The Role of Parents in Abating Teenage Pregnancy and School Dropout in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State

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Abstract
Parents who are by nature saddled with the responsibility of child upbringing have delegated sexuality education into the hands of teachers and peers who are often ill-equipped to handle such matters. The result is often catastrophic. This study has examined the role of parents in abating teenage pregnancy in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Makurdi LGA has a population of 297,398 (2006 National Population Census). A questionnaire titled “Parents and Teenage Pregnancy (PTP)” obtained information from 267 samples. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation on a four point Likert scale with decision point of 2.5. The study found that, parents do not discuss sexually issues with their children with a mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.04. On the ills of teenage pregnancy parents argued they are aware of the ills of teenage pregnancy with a mean of 2.15 and standard deviation of 0.989 while a mean of 2.22 and standard deviation of 0.835 were obtained on the knowledge of contraceptive. Based on these results it is recommended that parents should as a matter of necessity teach their children early about sexuality, educate them on the ills of pregnancy and the appropriate contraceptive.

Key Words: Teenage Pregnancy, the role of parents, abating.

Introduction
The adolescent period starts from the age of twelve to about nineteen years. During this period teens go through puberty and become sexually matured. The girls develop breast, their hips widens and they begin to menstruate. For the boys their penis is enlarged, the voice broken, or becomes deep or hoarse and the testicles become larger. If teens have sex, they will get pregnant or someone pregnant (Olayinka, 2000).

The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHC, 2008) shows that adolescent fertility topped other African countries with 121 live births per 1000 births, stressing that this is relatively high
when compared with other African countries that have considerably reduced adolescents fertility rates.

Similarly, the World Bank indicator of 196 countries puts Nigeria Reproductive health as follows: In 1992, 28.3% teens were pregnant while 1998 shows 21.99%, 1994, 25.2% and in 2010, 22.9% pregnancy cases were recorded (2014 Trading Economies). The National Population Commission (NPC) has disclosed that the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in the country might increase to over 60 million by the year 2015.

Teenage pregnancy seems to be the greatest killer of teenage girls worldwide and it is observed to be associated with consequences such as unsafe abortions and child abuse which eventually leads to school drop - out and unmet career aspirations. Other consequences as asserted by the HIV/AIDS Reproductive Health Survey shows that 73% of girls aged 13 to 19 years get married in Northeastern Nigeria and contribute to 71% annual birth and attributed this to lack of sex education, poverty, dysfunctional homes with single parents, non use of contraceptives, gender inequality, child and forced labour among other factors.

Concept of Sexuality

Sex education is the instruction on issues in relationship to human sexuality including sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual activity, reproductive health, emotional relationships, reproductive rights, rights and responsibilities, sexual abstinence and birth control (http://en.mwikipedia.org/wiki/sex_education)

The biological aspect of sexuality on the other hand refers to the reproductive mechanisms as well as the basic biological dine, libido that exist in all species which is strongly influenced by hormonal levels. The emotional or physical aspects of sexuality refers to the bond that arises between individuals and is manifested physically or through emotions such as love, trust and caring (UNICEF, 2002).

Experience has shown that adolescents are curious about sexuality as well as the nature in general and may seek to experience their sexuality in some way. The teens are under the influence of their peers who ginger them to believe that all relations with the opposite sex leads to premarital sex and that it is normal that if you love someone it is only natural to be intimate.

Traditionally adolescents in many cultures are not given any information on sexuality since discussion on this issue is being considered a taboo. Traditional norms and mores often promote virtue and chastity and most parents do not seem to expose their children to what is considered sacred. To Gyuse and Gyuse (1997), the word SEX in capital letter connotes immorality and religious faithful should keep off to ensure chastity. The growing child receives information everyday directly or indirectly about his/her sexuality from different sources such as parents, relatives, close friends, peer groups, teachers, media and religious institutions. However, Rakel (2007) stated that sexuality information provided by the peers and mass media could be inaccurate, misleading and inappropriate while school based education regarding health development and sexuality is often limited. Haris (2007) however made it clear that children learn much of their values including sexuality, religious facts, political affiliation and much more from their parents. Parental nurture according to her determines and governs who their child would become.

Added to that, Kolo (2010) opined that the parents are not only the first teacher the child interacts with but the most effective model that affect the child’s life either vicariously or directly. Parents should therefore resist the urge to delegate the sex education of their
Although parents may find it difficult or embarrassing to explain the facts of life to their own children, it must be noted that it is one of the most important contributions that can be made to the nurturing of a youngster. More so, the parenting style adopted by parents would endear their children into friendship with them. The attributes of friendship in parenting as stated by Westlake and Westlake (1992) portrays the parent as a supporter, a sympathizer, an intimate friend and one who wishes another well. They are attached to each other by self esteem, respect and affections. All these are characteristics of parents towards their children and of children’s attitudes towards their parents. Autocratic, permissive and democratic parenting styles should incorporate these attributes where the earlier style has not produced positive effects.

Having observed that, parental friendship with their teens provides appropriate stimulating environment for sexuality education, what kind of education and when do they need to equip their children? The nature of sex education parents need to provide according to Tabitor (2004) should focus on the whole person and presents sexuality as a mutual and positive part of life. It should cover all aspects of being a sexual, gendered person and it includes biological physiological, social, economic and cultural perspectives. It also cuts across all aspects of development. Wagma (1977) enjoins parents to teach the anatomy of the reproductive system, ills of sexuality and contraceptives.

The parents are seen as the teachers of children and they teach them language. Instructions on sexuality should begin as soon as the child can speak. Proper names for the body parts involved like in the males, the reproductive organ; the penis and the testicles. The female reproductive organ is the vagina. At the end of the vagina is an opening called the cervix, this leads into the uterus or womb. The child should not be frustrated when questions are asked; honest answers should be provided rather than allowing the child to discover the truth by themselves.

Equally important in the sexuality education parents can give their children is the knowledge of hazards of premarital sex. First and foremost sexual relationship can lead to pregnancy and school drop out. Most teens go into sex before thinking of the consequence which is often late. This normally happens when they are not mentally, emotionally, physically and financially ready. Next is the danger of venereal diseases. The American Social Health Association (ASHA 2011) estimates that about three million teenagers each year become infected with Chlamydia, Syphilis and Gonorrhea which often do not show signs early allowing the condition to worsen.

It is a bitter irony for many parents to discover that their children, may have endangered their health to diseases which could have been treated early but due to pride, shame and privacy most teens do not disclose their problems resulting to infertility in later life, heart disease, cervical and genital cancer insanity and untreated syphilis resulting to blindness (Medical Encyclopedia). The best way to avoid venereal disease is to use condoms, diaphragms and spermicidals.

To enable adolescents make useful and informed choices, parents must have sound knowledge about the availability and usability of contraceptives so that they can give their children correct information. Research evidence from http://www.indexmundi.com/facts /nigeria /contraceptives - prevalence shows that
less 15% of Nigerian women of reproductive age used contraceptives in the year 2008. This shows that most Nigerian women are ignorant about the knowledge of contraceptives and would rather encourage abstinence. Many women do not use contraceptives because of their faith and would never encourage their daughters for fear of sexual exposure and the side effects on them in later life. In the same vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria has since 1997 invested about one point five billion dollars on a strict abstinence program for youths (www.Advocates for youth.org/publications/1487?task=view). More so, no contraceptive controls birth 100%. Delayed abstinence is the surest way to avoid pregnancy and venereal diseases. Other methods of family planning are available at the Doctor’s prescription.

Statement of Problem
Sex education of children is often left in the hands of peers and the mass media. However, sex information provided by the peers and the mass media, could be incorrect, misleading and inappropriate while school-based sexual education on the other hand could be limited. Parents who are first and effective teachers often seem to shy away from this responsibility. This research work is aimed at providing an insight into the role of parents in abating teenage pregnancy and school drop-out in respect of teenage sexuality.

Significance of the Study
This study is significant because it points out the responsibilities of the parents in assisting their teens in making useful and informed choices in respect of sexuality.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of parents in providing sexuality education to their teenage children to avoid pregnancy and its attendant complications. Specifically, the study seeks to:
1. Identify cultural beliefs that hinder parents from giving their teens information on sexuality.
2. Identify the ills of teenage pregnancy and the information parents need to provide to guard against it.
3. Probe the depth of knowledge parents have about contraceptives.

Research Questions
The following research questions were postulated to guide the study:
1. To what extent do cultural beliefs hinder parents from giving their teens information on sexuality?
2. What are the ills of teen pregnancy that parents need to provide information on to guard against teen pregnancy?
3. What knowledge do parents have on contraceptives?

Methods
The descriptive survey design is adopted for the study because it involved data collection from a given population in an attempt to explore their opinions on existing conditions, practices, attitudes and trends that are developing.

Population and Sampling
The study population consists of parents in Makurdi metropolis approximately 297,398 (national population census of 2006). A sample of 267 parents was gotten by using the table for determining need size (s) of a randomly chosen sample from a given finite population of (N) cases (Krejcie & Morgan 1970).

Results and Discussions
Table I: To what extent do cultural beliefs...
hinder parents from giving their teens information on sexuality?

Table 3 has shown that the parents have a considerably fair knowledge of contraceptive practices. The result is confirmed with an average mean of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 0.835.

Discussion of findings
In answering research question 1, which sought to find out the influence of cultural barriers that hinder parents from discussing sexuality issues with their teens, the study discovered that majority of parents do not discuss sexuality issues with their children due to their religious beliefs. Both Christians and Muslim faithful expect the girl child to be pure and chaste and reserve her virginity until she gets married. Discussing sexuality issues with them will expose them. This view is considered by Gyuse & Gyuse (1997) when they said “SEX with capital letters is immorality” and immorality is whatever is not morally right. Since Christians obtain their moral values from God, they must keep off from anything that will destroy their faith. To the Muslim faithful, the parts of the girl’s body are not to be seen, not to talk of committing the act of even teaching it to children.

In analyzing research question 2, parents seem to know of the consequences as many see teens around who are pregnant out of wedlock, have dropped out from school and even heard of teens that have lost their lives. This finding is in line with the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHC 2008) which has reported the increase in rise of teenage pregnancy. Since parents are aware of these ill, guidance counselors need to educate them to take positive steps towards abating the destruction of lives of these ignorant children who are responding to their body chemistry.

Research question 3 sought to find out parents’ knowledge of contraceptives. Results revealed that majority of parents have knowledge of contraceptives but...
maintained that abstinence is a more reliable form of avoiding teenage pregnancy. Result evidence from http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/nigeria/contraceptives-prevalence shows that only few women use contraceptives, this still boils down to their belief and faith that chastity must be maintained by girls. They maintained that if contraceptives are to be taken, it must be with the doctor's advice

Recommendations
This study recommends that:
1. Parents should expose their children to various aspects of sexuality depending on their various ages.
2. The ills of teenage pregnancy should also be taught to them.
3. Parents must encourage their teens to wait but if there is an otherwise need, emergency contraceptive should be sought.

Conclusion
It is worth noting that parents occupy a central position in the lives of their children. If parents give their time, energy and resources to their children and seek to become friends with them, mistakes of the past will be avoided, teenage pregnancy reduced and children will have a better feature.

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