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Rationale for Sex Education: Strategy for Reduction of Gender Based Violence among Nigerian Youth

Dr. Evans-obinna Rosemary Nkechinyere

Lecturer, Department of Educational Management, College of Science and Technology Education,
(COASTED), Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

Abstract:

Sex and sexual instinct is part of human nature and one of the most wonderful gifts of nature to mankind. Evidence abound to suggest that violence in the society is a global issue. In Nigeria, Violence appears to be a permanent phenomenon. Daily newspapers report of varying violent incidences in our National Assemblies, homes, place of work, motor parks, markets, schools and tertiary institutions. But in most cases, women are the unfortunate victims of societal violence. Traditionally, adolescents are not given any information on sexual matters, with discussion of these issues being considered taboo. Such instruction as was given was traditionally left to a child's parents. Nowadays, sex is being glamorized in books, television, phones and movies. These places do not really encourage our youths to become chaste and also maintain conduct that gives them real happiness both now and in the future. Since they are curious to know about sex, it will really be demanding if they are not given sex education both at home and in the school. Sex education does not mean instructing the youth in sexual techniques or acts, rather it entails giving the necessary facts or knowledge about sex and encouraging questions and discussions. It is rather a preventive measure against sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, genital herpes and worse still HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and abortion and at extreme cases untimely death. There is therefore every need to guide the youths in the right direction by providing them with the most needed information and to be supportive in weighing the consequences of their actions. As some perceive sex education and public discussions on human sexuality as a taboo. This discourse therefore sets to examine the rationale for sex education, gender based violence, the concept of sex education and youth sexuality of education of youths and who gives sex education and how. In addition, the paper suggests possible measures to reduce violence among Nigerian youths and recommends the need for adequate sex education.

Keywords: Rationale, Sex Education, Gender based Violence and Youths

1. Introduction

Sex and sexuality is parts of human nature. It is God's gift to man. Sex education has received attention from some Nigerians in recent years. Opinions and ideas have conflicted on the issue of whether there should be education or not. Sex education and discussions on human sexuality is perceived as a taboo. Others believe that we cannot over emphasize the need for sex education.

Sex and sexual instinct are among the wonderful gifts of nature to mankind. It is as natural as man himself. It is God's gift to man and an instinct that must be controlled by reason for the benefit of man and with the help of the giver, who is God. Sex and sexual instinct find their full and complete expression within the dedication of marriage. With full expression of sexual instinct inside marriage, man is certified a partner and a partaker in the work of creation. The end product of sexual behavior between two grown up male and female is another complete man. God endowed man with the gift of sex and sexual instinct not only as a unifying factor for marriage couples but also and most importantly as the avenue through which the face of the earth will continue to increase and multiple in human persons.

In Nigeria, it is a greater taboo to discuss sex where non-adults will hear about it. The situation is so terrible that any child who goes to the extent of mentioning such words as "pennies" "vagina" etc. is regarded as a spoilt or rotten child. In some cases, such a child might even receive a beating of his/her life by his/her parents or any other concerned adult. However, the truth of the matter is that sex and sexual instinct are part of man. Whether we talk about sex or not, our children will get to know about it and even get involved in sexual behavior. If for any reason they get involved in sexual behavior ignorant of the consequences, which is where the problem lies. It is against this background that this study wishes to examine the need for sex education and how it will be used as a strategy for reduction of gender based violence among Nigerian youth. The need to address gender issues has been given greater impetus by recent international conferences.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Cairo 1994, for instance, stressed the importance of effective promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women if the goals of sustainable development are to be attained. The frame work for action to implement the 1990 world declaration on education for all the ICPD programme of Action and the Beijing platform for action all place priority on the education of women as a human right as women's equal access to education is seen as key to

improving the health, nutrition and education of the family as a whole, as well as to empowering women to participate more fully in the development process. This paper therefore critically examines the concept of sex education, the rationale for sex education, gender and the different types of violence seen among the youths and stressed the need for adequate sex education of the youths and the aspects of sex education that should be emphasized.

2. Sex Education

Academic American Encyclopedia (1989) viewed Sex Education as “a formal instructional program to provide children and young adults with an objective understanding of sex as a biological, psychological and social life force. This source views sex education as a course or a subject of study in a formal school system. It went further to explain that this course of study will have a comprehensive curriculum which will be developed for sequential age levels, which will include discussion of the maturation and reproductive processes and extends to such related considerations as the following;

- Perception of obligation to self and others
- Protection from sexuality related disease, exploitation and injury.
- Awareness of the maturity required for full expression of sex in love relationships.

Encyclopedia (1997) saw sex education as “the study of the characteristics of being a male or female”. Sexuality is an important aspect of the lives of human beings and almost all people (including children) want and need to know about it. Onuigbo (2000) viewed sex education as ‘the importing or transfer of knowledge and materials exalting to sex and differences to the young ones or illiterates. It is the creation of awareness in all matters relating to the sexes development, stages, control and management. It is an exposure to and removal of all societal biases, inhibitions, misconceptions, myths, fears and misinformation about sex and sexual practices. For a clearer understand of sex education, it is important to define the concept sex. Sex is defined as the structure or component in animal body that differentiates between male and female, masculine and feminine, man and woman and the difference in each group.

3. Gender Based Violence

Around the world, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, Coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Increasing, gender based violence is recognized as a major public health concern and a violation of human rights. Women with history of physical or sexual abuse are also at increased risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Fear of using contraception or condom because of partners’ reactions can put a woman at risk of this infection and unwanted pregnancy. Violence influences the risk of HIV and other STIs directly when it interferes with the woman’s ability to negotiate use.

4. Gender and Education in Nigeria

Literacy is generally used as an indicator of the level of socioeconomic development of a society (National Population Commission, Abuja May, 2001). National Population Commission (2001) notes that the females are disadvantage and that the female disadvantage in literacy is probably the result of the interplay of socio-cultural, religious and economic factors.

Nigeria demographic and Health Survey 1999 provided an insight into the reasons for leaving school among females 15 – 24 years of age. The major reasons given are ability to pay school fee (15 percent), getting married (10 percent) and that they have had enough education (24 percent). Education is an important variables which tends to influence nearly every aspect of one’s demographic behavior and outcome. Studies have shown that formal education has a negative impact on fertility levels. Equally, the greater the knowledge about and, perhaps, the use of modern contraception the greater the tendency towards lower fertility levels.

Level of Education	Both Sexes		Male		Female	
Level of Education	Population	% Distribution	Population	% Distribution	Population	% Distribution
Primary	821,710	45.72	451,082	44.35	370,628	47.57
JSS/Modern	238,382	13.26	130,488	12.83	107,894	13.83
SSS/Tech	281,032	15.64	162,757	16	118,272	15.83
Poly/College	57,842	3.22	37,388	3.68	20,454	2.62
University	29,277	1.63	22,099	2.17	7,178	0.92
Others	353,689	19.62	202,677	19.93	150,012	19.23
Not Stated	16,399	0.91	10,703	1.05	5,696	0.73
Total	1,797,331	100	1,017,194	100	780,137	100

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Population (12 years and above) by Highest Level of education Attained by Gender.
Source: National Population Commission (1998:149) retrieved from WOREC (2005:118)

The blueprint on women education in Nigeria has succulently summarized the major obstacles to female education in the country. Mallum (2002) believes that education plays an important role in imparting knowledge and skills to an individual. Effah et al (1995) quoting UNESCO figures on Nigeria state that girls represent 30 – 90 percent of the estimated 118 million children of school age who do not go to school. Efforts should be made to foster academic progress and advancement of women by improving their access to education. Many women have made it to the top through education. In Nigeria we have many women of distinction such as Dr. (Mrs.) Dora Akunyiri of blessed memory, former director-general, National Agency for Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), she had more than 175 awards scholarships and recognized both national and international, prof. (Mrs.) Alele Williams, former Vice Chancellor, University of Benin, Ndi Onyiuke, Okonjor-Iweala etc.

It is therefore clear that with aggressive pursuit of education, giving of accurate and timely information to women through sex education, our country Nigeria will boast of more prominent women in the near future.

5. The Youth and Challenges

I am convinced beyond doubts, that what Nigeria needs this time around are men and women of character and learning. Nigeria is populated with intellectual, men and women of great learning but little of character. Character formation is a thing of the spirit when good character is added to good learning, the results are obvious. Scholars do not agree on any age bracket about the youth. Some say that a youth is one who is not married and others say that a youth is one who is within the age bracket of 16 and 35 years. I define the youth as “one who is not old, with a clear thought and mind, full of energy, and having the capacity to make contributions towards the development of society. But the youth of Nigeria, is saddled with great challenges. According to Obilor (2005) these challenges of are as stated below:

- 5.1. Political: Squander-Mania, sycophancy, arrogance, praise- singing, greed for power, bitterness, thuggery, military dictatorship, electoral malpractice, intimidation, unlawful imprisonment etc.
- 5.2. Economical: Sabotage, greed for money, mismanagement, devaluation of currency, low productivity, unemployment, scarcity of essential commodity, retrenchment of workers, hoarding, bank fraud etc.
- 5.3. Educational: School take-over by government, poor remuneration for academic and nonacademic staff, moral decadence in schools, cult practices, lust for paper qualification, loss of prestige of teachers, secular environment of the schools, low standard of education, poor teaching staff, expensive fees etc.
- 5.4. Public Morality: Worship of money, open bribery, official bribery, judiciary in coma, armed robbery, main and murder, embezzlement of public funds, decay of infrastructure, disregard of human life, hostage taking etc.
- 5.5. Domestic affairs: Divorce, single parenthood, unmarried adults, selfish in marriage, deceit in marriage, deceit in marriage, domestic violence etc.
- 5.6. Religion: secular humanism, religious rivalry, religious prostitution, proliferation of churches, spiritual vacuum, church and money, materialism etc.

Looking at these challenges, there is no doubt that youth in Nigerian requires help if they must contribute their quota in nation building, fortunately, we can still lay claims to some forms of our heritage of honor, reason, equilibrium, respect for the social order, for duty, for patriotism, in truth, all positive human values expressed take its rightful place in nation building. To do this, the youth must be given as Socrates (CF: Fonlon 1969:88) said “a thorough physical, moral and intellectual education”. Both Plato (The Republic) and Aristotle (Politics) insisted on moral education for the youth. This article follows in that noble step. I am convinced that the matrix for reduction in gender based violence among Nigerian youth is character formation that comes through sexuality education.

6. Sexuality Education

Youths are the major segment of the Nigerian labour force upon which the future of Nigeria and government lies. They are known as the most heterosexuality active age the world over. Hormonal changes during puberty bring about a dramatic increase in sexual interest in youths.

But in the absence of adequate, valid and reliable information as is found in sexuality education, youths may be involved in unsafe sexual activities. Unfortunately, as a result of cultural factors discussion of sex is seen as a taboo in very many homes in Nigeria (WACOL, 2003) which proves the essence of sex education. Sex education is that aspect of health education which prepares the youth to understand his development biologically, physiologically and socially to full maturity as a man or woman. Sexuality education assists the youth to understand the meaning of sexuality in person and family life as a form of behaviour and mode of interpersonal relationship in which biological, social, and cultural factors are involved (Omeje & Okere, 2009).

Among parents, teachers and significant others, there are substantial disagreements about what a comprehensive course in sexuality education should include. Kirby (2000) suggested:

1. Focusing on education of one or more of the sexual behaviours that lead to unintended pregnancy or HIV/ STI infection.
2. Giving a clear message by continually taking a strong stance on risky behaviours.
3. Providing accurate information about the risks of unprotected intercourse and methods of avoiding unprotected intercourse.
4. Including activities that address social pressures associated with sexual behavior.
5. Stressing the value and benefits of remaining abstinent until involved in a committed and enduring relationship.
6. Stressing that there are no infallible methods of contraception aside from abstinence and that condoms cannot protect HIV and STD 100%.
7. Beginning sex education early in life and continuing throughout the life span and recognizing the special place that sexuality has in everyday life.
8. Demonstrating respect for people with different sexual values.

7. Sexual Deviation among Nigerian Youths

The various types of sexual deviation that exist among Nigeria youths include the following:

- Exhibitionism: Exposure of the genitals.
- Fetishism: The use of non-living things or non-genital parts of the human anatomy as objects of sexual desire or fantasy.

- Pedophilia: Sexual aroused as a result of physical contact with prepubescent children.
- Incest: Sexual arousal by, or sexual relationships with a close family member or a person with the same filial ties.
- Sexual Sadism: Sexual arousal that comes as a result of inflicting humiliation, suffering or death on oneself.
- Voyeurism: The covert viewing of other individuals who are naked, undressing, or engaged in sexual activity, as the primary means of sexual arousal.
- Transvestitism: Sexual arousal that emanates from dressing in the clothes or underwear of the opposite sex.
- Frotteurism: Obtaining sexual arousal and gratification by rubbing one's genitals against others in public places.
- Bestiality: Sexual attraction to, sexual desire for, or sexual arousal by animals.
- Homosexuality: Sexual stimulation or activity with a person or people of the same sex/ gender.

8. Rationale for Sex Education

Sex in this modern society is too complex a phenomenon for instruction to be left to the varying influences of parental attitudes and haphazard environmental exposure. Sex education is a preventive measure against sexually transmitted diseases like: syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Genital herpes and worse still HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, abortions and at extreme cases untimely death. Sex education is a cultural force for the development of mature psychosexual relationships in emerging adult life or youngsters. Most individuals in our society are morally bankrupt especially where it concerns sex and sexual behavior. Sexual immorality and promiscuity is what characterizes our present day society. Purity and virginity are regarded as "Old school philosophy". Signify backwardness and primitivism. Such a society like ours calls for the sex education of our youngsters who are always the victim of sex abuse, violence and intimidation.

Another reason for sex education could be appreciated with this illustration. An innocent five- year old boy was playing with his peers, a girl. Suddenly, he removed this little girl's pant and started putting his fingers into her vagina. What readily comes to your mind (an adult that sees this act) will be. Who taught his little boy this act? A million dollar question indeed. This boy in one way or the other may have learnt this act from his immediate environment, a movie, saw others do such and so on. The point here is that there is every reason and need for sex education. The truth of the fact then is, how adequate is this knowledge to enable these young ones cope with the complexity or sexuality. Remember "half education is dangerous". With adequate sex education, the youth will be assured of correct and complete information about sexuality, which will enable them handle the intricacies involved in sex and sexual instinct.

9. The Need for Adequate Sex Education of the Youths

Gender based violence among Nigerian youth make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. There is therefore an immediate need to give them an adequate and effective sex education with particular emphasis on the consequences of these risk behaviours which most of them get involved into, out of complete ignorance. The most problem in Nigeria is that most of these youths are ignorant of the consequences of their actions. Therefore, if they are given adequate sex education, they will know better and hence will flee from these risk behaviours. For many years now, Sex Education and public discussion on human sexuality have been a taboo especially for some Christians and religious bodies. For these groups, talking about sex will bring about sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct have been on the increase especially among the youths with its attendant anxieties, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, abortions, and even death at extreme cases.

The big question remains, must we continue to keep quiet about sex and sexuality? To the best of my knowledge, the answer is definitely no. "God made us sexual beings and has given us a lot of positive information about human sex". it is only when this information is made available to the youths through Sex Education, then and only then will violence among our youths will be drastically reduced.

10. Who Gives Sex Education and How

Sexuality is an important aspect of human life and nature. In giving the young ones sex education, the following groups have certain roles to play. They are: Parents, Teachers, Religious Institutions, Family doctors, and the Government.

10.1. Parents

Traditionally children receive information about sexuality for their parents. Unfortunately most parents discourage Sex Education for such reasons as religious beliefs, cultural and societal bases and even sheer rigidity. Parents should inform their children about different organs of the body and their functions, the differences between males and females, pre-natal and post-natal development, puberty and its potent surprises and crises". The mother according to Nnamani (2005:2) should educate the girl child on the menarche, and the resultant physical changes of puberty as well as the father to educate the boys on the consequences of getting involved in sexual activity, the evils of premarital sex and its attendant problems and anxieties.

10.2. Teachers (Guidance Counselors, School Psychologists etc.)

There is a belief that children often receive false information from friends, classmates, peer groups, magazines, cinemas, televisions etc. therefore they argue that school is the best place for children to receive correct and adequate information about sex. Sex education can be included in the school curriculum, carried out as extra curricula activity like organizing student's week, moral instructions and inviting resource persons like doctors, nurses, psychologist, priests etc.

10.3. Religious Institutions

There are in very good position to educate the youths on issue of sex as they don't only see to the spiritual aspect of human development but also their physical, psychological and social growth. They can organize such activities as youth Forum, youth week, youth retreat, conferences, seminar, workshop etc. During such activities, they can invite specialists to give talks on issues concerning sex and sexuality.

10.4. Family Doctors

The family doctors can effectively educate the youths in the family on issues of sex not only because he or she is part of the family but he/she is equally a specialist in that area.

10.5. Government

It is the duty of the government, following the trends of events all over the world, to formulate and make laws to legitimize sex education in schools, design curriculum, state the level of the school systems, such laws may be enforced. The government should equally enforce and supervise such laws objectively, critically and pluralistic manner to the benefit of the youths. Others include N.G.O'S, communities and private sectors.

11. Conclusion

The youths or the adolescents are at the age in human development characterized by changes that pose lots of challenges on them and even on the society in general. In a bid to belong or satisfy his/her needs is likely to get involved in certain risky behaviours just for the fun of it without considering the after effect of such behaviours. There is therefore every need to guide the youths in the right direction by providing them the most needed information and to be supportive in weighing the consequences of their actions through sex education.

12. Recommendations

In line with the discussions so far, this writer recommends as follows:

- Sex Education should be introduced in schools in order to consolidate on parental sex educational at home.
- The government should introduce sex education in schools with a well-articulated and designed curriculum which include sexual terms, sexual deviations, preparation for marriage, preparation for child bearing and rearing, married life, parenthood, moral expectation of specific sexes, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning and development, violence seen among the youths, the evils of cultism, drug abuse and related behaviours.
- Government and non-government organizations and well spirited individuals should heighten their awareness campaigns.
- Parents should be encouraged by religious organizations to help in sex educating their adolescent children. Encourage the youths to embrace the age long virtue of chastity, purity, holiness and abstinence from sexual immorality and promiscuity.

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