

GENDER ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADOLESCENT'S PREMARITAL SEX IN SENIOR AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE NEW JUABEN MUNICIPALITY IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to assess adolescent's attitudes towards premarital sex in Senior and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality in Ghana. A descriptive survey design was chosen for the study. The population of the study consisted of five thousand, one hundred forty-one (5,141) in-school adolescents in Junior and Senior High Schools in New Juaben Municipality. Convenient and random sampling techniques were used to select the study area, schools and respondents for the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the New Juaben Municipality. A random sampling method was used to select 250 respondents (students) from two Junior High Schools and two Senior High Schools in New Juaben Municipality. The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The data collected were statistically analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both and descriptive statistics and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test were used in the data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution in tabular form in graphical forms, and measures of central tendencies were used to analyse the data. The study concluded that the positive sexual behaviours of adolescents in Junior and Senior High Schools are evident in their attitude towards premarital sex. Adolescents in Senior High and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality exhibit a positive attitude towards premarital sex as the majority of them do not see that abstaining from sex would make them sick or look odd in society, neither would it give them problems during intercourse when they finally marry.

Keywords: Adolescent's, Attitudes, Premarital sex, Schools, New Juaben Municipality, Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education or sex and relationships education is sometimes referred to as acquisition of information and forming attitudes and beliefs identity, relationships and intimacy (Eggleston, Jackson, & Hardee, 1996). In many African Countries existence of AIDS has made the topic of sex education urgent (Wikipedia, n.d.). Fonner, Armstrong, Kennedy, O'Reilly and Sweat, (2014) maintains that if sex education is to be effective, it needs to include opportunities for young people to develop general life skills such as being able to communicate, listen, negotiate, ask for and identify sources of help and advice. These are useful life skills that can be applied in sexual relationships. In this vein, the school becomes a central point for exposing young people to a wide range of attitudes and beliefs in relation to sex and sexuality (Coetzee, 2015).

In some western societies, tradition holds that numerous and varied changes take place in the individual during adolescence and that the period is one of the extensive upheavals during which the individual detaches oneself from the ways of childhood and becomes radically transformed into adulthood. Adolescence have therefore been characterized as quarrelsome, rebellious, and terrible (Hall, Jones, Witkemper, Collins, & Rodgers, 2019). They are also adventurous. Many parents and educators dread this "turbulent period" when the child becomes unbalanced, unpredictable and unstable. It is this stressful period in which the adolescent tries to adjust to his or her varied physical, emotional and psychological changes. The adolescent is curious to ask many questions, but the challenge is whom to address these questions because talking about sex is taboo in Indian society (Yakubu et al., 2019). Even those who try to seek guidance from their parents are not satisfied because some try to evade discussion or do not answer it satisfactorily. Many authorities in the academic world have taken a keen interest in the period of the child's development. As a consequence, they have described adolescence in various ways. Yohn and Blendy (2017) argue that adolescence is a period of relative unpredictability. This

contention to some extent, holds true because of the physical, moral and emotional transformation that the adolescents are going through. These changes bring in its trail behaviour pattern that can make and unmake a young person and if care is not taking will shape changes in their sexual behaviours.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Attitudes are defined as positive or negative evaluations of objects of thought. Attitudes typically have three components. The cognitive component is made up of the thoughts and beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude. The affective component consists of the emotional feelings stimulated by the object of the attitude. The behavioural component consists of predispositions to act in certain ways toward an attitude object. Several psychological factors are involved in the formation of attitude and attitudinal change. Among them are direct instruction, operant conditioning and social (observational) learning.

Direct instruction involves being told what attitudes to have by parents, schools, community organizations, religious doctrine and friends. Operant Conditioning is a simple form of learning. It is based on the "Law of Effect" and involves voluntary responses. Behaviours (including verbal behaviours and maybe even thoughts) tend to be repeated if they are reinforced (that is, followed by a positive experience). Conversely, behaviours tend to be stopped when they are punished (that is, followed by an unpleasant experience). Thus, if one expresses or acts out an attitude toward some group, and this is reinforced by one's peers, the attitude is strengthened and is likely to be expressed again. The reinforcement can be as subtle as a smile or as obvious as a raise in salary. Operant conditioning is especially involved with the behavioural component of attitudes. Social (observational) learning is based on modeling. We observe others if they are getting reinforced for certain behaviours or the expression of certain attitudes; this serves as vicarious reinforcement and makes it more likely that we, too, will behave in this manner or express this attitude. Classical

conditioning can also occur vicariously through observation of others (Iyera & Aggleton, 2015).

Sulak, Herbelin, Fix and Kuehl (2006) examined changes in knowledge and attitudes before and after a sex education programme that was rolled out by an academic medical center. Surveys were completed by 26,125 students before and 24,550 students after a sex education curriculum. Knowledge improved for all grades, based on paired comparisons for each group. However, most students chose the option to wait until after high school graduation to have sex, significantly more students held this opinion after the programme. Variables that were associated with the attitude of delaying sex included making a pledge, original parents still married, attending weekly religious/church services, and watching 0 to 2 hours of television on school nights.

Agyemang (2009) examined the effects of knowledge of HIV/AIDS and attitudes on the sexual behaviour of unmarried people aged 15-24 years in the Ejura-Sekyedumase District. The quantitative sample size was made of 450 unmarried people aged 15-24 years. And qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that 47.3% of the respondents had had sex. The mean and the median ages at first sexual intercourse were 17.5 years and 18 years, respectively. Those in urban areas had significantly higher knowledge of HIV/AIDS than those in rural areas. A high self-perceived risk of getting HIV/AIDS was associated with less premarital sex and positive attitudes towards premarital sex resulted in less sexual activity. Sex education had a positive effect on knowledge and several attitude variables. Engaging in sex was lower among respondents who perceived a higher self-efficacy to abstain from premarital sex and among those who believed they could refuse sex for money. Condom use at last sexual intercourse was also higher among respondents who perceived a higher self-efficacy to insist on condom use and among those who believed that condoms are effective in preventing HIV/AIDS (Agyemang, 2009).

A study was undertaken by Raja (2005) to examine the sexual knowledge and attitude among adolescents in selected composite pre-university colleges in Bangalore. The sample size was 100 students from two institutions. The study found out that 66% of the respondents had excellent sexual knowledge and 58% of them had favourable sexual attitudes. There was a positive correlation between knowledge and attitude. However, no association was found between attitude and demography as well as between knowledge and demography. Esna-Ashari (2004) did a study to determine some factors affecting attitudes towards premarital sex among youth in Shiraz city, Iran. The sample size was 384 never married persons between the ages of 18-29. The sample had 193 males and 191 females. Of the respondents, 40.3% have had 3 or more boys/girlfriends and 35.1% of them have had at most 2 boys/girlfriends. However, 50% of them have never hugged, touched or kissed their partners. Forty-seven percent of the male respondents seldom have had outcourse sex (non-penetrative) and 5.3% of females seldom have outcourse. Usually, 8.8% of males and 0.7% of females have outcourse. However, 39.5% of males and 4.5% of females seldom have penetrative sex. Also, 7.9% of the male respondents and 0% of females usually have sex.

Coetzee (2015) did a study to determine the level of knowledge that adolescents have of HIV and AIDS and whether life skills can change behaviour. Respondents were 2076 pupils from 31 primary and senior high schools. There was no change in the sexual behaviour of the adolescents after the life skills programme. Also, their sexual knowledge was inadequate. Rondini and Krugu (2009) did a study on the secondary school student population of the Bolgatanga community in Northern Ghana to learn about the knowledge, attitude and practices of reproductive health of this adolescent student population. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected on adolescence perception, STIs and HIV/AIDS, family planning, male-female relationship, and vulnerability to sexual violence. Findings revealed a low familiarity of the student population with family

planning methods and HIV/AIDS transmission, which, combined with minimal.

Statement of the problem

Reiss (2018) one of the key issues during the turbulent period in the life of young people is knowledge of sex education and how it impinges on the life of young people. According to Reiss (2018), sex education seeks both to reduce the risk of potentially negative outcomes from sexual behaviour like unwanted pregnancies and infections with sexually transmitted diseases and to enhance the quality of relationships. School-based sex education focuses on reducing specific risky behaviours and uses a variety of approaches to teaching and learning that engage young people and help them to personalize the information. The issue of concern here is that the relevance of sex education as a mechanism to address certain sex practices among adolescents in New Juaben is beyond the doubt of stakeholders in education. The misconceptions adolescent's in the New Juaben municipality and its enclave have about sexual activities prompted the researchers to assess adolescent's attitudes toward premarital sex in Senior and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality in Ghana.

Significance of the study

It is hoped that this study will throw more light on adolescent sex education. Educators and parents would get a better perspective of sex education and intensify it by using the knowledge acquired as a tool to reshape their attitudes. It is hoped that the findings will be educative to adolescents in forming positive attitudes toward premarital sex as well as their sexual behaviour. It will be a guide to policymakers and especially curriculum developers on what to include in educational policies and the school's curriculum.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to examine the adolescent's attitudes toward premarital sex in Senior and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality in Ghana.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research sought to answer the research question - What attitudes do adolescents in Senior and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality exhibit towards premarital sex?

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was chosen for the study. The population of the study consisted of Five Thousand, One Hundred and Forty-One (5,141) in-school adolescents in Junior and Senior High Schools in New Juaben Municipality. Convenient and random sampling techniques were used to select the study area, schools and respondents for the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the New Juaben Municipality. A random sampling method was used to select 250 respondents (students) from two Junior High Schools and two Senior High Schools in New Juaben Municipality. The Junior High Schools are SDA Demonstration Junior High School and Roman Catholic Junior High School. The Senior High Schools are Oyoko Methodist Senior High School and Ghana Senior High School. The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The data collected were statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both and descriptive statistics and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test were used in the data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution in tabular form in graphical forms and measures of central tendencies were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section show results and discussion on attitudes of adolescents toward premarital sex. In order to achieve this, a five-point Likert Scale was used to allow the adolescent to

indicate how much they agree or disagree on each of six statements constructed about premarital sex. The five-point Likert Scale used is: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Don't Know; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree. The distribution of responses indicating how much adolescents agree or disagree with each of the statements presented and discussed.

Abstinence from sex will make one sick or look odd in a society

Figure 1 below shows the distribution of adolescents across each scale item (how much they agree or disagree). 77.6% of adolescents strongly disagree that abstinence from premarital sex will make one sick or look odd in society, whilst just 2.0% of them strongly agree or think that abstaining from premarital

sex will make one sick or look odd. Furthermore, 10.8% disagree whilst 7.2% agree, 2.4% of an adolescent do not know whether or not abstaining from premarital sex will make one look odd in society or sick. By comparison, 88.4% of the adolescent at least disagree that abstaining from sex will make one sick or look odd, as against 11.6% who at least agree. The result shows that adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality may have a positive attitude towards abstaining from premarital sex. This was evident in figure 1 that 88.4 % of the adolescent's maintained their positions strongly disagree and disagree respectively that, once abstinence from sex will not have any psychological and emotional stress on their daily social life.

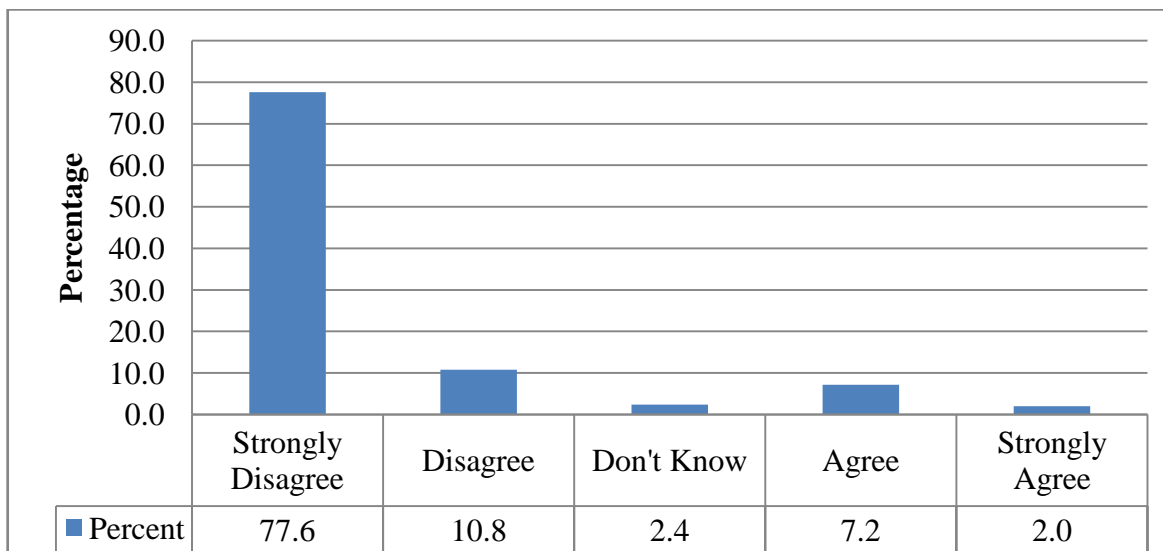


Fig. 1: Abstinence from sex will make one sick or look odd

Maintaining virginity until marriage will course problems in marriage during intercourse

From figure 2 below, and by contrast, 72.6% of respondents (adolescents) at least disagree that maintaining one's virginity until marriage will course sexual intercourse problems and 20.5% at least agree. Thus more than 3 in every 4 respondents at least disagree that maintaining virginity until marriage will

make sexual intercourse in marriage a problem. And this means that adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality are very positive about keeping their virginity before the marriage. As a matter of fact, Awusabo-Asare, Abane and Kumi-Kyerem (2004) reported in their study that 9 in 10 think both young women and young men should remain virgins until marriage.

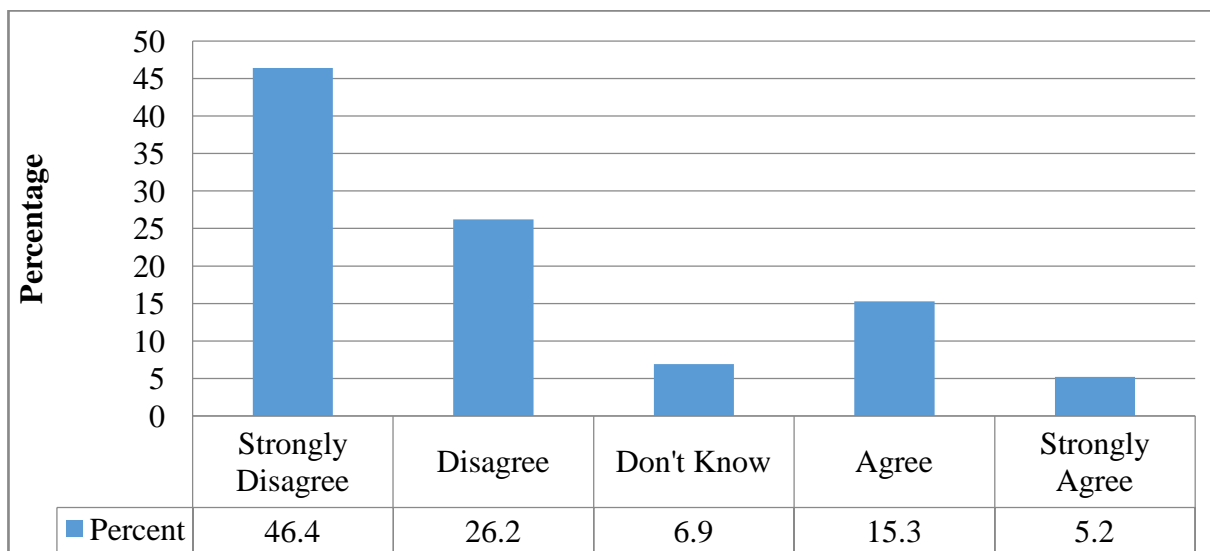


Fig. 2: Maintaining virginity until marriage will course sexual intercourse problems in marriage

Use of condom suggests sexual promiscuity or mistrust of sexual partner

It is clear from figure 3 below that just a little over half of the respondents (adolescents) feel that abstaining from using a condom does not suggest sexual promiscuity or mistrust of sexual partner; quite a significant number think otherwise.

Thus 54.3% of adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality at least disagree that the use of condom will suggest sexual promiscuity or mistrust of one's sexual partner whilst 22.5% at least agree. About 23.3% indicate they do not know as to whether or not using a condom would suggest sexual promiscuity or mistrust of one's sexual partner.

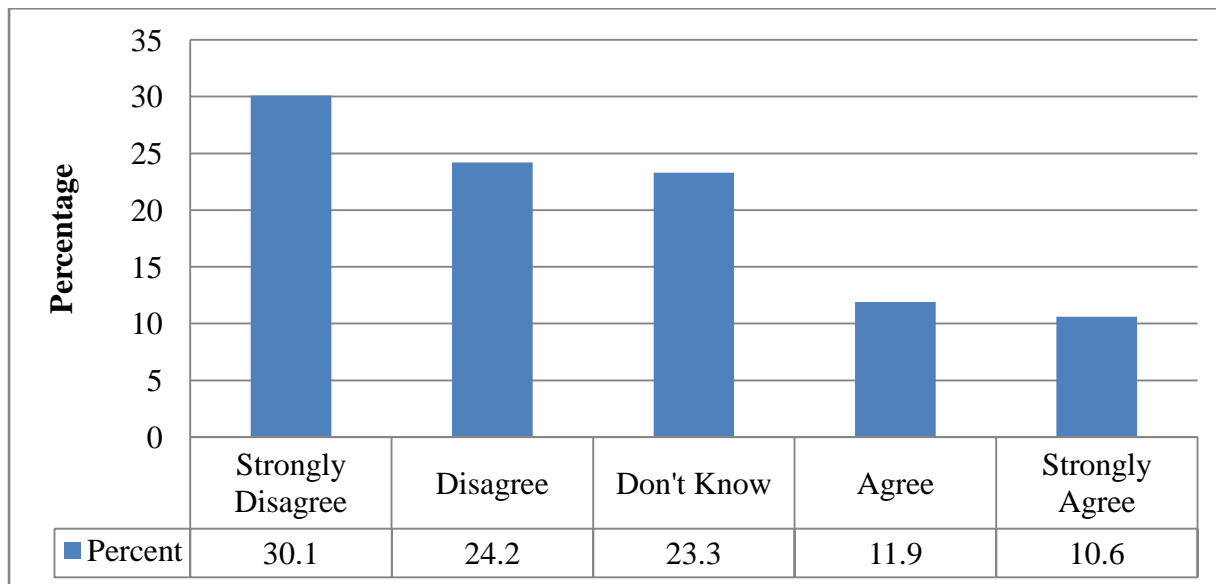


Fig. 3: Use of condom suggests sexual promiscuity or mistrust of sexual partner

I am confident I can abstain from sexual intercourse until marriage

The result in figure 4 below suggests that respondents (adolescents) in the New Juaben Municipality are very positive or confident about their tendency to abstain from premarital sex. From figure 4, only 9.4% of adolescents strongly disagree,

whilst 37.6% strongly agree. Also, just 11.4% disagree, whilst 30.2% agree. In contrast, there are 67.8% of the adolescent who at least agrees against just 20.8 that at least disagree. The findings posit that abstinence from sex is a key in the lifelong of the adolescent's livelihood that needs to be upheld by all stakeholders in education with continuous guidance and counseling.

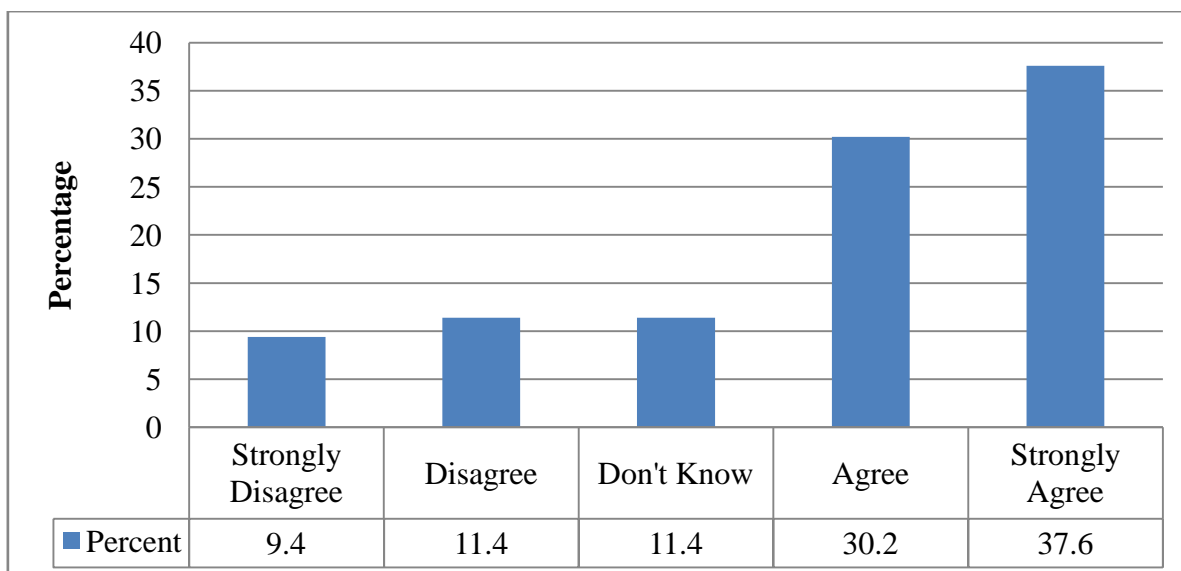


Fig. 4: I am confident I can abstain from sexual intercourse until marriage

I am confident I can refuse to have sex with someone if I don't want to

The result here is nearly similar to the explanation under figure 4, since they share nearly the same characteristics. Thus a significant number of adolescents in the municipality feel

confident they can insist on refusing to have sex with someone if they really do not want to. From figure 5 below, 16.2% of respondents at least disagree and whilst 69.7% at least agree. Quite a significant number (14.1%) of them could not state if they can confidently refuse to have sex if they do not want.

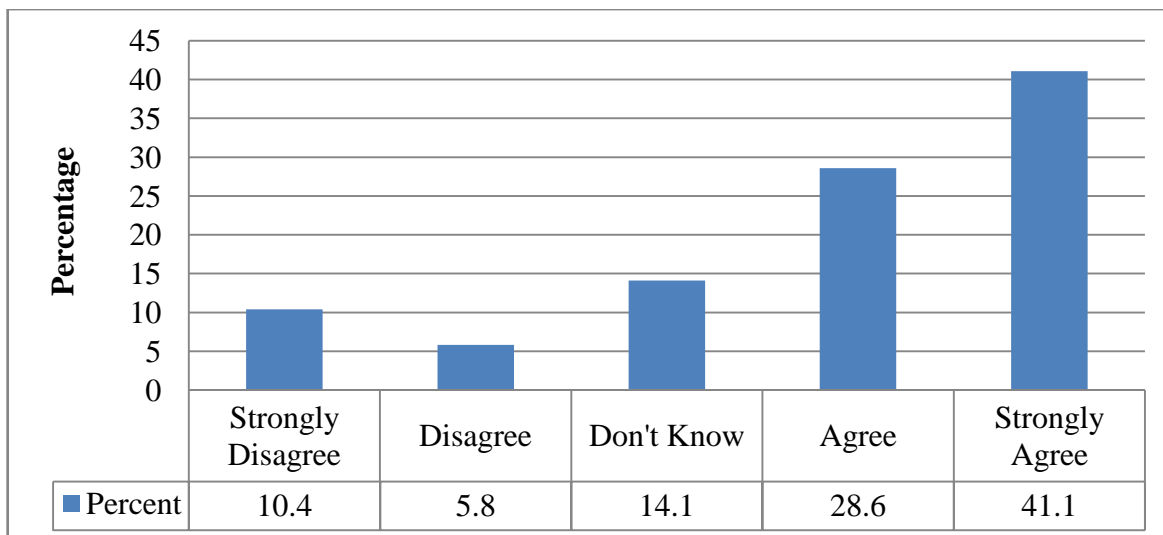


Fig. 5: I am confident I can refuse to have sex with someone if I do not want to

I am confident I can insist on using a condom if the partner does not want

As earlier discussed, underuse of condoms suggests sexual promiscuity or mistrust of sexual partner respondents seem to be not positive about the use of a condom. Though the majority, less than half of respondents, at least agree they can

confidently insist on the use of condoms during sexual intercourse if the partner does not want to. Thus 47.1% at least agree whilst 33.6% at least disagree. Quite a significant number or 19.3%, did not state whether or not they can refuse a partner if no condom is used.

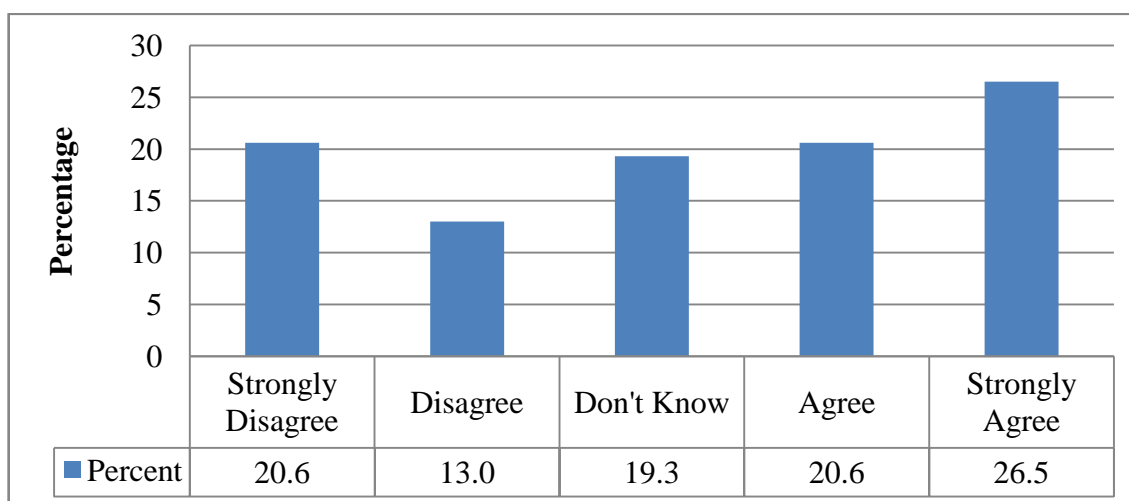


Fig. 6: I am confident I can insist on using a condom if partner does not want

Overall attitude towards premarital sex

To determine the overall attitude of adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality towards premarital sex. The first three statements of the six statements were used. The three statements used are:

1. Abstinence from sex will make one sick or look odd in society.
2. Maintaining virginity until marriage will cause problems in sexual intercourse during the marriage.
3. The use of condoms suggests sexual promiscuity or mistrust of sexual partners.

The ratings indicating how much respondents agreed or disagreed are combined to form a composite score for Attitude

towards Premarital Sex. The composite score is the overall rating how of agree or disagree a respondent would give for the three questions combined. Thus given the scale used, if respondents on the first statement Strongly Disagreed = 1, on the second statement also Strongly Disagreed = 1 and on the third also Strongly Disagreed = 1; the composite score would be 3, and the mean rating would be 1 (composite score/ Number of statements). In the same way, if a respondent gave a rating of Strongly Agree = 5 for all the statements, the composite score would be 15 and the mean rating would be 5.

Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics for the mean rating of the 250 respondents.

Table 1: Overall attitude towards premarital sex

Attitude	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Attitude towards premarital sex	235	1.00	5.00	2.0312	0.83374

Source: Field data

A total number of 235 out of the 250 respondents was entered for the analysis due to missing responses. From the table above, the minimum mean rating is 1 = Strongly Disagree, which means there was at least one respondent who Strongly Disagreed on all three statements. Also, the maximum mean rating is 5 = Strongly Agree, which also indicates there was at least one respondent who Strongly Agreed on all the three statements. The overall mean rating, as seen in table 1, is 2.0312, which is approximately 2 = Disagree on the Likert Scale used. Thus overall, respondents disagree on the three statements concerning premarital sex. This indicates that adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality have a very positive attitude towards premarital sex. In fact, these was the results that have been established when each of the statements was analysed individually. The positive attitude of adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality is reflective of their less tendency to engage in

sexual behaviour as 7 in 10 had never engaged in a sexual relationship. Agyemang (2009) did establish in his study that the positive attitude of adolescents in the Ejura-Sekyedumase district towards premarital sex resulted in less sexual activity.

Gender attitude towards premarital sex

This part of the section seeks to investigate whether or not male and female adolescents have the same level of sentiment (attitude) towards premarital sex. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to achieve this. The results are shown below, where table 2 gives the descriptive statistics on the mean ratings on attitude towards premarital sex for males and females and table 2 is the ANOVA table. From table 2, the mean rating for males is 02.2578 and that for females is 1.7601—all are about 2 = Disagree. However, the ANOVA table shows a significant difference in the level of sentiment toward premarital sex.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of gender attitude towards premarital sex

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	Minimum	Maximum
Male	128	2.2578	0.90029	0.07958	1.00	4.33
Female	107	1.7601	0.65364	0.06319	1.00	5.00
Total	235	2.0312	0.83374	0.05439	1.00	5.00

Source: Field data

Table 3: ANOVA table

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	P-value
Between groups	14.436	1	14.436	22.692	0.000
Within groups	148.224	233	636		
Total	162.660	234			

Source: Field data

There was a statistically significant difference between male adolescents and female adolescents as determined by the one-way ANOVA [$F(1,233) = 22.692, p < .05$]. The means and standard deviations are presented in table 3 above. It can be seen from table 3 that females disagreed on the three statements ($M = 1.7601$) more than did males ($M = 2.2578$). Thus female adolescents in the New Juaben Municipality have a better positive attitude toward premarital sex than male adolescents. This result is consistent with what was established earlier than male adolescents in the municipality are more likely to engage in a sexual relationship than do females.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the positive sexual behaviours of adolescents in Junior and Senior High Schools are evident in their attitude towards premarital sex. Adolescents in Senior High and Junior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality exhibit a positive attitude towards premarital sex as the majority of them do not see that abstaining from sex would make them sick or look odd in society, neither would it give them problems during intercourse when they finally marry.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Lovedale Adzo Tsotovor worked on the following areas: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Collection, Writing-original draft preparation. Gertrude Otubea Dadey: Writing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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