

Short Communication

Attitude of students and parents towards the teaching of sex education in secondary schools in Cross Rivers State

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This study was conducted to investigate the disposition of students and parents towards the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum in Cross River State. Using a random sampling technique, 602 secondary school students and 180 parents from Calabar, were selected for the study. Data were collected with the aid of self-administered questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The majority of the students (90.70%) and parents (93.89%) were in support of the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum. They believed that the teaching of sex education would compliment efforts being made towards the control of HIV/AIDS. Baseb on the results of the study, some recommendations were generated.

Key words: Attitude, Student's Attitude, Parental Attitude, Teaching, Sex Education, Cross River State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers, periodicals, journals and magazines often carry sensational stories of teenage sex escapades, pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea, syphilis and herpes (Oikeh, 1981, Adegboyega, 1986, Moodu, 1988 and Fabiyi, 1995). Most recently (relatively) but more dangerous are the reported cases of Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (HIV –AIDS), while the reports of expulsion of pregnant students by school authorities were also common (Ehinmowo, 1981, Momodu 1988).

Akingba (1971) claimed that nearly one million adolescents aged 15 -19 years become pregnant in the United States of America yearly and about 30,000 pregnancies occur out of wedlock and are unintended. Although up to date statistics were not available about the situation in Nigeria, there is no doubt that hundreds of Nigerian teenage girls roam about the streets of Nigeria's urban centers offering themselves to various men for economic gains. These sex escapades often result in pregnancies, venereal diseases and at some other times, fatal abortion.

What are the causes of this social phenomenon? Trefor (1975) feels that sexual resolution in its current advanced state is characterized by demands for new forms of

sexual freedom from repressive codes and styles of Victorianism. Societal, religious and legal expressions. Momodu (1988) was of the opinion that victims are mainly teenager from the secondary schools which are scattered throughout the nooks and crannies of the country. Adegboyega (1986) pointed out that school girls and boys in the cities had been known to commit horrible acts in their bid to get rid of pregnancies. He contended that their activities had always been influenced by what they had seen on television and cinema screens or read about on the pages of romance or pornographic materials.

The current general economic depression according to Ogunjimi (1989) had forced so many ladies including house-wives and single parents into trading their bodies for money (commercial sex workers). This according to him is being done to either supplement their meager financial resources or as a survival strategy. Egwu (1985) pointed out that some parents have because of poverty made use of their teenage daughters to make money from willing and in randy men.

Conclusively, prevailing circumstances among the various families, communities and the general societies at large have rendered the religious, moral and cultural che-

Table 1. Distribution by sex of parents and students responses to the teaching of sex education in schools.

Number of subjects: parents = 180; students = 602						
Acceptance of Sex Education in the School Curriculum						
		Yes	(%)	No	(%)	Total
Parents:	Male	93	(51.67)	3	(1.67)	96
	Female	76	(42.22)	8	(4.44)	84
	Total	169	(93.89)	11	(6.11)	180
Students:	Male	349	(57.97)	8	(1.33)	357
	Female	197	(32.72)	48	(7.97)	245
	Total	546	*(90.70)	56*	(9.30)	602*
GRAND TOTAL		715	(91.43)	67	(8.57)	782

*Sub-totals i.e. class total.

ck and balances in matters concerning human sexuality extremely irrelevant and moribund.

In view of the foregoing, the question thus, arises on how the society would meaningfully and constructively address the social malaise in the interest of the present and future generations. It is noteworthy, however, to observe that various recommendations have already been put forward by so many scholars. Akingba and Gbajumo (1970), Ehinmowo (1981), Wgwu (1985) as well as Adegboyga and Fabiyi, (1994) were of the opinions that the teaching of sex education should be institutionalized at the secondary school level. Their recommendations according to them were based on the fact that there was a high involvement of adolescents in sexual activities and that this development had made them much more vulnerable to the killer disease ably referred to as hydra-headed afflicted (HIV/AIDS).

Fabiyi (1995) contended that recommendation by experts may not be enough. Sex education according to him must be accepted by students and parents themselves as an appropriate subject to be taught in schools if a successful sex education programme is to be introduced in secondary schools. Oikeh (1981) blamed emotional rather than logical approaches to the evaluation of the need for the teaching of sex education, for the controversy that has inundated the institutionalization of the programmed in most parts of the world of the world.

This study was therefore conducted to ascertain whether the parents and students in Cross River State are in support of the teaching of sex education in secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of 602 secondary school students and 180 parents from Calabar, the state capital of Cross River State as shown in Table 1. Using random sampling technique 51 sixth year (SS3) students were selected from each of twelve randomly selected secondary schools in Calabar. For the purpose of this study, Calabar was divided into four zones. Three schools were random-

ly selected from each of the four zones. Six hundred and two (602) of the 612 students that completed the questionnaire were used for the study. The sample consisted of 357 (59.30%) male and 245 (40.69%) female students as shown in Table 1. Also 96 (53.33% male parents and 84 (46.67%) female parents participated in the study as shown in Table 1.

The instrument for data collection was a self administered questionnaire developed by the author. Face and content validity was confirmed by two professional colleagues. The questionnaire solicited information on the sex education to be taught in the second schools. They were asked to indicate by identifying reason for their choice as contained in the questionnaire.

Findings

The data revealed that a majority of the students 546 (90.70%) and most parents 169 (93.89%) were in support of the teaching of sex education in secondary schools (Table 1) 470 (78.07% students and 163 (85.00%) parents indicated that the teachings of sex education would help to stem the tide of HIV/AIDS infection.

Almost all the subjects of the study 587 (97.71%) students and 174 (96.67%) parents believed that the teaching of sex education would go a long way to reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancy. More information in why sex education should be taught as expressed by the subject of the study is contained in Table 2.

Discussion

It is gratifying to note that majority of the students and parents in this study were in favour of the teaching of sex education in secondary schools. This development did not come as a surprise because a lot of work had been done to convince the populace about the reality of the high incidence of HIV/AIDS that had been recorded within the state. The Federal and State Ministries of Health as well as many other non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have been carrying out HIV/AIDS intervention programmes in the state. The permissive nature of the

Table 2. Reasons for accepting the teaching sex education in schools.

Reasons	Students		Parents	
	No.	%	No.	%
Students will be able to avoid unwanted pregnancies	587	(97.51)	174	(96.67)
It will reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS among youths	470	(78.07)	153	(85.00)
Adolescents would be properly informed about human sexuality	182	(30.23)	48	(26.67)
It will reduce illegal abortion	53	(8.8)	28	(15.56)
It is one of the responsibilities of the school	49	(8.14)	18	(10.00)
Teachers are better trained to do the job	27	(4.49)	-	-
Others	24	(3.99)	12	(6.67)

society makes causal and unbridled sexual activities a norm rather than an aberration.

The finding agreed with that of Adegboyega and Fabiyi (1994) in which majority of parents in Ondo State favoured the introduction of sex education to schools. It must be noted, however, that the fear of HIV/AIDS has sensitized the people in Cross Rivers State towards the need to be more sexually responsible.

The conviction of almost all the subjects of this study (students 97.5% and Parents 96.6%) that the teaching of sex education will help students avoid unwanted pregnancy is a confirmation of the opinions of scholars on the advantages of sex education in schools. The above has gone a long way to vindicate Egwu (1985), Ogunjimi (1989) and Adegboyega and Fabiyi (1994), on their views in respect immediate advantages that are of importance towards the students' education.

Neither the parents nor majority of the students who participated in this study were of the opinion that the teachers in schools are better trained to carry out the sex education assignment.

This is a clear indication that the society is yet to have require confidence in the ability of the teachers to carry out this important assignment. It must be noted that teachers are members of the society, they do not live in isolation and therefore cannot hide their deficiencies i.e. moral, emotional, etc. from other members of the public. The above revelation constitutes a serious challenge to future of sex education and other important educational programmes in schools.

Conclusion

Both the parents and students supported the teaching of sex education in the secondary school level. They however, have their misgivings in respect of the capability if not the suitability of teachers to do an effective work on the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The teaching of sex education in secondary school should be made compulsory and effective without further delay.
2. Efforts should also be made to further enrich the pre-service training programme of teachers with sufficient contents in sex education. This will enable them live up to expectations in their job after leaving the college.
3. More information should be made available to educate Cross River State population on what sex education is. This should be done through the use of the mass media, churches and other religious organizations, workshop and seminars for social organizations like women's groups, market men and women, etc.

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