

DO SEXUAL HEALTH WEBSITES REPRESENT AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS?

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INTRODUCTION

- Adolescents in the United States face sexual health challenges addressable through comprehensive sex education [1].
- Analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth has shown that 49-55% of U.S. youth have received sex education meeting national standards [2].
- African American youth, particularly males, are less likely to receive comprehensive sex education [2].
- African American youth evidence a high prevalence of STIs and teen pregnancy [3;4].
- Internet-based sex education offers a viable supplemental option to improve sexual health education.
- This study examines the of internet-based sex education websites general quality and relevance to African American youth.

METHODS

- We identified 43 sites (US, English) using popular search engines between January & February 2022, that met specific inclusion (English/U.S., internet accessible by youth, providers assistance not needed, broad content including: reproductive health and HIV/STIs, and/or other sexual health topics) and exclusion criteria [Only single topic coverage, non-US sites, only published material (reports), only indirectly accessible].

- Relevance criteria included sites having:
 - Images of African Americans relevant to African American youth
 - Content specific to an African American audience
 - Content addressing disparities in African American sexual health.

- Relevance scoring: Sites received one point for meeting each of the above criteria; 0 = none, max = 3

- General quality criteria: Adapted criteria developed by Buhi et al., [5] (i.e., display of authorship, author's credentials, references & disclaimers provided, clear sources, editorial review provided, date of last update).

- General quality scoring: Sites received one point for meeting each of the criteria; range = 0 – 7.

- Adolescent Specific = Site directed to adolescent audience; Adolescent/Parent = Site directed toward parents of adolescents and adolescents; General = Site directed toward any age.

TABLE 1

Website	Ratings	Website	Ratings
	Relevance/General		Relevance/General
<u>Adolescent Specific</u>		<u>General</u>	
Teen Source	0/2	Oregon State	0/1
Seriously Sexuality	1/1	Very Healthy Life	0/3
Go Ask Alice	1/1	STD Check	0/7
It's Your Sex Life	1/1	IKnowUShould2	1/1
Healthy Children	1/4	Candor	1/2
Teen Health FX	2/3	Healthy Sexual	1/2
Sex Etc.	3/3	Oregon Health Authority	3/3
Scarleteen	3/4	America's Health Ranking	1/3
Bedsider	3/5	HHS.gov	1/3
<u>Adolescent/Parent</u>		Entirely Health	1/3
Stanford Children's	1/1	Young Women's Health	1/4
Georgia	1/4	Cleveland Clinic	1/5
Teens Health	2/3	Simply Health	2/2
Rochester	2/4	Act for Youth	2/2
Family Doctor	2/5	National Coalition	2/3
Planned Parenthood	3/2	Mayo Clinic	2/5
Medline Plus	3/2	Sutter Health	2/5
Nationwide Children's	3/5	Avert	2/5
Power to Decide	3/5	Pandia Health	2/5
WebMD	3/7	Harvard Health	3/3
Healthline	3/7	ASHA	3/3
		CDC	3/5
		Very Well Health	3/6

RESULTS

- 33% of websites met all Relevance Criteria (scores = 3) and/or General Quality Criteria (scores ≥ 5).
- Relevance and General Quality were significantly correlated ($r = .32, p = .03$).
- Rankings (See Table 1) reflecting index scores for both criteria show that only 3 sites (7%) were in the upper score levels for both indices (Green highlights, Table 1).
- No relationship was found between the targeted audience (adolescent vs. non-age-specific) and Quality/Relevance indices.

Figure 1

Relevance Index Score Percentage

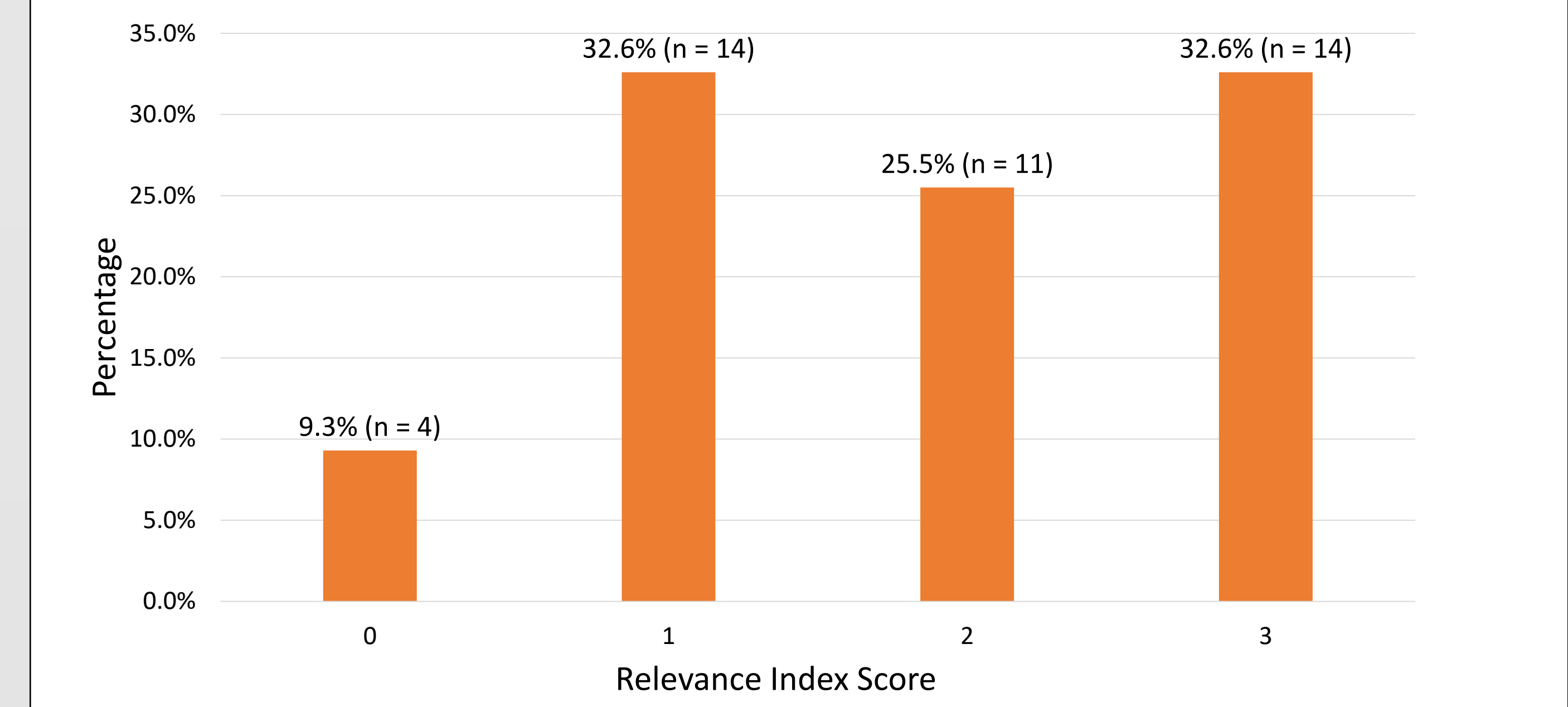


Figure 2

General Quality Index Score Percentage



CONCLUSION

- A substantial percentage of comprehensive sexual health websites accessible to adolescents are of low relevance to African American youth (scores = 0 – 1; 41.9%) and are of poor to modest quality (scores = 0 – 4; 67.5%).
- Sites with high scores on both indices typically had more professional involvement and oversight from sexual health experts.
- Future work using a similar analytic approach be applied to the relevance of these sites to LGBTQ+, other ethnic/racial, and gender-expansive sub-populations.