3 revealed that the responses of male students for items 11-15 produced mean scores of 3.33, 3.75, 1.95 and 3.03 and 2.74. While items 11, 12, 14 and 15 with mean scores of 3.33, 3.75, 3.03 and 2.74 were agreed for being above the criterion

mean of 2.50 for decision making, item 13 with mean score of 1.95 was disagreed. On the other hand, the responses of the female students on the same items produced mean scores of 3.57, 3.22, 1.67, 1.82 and 2.63. While items 11, 12, 15 with mean scores



of 3.57, 3.22 and 2.63 were agreed, items 13 and 14 with mean scores of 1.67 and 1.82 were disagreed.

### **Conclusion**

The research focused on sexuality and educational attainment of secondary schools in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The study sort to investigate how sexual experiences impact their educational attainments and the following conclusions were made:

- Sexuality and sexual behavior of students in secondary school impact their educational attainment.
- Students who are exposed to sexual activities perform poorly when compared to those who are not.
- Students become emotionally unstable if they feel uncertain about their sexuality which impacts their educational performance
- Social prejudice impacts the educational attainment of adolescents.
- There is a difference between the responses of male and female students on the impact of sexuality on educational attainment.
- Risky sexual behavior impacts the educational attainment of students as a

result of distraction, emotional and mental challenges.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- Sex education should be incorporated as part of the curriculum of the school especially at the secondary level of education. This will assist the students to understand how to handle sexual advances in the school and the educational effects of such behavior.
- There is need for more female teachers to be engaged especially in schools where there are predominantly female students while schools with more male students should be managed using male teachers.
- Parents and members of the community should provide an avenue for students' sexual orientation.
- Trained counselors and counseling services should be provided in secondary schools in the State.
- Students who have been exposed to sexual molestation and other sexual challenges will need to utilize the available counseling service to overcome the trauma of such exposure for improved educational achievement.



- Appropriate home training should be provided for these students from the home front.

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