

INFLUENCE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND ON ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEX AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE

Aroh, Patricia. Nwamaka; Chukwu, Chinyere Loveth & Ogbueghu, Sylvester Nwigwe

Department of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This research examined the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality education in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted Ex-post facto design. The population for this study was 8945 which comprise SS11secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. 240 SS11 students were used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was 31-item structured questionnaires titled "Family background influence and adolescents' attitude towards sexuality education questionnaire (FBIASEQ)". The overall reliability was 0.78 showing that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while ANOVA was used for testing the hypotheses. Findings of the study among others revealed that; there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on gender and there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level. Based on the findings, it was recommended that law enforcement agencies, religious bodies and parents should also teach and impose descents dressing and behaviors on youth to prevent rape, sexual harassment and offering courses in sexology to produce specially trained teachers and social workers for public schools is necessary.

Keywords: Family background, adolescents' attitude, sex and sexuality education, secondary schools

Introduction

The family background constitutes the foundational social structure where adolescents first experience patterns of behavior, norms, and values that significantly shape their outlook on various aspects of life, including sex and sexuality. As the primary socializing agent, the family influences adolescents' attitudes, knowledge, and openness toward sexuality education. Elements such as parental education level, family type, religious orientation, socio-economic status, and parent-child communication dynamics all contribute to how adolescents perceive and respond to discussions about sex and sexuality. In the context of secondary schools within Nsukka Education Zone, the nature of these familial influences plays a pivotal role in determining whether adolescents adopt informed, cautious, or dismissive attitudes toward sexuality education. According to Engels (2021) family remains the primary environment of the child. For Okunniyi (2014), family is defined as a primary social group of parents, offspring and possibly other members of the household. Family background refers to all the conditions and circumstances in the family which influence the child physically, intellectually and emotionally. This simply means that the essence of the family group is the parent-child relationship, which may be absent from many marriage pairs. This type of

unit, more specifically known as a nuclear family, is believed to be the oldest of the various types of families in existence. Muola (2020) observed that Children coming from different family backgrounds are affected differently by such family conditions. Eke (2019) noted that within some families, the background may vary from time to time for the same individuals. The family background depends on factors such as parental level of education, parental occupation, family size, and parental motivation. The extent and the manner in which parents are involved in their children's lives are crucial in the overall development of a child and prevention of sexual risk-taking behaviour among adolescents. This is because children are born into the family and their learning process which includes their sexuality begins from there. The family is a central agent of socialization in the adolescents' life course (Fingerson, 2015).

Adolescence is one of life's fascinating and perhaps the most complex stage. It is a time when young people take on new responsibilities and experiment with independence. Adolescents search for identity and are filled with excitement and curiosity, desire for sexual release and exploration about the world Nations Children Fund, 2021). During adolescence, the lives of boys and girls become wrapped in sexuality. They have an almost insatiable curiosity about the mysteries of sex and think about how to behave sexually and what the future holds for their sexual lives (Santrock, 2015). Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure intimacy and reproduction. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2016), Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices and relationship. Sexuality is also influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. Collins (2018) opined that sexuality education encompasses education about all aspects of sexuality including information about family planning, reproduction, body image, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, values, decision making, communication, dating, relationships, sexually transmitted infections and birth controls.

Several studies have reported increased sexual risk-taking behaviour among adolescents in southwest Nigeria, in which they are having sexual intercourse at young ages and also engage in multiple sexual partners. Most adolescents in this region do have their first intercourse between ages 10 and 16 years (Federal Ministry of Health, 2018; Aji, Aji, Ifeadike, Emelumadu, Ubajaka, Nwabueze, Ebenebu & Azuike, 2014). Adolescents' sexuality behaviour in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa is indeed undergoing great changes from what it used to be in the past. This can be attributed to the effect of westernization caused by industrialization, urbanization, education, exposure and enculturation through importation of various foreign cultures, which were alien to the African culture and Nigerian in particular (Oladebo & Fayemi, 2021). In the past, parents never had to worry about the threats of social media but presently, it has become a dangerous place for children in relation to negative sexual information which are available on the internet. Yet, most parents have very little or no knowledge of social networking sites, which would be necessary in guiding their children (Neil, Carlson & Donald, 2015). There is the need for parents to be more open with their adolescents, because there are social and media pressures on adolescents to become sexually active. It has been observed that school based family life

programmes are inadequate, except when parents are involved (World Health Organisation, 2016). Indeed, several factors influence adolescents' sexual health, but parental factor is a potential influence on adolescents' sexual behaviour because of the centrality of the family as a socialization agent in adolescents' life course (Henderson, 2016). Despite several interventions, much of what is heard and observed about adolescent sexuality is the problem of risky sexual behaviour and its grave negative consequences.

The teeming population of adolescents remains highly vulnerable to unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality and morbidity, contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, which till date have no certified cure. This continued susceptibility of adolescents to unhealthy sexual life does not only seriously compromise positive life chances of young people but also the drive towards national and global youth development as entrenched in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that adopted by 193 countries on the 25th of September 2015 with the aim of achieving sustainable development for all countries by the year 2030. In order to curb risky sexual behavior among adolescents, to meet their sexual health needs and to improve their quality of life for a greater tomorrow, they need orientation to help them adjust physically, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, socially and economically. However, the researchers was interested in examining possible underlying family background factors such as parental level of education, parental occupation and family size. Professional and to a lesser extent managerial occupational backgrounds tend to exhibit higher exposure to sexuality education (Gary, 2021). In support of this view, Onochie and Okpalla (2015) opined that educational level of parents which is an indicator of socio-economic status has direct influence on child's values as it regards the school and upbringing. They mentioned that children from illiterate families may learn little or nothing from home that can help them work on sex and their sexuality (Qeca, 2020). This is in contrast to what is obtainable from children from literate families where parents provide atmosphere conducive for the formation of good study habits and exposure to sex education.

In Nsukka Education zone where this work was carried out, the decision to engage in risky sexual behavior among teenagers has been influenced by a number of supporting factors such as poor knowledge about sexuality and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), drug use, peer pressure, teenage curiosity, poverty, parental background, and the effects of globalization. In the process of searching for self-identity, these teenagers really need the attention by their parents for proper knowledge on sexual development. During the search for identity, they actually need direction, guidance and sexual education from their parents and immediate environment which was lacking. These parents rarely pay attention to their children's changes in their behavior and attitudes as well as their psychological needs because they are busy working to ensure that the family's economic needs are met (Auliya, 2019). In all these local government areas, many families find it skeptical discussing sexuality, especially parents with low socio-economic and education level. Supporting this assertion, Ugbor (2018) noted that family background of adolescents influenced adolescents' attitude towards sexuality. Ugbor stated that educated parents who know the implication of not allowing peers influence their children towards sex engage their adolescent children in sexuality education. Ezebuilo (2020) found that parents with high

socio-economic level, high level of education and religious parents pay more attention on sexuality education than parents from with little or no education, low religious inclination and poor socio-economic status. It was based on this background that the researchers embarked on this study to find out the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. Nsukka Education zone was chosen for this study because high level of free sex among teenagers, high level of teenage pregnancy, culture of early marriage among children, arranged marriages, pregnancies outside of marriage with it negative economic implications.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students are at their critical period in life usually referred to as adolescent period that lies between the end of childhood and beginning of adulthood. An adolescent period witness constant and serious change(s) in aspect of physical, social and personal developments and others. The fact that adolescents are in the age of high sexual drive causes many to engage in unsafe sex, premarital sex and prostitution. Male adolescents were also reported to have had sexual experience from early age of 14 years. Studies have shown that parents spend insufficient time with their children. Some parents would even travel to distant places, leaving the children at the mercy of nannies and guardians. Such children lack parental care and attention and may end up becoming delinquent and most often would engage in early sexual intercourse even among them. In Nsukka Education Zone, many parents pay little or no attention to the sex life of their children. In most secondary schools in the zone peer pressure among students often influence the adolescents as many of the adolescents engage in most sexual activities just to belong. This influences their risks when parents of these adolescents are not provided with the necessary information about sex. This risk can expose these adolescents to the risk of getting premature pregnancy, abortion and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. Also, in Nsukka Education zone, many parents subject their adolescent children, especially the females to child labour and make them hawk in market places, streets and motor parks. In so doing, they expose these adolescents to sexual harassment from older males. Some parents encourage their teens into early sexual intercourse and prostitution, unknowingly, by neglecting their responsibilities toward them. Yet another problem is the communication gap between parents and the adolescents on reproductive and sexual health issues. To the best knowledge of the researchers, only few researches have been conducted on influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools. In these few researches, none has been conducted in Nsukka Education Zone. This study, therefore, intends to find out the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, the purpose of the study was to find out the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to find out:

1. the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone

2. strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone?
2. What are the strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the studying and were tested at 0.5 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level.

Methods

The research employed ex-post facto design. The study was carried out in Nsukka Education zone. The population of the study consisted (8945) SS2 students in all 53 public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, The sample comprised 240 SS2 students. Non -proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to draw four schools from each of the Local Government Area in the zone. 240 questionnaires were administered. Three experts validated the instrument two from Department of Social Science Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The FBIQSO questionnaire was trial-tested using 30 students from Obollo Afor education zone which was entirely outside the geographical area but have similar characteristics with the study area. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the score from 30 respondents in the trial testing of the instrument was used in establishing the internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha procedure. The overall reliability was 0.78 showing that the instrument was reliable. Data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation. The mean was used to answer the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the Null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A mean of 3.50 – 4.49 was accepted as strongly agree, 2.50 – 2.49 was accepted as Agree while 1.50 – 2.49 was accepted as disagree and 0.05 – 1.49 show strongly Disagree

Results

Table 1: Mean response and standard deviation of respondents on influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools

S/N	Item statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Parents that are literate give their adolescents sex education	2.88	0.85	Agree
2	Adolescents from rich homes are exposed to sex education through early exposure to social media	3.52	0.94	Agree

3	Parents believe that sex education is the best way to educate adolescents about sex and its consequences.	2.87	1.09	Agree
4	Adolescents from large families learn about sex from their siblings	3.21	0.93	Agree
5	Sex education has helped to deal with my sexual urges	3.23	0.75	Agree
6	Adolescents from Christian homes discourage discussions about sex	2.89	0.78	Agree
7	Adolescents feel shy in sex education classes.	3.02	0.98	Agree
Grand mean and Standard Deviation		3.09	0.90	Agree

From the table 1, the items had mean value that ranged from 2.88 to 3.52 which showed that the items were agreed by the respondents as influence of family background on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools. The Standard Deviation of each of the items ranged from 0.75 to 1.09 shows that all the respondents have similar opinions on the items. The grand mean and standard deviation indicated a mean value of 3.09 and standard deviation of 0.90 which generally showed that family background has influence on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools.

Table 2: Mean response and standard deviation of respondents on strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools

S/N	Item statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
26	Opening more counseling clinics so as to meet the need of the adolescents	3.01	0.79	Agree
27	Alleviating poverty to help restore power to parents	2.90	0.92	Agree
28	Parents should work together with schools administrations	3.32	0.77	Agree
29	Churches should get involved in preaching against premarital sex	2.97	1.17	Agree
30	Parents must provide for their children and should not shy away from their financial obligations	3.08	1.16	Agree
31	Use of seminar and workshops to teach adolescents about the risks of premarital sex by School administrator	3.31	0.87	Agree
Grand mean and Standard Deviation		3.09	0.94	Agree

Data presented in Table 3 showed mean and standard deviation of respondents on strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools. From the table, the items had mean value that ranged from 2.90 to 3.32 which showed that the items were agreed by the respondents as strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools. The Standard Deviation of each of the items ranged from 0.77 to 1.17 shows that all the

respondents have similar opinions on the items. The grand mean and standard deviation indicated a mean value of 3.09 and standard deviation of 0.94 which generally showed that there are strategies to be employed to curb the risk associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance.

Hypothesis One (H₀₁): There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on gender.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the students on mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on gender

H ₀₁	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	<i>t</i>	Sig.	p-value	Rem
Variable								
Male	113	2.85	0.74	96	0.04	.52	0.05	Not Significant
Female	127	2.63	0.62					
Total	240	3.70	1.36					

Table 3 presents the t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on gender. The table shows that the sig (probability) value (0.52) is greater than the alpha value (0.05) set for testing the hypothesis. This means that the null hypothesis (H₀₁) of no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools is upheld.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level.

Table 4: ANOVA Analysis of the students on mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level

H ₀₃	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	F-ratio	Sig	p-value	Decision
Variable								
No education	4	1.19	0.64	3	1.40	1.01	0.05	Not significant
Primary education	44	1.74	0.70					
Secondary education	88	1.22	0.51					
Tertiary education	104	2.10	0.62					
Total	240	5.80	2.29					

Table 5 present the ANOVA analysis of the students on mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level. The table shows that sig (probability) value (1.01) is greater than the alpha value (0.05) set for testing the hypothesis. This means that the null hypothesis (H_{03}) of no significant difference in the mean responses in the mean ratings of adolescents' attitude towards sex and sexuality in secondary schools based on parents' education level was accepted

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that family background significantly influences adolescents' attitudes towards sex and sexuality education in secondary schools. Specifically, it was found that parents who are literate are more likely to provide sex education to their adolescents, facilitating better communication on sensitive topics. Adolescents from wealthier families tend to have early exposure to sex education through social media, which serves as an additional source of information on the subject. Additionally, parents who recognize the importance of sex education are more inclined to take responsibility for educating their children about sex and its potential consequences. In larger families, adolescents often learn about sex from their siblings, further shaping their understanding and approach to sexuality. Despite this, many adolescents reported that sex education has helped them address sexual urges, though those from Christian homes tend to discourage open discussions about sex. A significant number of adolescents also mentioned feeling shy in sex education classes. This finding is consistent with the views of Muola (2020), who highlighted that family background plays a crucial role in shaping a child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development, ultimately influencing their approach to sex and sexuality.

The findings of the study also revealed that the strategies recommended to mitigate the risks associated with sexual activities among adolescents in secondary schools include the establishment of more counseling clinics to provide tailored support, alleviating poverty to empower parents to take a more active role in their children's education, and fostering collaboration between parents and school administrators. Additionally, churches were encouraged to become more involved in preaching against premarital sex, while parents were urged to fulfill their financial obligations and ensure a supportive environment for their children. Seminars and workshops were also suggested as effective ways to educate adolescents about the risks associated with premarital sex. Kakavoulis (2021) emphasized that rather than relying solely on deterrence or fear-based strategies, effective sex education should work to shape adolescents' attitudes and beliefs while also equipping them with skills to make informed decisions about their sexual relationships, taking into account the potential risks associated with sexual activity. These strategies align with the growing recognition that sex education should be comprehensive, empowering, and supportive in enabling adolescents to make responsible choices.

Educational Implication of the Study

The educational implications of this study highlight the crucial role of family background in shaping adolescents' attitudes towards sex and sexuality education. The findings underscore the need for a holistic approach to sex education, one that involves both family and school systems working together. The study suggests that schools should integrate comprehensive sexuality education programs that not only address the biological aspects of sex but also focus on emotional, social, and cultural factors that influence adolescents' attitudes.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of training teachers and school counselors to effectively communicate about sexuality and provide a safe space for students to discuss their concerns without fear of judgment. The findings also imply that parents should be actively engaged in their children's sexual education, with schools offering support through workshops, seminars, and counseling services to equip both parents and students with the necessary tools and knowledge. Furthermore, the study suggests the necessity of involving religious and community organizations in promoting positive sexual attitudes and behaviors. This would help counteract societal stigma and provide adolescents with a more balanced perspective on sexuality, contributing to healthier decision-making in the long run. Hence, the educational implications of this study call for a collaborative effort between family, school, and the wider community to create an environment that supports comprehensive, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive sexuality education for adolescents.

Contribution to Knowledge - Summary

This study highlights the significant role of family background in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward sex and sexuality education. It identifies key family factors, such as parental literacy, socioeconomic status, family size, and religious beliefs, that influence how adolescents perceive and respond to sexuality education. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive school-based programs to supplement family efforts, especially in addressing gaps in home-based sexuality education. It also proposes strategies like counseling, workshops, and collaboration between schools and families to reduce sexual risks among adolescents. Generally, the study provides valuable insights into improving sexuality education in secondary schools, offering practical recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers to adopt a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach.

Conclusion

In conclusion, sexuality education is crucial both in homes and schools. It is widely acknowledged that misconceptions and fears surrounding sexuality often arise from ignorance. Once effective avenues for sexuality education are established, they will significantly complement the limited sexual education often provided by parents at home. By bridging these gaps, sexuality education can help reduce fears, promote healthy attitudes, and provide adolescents with the knowledge and understanding they need to make informed and responsible decisions about sex and relationships. Moreover, a collaborative effort between parents, schools, and communities will create a well-rounded support system for adolescents, fostering an environment where they feel safe, informed, and empowered to make choices that positively impact their health and future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Law enforcement agencies, religious bodies and parents should also teach and impose descents dressing and behaviors on youth to prevent rape, sexual molestation and harassment.
2. Parents and guidance are the primary agents of socialization they should develop good communication skills with their children, and openly inform them.

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