

Impact of Sex Education on Adolescents' Early Sexual Exposure in Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of sex education on adolescents' early sexual exposure in Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State. Three research questions and three hypotheses were tested for the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The sample size for this study comprised 300 students drawn from 5,031 population of senior secondary school students using multi-stage sampling technique. Summated mean score and percentages were used to answer the research questions and t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses using SPSS 23.0. Findings revealed that sex education delayed adolescents' sex debuts, did not reduce the frequency of sexual practices among adolescents, and expose adolescents to the different modes of sex in Enugu State. Also, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts, frequency of sexual practices and knowledge of different sex modes based on their gender in Enugu State. The researcher concluded that the numerous sexual information available to adolescents from friends and social networking sites prevent them from inculcating the instructional lessons of sex education in secondary schools. It was recommended among others that a comprehensive sexual health education on safer sex practices capable of equipping adolescents with assertive skills in dealing with sexual relationships should be design as a stand-alone subject in secondary school curriculum.

Keywords: Sex education, adolescent, early sexual exposure, secondary school curriculum,

Introduction

A cursory look into Nigerian secondary school curriculum shows that pieces of sex education are embedded in Home Economics, Physical and Health Education, Social Studies and Integrated Science as well as Biology. Due to the increasing rates of sexual transmitted diseases in the society, the teaching of sex education cannot be overemphasized. Sadly, sex education is not given its due attention by teachers, media, parents, pastors and imams in Nigeria because of the hypocritical image of the Nigerian populace towards matters of sex. Sex education is an educational programme that enable its recipients' to make rational decisions about their sexual engagements. Sex education, which is sometimes called sexuality education or relationships education, is the process of acquiring sexual related information, and forming attitudes and beliefs

about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy (Forrest, 2002). According to Barbara (2011), sex education refers to formal programs of instruction on a wide range of issues relating to human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse, reproductive health, emotional relations, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, contraception, and other aspects of human sexual behavior.

The societal structure of Nigeria makes it a taboo for Nigerians to talk about sex education in public gatherings. It is not surprising that, most Nigerian adolescent gets sex education from their immature peers that lead to wrong conceptions about sex. Getting sex education from questionable sources could be responsible for early sexual initiation, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, unsafe sexual practices and increasing rate of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), among adolescents in Nigeria. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2012) defined an adolescent as a person between the ages of 10 and 19 years. Hence, Dorn and Biro (2011) defined an adolescent as a person experiencing physical and psychological development during the period of puberty to legal adulthood. Adolescents are teenagers filled with potentials and are also prone to risky sexual habits. According to Isangedighi in Ogundipe and Ojo (2015), adolescents are young individuals experiencing a period marked by increased self-awareness, increased sex drive and development of self-identity. The easy access to uncensored sexual information on the internet is one of the fastest avenue through which adolescents are exposed to early sexual exposure on daily basis. Early sexual exposure refers to early initiation of sexual activities with access to sexual content at a young age. The researcher was of the opinion that early sexual exposure involves the disclosure of illicit sexual contents without restrictions among adolescents. On daily basis, adolescents are exposed to early sexual exposure when they are with their mobile phones, and when watching movies and musical videos. The consequences of early sexual exposure among adolescents include early sexual debut, unprotected sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancy, multiple sexual partners, forced sexual intercourse and the use of alcohol or drugs before engaging in sexual intercourse (Ayodele, 2012).

The researcher believed that when adolescents are deeply drown in the waters of early sexual exposure, sexual harassment becomes a norm for them. Touching of the other gender's sensitive body parts becomes a growing habit, making expensive sexual jokes, gestures, or remarks, spreading dirty sexual rumours about their peers, making cocky comments about a person's body becomes part of adolescents' lifestyle. The implication of early sexual exposure among adolescents include early debut in sexual activities, having sex with many partners, inconsistent use of condoms, use of performance enhanced drug substances for sexual activities, and engaging in anal and oral sexual intercourse without sexual guidance. In order to keep adolescents from the dangers of early sexual exposure, the place of sex education in educational institutions should not be neglected because it will provide them with complete and honest information about their sexuality, and help them make healthy sexual decisions for themselves in the society.

In Nigeria, especially in the South East, early sexual debut or early sexual engagement appears to be a common feature among male and female adolescents due to early marriage arrangement between parents, peer influence or personal proclivity. The advent of puberty tends to make male and female teenagers developed strong sexual interest to the point of exploring the concept of sexual intercourse with the opposite gender. Against this backdrop, the researcher sought to determine the impact of sex education on adolescents' early sexual exposure in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The ever adventurous state of adolescence makes it possible for teenagers to engage in risky sexual activities without any form of protection that might increase their chances of contacting sexually transmitted diseases. Despite the call for safe sex practices across radios and television stations in Nigeria, the spread of HIV, genital herpes and syphilis as well as unwanted abortions and pregnancies among Nigerian adolescents is on the increase in South East, Nigeria and other parts of the nation. The problem of this study is that, there seems to be paucity of empirical works on the impact of sex education on adolescents' early sexual exposure in terms of their sex debuts, frequency of sexual practices and knowledge of different modes of sex in Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State. The identified gap in knowledge necessitated this research study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the impact of sex education on adolescents' early sexual exposure in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Impact of sex education on adolescents' sex debuts
2. Impact of sex education on adolescents' frequency of sexual practices
3. Impact of sex education on adolescents' knowledge of different modes of sex

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of sex education on adolescents' sex debuts?
2. What is the impact of sex education on adolescents' frequency of sexual practices?
3. What is the impact of sex education on adolescents' knowledge of different modes of sex?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses, tested at 0.05 level of significance guided this study

1. Gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts
2. Gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices
3. Gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of different modes of sex

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was conducted in Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The decision to use Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State for the study was informed by the fact that the area has a significant number of secondary schools coupled with the fact that there seems to be paucity of extensive research works on the impact of sex education on adolescents early sexual exposure in the area.

The population of the study comprised 5,031 (2045 males and 2986 females) Senior Secondary School (SSS II) students in the existing 45 public secondary schools in Obollo-Afor Education Zone, Enugu State. The sample for this study comprised 300 students drawn using multi-stage sampling technique. First, a simple random sampling technique by balloting with replacement was used to select two local government (Udenu and Igboeze South local government areas) from the three local government areas that made up Obollo-Afor education zone. Secondly, a purposive sampling was used to select five co-educational schools from each of the two local governments giving a total of 10 secondary schools. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 30 students (15 male and 15 female adolescents) from the sampled secondary schools.

A structured questionnaire titled “Impact of Sex Education on Early Sexual Exposure Questionnaire (ISESEQ)” was used for data collection. The questionnaires were validated by three experts; two from the Department of Social Work, University of Nigeria and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established by administering the draft of the questionnaire to 20 senior secondary students in Agbani zone of Enugu State who are not part of the population of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined by Cronbach alpha statistic which yielded the reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.77 and 0.93 for clusters B₁, B₂, and B₃ respectively. The result showed an average reliability coefficient of 0.84.

The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A consists of two items on the bio-data of the respondents. Section B consists four items in clusters B₁ to B₃ organized in accordance with the three research questions guiding the study. The instrument is structured on a 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned weight of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The researcher together with five research assistants used direct delivery method to distribute the questionnaires to the 300 senior secondary school students in Udenu and Igboeze South Local Government areas in Obollo-Afor education zone. The data collected was analyzed using summated mean score and percentages to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS 23.0

Results of Analysis

Research Question 1

What is the impact of sex education on adolescents’ sex debuts?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Range of scores of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debut

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
48.00 – 58.00	168	56	Strongly Agree
37.00 – 47.00	94	31.3	Agree
26.00 – 36.00	22	7.4	Disagree
15.00 – 25.00	16	5.3	Strongly Disagree

Results presented in Table 1 show that 168 (56%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 48.00 to 58.00 strongly agreed that sex education made them had their sex debut at 18 years and above in Enugu State, while 94 (31.3%) of adolescents with the scores ranging from 37.00 to 47.00 agreed that sex education made them had their sex debut at 16 - 17 years. Furthermore, 22 (7.4%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 26.00 to 36.00 disagree that sex education made them had their sex debut at 14 - 15 years, while 16 (5.3%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 15.00 to 25.00 strongly disagreed that sex education made them had their sex debut at 12 - 13 years. From the results presented, sex education delay adolescents' sex debut in Enugu State.

Research Question 2

What is the impact of sex education on adolescents' frequency of sexual practices?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Range of scores of adolescents on the impact of sex education on frequency of sexual practices

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
72.00 – 91.00	25	8.3	Strongly Agree
52.00 – 71.00	11	3.7	Agree
32.00 – 51.00	138	46	Disagree
12.00 – 31.00	126	42	Strongly Disagree

Results presented in Table 2 show that 25 (8.3%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 72.00 to 91.00 strongly agreed that sex education exposes them to kissing while 11 (3.7%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 52.00 to 71.00 agreed that sex education exposes them to the touching of private parts of other gender. Furthermore, 138 (46%) of adolescents with the scores ranging from 32.00 to 51.00 disagree that sex education exposes them to sexual intercourse, while 126 (42%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 12.00 to 31.00 strongly disagreed that sex education exposes them to sexting. From the results presented, sex education did not reduce the frequency of sexual practices among adolescents in Enugu State.

Research Question 3

What is the impact of sex education on adolescents' knowledge of different modes of sex?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Range of scores of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of different sex modes

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
51.00 – 61.00	173	57.6	Strongly Agree
40.00 – 50.00	101	33.7	Agree
29.00 – 39.00	15	5	Disagree
18.00 – 28.00	11	3.7	Strongly Disagree

Results presented in Table 3 show that 173 (57.6%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 51.00 to 61.00 strongly agreed that sex education taught them about vaginal sex, while 101 (33.7%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 40.00 to 50.00 agreed that sex education taught them about masturbation. Furthermore, 15 (5%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 29.00 to 39.00 disagreed that sex education exposed them to oral sex, while 11 (3.7%) of adolescents with scores ranging from 18.00 to 28.00 strongly disagreed that sex education taught them about anal sex. From the results presented, sex education exposed adolescents to the different modes of sex in Enugu State.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis (H₀) is that gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts

The alternate hypothesis (H_a) is that gender of adolescents does affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts

The hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented in Table 4

Table 4

Summary of t-test analysis of respondents' mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their sex debut
N=300 (Male =150; Female=150)

	Items Statements	X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Remarks
1	12 – 13	1.71	.46	1.84	.63	298	1.57	.76	NS
2	14 – 15	0.93	.33	1.17	.61	298	1.05	.82	NS
3	16 – 17	1.64	.76	1.88	.89	298	1.17	.41	NS
4	18 and above	1.93	.52	1.86	.40	298	2.61	.00	S

Key: X₁= Mean of male adolescents; X₂= Mean of female adolescents; SD₁= Standard Deviation of male adolescents; SD₂= Standard Deviation of female adolescent; Sig. = probability value (2 tailed); t-cal= calculated values; S= significant; NS= Not Significant

Data in Table 4 present the summary of mean ratings of male and female adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts in Enugu State. The data revealed that three items with p-values of .76, .82 and .41 are greater than the p-value of 0.05 at 298 degree of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts based on their gender. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on items 1, 2 and 3 was accepted. On the other hand, hypothesis of no significant difference for item 4 was rejected since the Sig values of the item was lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts based on their gender was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis (H0) is that gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices.

The alternate hypothesis (Ha) is that gender of adolescents does affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices

The hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented in Table 5

Table 5

Summary of t-test analysis of respondents' mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices
N=300 (Male =150; Female=150)

	Items Statements	X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	Df	Tcal	Sig.	Remarks
5	Kissing	3.63	.56	2.80	.32	298	1.94	.39	NS
6	Touching private parts of the other gender	2.14	.62	3.31	.43	298	2.90	.00	S
7	Sexual intercourse	3.70	.49	2.98	.57	298	1.86	.53	NS
8	Sexting	2.09	.24	3.01	.36	298	1.88	.93	NS

Data in Table 5 presents the summary of mean ratings of male and female adolescents on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices in Enugu State. The data revealed that three items with p-values of .39, .53 and .93 are greater than the p-value of 0.05 at 298 degree of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices based on their gender. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescent on items 5, 7 and 8 was accepted. On the other hand, hypothesis of no significant difference for item 6 was rejected since the Sig values of the item was lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices based on their gender base was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis (H0) is that gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of the modes of sex in Enugu State.

The alternate hypothesis (Ha) is that Gender of adolescents does not affect their mean ratings on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of the modes of sex.

This null hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6**Summary of t-test analysis of respondents' mean ratings on the impact of sex education on knowledge of sex modes
N=300 (Male =150; Female=150)**

	Items Statements	X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	Df	tcal	Sig.	Remarks
9	Anal sex	3.55	.26	2.99	.53	298	1.07	.18	NS
10	Oral sex	3.91	.53	3.10	.41	298	1.65	.69	NS
11	Masturbation	3.75	.83	3.08	.49	298	1.79	.45	NS
12	Vaginal sex	3.80	.91	3.41	.60	298	1.81	.60	NS

Data in Table 6 presents the summary of mean ratings of male and female adolescents on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of different sex modes in Enugu State. The data revealed that the four three items with p-values of .18, .69, .45 and .60 are greater than the significant value of 0.05 at 298 degree of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of sex modes based on their gender. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescent on items 9, 10, 11 and 12 was accepted.

Discussion of Results**Impact of Sex Education on Adolescents' Sex Debut**

The finding revealed that sex education delayed adolescents' sex debuts in Enugu State relates to the findings of Mmbaga, Leonard and Leyna (2012) which discovered an association between sex education and a delayed onset of sexual intercourse among adolescents. This means that sex education decreases adolescents' first sexual intercourse as most of them had their sex debut at 18 years and above. This finding tallies with the report of the United Nations Population Fund (2016) that quality sex education does not lead young people to have sex earlier than the national average, and in fact, can lead to delayed sexual activity and more leads to responsible sexual behaviors. This finding is in agreement with the study of Glover (2015) who reported that sex education decreases early sex debuts among adolescents because it shows them that they are socially immature for trauma of teenage pregnancy and early marriages. Hence, sex debut has changed over the past few decades with adolescents now reaching physical maturity before engaging in sexual intercourse (Tulloch & Kaufman, 2013). However, 94 (31.3%) of adolescents agreed that sex education made them had their sex debut at 16 - 17 years. Perhaps, the contents of sex education did not reduce adolescents' curiosity but rather increase their urge to engage in sex. This finding is consistent with researches done in Sri Lanka and Portugal where most adolescents enter into sexual activity during the mid-adolescence period (Rajapaksa-hewageegana, Piercy, Salway, & Samarage, 2015; Reis, Ramiro, Matos, De, & Diniz, 2011).

Also, the study disclosed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their sex debuts based on their gender in Enugu State. This implies that a comprehensive sex education is capable of influencing adolescents' age of first intercourse. This finding aligned with the report of the United Nations Population Fund (2014) which recorded that sex education has a positive effect on reduction of sexual debut among adolescents. The outcome of no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the

impact of sex education on their sex debuts based on their gender as reported in this study tallies with the study of Kirby (2011) who discovered that sex education reduces the age of sex debut among male and female adolescents.

Impact of Sex Education on Adolescents' Frequency of Sexual Practices

The finding revealed that sex education does not reduce the frequency of sexual practices among adolescents in Enugu State. This finding concurs with Parkes, Wight, Hunt, Henderson and Sargent (2013) which reported that sex education does not have impact on adolescents' frequency of sexual practices because of the internet and social media. With the inception of social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, adolescent are sending and receiving a lot of pornographic materials for fun. It is not surprising to find out that a large majority, 126 (42%) of adolescents sampled strongly disagreed that sex education expose them to sexting. This shows the great impact that social media has over sex education on adolescents (Onyeonoro & Oshi 2011). More so, the study disclosed that 138 (46%) of adolescents sampled disagree that sex education exposed them to sexual intercourse. Nigerian teenagers' involvement in sexual practices are on the increase because sex education is yet to be completely incorporated as a full subject in Nigerian secondary education curricula (Obiekea, Ovri & Chukwuma, 2013; Fawole, Ogunkan & Adegoke 2011).

The result of the study disclosed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their frequency of sexual practices based on their gender in Enugu State. This implies that sex education has no impact on male and female adolescents' tendencies to engage in sexual practices. This finding relates to the study of Fatusi and Blum (2008) which reported that sex education does not discourage male and female adolescents from frequently engaging in sexual intercourse. This finding supports, the study of Olugbenga-Bello, Adebimpe and Abodunrin (2009) which reported that male and female adolescents frequently engaged in risky sexual practices despite receiving sex education in schools. Perhaps, the transactional sex practices among adolescents as a means of getting money to buy trending clothes and fancy mobile phones in Enugu State could be responsible for the outcome of this study.

Impact of Sex Education on Adolescents' Different Modes of Sex

The finding revealed that sex education exposed adolescents to the different modes of sex in Enugu State. Perhaps, the contents of sex education in Nigeria exposes adolescents to vaginal and masturbation as a result of their societal and cultural background. This supports, the earlier study of Odonkor, Nonvignon, Adu, Okyere and Mahami (2012) which discovered that adolescents were aware and practice vaginal sex and masturbation. However, the study disclosed that adolescents were not exposed to anal and oral sex in sex education. This finding tallies with the study of Wright, Malamuth and Donnerstein (2012) which reported that adolescents knew about anal, oral and homosexual practices from television, radio, social media and internet. This implies that adolescents gets such awareness of non-penetrative sexual intercourse from their peers as well as from print and non-print media.

Also, the study indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of adolescents on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of different sex modes based on their gender in Enugu State. This disclosed that male and female adolescents were aware of anal

sex, vaginal sex, oral sex and masturbation. In today's age of technological development, adolescents have access to illicit sexual intelligence from all over the world within a second. The finding that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female adolescents on the impact of sex education on their knowledge of sex modes was supported by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010) on the basis that adolescents are exposed to different modes of sexual content in television programs, films, video games and musical videos at a very young age.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, sex education delayed adolescents' sex debuts while the adolescents were exposed to the different modes of sex but they were found engaging in risky sexual practices. Thus, the study concluded that the numerous sexual information available to adolescents from friends and social networking sites prevent them from inculcating the instructional lessons of sex education in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. A comprehensive sexual health education on safer sex practices capable of equipping adolescents with assertive skills in dealing with sexual relationships should be designed as a stand-alone subject in secondary school curriculum.
2. A peer-based health education system should be initiated in secondary schools where senior students can teach junior students the dangers of risky sexual behaviors in order to reduce wrong sexual information among peers and social networks capable of leading to teenage pregnancy and abortion.
3. School counsellors should organize group guidance programme for students in secondary schools and be more responsive and caring in educating adolescents about sex education in order to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases in the society.

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