

Strategies for Enhancing Healthy Sexual Behaviour among Secondary School Adolescents in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated strategies for enhancing health sexual behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Two research questions and a hypothesis guided the study. The subjects of the study was 160 secondary school adolescent students. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Mean score and t-test statistics were used for data analysis. Results show that adolescents healthy sexual behaviours would be enhanced through emulating healthy sexual behaviours of parents, not watching pornographic films among others. The result of the study also implicated factors such as increase in the rate of abortions among adolescent girls, increase in the spread of sexual transmitted diseases among others as consequences of adolescents' unhealthy sexual behaviours. The implications of the findings were highlighted and recommendations equally made.

Keywords: Strategies, healthy, sexual behavior, adolescents

1. Introduction

In the days of our forefathers' moral standard is a virtue which everybody quest for. Today, the moral legacy of our forefathers has been eroded by western culture. James (2004), regretted that what we used to know about virtue, morality and respect is fast fading away among youth (adolescents) in the society.

Adolescents are young people who are developing from childhood into adulthood, usually between the ages of 13 and 18. Adolescent as noted by Dale (2010) is a youngster, young person, a teenager. Adolescence on its own is a period and a time in one's life time when he or she develops from a child into an adult. Adolescence periods is usually between the ages of 19 and 18, however the age range may vary from place to place. Goleman (2005) is of the view that countries, cultures and tradition want what is best for their young generation and adolescence may be viewed differently from one community or culture to the next.

The period of adolescent is exciting and bewildering. It brings lots of developmental changes and problems. Many parents seem to be unaware of their adolescents' emotional, physical and social needs as to appreciate the challenge and adjustments they undergo. It is a period of stress and storm. The inability of both the adolescents and significant adults to handle these storms lead them to either healthy or unhealthy sexual behaviours. Ibe (2000) opined that sudden changes adolescents experience could lead to risky sexual behaviours if not well guided by the adults.

Sexual behaviours refers to all sexual actions and responses related to pleasure seeking. Abah and Echodu (2004) refers to it as one's ability to experience or express sexual feelings. According to Eyo (2004) sexual behaviour refers to the total action of individuals in handling their sexual impulses, that is the notion of expressing it as a male or female and how to live with it.

Sexual behaviour could be healthy or unhealthy. Unhealthy sexual behavior is any sexual activity that increases the risk of unwanted pregnancy, contracting Human Immune-Deficiency virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Highlighting on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy as risky sexual behaviour, Akinyemi, (2007) says that "the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in any given society leads to high level illiteracy". Unhealthy sexual behaviour also includes early sexual debut, unprotected sexual activity, inconsistent use of condoms, high risk partners or injection, drug users, sex with a person who has multiple sex partners, survival sex, otherwise regarded as sex in exchange for money, drugs, food or shelter.

The consequence of unhealthy sexual behaviour is that it increases the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted infections. The risk of unplanned pregnancy also increases with frequency of non protected sexual intercourse and in some cases even death. Any sexual behaviour that is planned, done with caution and respect like one acted out between life partners for instance could be regarded as a healthy sexual behaviour. Wisdom (2006) presented that high school adolescents aged between 12 and 16 are already in sexual relationship in their effort to express sexual feelings. This is an unhealthy sexual behaviour however Essien presented also that there was extensive sexual awareness among adolescent and that there was no difference between urban and rural adolescents. Stressing further, Wisdom suggested some measures of enhancing healthy sexual behaviour among secondary school adolescents such as passing relevant information on sexual issues during morning assembly,

discouraging them from watching pornographic and bad films and pasting pictures on bulletin board to show the damaging effect of unhealthy sexual behaviour. Whether these will equally fit-in within the area of the present study need to be empirically documented

Today in our society, movies and television programmes usually lead the young minds of adolescents into emotional state that eventually changes their behaviours into experimenting what they have watched with little or no knowledge of the risk involved. Unhealthy as it may, not much research works has been carried out to enhance adolescents knowledge of healthy sexual behaviour and their concentration in pursuance of worthwhile goal is seriously at risk. Thus the questions, what are the consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviours and what are ways of enhancing health sexual behaviours among adolescents? Premised on this, the present study is faced with the problem of ascertaining the strategies for enhancing healthy sexual behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State.

2. Research Questions

This study is guided by two research questions:

1. What are the consequences of adolescents' unhealthy sexual behaviours?
2. What are the strategies for enhancing healthy sexual behaviours among adolescents?

3. Hypotheses

A hypothesis guided this study.

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of urban and rural adolescents on consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviour.

4. Method

Descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The study was conducted in Nsukka education zone of Enugu State. The population of the study comprised of 5,200 students, made up of all the senior secondary school students in SS II and III (PPSMB, Nsukka education zone, 2013). Stratified random sampling was used to select two schools from the three local government areas that made up the education zone. From these two schools, 160 students emerged as respondents through the use of simple random sampling technique.

Instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire called Unhealthy Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire. It has two sections with section A which sought for personal data information of the participants, while section B which contained 12 items and built on a Likert type scale measure of five point rating responses. This section sought for information on the consequences of adolescents unhealthy sexual behaviours and strategies for enhancing healthy sexual behaviours among adolescents in Nsukka education zone. It has two clusters and the face validity was determined by giving draft copies to three experts in faculty of education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. One expert each from measurement and evaluation guidance and counseling and educational psychology respectively.

The reliability of the instrument was determined in a preliminary trial-testing among 30 SS II and SS III students in Obollo-Afor Education Zone using Kuder-Richardson 21 reliability co-efficient. The Kuder-Richardson 21 was computed based on cluster A and B. The average reliability co-efficient of the internal consistency was 0.79. Copies of the instrument were self-administered using three research assistants. Mean score was used to analyze the research questions while the only hypothesis that guided the study was analyzed using t-test statistics.

5. Results

Mean Responses on the Consequences of Adolescents' Unhealthy Sexual Behaviours.

From table 1, the major consequence of adolescents' unhealthy sexual behaviours is unwanted pregnancies among adolescents. This is because it has the highest mean (X) score of 3.78. Also other items as shown on the table such as increase in spread of sexually transmitted disease, increase in death rates, and increase in rate of abortion among female adolescents are all consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviour.

Mean Responses on the Strategies for Enhancing Healthy Sexual Behaviours among Adolescents.

Information from table 2 shows that all the items have a grand mean (X) score of 3.17, which is above the acceptance cut-off point of 2.50. Conclusion drawn is that adolescents' healthy sexual behaviours would be enhanced through passing relevant information on sexual issues during morning assembly, emulating healthy sexual behaviours of parents, not watching pornographic and bad films, among others.

The t-test Statistical Analysis for the Significant Differences between the Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Adolescents on consequences of Unhealthy Sexual Behaviours.

Data on table 3 shows the mean for urban as 2.82 and that of rural as 2.68. The data were further subjected to t-test analysis in order to ascertain whether there was any significant difference between the ratings of the two groups. The result shows that significant difference was not found between their rating as it concerns the

adolescents in urban and rural areas as regards consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviours. This conclusion was drawn based on the result where the t- calculated (1.52) did not exceed t-critical (1.65), thereby leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

6. Discussion

The study was guided by two research questions and a hypothesis, which focused on the consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviours among adolescents, strategies for enhancing healthy sexual behaviours among adolescents and differences in urban and rural adolescents on what constitutes unhealthy sexual behaviours among adolescents. Findings from the study showed that some consequences that could result from the adolescents unhealthy sexual behaviours include unwanted pregnancies, increase in the rate of abortion among female adolescents, increase in the spread of sexual transmitted diseases (STDs) among. This infers that reckless sexual acts or behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State is dangerous. The finding is in line with Ibe (2000) who noted that 40-75% of adolescents who engage in unhealthy sexual behaviour are more likely to get unwanted pregnancies.

The result of the study also indicated that the strategies for enhancing healthy sexual behaviours among adolescents include passing relevant information on sexual issues during morning assembly, emulating healthy sexual behaviours of their parents, including sex education in the school curriculum among others. These strategies were accepted by the respondents in effort to address unhealthy sexual behaviours among adolescents. Okeke (2006) state that counselors have the challenge of passing valid information to the adolescents concerning sexual matters as these relevant information are capable of replacing adolescents misconceptions about sex.

Finally the result showed that significant difference was not found between their mean ratings as concerns rural and urban adolescent secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone on consequences of unhealthy behavior.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations.

It is important to note that how adolescents adjust to sexual behaviours is important for their future. It is equally important that parents, counsellors, teachers and care-givers adopt open discussions and education on sexual and reproductive issues mostly for our adolescents.

The implication of the findings of this study is that parents and all those involved in education enterprise should embrace the findings and impart appropriate sex information to the adolescents in order to discourage their wrong conceptions about sexual matters which they got from their constant interaction with peers. This implies that parents, teachers, care-givers and counselors even social workers have lots of roles to play so as to enhance desirable sexual behaviours among adolescents especially in Nsukka education Zone. Equally, there was no significant difference in mean rating of rural and urban adolescent students with regards to consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviour. This was indicated by the result of the hypothesis that guided the study.

The present study was limited by inability of the participants to cooperate at the initial state. It was only with much pressure and conviction that they responded to the questionnaire. Furthermore the result could have been better different if much awareness on sexual issues were created among the adolescents before the study was carried out. The researchers then suggest such area for further research.

Finally, in accordance with the result of the study it is recommended that media house programme be re-organized in a manner that embraces educative and moral programme for adolescents to learn healthy ways of living. It is also recommended that a well-articulated curriculum for secondary school education be made to focus on sexual feelings, sexual terms, sexual deviations, sexually transmitted infections and their damaging effects.

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Tables

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Consequences of Adolescents' Unhealthy Sexual Behaviours.

S/N	Items Description	Mean (X)
1	unwanted pregnancies among adolescents	3.78
2	Society disassociation with individuals that engage in unhealthy sexual behaviours	2.34
3	Development of low self-esteem in adolescents	2.87
4	Increasing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)	3.70
5	increasing death rates among adolescents	3.17
6	increasing the rate of abortions among female adolescents	3.62
Total		19.48
Grand Mean		3.25

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Strategies for Enhancing Healthy Sexual Behaviours among Adolescents.

S/N	Items Description	Mean X
1	Passing relevant information on sexual issues during morning assembly	3.19
2	Adolescents emulating healthy sexual behaviours of their parents	3.08
3	Stopping adolescents from watching pornographic and bad films	3.42
4	Pasting photographs on bulletin board that show the damaging effects of unhealthy sexual behaviours	3.06
5	Avoiding bad comments like "you prostitute" on adolescents by parents and teachers	2.94
6	Including sex education in school curriculum	3.30
Total		18.99
Grand mean		3.17

Table 3: The t-test Statistical Analysis for the Significant Differences between the Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Adolescents on consequences of Unhealthy Sexual Behaviours.

Group	X	SD	No	df	t-cal	t-crit	Level	Decision
Urban	2.82	1.1291	141					
				298	152	1.65	0.05	Accepted
Rural	2.68	1.1531	159					

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