

An assessment of the necessity of sexual education for adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Youth in Africa often lack accurate sexuality knowledge due to reliance on uninformed peers. To improve access, parents in Africa should break cultural silence and talk to their children about sexuality. Sex education provides a comprehensive understanding of human relations, affecting male and female relationships. It is a cost-effective and fundamental method for improving health quality. It equips adolescents with knowledge and skills related to sexual and reproductive health, as well as information for accessing health services. Despite differing attitudes from mothers and fathers, encouraging sex education among adolescents is essential to enhance healthy sexual behavior. Parents should take responsibility for discussing sexuality with their children to break cultural silence and improve health outcomes.

Keywords: Sexual behaviour, Sex education, Adolescents, Parents, Young people

INTRODUCTION

A prevalent rationale for the inadequate sexuality knowledge among African adolescents is that they mostly obtain their education and information about sexuality from their equally uneducated and ignorant classmates. It has been proposed that parents in Africa should overcome the cultural taboo of discussing sexual things with their children and take the lead in facilitating young people's access to proper sexuality knowledge. A basic and affordable strategy for raising a country's health standards is sexuality education. Adolescents who participate in sex education programs acquire information about sexual and reproductive health as well as resources for assistance. Although there are substantial differences between the attitudes of mothers and fathers towards sex education, it is still necessary to support sex education among adolescents in order to promote healthy sexual behavior. Most African youth possess dreadfully incomplete sexuality education [1]. Poor sexuality education is viewed by researchers, sexuality educators, and various other groups involved in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Africa as the primary cause of the triple tragedy of HIV/AIDS, unintended teenage pregnancy, and unsafe induced abortion, which continues to claim the greatest number of lives among the youth on the continent [2]. A prevalent rationale for the inadequate sexuality knowledge among African adolescents is that they mostly obtain their education and information about sexuality from their equally uneducated and ignorant classmates. It has been proposed that parents in Africa should overcome the cultural taboo of discussing sexual matters with their children and take the lead in facilitating young people's access to proper sexuality knowledge [3]. However, this approach is predicated on the notions that parent-child communication does not exist in Africa and that parents will undoubtedly provide their children with sufficient and accurate information regarding sexuality. However, research done in the previous five years casts doubt on these presumptions. They demonstrate the prevalence of home-based sexuality education in Africa and the lack of correlation between the sexuality-related knowledge and behaviors of young Africans who receive direct parental instruction and those who do not [4]; [5]. The fact that young Africans who have been directly taught about sexuality by their parents continue to have false and harmful beliefs about sexuality highlights the urgent need to reevaluate the structure and content of home-based sexuality education across the continent. This study aims to investigate the communication between parents and children around sexuality and sex.

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Sex Education

These are the knowledge and abilities that a person gains to assist them in navigating human sexuality. Teenagers who receive sex education are given the knowledge necessary to make mature and responsible choices regarding their sexual behavior, including dating, wooing, choosing a partner, and conforming to social norms [6]. The physical, mental, emotional, social, economic, and psychological stages of human connections as they relate to male and female relationships are explained in detail by sex education. One of the main goals of sex education is to assist teenagers in developing moral values and attitudes toward sex and family.

- a. To form virtuous routines, behavioral patterns, and actions that align with these attitudes and principles.
- b. To learn about topics pertaining to family life and the physiology of human reproduction.
- c. Acquire the ability to refer to the body using the correct words.
- d. To learn about some of the potential results and repercussions of different behaviors.
- e. To dispel some of the myths and worries that are frequently associated with sexual adjustment.
- f. To aid in the individuals' emotional and social adjustment so that he can eventually become a parent and operate well as a family member [6].

The Need for Adolescents to Learn About Sexual Education

Male and female usher into a world of enjoyable experiences during adolescence. There is a lot of excitement and a need for sexual release during this time. Additionally, adolescents are enquiring and exploring both their bodies and the outside world during this time [7]. [8] clarified that adolescents have not had adequate access to information regarding human sexuality because of cultural and religious views. According to their opinion, sex education should be taught in secondary schools in Nigeria in order to provide teenagers the knowledge and skills they need to channel their sexual urges into other creative endeavors until they are old enough and ready to have sex. In Nigeria, having sex before marriage is seen as sinful. Families whose teenagers are found to have had premarital sex suffer greatly from it. [8] highlighted the significance of sex education, while [9] listed five causes of premarital sexuality:

- i. The characteristics of puberty: Isangedighi defines adolescence as a time of growing self-awareness, heightened sex urge, and self-identity formation. Some teenagers are naturally highly curious. Adolescents like them would like to have a sexual encounter. At this point, sex education is crucial to helping these teenagers learn how to channel their sex urge toward other creative endeavors until they are ready. Modernity exposure: Culture is ever-changing. It evolves over time in accordance with advances in technology. The advancement of technology has also resulted in a significant shift in teenage perspectives from traditional morals and values to what they refer to as modern living. Modernity was also introduced to the media and film industries by technological advancements. Music, movies, the internet, and television all have a big impact on how adolescents view sexuality. People frequently apply what they read, hear, and see. Sex education is necessary because these pressures put the sexual lives of adolescents in peril. Peer group influence: Adolescents experience social acceptance when they conform to the rules governing their peer relation group. Some adolescents are lured into sexual relationship by their peers who may have experienced it in one way or the other.
- ii. Parental care, attitude, and control: As noted by [8], parents are the first to instill moral values in their children. They serve as exemplary figures for their offspring. Adolescents are exposed to premarital sex when parents have a permissive parenting style. Some parents fall into another category where they freely indulge in extramarital sex. Teenagers from these households are vulnerable because their parents might not be concerned about their sex lives. These teenagers require sex education.
- iii. Eroding sexual morality: Teenage moral slackness may also contribute to premarital sexual behavior. According to [9], it is not unusual to discover a parent having sex with his daughter's girlfriend. Additionally, it is not unusual to witness pastors and teachers—who ought to be the guardians of morality—having sex with teenagers.

Review of Related Literature

According to [10], sex education is essential for students and has a significant impact on HIV/AIDS prevention. Knowledge and practice of contraception are influenced by sex education [11]. However, it was discovered that parents were typically awkward discussing human sexuality with their kids, and mothers were hesitant to bring up sex education with their daughter because they felt embarrassed to bring up these topics [12]; [13]; [14]. Studies have indicated that in addition to having appropriate training and a positive attitude toward sex education, parents and instructors who are active in sex education should possess some unique personal qualities [15]. According to [16], the majority of parents, educators, and students agreed that sex education should be included in the curriculum to help prevent unintended pregnancies, improve healthy relationships between opposite sexes, stop parental transmission of HIV/AIDS infections and STDs, and teach students about sex interactions, responsibilities, and consequences. Children in schools and colleges are more likely to accept formal AIDS education when it is taught in the classroom [17]. According to [18], sex education won't force pupils to engage

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in sexual activity. The majority of pupils in both public and private schools believed that sex education ought to be covered in the curriculum, according to the study.

Factors Influencing Parents' Views on Sexuality Education

Many research suggest that parents' gender is a crucial variable in influencing their views towards sex education, which helps to improve our understanding of parental attitudes towards sex education. Mothers are generally more supportive of sex education being taught in schools, even when it covers contentious subjects like contraception [19]. Mothers also seem to know more about sex education and to be more open to have the conversation. However, according to one study, fathers were more inclined to give their kids knowledge about sexual and reproductive health [20]. The educational attainment of parents may have an impact on how they feel about sex education being implemented. Nonetheless, there is inconsistent data regarding parental education levels and attitudes toward sex education. According to certain research, parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to recognize the value of sex education and be in favor of its instruction in schools. Remarkably, research indicates that there is a negative correlation between parents' educational attainment and their endorsement of sexual education. Parents with greater levels of education expressed reluctance to see the program implemented in schools, whereas parents with lesser levels of education indicated a more positive attitude toward it. According to [21], educated Chinese parents are more likely to uphold traditional attitudes that prevent them from having a conversation with their kids about sexuality. However, some research revealed that parental attitudes toward sex education are not significantly influenced by educational attainment.

Parental cultural and religious views may have an impact on their attitudes toward sex education. Numerous earlier research that highlight the notable differences in parental attitudes according to their cultural and religious beliefs also corroborate this claim. Parents who support traditional Chinese values and beliefs are less likely to have a sexuality conversation with their children, according to [12]. [22] Corroborated the claims made by certain parents that sex education should not be taught in schools because they believed it to be at odds with Islamic teachings. The place of living is another factor that could influence how parents feel about sex education. According to Liu et al., parents in metropolitan areas are more likely to adhere to conventional views and values, which may hinder them from having a conversation with their kids about sexuality. However, the results of a few research indicated that parental views regarding the inclusion of sexuality education in the curriculum is not significantly predicted by the home area. Based on the study, two studies showed that parents' attitudes about the implementation of sex education were highly influenced by their financial level. Greater wealth parents were more receptive to the teaching of sexuality in the classroom and exhibited a more positive outlook. Parents' support for sex education may be influenced by their familiarity with and understanding of the topic. According to studies, parents who are knowledgeable about sexual and reproductive health and are familiar with the sex education curriculum are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the education of teenagers about sexuality.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Sexuality education is a crucial and cost-effective method for improving health quality in a nation. It equips adolescents with knowledge and skills related to sexual and reproductive health, and provides information on accessing health services. Despite differing attitudes from mothers and fathers, encouraging sex education among adolescents is essential for enhancing healthy sexual behavior.

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