

RELEVANCE OF DEVELOPING INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR PARENTS ON ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work examined the relevance of developing an intervention for parents on adolescent sexuality education in Nigeria. Sexuality education is an educational approach intended to supply adolescents with information to a prosperous healthy sexual life. It helps adolescents to access information on sex, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and other problems. In Nigeria, sexuality matters are sacred; seen as taboo, and will amount to promiscuity. Parents spend time with their adolescents than any other. Incidentally, many parents in Nigeria are naive about sexuality, not knowledgeable; shy away from discussing it with their children, thus exposing adolescents to danger. This paper discussed the concept of sexuality education, adolescent sexuality education in Nigeria, adolescent risky sexual behaviours and intervention for parents on adolescent sexuality education. It will help establish positive relationship between parents and their children, by teaching them skills, how to start and sustain conversations on sex-related topics.

Key words: Relevance, Adolescent, Sexuality Education, Intervention for Parents.

Sexuality education is concerned with provision of information cutting across cultural background, puberty and reproduction, abstinence, contraception and condoms, relationships, sexual violence prevention, body image, gender identity and sexual orientation, aimed at preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. It is a normal, natural part of human development, and respect for adolescence right to complete and honest information. As adolescents grow, they face important decisions about relationships, sexuality, and sexual behavior. The decisions they make can impact their health and well-being for the rest of their lives. Adolescents have the right to lead healthy lives, and society owes them the responsibility of providing comprehensive sexual health education that gives them the tools needed to make healthy decisions.

Concept of Sexuality Education

Sexuality education came into existence in different countries at different times. The debate on sexual pleasure as an ethical substance to be governed by relations of force, struggle and establishment of dominion came into being in 1800's revolution. Across the globe, women agitate on issues concerning their sexuality; questioning and revolting against rules and regulations prohibiting their use of contraceptives and the spread of its information. Subsequent decades of that century experienced questioning of the concept of virginity and male dominance by both male and female (UNICEF, 2008). The socialization process of the child remained strictly the only way of acquainting the child with issues like family relationships and public manners with very little room for self expression (Adepoju, 2005).

Sexuality is about our gender, our outlook, attitudes, biases, our personality, education, and even experiences; our changes throughout our lives as we come to understand more about ourselves and about the physical and emotional differences and similarities between boys and girls, men and women. It starts from birth and continues till the end of one's life time. It is influenced by factors like moral, ethical, spiritual and cultural, and it includes giving and receiving sexual pleasure, and enhances reproduction. Sexuality deals with sexual anatomy, physiology, growth and development, gender identity and expression. It is also associated with sexual orientation, behaviour and lifestyles, sexual attitudes, values and beliefs, sexual thoughts, feelings and sexual health, body image and self esteem; deals with ones relationship with other members of the society. According to National Sexual Education Standard (2012), human sexuality involves the whole of human life whether genetic, physical, biological, emotional, mental and spiritual. It includes all aspects of lives such as impulses, the use of sexual intercourse as expression of love, including physical and emotional behaviour associated with the sexual act. It is shaped by values, attitudes, behaviours, physical appearance, beliefs, emotions, personality, likes and dislikes, spiritual, and ways of socialization.

Susan, Blake, Simkin, Ledsy, Perkins, and Calabrese (2001) reveal how comprehensive sex education can help adolescents delay sexual initiation and assist them in using protective measures when they do become sexually active. It equally provides adolescents with honest, age-appropriate information, and skills necessary to help them take personal responsibility for their health and overall well being. It takes care of relationships, attitudes towards sexuality, sexual roles, sexual development, self-esteem and self-reliance, gender relations and the social pressures to be sexually active, decision-making skill, and provides information about sexual and reproductive health services (Alford, 2008).

Adolescent Sexuality Education in Nigeria

Sexuality education among Hausas' of Nigeria is acquired through their peer groups, media and films (Oringanje, Meremikwu and Eko, 2009). Parents are very naive about sexuality education in schools because of misconception that it will negatively affect the children. In Tiv, and Igala, adults are not comfortable with sexuality; open talks about sexuality are clearly perceived as taboo. The Efik and other ethnic groups think that knowledge about sexuality is a way of preparing the children. In Yoruba, the context between the educated and uneducated is clear. Educated adults see nothing bad in sexuality education, but the uneducated say it is an abomination and such should not be heard of (Basavanthappa, 2008).

In Delta region, most adults view sexuality education negatively because they believe that it initiates sexual relationships. In Edo region, the general attitude towards sexuality education is negative. Discussion of topics is avoided because it is believed that discussing the topic will result in promiscuity and exposure of adolscents to bad habits (Oringanje, Meremikwu and Eko, 2009). Adults do not easily discuss sexual topics because it is considered a taboo. In Imo, Enugu, and Anambra States, there is no formal sexuality education. Parents teach children through their attitudes and behaviour. They believe speaking about sexual matters is vulgar, and as such sexuality issues should never be discussed (Oringanje et al., 2009).

Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviours

A significant number of adolescents around the globe are sexually active, and this proportion increases steadily from mid- to late- adolescence (Chandra-Mouli, McCarraher, Philips, Williamson & Hainsworth, 2014).

Teenage pregnancy remains a challenge, requiring urgent resolution all over the world. Approximately 95% of teenage pregnancies occur in developing countries with 36.4 million adolescents girls becoming mothers before age of 18years (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). According to W.H.O. Adolescents Pregnancy (2014), close to 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 and some 1 million girls under 15 give birth every year, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second cause of death for 15-19 year-old girls globally. Every year, 3 million girls aged 15 to 19 undergo unsafe abortions. Babies born to adolescent mothers face a substantially higher risk of dying than those born to women aged 20 to 24. Unsafe sexual behaviours expose adolescents to Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and other sexuality transmitted diseases which include herpes, syphilis and chlamydia which are transmitted through anal and oral sexual intercourse.

Other health implications of premarital sex include: unsafe abortion, vesico-vagina fistula (vvh) and some psychological problems, infertility and even death. Adolescents need information on the physical changes of adolescence and behaviours that are not acceptable. Continued support, communication and teaching during the maturation of adolescents will guide them throughout the adolescent years. Supportive discussions with adolescents on the negative consequences of sexual experimentation, like sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and damaged self esteem, is balanced with rewards of healthy sexual relationships (Salam, Das, Lassi & Blutta, 2016b). In their daily lives adolescents are exposed to mixed information about sexuality from the parents, teachers, religious leaders, media and even peers, which they need in developing their sexuality and sexual behaviour. Sex education teaches young people the skills they need to protect themselves.

Intervention for Parents on Adolescents Sexuality Education

Parents and guardians who are the primary sexuality educators find it difficult to give their adolescent children accurate information on sexuality education with the view that it will expose them to premature sexual intercourse and make them promiscuous, because some are shy, and not even knowledgeable on sexual issues hence discussion of the topic is avoided. On the other hand, the rate of urbanization encouraged rapid improvement in communication and transportation which had tremendous effects on sexuality issues in Nigeria. Letter writing and use of telephones also help in promoting interpersonal relationships. The print media intensified and popularized flirting, dating and a variety of sexual behaviours.

Conservative morality about sexuality is beginning to decline with people gradually realizing that sexual knowledge can serve as great weapon against ignorance (Coyle, 2013). Many parents are concerned with their children's sexuality education especially the negative consequences of early sexual activity like unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and sexual coercion (Oringanje et al., 2009). Many parents are uncomfortable with sexual language and find it difficult to discuss it with their children. Some people are raised in homes where sexual matters were not mentioned, thus never learnt from their parents, sexual matters (Williamson, 2013).

Certain parenting behaviours and types of parent-adolescent relationships are related to adolescent risk behaviours. Lack of parental care and upbringing is one of the factors that predisposes

an adolescent child to sexual behaviour (Inyang & Mong, 2007) . The more knowledgeable and involved parents are with the school and extracurricular activities of their adolescents, the less likely their adolescents will initiate sexual intercourse at earlier ages and engage in drug use and other problem behaviours. In addition, adolescents are less likely to initiate intercourse at a young age or engage in frequent intercourse and more likely to use contraception, if they are positively connected to their parents (e.g., feel satisfied in their relationships). Parents' inability to discuss sexual issues with their children is another factor that predisposes them to sexual risky behaviours. Both illiterate and literate parents find it difficult and embarrassing to discuss sexual matters with their children because they were not well informed on sexual education; feel incompetent and have no confidence to answer some of their children's questions on sexuality.

Considering the above, there is need to develop an intervention for parents on adolescent sexuality education because parents play important roles in the life and sexual health of their adolescent children. The programme will help establish positive relationship between parents and their children, by teaching them skills, facts, and options and offer advice on how and when to talk to adolescent. It will as well help them learn how to start and sustain conversations on sensitive sex-related topics; how to ask questions, and listen without lecturing. With such programme, they will learn basic communication skills to enable them talk to adolescents about sexual intercourse; establish a quality parent-child relationship; identify and reinforce adolescent's strengths; spend time with adolescent; help adolescent; develop future goals and supervision of adolescents. Parents are encouraged to praise or reinforce their adolescent's strengths; reinforce positive parent-adolescent relationships and discussing adolescent's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. These will help them understand adolescent's behaviors that are baffling and frustrating which might be part of their development.

They are reminded of how the physical changes may affect their feelings about themselves, and how their romantic feelings develop. Sexual orientation is introduced which will help parents acquire sexual information to enable them discuss sexual issues with their adolescents. Parents identify and discuss reasons why they are not eager to discuss sexual matters with their adolescents. Reasons such as, fearing that discussing sexual issues might encourage their indulgence in it, the adolescent being young to talk about it with them, disclosure of their own past than they want to, etc, abound. By addressing these concerns, parents develop the confidence to talk to their children about sex. Parents learn an approach called 'active listening', which involves paying attention, listening without interrupting, and identifying the feelings of their children and expressions which encourages adolescents to express themselves and engage in a balanced discussion with their parents. Many parents have fear of not wanting their adolescents to have sexual intercourse and not identifying the adolescent's beliefs or feelings about dating and sexual behaviors that might occur before sexual intercourse. Identifying their beliefs helps parents consider what messages they want to convey. Thus, adolescence having adequate information and understanding of sexuality education, will help them see sexual issues as human problem and treat it with affection, tenderness and respect of feelings of others because knowledge is power.

Salam, Das, Lassi and Blutta (2016a), observed that despite the evidence for the protective role of parents in adolescent sexual health, most HIV and sex education programmes targeted at adolescents have little or no role for parents. By implication, programmes developed for parents will have enduring effects on adolescents' behaviors. Parents' knowledge of the implications of their adolescents' comprehensive sexual health and development and their ability to use and retain the

knowledge and skills, will enhance the ongoing reinforcement that the adolescent sexuality needs. . Intervention programs that could help adolescent delay the timing of first sexual intercourse or increase condom use or other contraceptive use could help reduce high rates of teen pregnancy and STIs. This informed the need to develop a parent-based intervention on comprehensive sexuality for adolescent.

Conclusion

Sexuality education is the acquisition of knowledge that deals with sexuality. Lack of it has contributed to risky sexual behaviours and unplanned pregnancies among adolescent girls. Adolescents are exposed to mixed information about sexuality from their parents, teachers, religious leaders, and peers, which they use in developing their sexuality and sexual behaviour. This exposes them intentionally or unintentionally to sexual risks such as unprotected sex, rape, sexual harassment and incest. A well developed program on adolescent sexuality education for parents will help them acquire information and techniques that will enable them discuss sexual issues with their adolescents. This include reminding them of how the physical changes may affect their feelings, and how their romantic feelings develop.

Recommendation

Considering the above assertions, the following recommendations are made that Parents, who are supposed to be strongly behind their adolescents at each phase of their lives, should be well equipped with adolescent sexuality education through seminars and conferences. The programmes should be organized for parents to strengthen them with knowledge and skills that will help them interact effectively with their adolescents on comprehensive sexual matters, prevent and control the adverse outcomes related to risky sexual behavior and help protect and secure their future.

Early sexual health education was recommended to start from primary school which will help in influencing the reproductive decisions and sexual behaviour of the adolescents. Contraceptive acceptance and usage was encouraged to prevent teenage pregnancy

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