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Perception and Attitude to Family Life Education among Parents in Osun State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author Olugbenga Olusola Odu designed the study and also critically reviewed the writings. Author EOA performed the statistical analysis and wrote the protocol. Author SAD wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors VAA and Olubayo O. Owoeye managed the analyses of the study and author EEE managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Parents and guardians are important stakeholders in disseminating information about family life education (FLE) to their children. This study was carried out to assess the perception and attitude to FLE among parents and guardians in Osun State Nigeria.

Methods: The study, carried out between July and August, 2010, among parents and guardians in Egbedore Local Government Area (LGA), Osun State, Nigeria, employed a cross-sectional descriptive design. A pre-tested, self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from 400 parents who were recruited by multi-stage sampling method. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 17.

Results: The mean age of respondents was 42.4 ± 11.4 years; 52.0% were Christians while 43.5% were Muslims. Overall, 54.3% of the respondents had good perception of FLE while 45.7% had

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poor perception; 72.0% of the respondents had positive attitude to FLE while 28.0% had a negative attitude. There was a statistically significant association between religion, education, occupation and FLE perception and a statistically significant association between parental status, education, occupation and attitude to FLE ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Parents in Egbedore LGA of Osun State had good perception of and positive attitude to FLE. Parents should be encouraged to translate these positive dispositions into action by teaching their children about FLE.

Keywords: Parents; perception; attitude; family life education; Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family life education (FLE) is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. It is also about developing young people's skills so that they can make informed choices about their behaviour and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. FLE helps young people to protect themselves against sexual abuse, unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. It also helps to enhance the quality of relationships [1-3]. FLE that will be effective should start early before young people reach puberty and before they have developed established patterns of behavior [4-6].

In Nigeria, young people found within the age range 10-24 years constitute about 36.7% of the population and are highly vulnerable to antisocial behaviours such as violent crimes, drug abuse and early exposure to unsafe sexual activities, among others [7]. Their exposure to sexual intercourse at an early age coupled with lack of information and skills on how to handle this exposure lead to early and unwanted pregnancies and its related complications [8]. This vulnerability of young people due to lack of information has been linked with the poor perception and negative attitudes of parents to family life education. For example, a study in Ile-Ife revealed that 15.4% of parents did not understand the concept of FLE [9].

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other sexuality related complications among the youths has been of particular concern to parents [9]. Though the Federal Government has made tremendous efforts at curtailing the spread of this pandemic through the infusion of sexuality related topics into the syllabus, much more need to be done. Researches conducted among young people in Nigeria found that their awareness, level of the causes, effects and prevention strategies of HIV/AIDS was significantly high, yet

the cases of infection continue to rise [10]. Given this situation, it becomes necessary for parents to get more involved in helping to reduce the incidence of the disease by creating a home environment, which focuses on rational decision making.

Also in order to make the country economically strong and politically stable, and for the youth to become responsible future leaders, who can avoid the disproportionate burden of mortality and morbidity from health challenges they experience from ignorance about FLE; it becomes necessary to teach FLE, both at the school and family levels [11,12].

Parents are important stakeholders in disseminating information about FLE to their children and encouraging same at school; yet there is paucity of data about their perception and attitude to FLE in Egbedore Local Government Area, Osun State. The study was therefore undertaken to fill this knowledge gap by assessing their perception and attitude to FLE in the LGA.

2. METHODS

Egbedore Local Government Area (LGA) is one of the 30 LGAs of Osun State; one of the six in the South West zone of Nigeria. It consists of 10 wards and has its secretariat located in Awo. It is bounded on the East by Ejigbo LGA while it is bounded on the West by Ede LGA. The people residing in the area are predominantly Yoruba speaking people and mainly practice Islam and Christianity. Majority of the residents are farmers, artisans, and civil servants. The estimated total population as at the time of conducting the study was 74,436 [13].

The study design was cross-sectional descriptive in nature and study population consisted of male and female parents and guardians with specific families, who were resident in Egbedore LGA as at the time of the study. The selected parents

had children of their own or other people's children that they were caring for.

The sample size was determined using the formula for determining single proportions by Abramson and Gahlinger. With a normal standard deviation z, set at 1.96, prevalence of parents with good perception of FLE p, of 83% from a previous study, and degree of accuracy d set at 5%, a minimum sample size of 217 was obtained. A total of 400 questionnaires were eventually administered [14,15].

Multistage sampling technique was utilized in recruiting participants into the study. Four out of the ten wards in Egbedore LGA were first selected by simple random sampling. From each of the selected wards, two communities were also selected by simple random sampling. In each of the selected communities, five streets were selected by simple random sampling. Starting from the centre of each street and using a sampling interval of four, every fourth house was selected until 10 houses were selected from each street. Within each selected house, an eligible participant who consented was interviewed.

A pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire, developed in English language and back translated into Yoruba in order to ensure the content validity was used. The questionnaire was pre-tested in Olorunda LGA which was not utilized for this study. It elicited information about the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and their perception and attitude to FLE. Data were collected through guided self-administration by literate parents and by interview of non-literate parents by trained research assistants. The survey was conducted over a period of one month in 2010.

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. In determining the perception to FLE, a five-point question was used. Each correct response was scored one while a non- or wrong response was scored zero. Respondents who scored 4-5 were categorized as having good perception; those that scored 0-3 were categorized as having poor perception. In determining the attitude, a five-point question was also used. Each correct response was scored one while a non- or wrong response was scored zero. Respondents who scored 4-5 were categorized as having positive attitude; those that scored 0-3 were categorized as having negative attitude.

Ethical clearance was obtained from LAUTECH College of Medicine Ethics and Research Committee. Verbal consent was obtained from the respondents, the questionnaires were filled anonymously and confidentiality of information collected was ensured by the researchers.

3. RESULTS

All the 400 questionnaires distributed were returned filled appropriately giving a response rate of 100%.

3.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

Most of the respondents were aged 21 to 50 years with a mean age of 42.4 ± 11.4 years. Fifty two percent of the respondents were Christians, 83% were educated formally, 74.2% were employed and 95.0% were fathers and mothers (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (n = 400)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (years)		
21 – 30	71	17.7
31 – 40	133	33.3
41 – 50	109	27.3
51 and above	87	21.7
Religion		
Christianity	208	52.0
Islam	174	43.5
Traditional worshippers	18	4.5
Educational status		
None	68	17.0
Primary	112	28.0
Secondary	97	24.2
Tertiary	123	30.8
Occupation		
Unemployed	103	25.8
Unskilled labour	149	37.3
Skilled labour	63	15.7
Professionals	85	21.2
Parental status		
Father	192	48.0
Mother	188	47.0
Guardian	20	5.0

3.2 Perception

Majority of respondents agreed that FLE should be taught at home 288(72.7%), in school 254(63.5%) and without restrictions 217(54.3%). However, only 172(43.4%) and 162(40.5%) agreed that matters of sexuality should be freely

discussed among children and teaching of FLE had no disadvantages (Table 2). Overall, 54.3% of the respondents had good perception of FLE while 45.7% had poor perception of FLE.

3.3 Attitude

Majority of the respondents supported seeing their children learn about FLE (72.5%), teaching FLE at home (72.5%) and at school (72.3%), and organizations aimed at educating young people about FLE respectively (72.0%) (Table 3). Overall, 72.0% of the respondents had positive attitude to FLE while 28.0% had negative attitude.

3.4 Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Perception of FLE among Respondents

There was a statistically significant association between respondents' religion, education and occupation and their overall perception of FLE. When compared, respondents that were Christians, who had higher education and were professionals had better perception of FLE than those who were non-Christians, uneducated and unskilled ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4).

3.5 Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Attitude to FLE among Respondents

There was a statistically significant association between respondents' parental status, education and occupation and their overall attitude to FLE. When compared, respondents that were mothers, who had higher education and were professionals had better attitude to FLE than those who were fathers, uneducated and unskilled ($p < 0.05$) (Table 5).

4. DISCUSSION

The study assessed the perception and attitude to family life education (FLE) among parents in Egbedore LGA, Osun State, Nigeria.

Majority of respondents agreed that FLE should be taught at home, in school and without restrictions. Overall, slightly over half of the respondents had good perception of FLE while slightly lower than half had a poor perception. Previous studies conducted in different parts of the country, sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world reported that parents had different perceptions about FLE; while some were good, others were bad.

Table 2. Respondents' perception of FLE

Parents' perception	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Undecided (%)
FLE should be taught at home	288 (72.7)	37 (8.5)	75 (18.8)
FLE should be taught in school	254 (63.5)	61 (15.3)	85 (21.2)
FLE should be taught without restrictions	217 (54.3)	97 (24.2)	86 (21.5)
Matters of sexuality should be discussed freely among children in school	172 (43.0)	129 (32.2)	99 (24.8)
There are no disadvantages in teaching FLE to children	162 (40.5)	136 (34.0)	102 (25.5)

Table 3. Respondents' attitude to family life education

Attitudinal statements	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
Support teaching of family life education in school	289 (72.3)	104 (26.0)	7 (1.7)
Support teaching of family life education at home	290 (72.5)	98 (24.5)	12 (3.0)
Glad seeing child learning about family life education	290 (72.5)	98 (24.5)	12 (3.0)
Support government's compulsory inclusion of FLE in the school curriculum	232 (58.0)	161 (40.3)	7 (1.7)
Support organizations aimed at educating young people about family life education.	288 (72.0)	102 (25.5)	10 (2.5)

Table 4. Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and perception of FLE

Variables	Perception		X ²	p-value
	Poor	Good		
Parental status				
Father	81 (42.2)	111 (57.8)	1.45	0.485
Mother	68 (36.2)	120 (63.8)		
Guardian	8 (40.0)	12 (60.0)		
Age group (years)				
40 and below	84 (25.4)	112 (74.6)	2.41	0.121
41 and above	72 (40.6)	132 (59.4)		
Religion				
Christianity	67 (32.2)	141(67.8)	11.44	*0.003
Islam	76 (43.7)	98 (56.3)		
Traditional	12 (66.7)	6 (33.3)		
Educational level				
None	46 (67.6)	22 (32.4)	44.57	*0.001
Primary	53 (47.3)	59 (52.7)		
Secondary	32 (33.3)	65 (66.7)		
Tertiary	26 (21.1)	97 (78.9)		
Occupation				
Unemployed	56 (54.4)	47 (45.6)	21.70	*0.001
Unskilled labour	62 (44.6)	87 (58.4)		
Skilled labour/professionals	38 (25.7)	110 (74.3)		

*Significant

Table 5. Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and attitude to FLE among respondents

Variables	Attitude		X ²	p-value
	Negative	Positive		
Parental status				
Father	110 (57.3)	82 (42.7)	30.67	*0.001
Mother	55 (29.3)	133 (70.7)		
Guardian	10 (50.0)	10 (50.0)		
Education				
None	40 (58.8)	28 (41.2)	58.89	*0.001
Primary	48 (42.8)	64 (57.2)		
Secondary	25 (25.8)	72 (74.2)		
Tertiary	12 (9.8)	111 (90.2)		
Occupation				
Not employed	59 (57.3)	44 (42.7)	57.65	*0.001
Unskilled labour	48 (32.2)	101(67.8)		
Skilled labour/ Professionals	18 (10.1)	130 (87.9)		
Age groups (years)				
40 and below	57 (27.9)	147 (72.1)	2.12	0.145
41 and above	68 (34.7)	128 (65.3)		

*Significant

For example, in a study conducted among parents in Ghana, parents had a positive perception about FLE as majority of them wanted sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information to be provided in schools, did not mind their children using SRH services and would permit their adolescents to receive both information and services from them [16].

Similarly, a study conducted in South Western Nigeria reported that parents had positive perception about sexuality education being taught in schools. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that sex education should be taught at all levels in schools and should also be taught at home since parents were in the best position to teach sex related issues to their

children. It should also not be taught secretly [17].

On the other hand, some studies reported poor perception about FLE. For example, studies conducted in another part of Ghana, Uganda, India and South-South zone of Nigeria reported poor perception about FLE among parents. They did not only feel uncomfortable discussing sexuality issues with their own children but also felt it was a taboo. They also did not support the provision of sexuality education in the schools and perceived that teaching such to adolescent amounts to encouraging immorality among them [18-22].

Majority of the parents in this study probably had a good perception about FLE because they were already aware of it and its inherent advantages for youths while those with poor perception were still held down by their old opinion about FLE based on religion, culture and tradition.

Overall, in this study, about three-quarters of the respondents had positive attitude to FLE. Almost three quarters of the respondents supported seeing their children learn about FLE; teaching FLE at home and at school and organizations aimed at educating young people about FLE respectively. This result is consistent with those of some studies conducted in Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, United States of America and Western Australia which also reported positive attitude to FLE among parents. They were not only positively disposed to FLE being taught at home, they also supported it being made comprehensive and included in the school curriculum and skilled teachers and non-governmental organizations teaching their children about FLE [17,23-26].

On the other hand, parents in Kenya were reported to have a negative attitude to sexuality education being taught in schools and actually resisted it; being of the opinion that schools were not the place to learn about sex [27]. The reasons which informed the parents' good perception of FLE mentioned above could also have influenced their positive attitude to it.

In this study, religion was significantly associated with parents' perception of FLE. Compared with respondents of other faiths, Christians had better perception of FLE. It is possible that it is not religion itself as an entity that affects people's perception about FLE but rather how tenaciously one holds on to laid down tradition and cultural

tenets about FLE. In a situation where parents have the cultural belief that sexuality issues should not be taught to adolescents before marriage, they are more likely to have a poor perception of it irrespective of their religious stand. This is in conformity with the findings of a study conducted among predominantly Christians in South-South Nigeria which reported that all of them had a poor perception about FLE [22].

Education was also significantly associated with parent's perception of FLE. Respondents with tertiary education had better perception of FLE than those with other levels of education or no education at all. This however contrasts with that of a Nigerian study in which there was no significant difference between literate and illiterate parents in their perception of FLE [22]. Those who were educated in this study could have been more exposed to FLE than the rest and were therefore in a better position to overcome the forces of ignorance and tradition which tends to make parents' perception of FLE poor.

Occupation was also significantly associated with parent's perception of FLE in this study. More respondents who were professionals or skilled labourers had better perception of FLE than those who were unskilled or unemployed. Occupation could have affected respondents' perception of FLE indirectly through education.

The factors which were significantly associated with parents' attitude to FLE were parental, educational and occupational statuses. More mothers had positive attitude to FLE than fathers and guardians. This is similar to the reports of studies conducted in Leeds and Rwanda. In the Leeds study, mothers tended to have better attitude to FLE and tended to be the main educators although a few fathers shared the role [28]. In Rwanda, being male was significantly associated with "not communicating" sexual matters with adolescents [29]. Those with tertiary education had positive attitude to FLE than those with other levels of education and more professionals or skilled labourers had positive attitude to FLE than those who were unskilled or unemployed. These findings are also corroborated by the Rwandan study [29]. However, it contrasts with that of an Indian study which reported no significant relationship between parents' educational level and attitude towards sexuality education [24].

5. CONCLUSION

Majority of parents in Egbedore LGA, Osun State, Nigeria had a good perception of; and a positive attitude to family life education (FLE). The factors which were significantly associated with parents' perception of FLE were religion, education and occupation. Those who were Christians, who had tertiary education and were professionals or skilled labourers had better perception of FLE. The factors which were significantly associated with parents' attitude to FLE were parental status, education and occupation. The mothers, those who had tertiary education and were professionals had better attitude to FLE.

Parents should be encouraged to translate these positive dispositions into action by teaching their children about FLE.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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