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INFLUENCE OF SEX EDUCATION AND PEER PRESSURE ON EARLY MARRIAGE PRACTICES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (SPECIAL), OYO

BY

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Abstract

Any marriage consummated before the female is physically, psychologically, and physiologically prepared to take on the obligations of marriage and childrearing is considered early marriage. The study used a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of sex education and peer pressure on early marriage practices among undergraduates at FCES, Oyo. It used a self-structured questionnaire that was validated at 0.70 in a pilot study before being given to the intended audience. Using random sampling procedures, a total of 100 samples were selected from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, F.C.E. (SP) Oyo, LASU Program, with 20 respondents from each level, ranging from 100 to 500. For this study, three research hypotheses were formulated, and Pearson's analysis was employed to examine the data. The data indicate that, when considered collectively, the independent factors explain the link between sex education and age on early marriage among undergraduate students. The findings indicate that HO1 (r =.471, n=100, p (.000) <.05), HO2 (r =.609, n=100, p (.000) <.05), and HO3 (r=.649, n=100, p (.000) <.05). In this investigation, each of the three hypotheses was important. The study found that the respondents' peer groups, sex education, and early marriage differed significantly. The three variables do, however, have a strong and meaningful link. It is advised that counselors with professional training start Boost parental economic empowerment initiatives, strengthen comprehensive sex education programs, put peer-led intervention programs into place, encourage parental education and awareness, and improve policy implementation and oversight.

Keywords: Marriage, Early marriage, Peer Pressure, Sexuality and Sex education

Introduction

Early marriage is a global problem that has an impact on people's social and scholastic growth as well as their physical and mental health. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2014), the highest rates of early marriage are found in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The percentage of girls who do not attend school and those who marry at the age of 18 is approximately 34% worldwide. According to data from 2000–2009, 19% of women in the European region between the ages of 20 and 24 were in a relationship or marriage before turning 18, as reported in the World Health Organization's article "Child marriage-a threat to health" (World Health Organization, 2012). When a boy or girl marries before turning 18, it is referred to as child marriage. Over 44% of Nigerian girls get married before turning 18, and 18% get married before turning 15, according to UNICEF (2021) (Child Not Brides, 2017). With 3.5 million child brides, Nigeria now ranks third in the world. Any marriage consummated before the female is physically, psychologically, and biologically prepared to take on the duties of marriage and childbearing is considered early marriage, often known as child marriage.

In the poor world, 20 to 50 percent of women get married before the age of 18, with the highest numbers in West Africa within Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Luther and Tsekeh 2020). In wealthy countries, however, more women are getting married in their thirties. Nigerian children, particularly girls, confront numerous challenges that disadvantage them and prevent them from reaching their full potential. The child is vulnerable to physical abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, psychological abuse, medical neglect, emotional abuse, denial of education, desertion, and lack of monitoring. About 15 million Nigerian youngsters work in official or semiformal professions across various economic sectors, according to Abdallah (2021). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 25% of Nigeria's 80 million children under the age of 14 are currently employed.

Nigerian children's overall development is severely hampered by some customs. According to Jekayinfa (2013), these customs, tribal scars, forced child feeding, child labor, early female child betrothal, and child marriage are supported by the community. Among detrimental traditions affecting Nigerian children, early marriage stands out as the most demeaning (Omoniyi, 2020). This custom, which is common in northern Nigeria, involves marrying children as young as 12 to adults who are typically old enough to be their dads and grandfathers. Although many girls and a smaller percentage of boys come into marriage without having the opportunity to exercise their freedom

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to choose, marriage is a contract that should be entered into by consent. Some people are coerced into marriage at a very young age. Some are just too young to make an informed choice regarding their spouse or the consequences of being married.

In many low- and middle-income nations, child marriage is a significant health and children's rights issue (Asiimwe, Jacob, Ariyo, Kobusingye, Kamugisha & Friday, 2023). Girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage, which has long-term effects on their physical and mental well-being. In addition to being denied the freedom to select their own spouse, child brides are ignored and subjected to a number of cultural, political, social, and religious customs that violate their fundamental human rights (WHO, 2012). Early marriage increases young girls' and women's exposure to unprotected sex, which in turn restricts their exposure to HIV prevention strategies, according to a joint UNICEF and Child Not Brides book. In Nigeria, 1.5% of adults aged 15 to 49 have HIV (Oginni, Adebajo & Ahonsi 2017). Women make up 55.56% of the 1.8 million HIV-positive individuals (Oginni, Adebajo, and Ahonsi 2017). Governments will need comprehensive scientific data on the prevalence of child marriage in their nations and its structural determinants in order to make meaningful investments in program and policy responses and meet the Sustainable Development Goal of ending child marriage by 2030 (Rumble, Peterman, Irdiana, Triyana & Minnick, 2018).

By giving youth the knowledge and skills, they need to postpone sexual activity in order to protect themselves, sex education can play a significant part in assisting them in making healthy and responsible decisions regarding sex. They are therefore at danger of unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and their complications when they start having sex at a younger age (Cynthia, 2017). Most people are reluctant to discuss sex acts, including copulation (Kantor, Rolleri & Kolios, 2014). Additionally, he claims that Nigerian parents' attitude on sex education is that "the child will grow up to know," which is why they don't want to talk about anything related to sex in front of their kids, and even if they do, the kids won't listen.

In order to help young people (adolescents) have pertinent information and make healthy decisions about sex and healthy sexual behaviors, sex education has been incorporated into secondary school health education curricula. Due to the difficult economic circumstances and detrimental societal influences on adolescents, a large number of Nigerian teenagers engage in sexual activity. Parents, schools, the government, and the entire society are extremely concerned about the bad social and health repercussions (Ndidi, 2022). Teens from diverse cultural backgrounds are especially vulnerable to unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted illnesses (STDs) because they lack knowledge on how to protect themselves sexually (Luther, Tsekeh, 2020). Therefore, despite the dangers of sexual behavior, sex education is now important as a guide or influence on teenagers. The most powerful social forces influencing teenage behavior are peer groups, which have an impact on everything from routine choices about attire, hairstyles, music, and entertainment to more important choices about immediate and long-term goals. During the early adolescent years, they are perhaps even more significant than parents, teachers, and counselors. However, research from a variety of cultures has demonstrated that a child experiences the need to fit in and be accepted by the group from infancy through puberty. Developing a sense of belonging to a social group is a fundamental human desire. Peer relationships are prevalent in Nigerian homes and schools, and they are crucial to children's socialization. Any person whose behavior you like or who you believe to be on par with your age or skill level might be considered a peer (Hassan, 2013).

Peer pressure encourages young people to hang out on the streets, watch movies, go to parties during school hours, and use taping as a substitute for stealing, which can lead to armed robbery (Adekunle, 2015). Addiction to social media, dating and sex, substance misuse, and attitude shifts are all indicators of peer group pressure. Through virtual communities and networks, social media are interactive computer-mediated tools that make it easier to create or share ideas, information, career interests, and other forms of expression (Weber, 2016). Therefore, this study is well-positioned to examine the impact of sex education and peer pressure on early marriage among Lagos State University undergraduate students enrolled in the F.C.E (SP) Oyo programme.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of sex education and peer pressure on early marriage among undergraduate students of the F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. Specifically, this study is to examine:

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1. The significant relationship between sex education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme.
2. Significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme.
3. Relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between sex education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme
2. There is no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme
3. There is no significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used in this study. This is due to the fact that the researcher will not be able to change the variables of interest in the study, and that this kind of research method allows the researcher to elicit or obtain the judgment of the respondents. All of the Federal College of Education (SP) Oyo students made up the study's population. One hundred (100) students from the Affiliated with Federal College of Education (SP), Oyo, comprised the study's sample. The respondents at all levels will be chosen using a straightforward random sampling procedure. Information on the topic was gathered from respondents using a self-structured questionnaire called the Sex Education and Peer Pressure on Early Marriage Questionnaire (SEPPEMQ) for teenagers. The instrument was divided into two halves (A and B). The demographic information of the respondents was included in Section A of the questionnaire, and the 30 items in Section B asked them to rate their agreement and disagreement on a four-point Likert scale that included (4) Strongly Agreed (SA), (3) Agreed (A), (1) Disagreed (D), and (0) Strongly Disagreed (SD). Twenty women who were not participating in the study participated in a pilot trial of the questionnaire, and the results were validated at 0.70, indicating that the participants could use it. The study question was examined using descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were examined at the pα 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between Sex Education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme

Table 1: PPMC Showing the Relationship between Sex Education and Early Marriage

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P values	Remark
Sex Education	18.92	3.91	250	.471**	.000	Sig.
Early Marriage	18.46	4.62				

Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between sex education and early marriage of undergraduate students (r = .471, n=100, p (.000) <.05). The p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation coefficient of 0.471** implies that there was a positive and strong relationship between the two variables. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between Sex Education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The null hypothesis was rejected.

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Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme

Table 2: PPMC showing the Relationship between parental socio-economic status and early marriage

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P values	Remark
Parental socioeconomic status	18.58	4.06	100	.609**	.000	Sig.
Early marriage	18.46	4.62				

Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 showed that there was a significant relationship between the parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme (r = .609, n=100, p (.000) <.05). The p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation coefficient of 0.609** implies that there was a positive and strong relationship between the two variables. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme

Table 3: PPMC Showing the Relationship between Peer Influence and Early Marriage

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	p-value	Remark
Peer Influence	18.8714	4.11403	100	.649*	<.0001	Sig.
Early Marriage	17.8143	4.57876				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 showed that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The results indicated that (r=.649, n=100, p (.000) <.05). Hence, peer group has a significant influence on early marriage in the study. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

There is no significant relationship between Sex Education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between sex education and early marriage of undergraduate students (r = .471, n=100, p (.000) <.05). The p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation coefficient of 0.471** implies that there was a positive and strong relationship between the two variables. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between Sex Education and early marriage of undergraduate students of Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The null hypothesis was rejected. The results are in line with WHO (2012), which says Sex Education gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information, skills, and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships, and wellbeing. Maduakonam (2021) and Nwabuisi (2014) also support the results, which say it would help them understand consent, acceptance, tolerance, etc., and also help them understand rape and its consequences.

There is no significant influence of parental socio-economic status on early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The outcome of this study negate

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the earlier stated hypothesis which makes it null and void with the result revealing that there is significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme with the results (r = .609, n=100, p (.000) <.05). This implies that the parent socio-economic status has a huge significant effect on early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. According to (Osakinle and Tayo-Olajubutu 2017), Adebambo (2010), Aduradola (2023), Chanda, Edwin, Enock, and Chisebe (2023) also supported the claim that poverty and economic transactions, notions of morality are major causes of child marriage. From the above discussion, one can imply that poverty is a major determinant of early marriage among young people, most especially the female gender, and thereby results in child marriage because of their parents' incapacitation. This is actually a factor to work on if we want to rectify the recurrence of early marriage acts.

There is no significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. But the result of hypothesis three indicate that there are significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme, having collected the data from the study location it was discovered at the end of the study that Peer influence has significant influence on early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The table showed that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and early marriage among undergraduate students in Lagos State University affiliated with F. C. E (SP) Oyo programme. The results indicated that (r=.649, n=100, p (.000) <.05). Hence, peer group has a significant influence on early marriage in the study is accounted for by the independent variables when taken together. Also, the finding confirms a study by Robalino and Macy (2018), which revealed that peers had the biggest influence on young people, be it male or female, and they also found a significant relationship between the factors and the dependent variable, which is early marriage. It was concluded that as a young person, the parent does not have the highest level of influence, and the influence is very high when it comes from their peers than the influence from their parents. Stereotypes of African men play a powerful role in maintaining their status in the social system and therefore play a part in the problems between men and women.

Conclusion

Based on the study's results, it could be said that among Lagos State University undergraduate students connected to the Federal College of Education (SP) Oyo, there were notable differences in sex education, peer pressure, and early marriage. The three variables do, however, have a strong and meaningful link. The majority of participants came from intact households, although many from separated and divorced households continued to have hope for marriage. However, exposing young adults and young people to the results of this study will improve their perspective on marriage and help them develop the proper attitude toward it. They were able to identify their imagined or real-life social interaction issues related to marriage thanks to the study. Additionally, it helped the participants further evaluate their difficulties by dissecting them into situational elements, which made it simpler for them to identify the particular aspects of marriage that would give them hope. Additionally, the individuals were better able to comprehend why they had problems or difficulties while interacting with people of the opposite sex. The study's outcome encouraged participant group dynamics.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings of this study:

1. **Strengthen Comprehensive Sex Education Programmes:** Educational authorities should integrate comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education into school curricula to equip adolescents with accurate knowledge, decision-making, skills, and awareness of the consequences of early marriage.
2. **Put in place peer-led intervention programs:** Schools and community organizations should set up mentorship and peer education programs that support positive peer influence and assist teenagers in fending off harmful peer pressure that promotes early marriage.
3. **Strengthen Parental Economic Empowerment Initiatives:** To lessen financial pressure that can push parents to promote early marriage, government and non-governmental organizations should support income-generating programs, vocational training, and financial aid for low-income families.

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4. **Encourages Parental Education and Awareness:** To educate parents about the long-term social, educational, and health effects of early marriage, regular seminars and community sensitization programs should be held, with a focus on the significance of supporting adolescents' education.
5. **Strength Policy Implementation and Monitoring:** Governments should make sure that child marriage laws are effectively enforced and that the effects of peer pressure, sex education, and socioeconomic interventions on early marriage trends are regularly observed.

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