

Attitude of Colleges of Education Students Towards Sex Education in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study assessed the attitude of Colleges of Education students toward sex education in Southwest Nigeria, focusing on the influence of gender, religious beliefs, parental education, and school location on their perceptions. A descriptive survey design was used to collect data from students in selected colleges of education. The study's population included 34,274 students across 12 Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. A sample of 900 students was selected using a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, three states were randomly chosen. In the second stage, one Federal and one State College were selected from each state using stratified random sampling. Finally, 75 students from each college were purposively selected. Data was gathered using a self-developed instrument, the "Students Attitude Towards Sex Education Questionnaire" (SATSEKQ), designed to assess students' attitudes. The instrument was validated by subject experts, and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The SATSEKQ was administered to the selected students through face-to-face distribution during scheduled lecture hours, with respondents assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Descriptive statistics, including percentage and mean, were used to answer the research questions. Path analysis tested the research hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicated that College of Education students generally hold positive attitudes toward sex education. However, religious beliefs and gender differences significantly shaped their attitudes. Students from religiously conservative backgrounds held more restrictive views, while female students demonstrated greater engagement with sex education than their male counterparts. Parental education and school location were found to have minimal influence on students' attitudes. Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools develop sex education programs that respect religious beliefs while promoting comprehensive and accurate information. Teachers should tailor their methods to address gender differences, and the government should offer professional development on sensitive topics for educators.*

Keywords: attitude, college, parent, gender, sex education, students, school location

INTRODUCTION

Sex education is an essential process of a person's learning that helps him or her make responsible

decisions regarding sexual relationships, protect against STIs, and key in matters of relationships and consent, and reproductive health. In many global education systems, though, the process of sex education is guided by such factors as culture, religion, and society hence affecting students' perception of sex education (Mukonka, et al., 2023). Sex education is a sensitive issue in Nigeria, just like in other parts of the world, with many divided on whether it is necessary and how it should be delivered. It is in this context that the students of the College of Education stand out, as they are the would- be teachers. Their attitude towards sex education essentially makes a difference, as they could become the next generation of teachers that will be teaching their students about sexual health. However, it is important to bear in mind that students hold divergent attitudes toward the issue of receiving sex education, which again is shaped by their gender, parental education level, religious beliefs, and geographic location (Dong, et al., 2022; Yeo & Lee., 2020).

Parents' education level and student's perception about sex education have been subjects of concern for quite some time now. From the mentioned studies in the case, parents with higher education are even in a better position to make it easy to discuss and develop a better attitude towards sex education (Zhang, & Yuan, 2023). However, students from the family with lower education, the students will not get much support or encourage to discuss this top with others thus they will establish more conservative or cautious perceptions regarding sex education.

Religion, the last identified factor, also plays part on how students' perceive on matters of sexuality and the like. This is particularly especially where religious dogma on sexuality is seen to contrast the components of sex education and this may be rejected or even ignored by the religious groups in question (Westwood, 2022). Implication for students' attitude has for perception of the usefulness of sex education is also an issue.

Another variable that poses a real difference in attitude toward sex education is Gender. Source suggest that boys and girls' student's perception concerning Sexual Health Education might be different due to various reasons caused by gender stereotyping and roles (Dong, et al., 2022). For example, females may show higher interest on issues concerning reproductive health than do males. These gendered perspectives can be of as a significant factor in analysing the manner in which student absorbs sex education.

This research work reveals that geographical location is an important determinant of the perception people have towards sex education. First, the availability of the sex education programmes differs between rural and urban communities. Students in urban schools are more likely to have better exposure to classroom-based sex education than the rural students and therefore, practice, knowledge and attitude differ across region type (Jones, et al., 2014). Collecting these kinds of geographical differences it is possible to extend the understanding of how students' geographical location influences the perception of sex education. Therefore, this study will examine the attitude of colleges of education students towards sex education in southwest Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Sex education is vital for providing knowledge on sexual health, relationships, and responsible decision-making. However, attitudes toward it varies widely due to sociocultural, religious, and demographic influences, especially in Colleges of Education, where future educators' views shape their teaching approaches. In Nigeria, cultural and religious sensitivities often result in mixed perceptions of sex education. While some argue it promotes informed decisions and reduces risks like unintended pregnancies and STIs, others see it as conflicting with traditional values, raising concerns about educators' preparedness. Parental education significantly impacts openness to sex education, with educated parents fostering positive attitudes, though this is underexplored in Nigeria. Religion also influences perceptions, with conservative backgrounds often resisting sex education. Gender norms further shape views, affecting content and methods deemed suitable for teaching. Geographical location plays a role, as urban students often have better access to sex education than rural ones, who face resource and cultural barriers. This study examines how parental education, religion, gender, and location collectively influence College of Education students' attitudes toward sex education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine students' attitude toward sex education among college of education students;
2. Investigate the relationship between parents' education and students' attitude towards sex education.
3. Determine the relationship between students' religion and students' attitude towards sex education.
4. Investigate the relationship of between students' gender and their attitude towards sex education.
5. examine the relationship of students' location with their attitude towards sex education.

Research Question

1. What are the attitudes of College of Education students toward sex education?

Research Hypotheses

1. Parents' educations will not significantly predict students' attitude towards sex education.
2. Parents' educations will not significantly predict students' attitude towards sex education.
3. Students' gender will not significantly predict students' attitude towards sex education.
4. Students' location will not significantly students' attitude towards sex education.
5. Students Attitude towards sex education will not be most significantly predicted by parents' education, students' religion, students' gender and students' location.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The target population consisted of 34,274 students from 12 colleges, including four Federal and eight State Colleges. A sample of 900 students

was selected through multistage sampling. In the first stage, three states were chosen using simple random sampling. The second stage employed stratified random sampling to select one Federal and one State College per state. Finally, 75 students from each college were selected using purposive sampling. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire tagged "Students Attitude Towards Sex Education Questionnaire" (SATSEKQ), which was validated by experts and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was answered using percentage and mean while the research hypotheses were tested using path analysis.

All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of College of Education students toward sex education?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of respondents on the attitude of Colleges of Education students' towards sex education

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	I like discussion on sex education.	413 (49%)	304 (36.1%)	79 (9.4%)	47 (5.6%)	3.28	Agreed
2.	I always open up on sex related issues with my confidant.	323 (38.3%)	170 (20.2%)	184 (21.8%)	166 (19.7%)	2.77	Agreed
3.	I feel I am mature enough to handle sex related issues.	383 (45.4%)	335 (39.7%)	62 (7.4%)	63 (7.5%)	3.23	Agreed
4.	I love to listen to an expert on sex education.	384 (45.6%)	356 (42.2%)	67 (7.9%)	36 (4.3%)	3.29	Agreed
5.	I am comfortable to discuss sex issues at all times.	410 (48.6%)	32 (0.38%)	80 (9.5%)	33 (3.9%)	3.31	Agreed
6.	I am free to discuss with my parents on sex issues.	378 (44.8%)	328 (38.9%)	77 (9.1%)	60 (7.1%)	3.21	Agreed
7.	My religion prohibit discussing sex issues with my parents.	132 (15.7%)	168 (19.9%)	294 (34.9%)	249 (34.9%)	2.21	Disagreed

8.	My parents are too educative to discuss sex issues with.	109 (12.3%)	173 (20.5%)	315 (37.4%)	246 (29.2%)	2.17	Disagreed
9.	My parents' culture forbid sex education nor open discussion on sex.	146 (17.6%)	176 (20.9%)	296 (35.1%)	223 (26.5%)	2.29	Disagreed
10.	I prefer learning sex education on the social media.	261 (31%)	439 (52.1%)	71 (8.4%)	72 (8.4%)	3.05	Agreed
11.	I freely discuss sex issues with my friends.	308 (36.5%)	406 (48.2%)	74 (8.8%)	55 (6.5%)	3.14	Agreed
12.	I feel that teaching of sex education should be a societal concern.	334 (39.6%)	367 (43.5%)	63 (7.5%)	79 (9.4%)	3.13	Agreed
13.	There is no need for sex education among tertiary education students.	87 (10.3%)	72 (8.5%)	428 (50.8%)	256 (30.4%)	1.98	Disagreed
14.	I feel indisposed whenever I hear anything about sex.	147 (17.4%)	141 (16.7%)	377 (44.7%)	178 (21.1%)	2.30	Disagreed

Mean Cut Off = 2.50

Table 1 reveals that Colleges of Education students generally hold positive attitudes toward sex education. Items such as enjoying discussions on sex education (Mean = 3.28), being comfortable discussing sex issues (Mean = 3.31), and valuing expert input (Mean = 3.29) received agreement from most respondents. Students also indicated a preference for learning about sex education through social media (Mean = 3.05) and felt it should be a societal concern (Mean = 3.13). However, cultural and religious constraints were evident, as items suggesting restrictions on discussing sex education with parents or due to cultural norms were disagreed upon (e.g., Mean = 2.21 for religious prohibition). Similarly, respondents rejected the notion that sex education is unnecessary (Mean = 1.98).

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Parents' educations will not significantly predict students' attitude towards sex education.

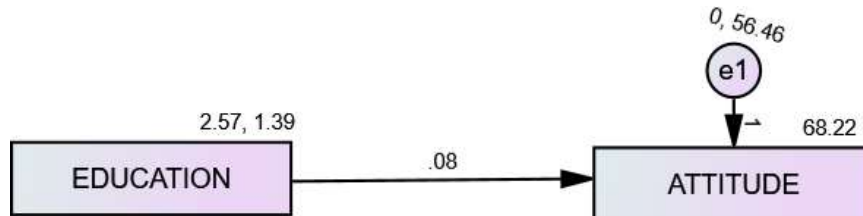


Figure 1: Path Analysis of the prediction of students' attitude towards sex education by parents' education

Table 2: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ATTITUDE	<---	EDUCATION	.083	.213	.389	.698

The analysis for Hypothesis 1 indicates that parents' education does not significantly predict students' attitudes toward sex education. The regression weight for parents' education predicting attitude is 0.083, with a standard error (S.E.) of 0.213 and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 0.389, yielding a p-value of 0.698. Since the p-value is above the 0.05 threshold, the relationship is not statistically significant. This suggests that the level of parental education has no meaningful influence on shaping students' attitudes toward sex education. Figure 1, which presents the path analysis, visually confirms the absence of a significant effect. These findings imply that other factors, beyond parental education, may have a stronger impact on students' perceptions of sex education.

Hypothesis 2: Students' religion will not significantly students' attitude towards sex education.

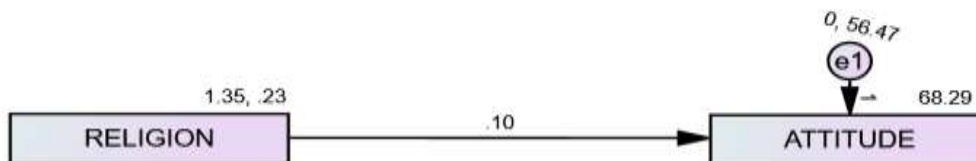


Figure 2: Path Analysis of the prediction of students' attitude towards sex education by students' religion

Table 3: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ATTITUDE	<---	RELIGION	.104	.524	.199	.012

The results for Hypothesis 2 reveal that students' religion significantly predicts their attitude toward sex education. The regression weight for religion predicting attitude is 0.104, with a standard error (S.E.) of 0.524 and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 0.199, yielding a p-value of 0.012. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that students' religious affiliation or beliefs have a meaningful influence on their attitudes toward sex education. Figure 2, which presents the path analysis, visually highlights this significant relationship. The findings suggest that religion is a key socio-cultural factor shaping students' perspectives on sex education.

Hypothesis 3: Students' gender will not significantly predict students' attitude towards sex education.

**Figure 3: Path Analysis of the prediction of students' attitude towards sex education by students' gender****Table 4: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ATTITUDE	<---	GENDER	-.123	.527	-.234	.021

The results for Hypothesis 3 demonstrate that students' gender significantly predicts their attitude toward sex education. The regression weight for gender predicting attitude is -0.123, with a standard error (S.E.) of 0.527 and a critical ratio (C.R.) of -0.234, resulting in a p-value of 0.021. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold, the relationship is statistically significant. This suggests that gender differences play an important role in shaping students' attitudes toward sex education. Figure 3, which depicts the path analysis, illustrates this relationship, with the negative estimate indicating that the direction of influence differs between genders. These findings emphasize the need to consider gender-specific approaches when designing and implementing sex education programs to address diverse perspectives effectively.

Hypothesis 4: Students' location will not significantly students' attitude towards sex education.

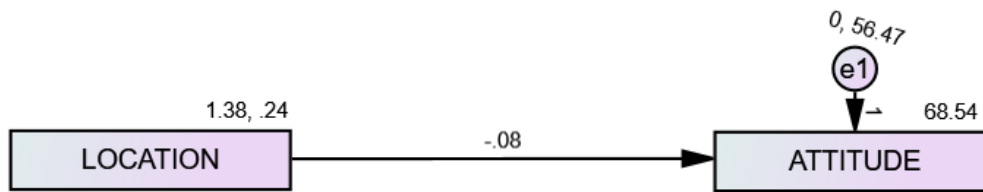


Figure 4: Path Analysis of the prediction of students' attitude towards sex education by school location

Table 5: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ATTITUDE	<---	LOCATION	-.081	.515	-.156	.876

The results for Hypothesis 4 indicate that students' location does not significantly predict their attitude toward sex education. The regression weight for location predicting attitude is -0.081 , with a standard error (S.E.) of 0.515 and a critical ratio (C.R.) of -0.156 , yielding a p-value of 0.876 . Since the p-value is well above the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance, the null hypothesis is retained. This implies that students' school location (whether rural or urban) does not have a meaningful impact on their attitudes toward sex education. Figure 4, which depicts the path analysis, confirms the absence of a significant relationship. These findings suggest that other factors, such as cultural, religious, or family influences, may play a more central role in shaping students' attitudes, rather than the geographical context of their schooling.

Hypothesis 5: Students Attitude towards sex education will not be most significantly predicted by parents' education, students' religion, students' gender and students' location.

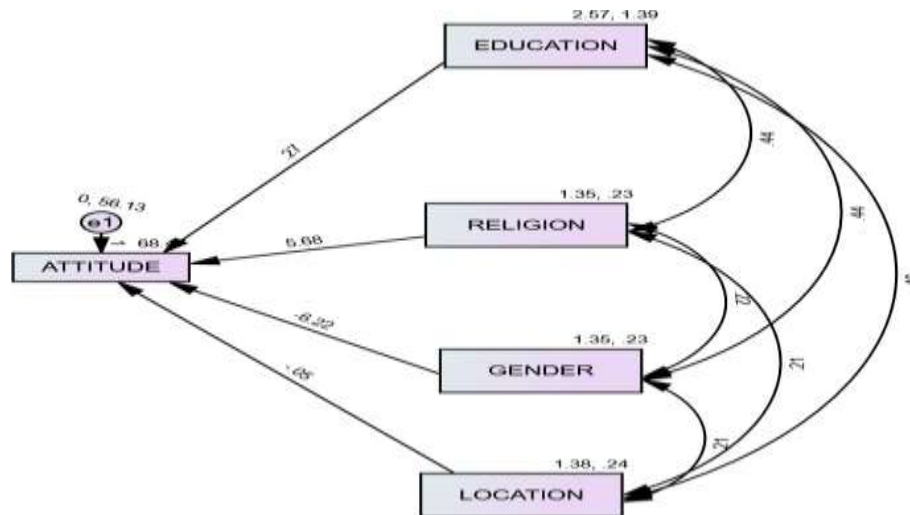


Figure 5: Path Analysis for the prediction of students' attitude by parents' education, students' religion, students' gender and school location.

Table 5: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-label
ATTITUDE	<---	PARENT'S EDUCATION	0.274	0.369	0.741	0.459
ATTITUDE	<---	STUDENTS' RELIGION	5.683	2.681	2.119	0.034
ATTITUDE	<---	STUDENTS' GENDER	-6.223	2.986	-2.084	0.037
ATTITUDE	<---	SCHOOL LOCATION	-0.046	1.379	-0.034	0.973

The results for Hypothesis 5 show that students' attitudes toward sex education are influenced by some predictors while others have no significant impact. Specifically, students' religion ($p = 0.034$) and students' gender ($p = 0.037$) significantly predict attitudes, as their p-values are below the 0.05 threshold. Religion exhibits a strong positive influence with a regression weight of 5.683, while gender has a negative effect with a weight of -6.223, suggesting differing attitudes between genders. On the other hand, parents' education ($p = 0.459$) and school location ($p = 0.973$) do not significantly predict attitudes, indicating no meaningful relationship with these variables. Figure 5, the path analysis, visually demonstrates these dynamics, emphasizing significant and non-significant paths. Overall, the findings suggest that religion and gender play critical roles in shaping students' perspectives on sex education, while parental education and school location are not influential factors.

FINDINGS

1. Colleges of Education students generally hold positive attitudes toward sex education.
2. Parental education has no meaningful influence on shaping students' attitudes toward sex education.
3. Students' religious affiliation or beliefs have a meaningful influence on their attitudes toward sex education.
4. Gender differences play an important role in shaping students' attitudes toward sex education.
5. Students' school location (whether rural or urban) does not have a meaningful impact on their attitudes toward sex education.
6. Religion and gender play critical roles in shaping students' perspectives on sex education, while parental education and school location are not influential factors in this context.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study reveals that colleges of Education students generally hold positive attitudes toward sex education. The finding aligns with contemporary literature emphasizing the increasing acceptance of sex education among young adults in educational institutions. For instance, Bamire, (2021) reported that students in teacher training institutions view sex education as a crucial tool for promoting informed decision-making, reducing risky sexual behaviors, and fostering healthy relationships. Similarly, Rivenes Lafontan et al., (2024) found that tertiary students advocate for comprehensive sex education, recognizing its role in addressing misconceptions and equipping individuals with critical life skills. This positive disposition is often linked to greater exposure to health education curricula and the progressive societal shift toward open discussions about sexual health. These findings highlight the importance of integrating sex education into teacher training programs, as future educators' attitudes can influence the effective implementation of such curricula at lower educational levels.

The finding of the study reveals that parental education has no meaningful influence on shaping students' attitudes toward sex education. The finding is consistent with recent studies highlighting the diminishing role of parental education in shaping adolescent perspectives on sensitive topics. For example, Sabejeje, & Bello, (2021) found that while parents' education levels often impact general academic performance, their influence on attitudes toward sex education is limited, as students' views are more strongly shaped by peers, media exposure, and school-based programs. Similarly, Eisenberg, et al. (2022) noted that societal shifts and the availability of comprehensive sex education in schools have reduced reliance on parental input for information about sexual health. This underscores the growing importance of formal educational settings in addressing sex education, as they provide structured and evidence-based knowledge that transcends familial or educational background disparities.

The finding found that students' religious affiliation or beliefs have a meaningful influence on their attitudes toward sex education. The finding is supported by recent literature emphasizing the role of religious beliefs in shaping views on sensitive topics. According to Mukoro (2017), religious teachings often frame discussions about sexuality, influencing whether students perceive sex education as appropriate or conflicting with their values. Similarly Miller, (2024) observed that students from conservative religious backgrounds are more likely to hold restrictive or skeptical attitudes toward sex education, while those from more progressive religious groups exhibit a more open and positive disposition. These findings highlight the intersection between religion and education, suggesting that culturally sensitive approaches are essential when designing and delivering sex education curricula to address diverse perspectives effectively.

The study finding reveals that gender differences play an important role in shaping students' attitudes toward sex education. The finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of gender in perceptions of sexuality and health education. For instance, Akpa, (2024) found that female students tend to have more positive attitudes toward sex education due to a heightened awareness of its relevance to their health and well-being. Conversely, male students are often less engaged, sometimes perceiving sex education as less critical to their personal experiences (Bloom, et al 2022). These differences may stem from societal norms and expectations that influence how genders perceive discussions around sexuality. The findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive approaches in sex education programs, ensuring that content and delivery methods address the unique needs and concerns of both male and female students to foster more balanced and inclusive attitudes.

The finding of the study reveals that students' school location (whether rural or urban) does not have a meaningful impact on their attitudes toward sex education. The study aligns with recent research suggesting that access to information and exposure to global perspectives are bridging the gap between rural and urban attitudes. For example, Olanrewaju, et al., (2021) reported that the widespread use of digital technology and social media has enabled students in rural areas to access similar information on sexual health as their urban counterparts. Additionally, Effiom, et al., (2022) found that standardized curricula in schools across different locations contribute to consistent attitudes toward sex education. These findings indicate that the influence of location is diminishing due to increased access to education and information, emphasizing the importance of equitable educational resources rather than geographic considerations in shaping students' views on sex education.

The study reveals that religion and gender play critical roles in shaping students' perspectives on sex education, while parental education and school location are not influential factors in this

context. The study's finding that religion and gender significantly shape students' perspectives on sex education, while parental education and school location are not influential, aligns with broader research findings on cultural and social determinants of attitudes toward sexual health. Religion often dictates moral frameworks and cultural norms, as noted by Rossouw (2024), who found that religious beliefs strongly influence students' openness to sex education, with more conservative faiths promoting restrictive views. Similarly, gender differences reflect societal expectations, with studies by Amodu, et al., (2024) indicating that female students often demonstrate greater receptiveness to sex education due to heightened health awareness, whereas male students may be less engaged. Conversely, the limited influence of parental education and school location highlights the growing role of standardized curricula and widespread access to digital resources, which diminish the impact of family background and geography on students' attitudes. These findings underscore the need for tailored approaches in sex education that consider the nuanced effects of religion and gender while leveraging universal education tools to promote inclusivity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study shows that students' attitudes toward sex education are significantly influenced by religion and gender, reflecting the deep cultural and social frameworks that shape their perspectives. Conversely, parental education and school location were found to have minimal impact, suggesting that access to standardized education and digital resources is bridging traditional gaps in information dissemination. These findings underscore the importance of designing culturally sensitive and gender-responsive sex education programs that address diverse beliefs and experiences while ensuring equal access to accurate sexual health information for all students.

Recommendations

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

1. School authorities should develop and implement sex education programs that are respectful of diverse religious beliefs while promoting accurate and comprehensive information.
2. Teachers should tailor teaching methods and materials to address gender-specific concerns, ensuring inclusivity and engagement for both male and female students.
3. The government should provide educators with professional development opportunities to effectively address sensitive topics and manage diverse student attitudes.
4. Parents should be encouraged to participate in discussions about sex education to bridge gaps between home and school learning.
5. School management should leverage digital tools and platforms to provide equitable access to sex education resources, particularly in rural areas.
6. The school management and teachers should advocate for policies that standardize sex education across regions to minimize disparities caused by location or socio-economic factors.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to safeguard participants' privacy. The study respected cultural and religious sensitivities, particularly given the sensitive nature of the topic, and ensured that participation was voluntary and free from coercion.

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