

**TITLE:** Do Sexual Health Websites Represent African American Adolescents?

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**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** Yes

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Researchers, Website developers and evaluators, public health communication professionals

**ABSTRACT:** School-based comprehensive sex education (CSE) can reduce adolescent sexual health problems. However, only 49%-55% of adolescents receive CSE that meets national standards. African American youth (AAY) are less likely to receive CSE. Internet-based CSE offers a supplemental option. We examined the quality and relevance to AAY of internet-based CSE. We evaluated 48 sites using 2 indices. Relevance indicators (to AAY) included sites having: a) African Americans images, b) AAY specific content, and c) content addressing disparities in AAY sexual health (Relevance scores = 0 – 3). General Quality was assessed using an adaptation of a previous measure (General Quality scores = 0 – 7). Only 9 sites (21%) had high rankings on both indices (e.g., WebMd, Very-Well-Health). Relevance and General Quality indices were significantly correlated ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ). Neither index was correlated with the type of intended audience. Although 81% of sites reported at least 1 of the Relevance criteria, there is significant need for improvement in this area as only 16% evidenced all 3 criteria. Sites ranking high on both indices typically had more professional involvement and oversight. We recommend a similar analytic approach be applied to studying CSE website relevance for LGBTQ+, other ethnic/racial, and gender-expansive sub-populations.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Evaluate the relevance of current sexual health websites for African American adolescents. Evaluate the general quality of current sexual health website accessible by adolescents in the United States

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