

**KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF LGBTQ+ PRACTICES AMONG
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UKWUANI LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF DELTA STATE**

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Abstract

The study looked at the knowledge and perception of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. Three (3) research questions and one hypothesis were asked and formulated respectively to guide the study. The population comprised of all the Three thousand and twenty-One (3,021) Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. A total of Three hundred and two (302) Respondents (162 males and 140 females) made up the Sample for the study. A self-structured questionnaire in line with the Four-Point Likert-Like Scale was the instrument used for data collection and it was validated by two experts in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. It's subsections were tested for both content and construct validity of all items using factor analysis method and the revealed content validity ranged between 93.05% and 98.56%. Through Cronbach Alpha, the reliability index of 0.94 for knowledge of, 0.90 for extent of awareness and 0.84 for level of acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices were gotten establishing the level of internal consistency of the instrument. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions, while linear regression was used in testing the hypothesis. The major finding of this study was that there is low level of knowledge, awareness of consequences and acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School Students. Therefore, the paper recommends among others that, there should be deliberate and vigorous efforts by school health educators about LGBTQ+ and their consequences.

Key Words: LGBTQ+, Lesbianism, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Consequences.

Introduction.

Sexuality is a critical aspect of human life, that if well shaped could guarantee better health for an individual and the community at large. Sexual desires make an individual attracted to another person(s) regardless of their race or gender. However, Rupa-Shree and Gayathri (2022), states that “from ancient to modern times, human society demands an individual to direct his or her passionate sexual attraction towards their opposite sex alone”. So, as the source added, the dominant heterosexuality ignores all streams associated with LGBTQ+, such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and queers.

LGBTQ+ is an initialism used to explain an individual's gender identity or sexual orientation. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male, female or someone outside of the gender binary. While sexual orientation is an individual's physical, emotional, and romantic attraction to another person, such as being straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Kelvin, 2022). It is worthy of note that LGBTQ+ covers all sexual orientations that are non-heterosexual or non-cisgender. So, gender identity or sexual orientation is not determined by one's sex at birth.

The term “Lesbian” describes a woman who is physically, emotionally or romantically attracted to other women, making her to develop strong affectional and erotic ties with those other women (SDSU, 2023; Kelvin, 2022; Olarewaju, 2023; Ugwoezuonu, Nwobodo & Ezema, 2022; Cherry, 2023).

As Rupa-Shree and Gayathri (2022) explained that, lesbianism and Sapphism are synonymous for a woman's homosexuality. However, gay describes an individual, either male or female that has significant physical, emotional or romantic attractions to persons of same gender or sex (SDSU, 2023, Kelvin, 2022; Cherry, 2023). So, males who are sexually attracted to males are more conspicuously referred to as gays, but lesbians can also be seen to belong to this group. Again, today, bisexual and pansexual people sometimes use gay to casually refer to themselves when they talk about their same gender attraction (Cherry, 2023).

There may be the sexual urge in certain individuals to be attracted to people within more than one sex, gender, or gender identity. They have the potential to be sexually attracted to all genders and this is known as bisexual. The recognition of every bisexual individuals is imperative as they have been times that people are identified as bi have been misunderstood as being gays (Cherry, 2023).

Transgender is an umbrella term for those whose gender expression or identity is not congruent with the sex at birth and or whose gender is not validated by the dominant culture (SDSU, 2023). The Q in the LGBTQ+ stands for queer or questioning, which is a term used to describe an individual that is exploring his/her sexual orientation or gender identity.

According to Cherry (2023), queer though an umbrella term for anyone who is non-cisgender or heterosexual, should be used for persons who may be unsure of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Though Nigeria is one of the countries with little acceptance of LGBTQ+, many scholars in western countries have addressed attitudes related to LGBTQ+ and policymakers have aimed at reducing discrimination and contributing to a generally positive social atmosphere with a consequent high level of acceptance (Denwigwe, Arop, Edward, Azubiko & Asuquo, 2022). Researchers have attributed LGBTQ+ attitudes and behaviors to a lot of factors ranging from self-concept, puberty, environment, peer influence, culture, family background, personal factors, religious background, sex to media influence. Self-concept, which is an individual's perception of himself, including his beliefs, attitudes and values is a key aspect of personality and is impactful on the mental and emotional well-being of an individual, as Olanrewaju (2023) presented out that it, has impact on the sexual orientation of an individual. Sexual behavior increases when an individual reaches puberty or what may be said to be adolescent stage and according to the University of Idaho Counselling and Testing Centre (n.d) quoted by Rupa-Shree & Gayathri (2022), homosexual orientation primarily gets initiated during the adolescent stage of life. The environment like the school can also promote LGBTQ+ sexual orientation and behaviors as well as peer influence. Nonetheless, in some cultures and societies, LGBTQ+ tendencies may not be accepted or understood, and individuals who experience them may face discrimination, stigma and prejudice and this can have a negative impact on their self-concept and overall wellbeing (Olanrewaju, 2023). The development of LGBTQ+ sexual orientations could also be traced to home factors, for instance, a poor parent-child relationship, broken homes or sex preference that make some children unsafe could resort to confiding in same-sex friends excessively to the extent of sexual experimentation especially at puberty. The practices of LGBTQ+ can also be attributed to personal factors such as hormone effects and genetics, neuroplasticity and psychosocial factors (Ugwoezuomu, Nwobodo & Ezema, 2022). It is believed that men who practice same-sex sexual behavior have abnormally low level of androgens (male sex hormones), while the levels are abnormally high in women who indulge in same-sex sexual behaviors. Another factor that could play a role in determining sexual orientation is religious background. The acceptance of LGBTQ+ behaviors are particularly widespread in nations where religion is less central in people's lives and these are also among the wealthy nations of the world while poorer nations with high levels of religiosity have only very little acceptance of homosexuality (Denwigwe, Arop, Edward, Azubiko & Asuquo, 2022). Sex of an individual is also a factor as women are more likely to become gays than men and media especially social media helps in fuelling the attitudes of LGBTQ+.

The practices of LGBTQ+ have a lot of consequences such as human being face risks in their sexual lives but risks that LGBTQ+ individuals face come in different forms and

magnitude even if they may be similar to those encountered by heterosexuals, for instance, certain diseases that are not usually spread sexually can be transmitted in lesbians, gays and bisexuals as the act involves a variety of physical and sexual practices involving penile-anal contact, oral sex and anal-oral sex (Chidi & Orji, 2015). Enteric organisms which are ordinarily known to be transmitted through contaminated foods and water may also be contracted through feacal-oral route during sexual contact especially among homosexuals and lesbians who also practice oral-anal sex. Lesbians, bisexual women and men who have sex with men are at elevated risk for certain Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) (Cigna Healthcare, 2023; Mayo Clinic, 2023; Christian Medical and Dental Association, 2023). As Cigna Healthcare (2023) put it that, lesbian and bisexual women are at greater risk for breast and other gynecological cancers but less likely to be screened than their heterosexual counterparts. Cancer facts of the American Cancer Society's for Gay and Bisexual Men specifies that gay men are at increased risk for lung, testicular, colon, and anal cancers (Christian Medical and Dental Association, 2023). Again, depression and anxiety can be more common among LGBTQ+ practitioners as women who have sex with women and men who have sex with men are at higher risk of depression and anxiety than are other men and women. Furthermore, Cigna Healthcare (2023) opined, lesbians and bisexual women are more likely to have pulmonary and cardiovascular diseases than their heterosexual counterparts due to their increased risk of using tobacco and alcohol. Another surprising consequence of LGBTQ+ is that lesbians and bisexual women experience domestic violence more commonly than their heterosexual counterparts. Mayo Clinic (2023) explained that, violence can affect anyone in an intimate relationship but lesbians and other women who have sex with women experience intimate partner violence at higher rate than do other people. The foregoing trend shows that LGBTQ+ practitioners are at greater risks of almost if not all problems associated with sexual orientations and relationships, this irrefutably could affect their life expectancy negatively too. Christian Medical and Dental Association (2023) supported this when it stated that homosexuals lose twenty-five to thirty years of their lifespan.

The knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues is very important among Secondary School students of Ukwuani Local Government Area because an accurate knowledge of them and their consequences will afford them the opportunity of making informed decisions about them. According to Ugwu (2003) Knowledge is the awareness of factors associated with something and for an individual to be knowledgeable about things, the person must be aware of the features of that thing. In this instance, knowledge has to do with having adequate information about LGBTQ+. On the other hand, perception is the ability to see, hear or understand things. According to Igbokwe (2012), perception is a process by which one becomes aware of an existing situation or factor. In Ukwuani culture, sexual orientations apart from heterosexuality is detested and viewed as abominations, but however, there is the notion that LGBTQ+ practices, especially homosexuality, lesbianism and bisexuality are creeping fast into the secondary schools in the area and these go with

their negative consequences. Therefore, this paper is set to find out if the students have the knowledge and perceive LGBTQ+ accurately.

The following questions were asked:

- i. What is the level of knowledge of LGBTQ+ among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?
- ii. What is the level of the perception of the consequences of LGBTQ+ among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?
- iii. What is the level of acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested:

- i. The knowledge of the consequences of LGBTQ+ among Senior Secondary School students will not significantly determine their level of acceptance of the practices in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.

This study was carried out to determine the knowledge and perception of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. From the researchers observations, LGBTQ+ and their attendant consequences are fast creeping into the sexual orientation of the adolescents in our Secondary Schools, especially the senior classes and literature review have shown scarcity of data on the knowledge and perception among the Senior Secondary School students in the L.G.A. Therefore, the results of this study shall help health educators in better LGBTQ+ education of the students. It shall help the school authorities in repositioning of the awareness programmes on LGBTQ+ issues in the schools and the students shall consequently benefit better in gaining accurate knowledge of LGBTQ+ practices and their consequences and become more equipped in making more informed and beneficial health decisions.

Methods and Procedure

Descriptive survey research design helped in eliciting information on the topic of study was employed, and the population for the study comprised of all Public Secondary School students in the Thirteen (13) Secondary Schools in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. Through a simple random sampling, seven (7) schools were sampled from among the schools. The population of students in the seven schools that were sampled was Three Thousand and Twenty-One (3,021). A sample of 10% of the student's population was gotten through a proportionate random sampling technique and this gave rise to a Sample Size of Three Hundred and Two (302) students.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire which had two sections. Section A contained the bio-data of the Respondents while Section B was

structured in line with the four-point Likert-Like scale rating of Strongly Agree (SA), (4); Agree (A), (3); Disagree (DA), (2); and Strongly Disagree (SD), (1). The instrument was given to two experts in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. Some of the items were restructured to reflect the views of the students, and the face validity of the instrument was considered appropriate by expert judgment. So also, subsections of the instrument were tested for both content and construct validity of all items using the factor analysis method and each of the sub-sections revealed a good content validity of all items in the subsections ranges between 93.05% and 98.56%. The construct validity was estimated by using the rotated factor loadings matrixes. The Eigen values above 1 were used to select factors that genuinely measures similar construct. The variables had factor loading matrixes that ranged between .82 and .91. For reliability, the instrument was administered to fifty (50) respondents in Ogume Grammar School, Ogume in Ndokwa West L.G.A. The reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha for estimating the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability index of 0.94 for knowledge of LGBTQ+, 0.90 for extent of the awareness of consequences of LGBTQ+ and 0.84 for level of acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices, this is evidence from the above that the subsections had good psychometric properties of reliability. The instrument was administered by researchers to the sampled students in their schools and to reduce the rate of instrument mortality, the questionnaire that was administered were retrieved immediately and this ensured 100% retrieval rate. The data analysis was done with descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation for the research questions. Items with means greater than or equal to the criterion mean or benchmark of 2.50 indicated acceptance or agreements with the options. While the items with means that are less than the criterion mean of 2.50 indicated rejections or disagreements with the opinions. So also linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results.

Research Question 1

What is the level of knowledge of LGBTQ+ among Senior Secondary School students of Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

Table 1: Frequency Counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation on Knowledge of LGBTQ+

								N = 302
S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	I know the full meaning of LGBTQ+	2 (0.7%)	7 (2.3%)	102 (33.8%)	191 (63.2%)	1.77	0.67	Disagree
	Lesbianism has to do with women having romantic	*8 (8.3%)	21 (13.9%)	204 (53.3%)	193 (24.5%)			
2.		25 *100	42 126	161 322	74 74	2.02	0.65	Disagree

	affairs with fellow women							
3.	A gay is not just a man who has sexual attraction towards fellow man	11 (3.6%) *44	15 (5.0%) 45	165 (55.6%) 336	108 (35.8%) 108	2.03	0.70	Disagree
4.	A woman can be a gay	2 (0.7%) *8	5 (1.7%) 15	98 (32.5%) 198	197 (65.2%) 197	2.14	0.75	Disagree
5.	Bisexuals are persons who have sexual feelings towards people of opposite sex	40 (13.2%) *160	108 (35.8%) 324	102 (33.8%) 204	52 (17.2%) 52	1.95	0.95	Disagree
6.	Men who dress like women are all homosexuals	166 (55.6%) *664	106 (35.6%) 318	21 (7.0%) 42	9 (3.0%) 9	2.56	0.91	Agree
7.	Women who dress like men are all lesbians	41 (13.6%) *164	98 (32.5%) 294	78 (25.8%) 156	85 (28.1%) 85	2.43	0.95	Disagree
Grand mean						2.13		Disagree

** Scale derivations*

Table 1 above shows that 90% of the respondents agreed to item 6, this implies that the knowledge they have about men who dress like women are homosexuals and on the other hand, 97%, 77.8%, 91.4%, 97.7%, 51% and 53.9% respectively of the respondents disagreed to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. This revealed that the respondents do not know the full meaning of LGBTQ+, and that lesbianism has to do with women having romantic affair with fellow women, that gay is not just men attracted to men only, that a woman can be a gay, that approximately half of them are aware that bisexuals are not just persons who have sexual feelings towards persons of opposite sex, and that women who dress like men are not necessarily lesbians. Consequently, the grand mean of 2.13 is less than the criterion mean of 2.50 and therefore disagreed with their having adequate and proper knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues.

Research Question 2:

What are the level of the awareness of the consequences of LGBTQ+ among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

Table 2: Frequency Counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation on Awareness of the Consequences of LGBTQ+

								N = 302
S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
8.	Men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women are at greater risk of STIs than others.	22 (7.3%) *88	36 (11.9%) 108	108 (35.8%) 216	136 (45.0%) 136	1.98	0.81	Disagree
9.	Lesbians and homosexuals are at greater risks of gynecologically related cancers than heterosexuals	24 (7.9%) *96	39 (12.9%) 117	121 (40.1%) 242	118 (39.1%) 118	2.06	0.91	Disagree
10.	Depression and anxiety can be more common among gay and bisexual individuals	26 (8.6%) *104	38 (12.6%) 114	120 (39.7%) 240	118 (39.1%) 118	2.25	0.91	Disagree
11.	Gays and bisexuals are more likely to develop heart diseases than heterosexuals	21 (7.0%) *63	43 (14.2%) 129	105 (34.8%) 210	133 (44.0%) 133	2.24	0.59	Disagree
12.	Domestic violence is more common among gays and bisexuals	19 (6.3%) *76	36 (11.9%) 108	102 (33.8%) 204	145 (48.0%) 145	2.34	0.86	Disagree
13.	LGBTQ+ practitioners are of lower life expectancy than heterosexuals	25 (8.3%) *100	44 (14.6%) 132	123 (40.7%) 246	110 (36.4%) 110	1.91	0.70	Disagree
Grand mean						2.13		Disagree

Table 2, above indicates that the respondents disagreed to all of the items (8 – 13), indicating that they have low level of awareness concerning the consequences of LGBTQ+ as 80.8% of them disagreed that men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women are at greater risks of STIs than others, 79.2% of them disagreed that lesbians and homosexuals are at greater risk of gynecologically related cancers than heterosexuals,

78.8% disagreed that depression and anxiety can be more common among gay and bisexual individuals, and that gays and bisexuals are more likely to develop heart diseases than heterosexuals, 81.8% disagreed that domestic violence is more common among gays and bisexuals as 77.1% also disagreed that LGBTQ+ practitioners are of lower life expectancy than others. The grand mean of 2.13 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, showed that the respondents are not really aware of the actual consequences of LGBTQ+.

Research Question 3:

What is the level of acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

Table 3: Frequency Counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation on Level of Acceptance of LGBTQ+

								N = 302
S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
14.	Lesbianism is a good practice	11 (3.6%)	26 (8.6%)	129 (42.8%)	136 (45.0%)	1.91	0.70	Disagree
15.	I like women who behave like men sexually	*44 9 (3.0%)	12 (4.0%)	156 (51.7%)	125 (41.3%)	1.99	0.73	Disagree
16.	It is good for a man to have sex with another man	*36 2 (0.7%)	36 4 (1.3%)	312 92 (30.3%)	125 204 (67.5%)	1.93	0.74	Disagree
17.	It does not matter if a man or a woman have sex with both men and women	*8 6 (2.0%)	12 11 (3.6%)	184 105 (34.8%)	20 180 (59.6%)	2.13	0.75	Disagree
18.	Homosexuality is a good practice	24* 4 (1.3%)	33 8 (2.6%)	210 82 (27.2%)	180 208 (68.9%)	2.22	0.79	Disagree
Grand mean						2.04		Disagree

Table 3, showed that the respondents disagreed to items 14 to 18, which means that they perceived lesbianism as a bad practice, does not like women who behave like men sexually, see men having sex with fellow men as bad, it is worrisome for men or women to have sex with both sexes as they please and that homosexuality is not a good practice as 87.8%, 93%, 98%, 94.4% and 96.1% disagreed to the items respectively. With the grand mean of 2.04 which is less down the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents disagreed that LGBTQ+ practices are good.

Hypothesis 1

The knowledge of the consequences of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students will not significantly determine their level of acceptance of the practices in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis of Knowledge of the Consequences of LGBTQ+ as a Determinant of Acceptance of Practices.

R		r - Square		Adjusted r - Square		Std. Error of Estimate	
0.047		0.002		0.002			
4.64642							
Anova							
	Sig	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square		f	
Regression	0.035	101.895	1	101.894		4.511	
Residual		42897.825	1897	21.580			
Total		42999.720	1900				
Coefficient							
	Sig	Unstandardised Coefficient <i>b</i>	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficient <i>Beta</i>			<i>t</i>
(Constant)	75.556	27.826	0.379				
Knowledge of Consequences	0.035	0.036	0.017	0.048			2.123

The result of table 4, above indicates an *f*-value of 4.511 and a *p*-value of 0.035. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the *p*-value of 0.035 was less than the alpha level of 0.05, as such, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the knowledge of the consequences of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State would significantly determine their level of acceptance of the practice. The *r*-square value of 0.002 shows that 0.2% of variance on acceptance was accounted for by the knowledge of the consequences they have. The unstandardised coefficient (*b*) for determining their acceptance was 0.036, the standardized coefficient (*Beta*) was 0.048, *t* = 2.123, explains that the knowledge of the consequences was significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Discussions of Results.

The analysis of the data collected revealed that the students do not have adequate and factual knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues. Precisely, they don't know what LGBTQ+ represents, neither do they know what exactly lesbianism, gay and bisexuality mean. This is in line with the findings of Ugwoezuonu, Nwobodo, & Ezema (2022), that adolescents lack an informed knowledge of homosexuality and lesbianism in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that knowledge of the consequences of LGBTQ+ significantly determine it's level of acceptance among the students. This is in consonance with the findings of Olanrewaju (2023), that lack of knowledge about the consequences of lesbianism and homosexuality made many adolescents to indulge in them.

The findings of this study also revealed that Senior Secondary School students level of perception of the actual consequences of LGBTQ+ is very low. They do not know that there are greater risk of Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs), cancers, depression, anxiety, domestic violence and even reduced life expectancy among LGBTQ+ individuals compared to heterosexuals. This is contrary to the views of Kelvin (2022), who believes that high self-esteem or self-concept which makes an individual aware of exactly who he/she wants for him/herself is responsible for higher level of LGBTQ+ practices in the western world.

The findings on the level of acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary Students showed that there is low level of acceptance which was determined even by the low level of perception they have on the consequences.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

The major finding of this study was that there is low knowledge, awareness of consequences and acceptance of LGBTQ+ practices among Senior Secondary School Students in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. However, the knowledge of the consequences significantly determines their acceptance level of the practices.

- Based on this facts, the following recommendations were made:
- i. There should be deliberate and vigorous efforts by school health educators to educate students about LGBTQ+ and their consequences.
 - ii. School health education programmes should incorporate LGBTQ+ issues, so that students can have accurate knowledge of them and make informed and healthy decisions about them.
 - iii. Health education should use the mass media, especially social media in educating students of the consequences of LGBTQ+ practices.

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