

Parental Perception Of Sexuality Education Of Adolescents In Secondary Schools In Enugu State

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Abstract

This study investigated the perception of parents in Enugu State of Nigeria to teaching sexuality education in secondary schools. Data were collected from 1,576 parents in Enugu State and was analyzed using mean and ANOVA. The findings show that majority of the respondents have positive perception of sexuality education in secondary schools. It was also found that non of the demographic variables of gender, education, religion and age influenced the respondents perceptions. To achieve much more support from parents, it was recommended that parents should be involved in sexuality programme development of adolescents in secondary schools. The results of this study have implication for science teachers and counsellors who can use the findings in teaching and counselling adolescents and parents.

Key Words: Perception, Parents, Adolescents, Sexuality, Education

Introduction

Sexuality refers to actions involving sex or behaviour relating to sex or the sexes. Sexuality education is that aspect of health education which prepares the adolescents to understand his development biologically, physiologically and socially to full maturity as a man or woman. Adepoju (2005) pointed out that sexuality education is about providing vital information on reproductive health needs of the adolescent in relation to the inculcation of good practices and reinforcement of values and group norms against unprotected sexual behaviour. Reproductive health, according to Women Aids Collective (WACOL) in Onyechi (2006) is promotion of safe and responsible sexual behaviour particularly during adolescence. This includes prevention and management of abortion, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, harmful and violent practices related to sexuality and reproduction.

UNICEF (2011) views sexuality education as education that equips young people with knowledge, skills and values, to make responsible and informed choices about their sexual and social relationships. From the time that we are born, we learn about love, touch, affection and our bodies. As we grow, the messages continue from both our families and the social environment, with school-based programs complementing that of the parents and significant others in the family (Stong; Devault, Sayad & Yarber, 2005).

Adolescence is the social and psychological state that occurs between the beginning of puberty and acceptance into full adulthood of any child. Puberty is the stage of a child's development when the body becomes capable of reproduction. Puberty is

considered to begin at age 12 for girls and age 14 for boys (Strong et al, 2005). Adolescents are sexually mature in a physical sense but they are still learning about their gender and social roles. Adolescents are known as the most heterosexually active age, the world over. They are in a period of life dominated by sexual experimentation. Hormonal changes during puberty bring about a dramatic increase in sexual interest in adolescents.

Among parents, teachers and significant others, there are substantial disagreements about what a comprehensive course in sexuality education should include. Kirby in Okere (2010) suggested:

- Focusing on Education of one or more of the sexual behaviours that lead to unintended pregnancy or HIV/STI infection.
- Giving a clear message by continually taking a strong stance on risky behaviours.
- Focusing on activities that address social pressures associated with sexual behaviour.
- Demonstrating respect for people with different sexual values.

In Nigeria, a number of studies (Ifelunni, 2003; Unachukwu, 2006) show that Nigerians enjoy and love sexual activities but the problem of many families is that issues concerning sexuality should not be discussed openly. There was a case of a governor of a state in Nigeria in 2007 that warned that sex education is not allowed in their schools. According to him, it exposes youths to matters relating to sex thereby making them more promiscuous. This is a major problem affecting sex education of adolescents in some Nigerian secondary schools. As a result of cultural and religious factors, many parents are shy when it comes to issues concerning their children's sexuality. Any open sexuality communication is generally abhorred (Onyechi, 2006). World Health organization (2004) stressed that investing on sex education of youths is necessary because as boys and girls become sexually mature, they need information on how to develop healthy attitude towards family life. Adolescents engage in frequent sexual activities without proper knowledge of what is involved (Ifelunni, 2003).

One of the most recent and notable Federal Government programmes aimed at improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria is the family life and HIV/AIDS Education (FLHE) curriculum and program, launched in 2002. A number of state ministries of Education supported by international partners have tried to implement this program to improve sexuality education across the country. The uptake of the curriculum has been slow, so far, only 10 of the 36 states have implemented it (Olakunbi, 2012). However, Fabuiyi (1995) had contended that efforts by the government would not be enough but that sex education must be accepted by students and parents as an appropriate subject to be taught in schools if a successful sex education programme is to be introduced in secondary schools. In line with this view, Fay & Yanoff (2000) recommend that schools should invite parents to attend the sex education programmes in which their children participate and provide educational materials to facilitate parent-child communication on sexuality. Parents could then be partners rather than detractors in the sex education process. In a Health Education Authority (HEA) study in Ogun State in 1994, many parents supported sex education in schools but when asked whether there were any aspects of sex education for which they might consider withdrawing their children: 13% thought that they might, 17% were unsure and 70% said they would not (Olakunbi, 2012).

It is possible the narrated situation may differ in several other parts of the country. WACOL (2000) observed that in Enugu State a number of parents fear that if

teenagers are taught about sex, ideas will be put into their heads, and they will start doing it. A good number of others feel it is not so. Factors such as gender, education, age and religious affiliation can influence sexual behaviour significantly. Gender is instrumental in defining human sexuality and so is education and religion. Rational reasoning could be influenced by age.

The idea of sex education has been a controversial issue and debates have been going on discussing if it should be taught formally in schools or not. It is against this background that the researchers sought to establish parental perception of sexuality education of adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria and the extent of influence of gender, education, religion and age on their perception.

Statement of the Problem

In Enugu State, it has been echoed by some parents that the teaching of sex education in secondary schools has violated the innocence of children. As a result of cultural factors discussion of sex is seen as a taboo in many homes. For others, the danger in the absence of adequate, valid and reliable information as is found in sexuality education, may have led adolescents into unsafe sexual activities. The problem of this study put into a question is thus: what is the perception of sexuality education of adolescents in secondary schools by parents in Enugu State?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will benefit sex educators who will be better equipped to educate ignorant parents and their children on the need for adequate information that will help children live healthy lives. The earlier belief by some parents that talking about sex to children will make them start doing it, will be gradually discarded. Adolescents will equally benefit from the findings because with almost total support of their parents, there will be more interest in issues relating to sex education, for healthier life styles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perception of parents to teaching sexuality education in secondary schools

Research Question and Hypothesis

One research question guided the study:

What is the perception of parents to teaching sexuality education in secondary schools?

One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

There is no significant influence of parents' gender, education, religion and age on their mean perception of teaching sexuality education in secondary schools.

Scope of the study

This study was delimited to Enugu municipality and Nsukka local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The content comprised negative and positive perception to teaching sex education in secondary schools.

Methodology

Design: The design was descriptive survey. Descriptive survey design is used for studies which aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristic features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2006). This design enabled the researchers determine the perception of parents to sexuality education in secondary schools.

Area of study – the area of study is Enugu state of Nigeria. The focus was Enugu municipality and Nsukka local government area of Enugu State. The choice of the area is based on the consideration that representativeness is very important in a survey study. The two areas are within the two major zones of the state.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all parents in the focus area of the study i.e. Enugu municipality and Nsukka local government area. Enugu municipality has a population of 44,897 married men and 45,510 married women. Nsukka has a population of 12,255 married men and 12071 married women (National population commission, 2012 projection).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study was 1,576 parents made up of 782 males and 794 females drawn using a multi-stage sampling procedure, with each stage resting on simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling was used in selecting twenty localities where the respondents were drawn. The selection of the parents was purposive. Only parents with children in secondary schools in the focus areas were selected for the study.

Instrument: The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled “Parents Perception of Sex education in secondary schools” (PPSESS) adapted from Olakunbi (2012) to suit the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A consists of personal data of the respondents while section B consists of 20 items on parents’ perception of sexuality education in secondary schools. The questionnaires were given to students to take home to their parents for response. The items have a four point response format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), Weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The validity of the instrument was determined by giving it to 3 experts, one in measurement & evaluation, one in counselling and one in Vocational Teacher Education, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their contributions were incorporated into the final draft of the items. Cronback Alpha statistics was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The reliability obtained was 0.82.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean scores and standard deviation were used for analyzing the research question. Acceptance point of the items was 2.50 and above. ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results are presented in accordance with the research question and hypothesis formulated in the study.

Research Question: What is the perception of parents to teaching sexuality education in secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean responses of parents’ perception to teaching sexuality education in secondary schools.

S/N	Items	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_g	SD	Remark
1	Sex education can help secondary school students overcome the temptation of indiscriminate sex.	3.21	3.59	3.40	0.19	P+V
2	It is necessary to teach both boys and girls sex education.	3.72	3.96	3.84	0.18	P+V
3	Sex education is useful to adolescents in secondary	2.98	3.10	3.04	0.16	P+V

	schools.					
4	Sex education ought to be compulsory in secondary schools.	2.98	3.06	3.02	0.64	P+V
5	Sex education should not be taught by religious leaders only.	2.44	2.36	2.40	0.16	P+V
6	Sex education should not be taught only by parents.	2.35	2.41	2.38	0.12	P+V
7	It is a good idea to combine teachers and parents in the teaching of sex education.	3.78	3.58	3.68	0.02	P+V
8	Sex education in secondary schools can lead to adolescents experimenting sex.	2.41	2.23	2.32	0.18	P+V
9	Sex education must have some positive contributions to the society.	3.84	3.04	3.44	1.02	P+V
10	Sex education will put an end to sexual immortality in secondary schools.	3.42	3.68	3.55	0.86	P+V
11	In sex education, male teachers should teach only male students and female teachers, female students.	2.56	3.36	2.96	0.18	N+V
12	It is ignorance, not sex education that stimulates irresponsible actions.	3.60	3.50	3.55	0.16	P+V
13	If students are taught sex education, ideas will be put into their heads that they wouldn't ordinarily have.	3.84	3.04	3.44	1.02	N+V
14	Sex education violates the innocence of children	2.96	3.05	3.01	0.05	N+V
15	Sex education is against our culture.	2.85	3.11	2.98	1.22	N+V
16	Sex education should be part of formal education but given informally.	3.12	3.36	3.24	0.44	P+V
17	Sex education is a controversial issue in Nigeria.	2.96	3.14	3.05	1.04	P+V
18	All aspects of sex education should be given to adolescents.	3.64	3.56	3.60	1.21	P+V
19	Homosexuality should be part of sex education of adolescents.	3.29	3.11	3.20	0.10	P+V
20	Sex education should be taught to only adolescents in secondary schools.	3.46	3.24	3.35	0.20	P+V

\bar{X}_1 = Male parents \bar{X}_g = Grand mean N+V = Negative perception
 \bar{X}_2 = Female Parents P+V = Positive perception SD = Standard Deviation

From the responses on table 1, sixteen of the twenty items indicate positive perception to teaching sexuality education to adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State. Only 4 items have negative perception to teaching sexuality education. The standard deviation from the mean ranged from 0.02 – 1.22, indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses. This gives further credence to the validity of the mean.

Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of parents' gender, education, religion and age on the mean perception of teaching sexuality education in secondary schools.

Table 2: Analysis of variance showing influences of gender, education, religion and age on perception of sexuality education in secondary schools.

Tests of between – subjects effects						
Dependent Variable						
Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig	
Corrected model	1569.251	105	14.788	1.567	.000	
Intercept	603.058	1	603.058	68.044	.000	

Gender	.238	1	.238	.129	0856
Education	16.119	4	4.014	.462	.761
Religion	46.132	3	15.282	1.812	.150
Age	11.665	3	3.912	.432	.713

Table 2 reveals the test of influence of the demographic variables of gender, education, religion and age on the respondents perception of sex education in secondary schools. One can observe from the table that none of the demographic variables can be said to influence the respondents’ perceptions as their F-values surpass the 0.05 threshold. For gender $F = .129$ at $P < .05$; education $F = .462$ at $P < .05$; religion $F = 1.812$ at $P < .05$; Age $F = 1432$ at $P < .05$. Based on the above result, it can be concluded that there is no significant influence on gender, education, religion and age of parents on perception of sexuality education in secondary schools.

Discussion

In this study, the statistical analysis of the data collected from parents in Enugu State show that they approve the teaching of sexuality education in secondary schools. Similarly, the hypothesis tested showed no significant influence on gender, education, religious affiliation and age of parents on perception of sexuality education in secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding is consistent with Action Aid (2003), Kaiser family foundation (2000), HEA (1994) and Olakunbi (2012). These studies found high positive perception of sex education in their different areas of study. Conversely, WACOL (2000) observed that in Enugu State, discussion of sex and sexual issues is a ‘taboo’ in many homes. Similarly, Ifelunni (2003) and Unachukwu (2006) observed that the problem of sex education in Nigeria is that for many families, issues concerning sexuality should not be discussed openly.

The findings of this study show that efforts and attempts at educating parents on the importance of sexuality education is yielding results. A lot more however needs to be done, especially with regards to many parents who believe that teaching adolescents about sex will make them experiment on it. This is particularly worrisome as the age of adolescence is the age of experimentation the world over. Equally, worthy of note is the concern of some parents insisting on male teachers teaching male students and vice versa.

Recommendations

1. Parents should be involved in sexuality programme development of adolescents in secondary schools to achieve almost total support of parents on some of the issues that border them, as found in this study.
2. Science teachers and counsellors need to internalize the results of this study and make use of them in teaching and counselling students and their parents.
3. There is need for thorough counselling on the idea of sex education violating the innocence of children.

Conclusion

This paper tried to define sexuality education and the views of various experts on this issue. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that parents in Enugu State approve the teaching of sexuality education in secondary schools. There are also no significant

influences of gender, education, religion and age on the perception of parents in Enugu State to the teaching of sex education in secondary schools in Enugu State.

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