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## Promoting Sexuality Education in Tertiary Institutions: Expected Roles of Women Librarians in Nigeria

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**Promoting Sexuality Education in Tertiary Institutions: Expected Roles of  
Women Librarians in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This paper aimed at x-raying the expected roles of women librarians in promoting sexuality education on within the Nigerian context. The study adopted the desk-research approach where extensive literature review was used in generating data for the study. The findings reveals that women can organize talks for women and young people in the rural areas, organize sex education seminars in collaboration with students Affairs Division in tertiary institutions, use social media platform to disseminate information relating to sexuality education among others. Challenges relating to cultural, religious factors, low literacy level among rural women were identified in the paper. The paper concludes that educated, knowledgeable and skilled women librarians participation in sexuality education would help in preventing the high rate of teenage pregnancy, illegitimate birth among adolescents and sexually transmitted infections.

**Keywords: Education, Librarians, Sex Education, Tertiary Institution, Women Librarians, Nigeria.**

## **Introduction**

There are different kinds of sexual aberration that are visible in the society, which the adolescents practice as a result of premarital sexual permissiveness. They include illegitimacy, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, sexual harassment and exploitation including rape and incest (Eze & Adu, 2015:402). The devastating consequences of inappropriate sexual desires and practices among students calls for sober reflections and prompt actions of all and sundry (Gesinda, 2010). Nigerian adolescents are plague with social and moral decadence ranging from indecent dressing, drug addiction, pornographic attachment, hooliganism, abortion, teenage pregnancy to rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDs (Adeniyi, Oyewumi & Fakolade, 2010). Sex education is the mechanism or procedures, which stands for the protection, improvement and development of the human family based on accepted ethical ideas (Nakpodia, 2012). Sexual decision-making and related behaviour have significant implications for the health and development of adolescents (Ojo et al, 2011). Sexuality education was incorporated into the Nigerian educational system to address and create awareness on sexuality based problems especially among the youths. As put forward by Kayang, Jatau & Kolawole (2015), sexuality or sex education is an important aspect of the life of all humans and almost all people, including children and most importantly the secondary school students deserve to know about sex education.

Sex education was traditionally meant to be given to every child and adolescents by his/her immediate family but these practices have been eroded by the influences of modernization, western civilization, and collapsing family life. The effect of this is that the younger generations are left at the mercy of the wider society and other socializing agent who more often than not mislead the young

ones in the transition process to adult hood (Ameh, 2015). Sex education is a well planned and designed education scheme to instruct the young ones and adolescent to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding of the need for sex so that they can fit into the society as desirable member of the community (Sule et al, 2015). Every human individual has sexual feeling, attitudes, and beliefs, but adolescents experiences of sexuality are unique because it is processed through an intensely personal perspective, which comes from private, personal experience, public and social sources (Ogundipe & Ojo, 2015). Sexual development is an integral and important part of human development (Ogundipe & Ojo, 2015). Sexuality education to Sunday & Umeh (2014) is the responsibility of the community – including schools, parents, government and non-government agencies, volunteers, teachers, counselors, health workers, games masters, home economic teachers and skilled peer groups.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to draw the attention of women librarians to some roles expected of them towards promoting sexuality education in the context of Nigerian environment.

### **Method Adopted for the Study**

Secondary data were mainly used in this study, combined with brainstorming from professional colleagues.

### **Sexuality Education: Conceptual Analysis**

Adepoju (2005) explained sexuality education as simply the art of learning how to conform to certain art of living by being able to reason, examine and monitor oneself in clearly defined terms. Sex education to Nakpodia (2012) does

not necessarily mean instructing children in sexual techniques or acts, rather it entails giving the necessary facts or knowledge about sex and encouraging questions and discussions. Anameze (2002) in Nwakwurobi & Onwuachu (2009) sees sex education as the transmission of appropriate sex-based knowledge, values, attitudes and roles to children, which seeks to teach boys and girls the physiological functioning and use of sex organs and the expected roles of each sex organ. Sex education to Salami (2015) is the acquisition of adequate information, forming right attitude and beliefs about sex, sexuality, sexual identify, relationship and intimacy (Aniebue, 2007). Ameh (2015) sees sex education as deliberate, planned and organized learning experience in the aspect of human sexuality which is intended to equip young people with the requisite skills and adequate knowledge which will enable them to develop positive attitude on sex related issues as well as to take rational decisions in line with societal expectations.

### **Purpose of Sexuality Education**

Omeje & Nwosu (2007) citing Fee & Youseef (1993) avers that the primary focus of sexuality education is on the adolescents (youths) because adolescents reach sexual maturity before they develop mental and emotional maturity and the social skill needed to appreciate the consequences of their sexual activity. The importance of sexuality education was aptly captured by Obiekea, Ovri & Chukwuma (2013:325) when they asserted that:

Sexuality education could serve as an intervention and socio-psychological programme for youths in secondary education in order to reduce the rate of dropouts unintended pregnancies, deviant behaviours, early marriage that can cause VVF among

females, reproductive health issues, contamination of diseases like HIV/AIDs, ST/s etc.

Sexuality education according to James (2012) addresses a wide range of needs and is meant for all persons since its purpose is to achieve sexual health, which is not restricted to the act of having sex, but refers to “a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well being in relation to sexuality and not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. The goal of sexuality education is to promote sexual health and well beings, promoting positive life experiences and preventing diseases and unintended pregnancy.

Aniebue (2007) explained that sex education seeks to assist young people in developing a positive view of sexuality, provides them with information and skills about taking care of their sexual health and helps them make sound decision regarding their reproductive health. Henault (2005) in Ogbuinya & Nwimo (2015) contend that providing information on sexual relationships is beneficial in meeting the needs of the young people by decreasing inappropriate sexual behaviours and enhancing social skills among them.

The assertion of James (2012:286) underscores the relevance and necessity of sex education:

with the negative effects of modernization and a multiplicity of other factors which tend to reduce the ability of families to effectively educate and take care of their young ones, there is an urgent need for effective intervention strategies that will promote the well being of young people, foster positive attitudes and healthy behaviours in adult life. There is need for stakeholders to provide relevant life skill education to address specific development problems being faced by young people, particularly those of sexuality and reproductive health.

Effective sex education as reported by Sule et al (2015:35) provides young people with an opportunity to explore resources on sex and sexuality, understand why people have sex, and to think about how it involves emotional respect for one self. They further assert that young people should have the chance to explore gender differences and how ethnicity and sexuality can influence people's feeling and option.

Sexuality education to Sunday & Umeh (2014) will help increase personal perceptions of risk and harmfulness of engaging in specific health risk behaviours, as well as reinforcing protective factors. They further posits that it will also assist in addressing social pressure and influences, as well as reduce anxiety level about sex among preteens and adolescence.

### **Justification and Rationale for Sex Education in Nigerian Schools**

Makol-Abdul, Nurullah, Iman & Rahman (2009) citing Forester (2009) suggests that it is now widely accepted that young people have right to sex education, partly because it is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuses, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDs. According to Owuamanam (2013), in modern African societies, relationship between parents and the children is different from what they used to be in traditional societies. He further asserted that as the society gets more and more technologically advanced, the individuals' education passes more through schooling, television, radio, the press, and new ideas which create new attitudes than the family. Absence of sex education gives rise to adolescent sexuality (Kajang, Jatau & Kolawole, 2015).

Teenage pregnancy has global effects and implications which need the attention of every country, for instance in Nigeria, studies show that the problems



of teenage pregnancy affect the country's development. Oyinloye (2014) contends that sex education is a must to fortify the adolescents with adequate information on sex and sexuality and this is more urgent because young ones are daily bombarded by information on sex and sexuality from various avenues and it is evident that formal teaching on sex and sexuality will simply assist to enlighten them to acquire wholesome adjustment needed to fortify them against wrong attitude (p.1882).

As noted by Nakpodia (2012), there is need for younger ones to establish and accept the role and responsibilities of their own gender by acquiring the knowledge of sex. This to him would help to set up a foundation for future development in their acquaintance with friends and lovers and their interpersonal relationship. The rationale for sexuality education as put forward by James (2012) is to acquaint the youth with factual and accurate information about the dimension of sexual knowledge that will enable them understand and clarify their personal values, improve their sexual knowledge and sexual decision-making, thereby promoting their knowledge about how all these interact with socio-cultural and religious factors to affect personal well-being (p.288).

The sexual revolutions among contemporary youth as noted by Sule et al (2015) suggest sex education as an imperative for adolescents that should be protected from the harmful effect of deviant sexual behaviours. According to Sunday and Umeh (2014), sexuality issue do not disappear without appropriate information and education and lack of instruction can become destruction when it is related to sexuality.

Omeje and Nwosu (2007) through their findings implied that integration of sexuality education in the school will help to reduce teenage pregnancy, school drop out, unplanned/early marriage, STDS and HIV/AIDS disease for the

adolescent and the youths because they are the leader of tomorrow in Nigeria and over the world

The rationale for sexuality education according to Adepoju (2005) includes:

- ✓ taking responsibility for sexual health
- ✓ building new morality and removing falsity among people.
- ✓ preparing adolescents for adulthood role.
- ✓ helping adolescents to achieve their potentials.
- ✓ providing sexual knowledge that can serve as weapon against ignorance

Shittu et al (2007) posits that in a pluralistic society like ours, attitude about adolescent sexuality differ not only by ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious and geographic religions, but, also vary widely within individual families and communities.

### **Sexuality Education in the Nigeria Context**

As buttressed by Ogundipe and Ojo (2015), in most Africa context, especially in Nigeria, sex education is seen as a taboo to be talked about. Adolescent are not allowed to have access to sexual health information because the society have the perception that such exposure will corrupt the child and he or she may likely be a victim of early sexual intercourse. Adepoju (2005) in Stephens (2013) avers that in Nigeria, the evolution of sexuality education and its introduction in Nigeria school became apparent as there was an urgent need to

address adolescent reproductive health, sexual right and sexuality issue. Owuamanam (2013:17) painted a sorry picture of the Nigeria situation when he asserted that:

Nigerian society seems to set a double standard of behaviour between the male and female children when sex is concerned. Parents seem to be more permissive to male sexual behaviour than to the female. While female children are required to preserve their virginity till marriage and to see sex as dirty and sinful, and the males seems to be allowed to be free.

No doubt, the Nigerian child is being overwhelmed with the flood of information in the social space like Facebook, Whatsapp etc. The television and peer group are not excluded from the avenues through which the Nigerian child corrupted. If there has ever been a time that sex education is necessary, it is now, because if they are not taught on time, they would learn the negative ones from the sweeping social changes in the society.

According to Salami (2015), sex education in the Nigerian context is regarded as a taboo that ought not to be addressed in the public, noting that the little knowledge of sex education that a teenager is to acquire before marriage is expectedly given by the parent of the same sex. Eze & Adu (2015) x-raying the scenario in Nigeria observed that the adolescents are exposed to sexual stimuli through magazines, television and the movies to a greater extent compared to earlier times. This to them, has created a general trend towards a liberated attitude and values that encourage open discussion on sexuality that was once considered a taboo.

Ogbuinya & Nwimo (2015) affirmed that in almost all the secondary schools in Ebonyi, state, that none seemed to be offering format programme on sexual

relationship information/education as a separate school subject with its full duration accorded to it. They observed that the only avenue for some contents of sexual relationship information being offered is through correlated or integrated approach with other subjects like biology and integrated science.

James (2012) observed that in recent times, parents are too absent from their children and therefore, no longer counsel than on sexuality as most of the time the children are in school, hence our traditional values and norms are fading gradually because of the dangerous effects of modernization.

### **Expected Roles of Women Librarians in Promoting Sexuality Education in Nigeria**

As rightly noted by Gesinde (2010), the successful teaching of sexuality education is hinged on collaborative efforts of professionals, parents and the entire community. Women librarians could play the following roles in promoting sexuality education, these include:

i. ***Organizing of talks for women in rural areas on the necessity of sex education:*** Women librarians by virtue of their training are deemed to be enlightened. Therefore, they can explore organizing of talks for women in rural areas and enlightened the rural women on why and how to go about giving their children sex education. This will go along way in eradicating the misconception that they had already established about sex education.

ii. ***Organizing of sex education in tertiary institution:*** The Association of Women Librarians in Nigeria (AWLIN) in collaboration with Students Affairs Division in the various tertiary institution could organize sex education seminar for the undergraduate especially the first year students. This would no doubt contribute significantly in promoting sex education in Nigeria.

iii. *Use of social media platform*: Women librarian could explore social media platform as avenue for promoting sex education in Nigeria. A social space can be created in any of the social media whereby the women could answer and responds to issues bordering on sex education. The social media could also offer the young people the opportunity of learning from women that are in position of their mother, especially for those children whose parents busy nature does not permit them to interact as they ought to do.

Women librarians through their contacts with articles and publications on sex education with permission can post such articles on the social media platform for the benefits of the young ones.

### **Challenges to Promotion of Sexuality Education in Nigeria**

Promoting sexuality education in Nigerian cannot be said to be without challenges. Outlined below are the challenges that Women Librarians are likely to encounter when promoting sex education in Nigeria:

i. *Religious challenges*: As revealed by Ogundipe and Ojo (2015), there is indication that sexuality education within churches is still an uncomfortable topic that is only mention in passing. Thus, religious position will impede on the successes of women librarians effort towards promotion of sexuality education.

ii. *Cultural factor*: Nigerian culture like most traditional cultures, considers it a taboo to discuss sexual matters. There are cultural environments where children's knowledge on sexuality is regarded as harmful. Salami (2015) notes that these cultural and traditional norms are so strong that the children may not be able to known the proper names of their sex reproductive organs. Sex to an average African is sacred and as such, public debate on it is prohibited. In other words, the

traditional beliefs about human sexuality in the African context, does not permit open discussion of sex related matters (Gesinde, 2010).

iii. *Low literacy levels among rural women:* The low literacy level witnessed among women in rural areas posed a challenge to promotion of sexuality education in Nigeria. The implication of this is that talks or seminars organized in the rural areas should incorporate the use of local dialect or indigenous language because it is only when the rural women appreciate the importance and content of sexuality education that they can but whole heartedly help transmit it to their children.

iv. *Misconceptions about sexuality education:* Omeje & Nwosu (2007) observed that whenever sex education is mentioned that there is always a misconception. Some see it as equivalent to sex or sexual intercourse. Many see it as a campaign to create an increasing and dangerous obsession with sex in the minds of the adolescents.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that sexuality education that is provided by women that are educated knowledgeable and skilled in children-sex related matters would yield the desired result, thereby prevent the high rate of teenage pregnancy, illegitimate birth among adolescents and sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDs. Women librarians must wake up and assist the Nigerian nation to address the social malaise in the interest of the present and future generations.

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