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Awareness and knowledge of family life education services among Nigerian youth: implications for social work

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ABSTRACT

Good and stable society is the major goal of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). For effective and sustainable development, the Social Welfare department of Nigeria helps to provide family life education for the youth. This study explored the level of awareness and knowledge of the family life education services by the youth in Enugu-North Senatorial Zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. In the study, the relevance of the Social Welfare department in achieving sustainable development in the country was created. The study was carried out with 400 respondents selected from the youth using multi-staged random sampling technique. Data was collected using questionnaire while it was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and chi-square (χ^2). The result showed that the level of awareness and knowledge of family life education among the youth was low. Recommendations are made on the need for awareness creation on family life education and the relevance of Social Welfare services in the society. These services are to be headed by Social Workers to help achieve SDGs in Nigeria.

KEY TERMS: awareness, family life education, knowledge, Nigeria. Social Work, sustainable development and youth,

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INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up to improve the living standard of people all over the world. It stressed the need to adopt an inclusive approach if the aim is to be attained by year 2030. The SDGs are made up of 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages. Though none of these goals is specifically directed to the youths, all the goals affect the youths and youth participation in all the SDGs cannot be over emphasized. Data (UNO 2014) reveal that youths are marginalized in the development efforts. One way of ensuring their effective participation in the attainment of the SDGs is through family life education. Family Life Education (FLE) services provided for the youth in Nigeria are essential because they prepare the youth on effective problem solving skills and contribution to national development.

BACKGROUND

Rationale for study

Different studies have been carried out on awareness and knowledge of FLE, but most of the studies have been done outside Nigeria. These studies include the works of (Ravisankar (2013), Chandra-Mouli, Plesons, Hadi, Qadeer, & Lang (2018). The ones that been carried out in Nigeria, include the works of (Mbara, Obiechina, & Akbuike (2013), Uzochukwu, Uguru, Ezeoke, Onwujekwe, & Sibeudu (2011), & Isiugo-Abanihe, Olajide, Nwokocha, Fayehim Okunola, & Akingbade (2015). However, they focused on HIV/AIDS, sexuality education and reproductive health. None of the studies to the researchers' knowledge attempted to examine the FLE services provided by the Social Welfare Departments in the Local Government Areas in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Nigeria. To fill this gap, this study examined the awareness and knowledge of the Family life education programme carried out with the youth.

Youth is considered important because they constitute a large proportion of the world's population. In Nigeria, youth consists of people between the ages of 12 to 30 years and they represent one third of the national population (FRN 1989, Federal Ministry of Youths and Sports 2007). In Nigeria, the Social Welfare Departments (SWDs) are mandated by the federal government to organize FLE programmes for the youth. The social welfare department was established under the Decree No 12 of 1974 and came into being in 1989 (FMWASD nd) to provide direct services to families, youth and children.

Therefore, this study explored the level of awareness and knowledge of the FLE services among the youth bearing in mind the achievement of the SDGs in the country.

Statement of the problem

The Sustainable development goals (SDGs) have 17 goals and 169 targets. The goals include "no poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, industry and infrastructure, clean energy, decent work and growth, climate actions, life below water, life on land, peace and justice, and partnership for growth," (United Nations 2017) while none of the goals specifically addressed the youth, one third of the targets referenced the young people. Bokoyeibo (2018) stated them as Goal 2 (hunger), Goal 3 (health), Goal 4 (education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work), Goal 10 (inequality), and Goal 13 (climate action) and they addressed such youth issues as malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, employment, teenage birth, literacy, informed decision making irrespective of sex, and sexual violence.

Awareness and knowledge of the FLE by the youth is essential for the attainment of the SDG goals as adequate knowledge of the available programmes in the communities enables them to plan and work with relevant government agencies towards the realization of the national goals but UNICEF (2020) postulates that lack of awareness and knowledge of programmes are major factors that hinder participation, effective contribution to national development as well as ineffective in decision making and adoption of programmes.

Vambe (2018), Diorgu & Diorgu (2019) in their studies also posit that there is low level of awareness and knowledge among Nigerian youth towards youth oriented programs and it leads to negative implementation of policy for national development and attainment of the sustainable development goals in the areas of participation and contributions towards national development. Due to these gaps above, this study has explored the level of awareness and knowledge of FLE services in Nigeria and made some recommendations for both the youth as innovators and the future leaders as well as the policy makers for driving this nation to the future hope and in achieving the SDGs.

The objectives were to:

- a) Ascertain if the youth in Enugu North senatorial zone are aware of the FLE services provided by the government in the Social Welfare agencies?
- b) Find out if the youth in Enugu North senatorial zone have knowledge of the FLE services provided by the government in the Social Welfare agencies?
- c) Identify the factors affect their awareness and knowledge of the FLE services provided by the government in the Social Welfare agencies and
- d) Suggest ways to improve awareness and knowledge of FLE services in the study areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature was done by examining previous researches on FLE and related issues that have been carried out by other researchers, organizations and government. Issues relevant to the study were extrapolated and discussed.

The National Council of Family Relations (NCRF) introduced the concept of FLE, Monanu, Popa & Samoila (2018) postulate that it was coined at the beginning of the twentieth century in response to the changing social conditions of the time. NCRF (2016) went on to define FLE as an educational process that provides individuals and families with knowledge and skills to live effectively and that it focuses on healthy family functioning within a family systems perspective and provides a primarily preventive approach. FLE helps youth cope effectively with life covering various areas of life like family living, human sexuality, premarital counselling, parenting skills, community relations, substance use and abuse, moral, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, skills for adult living, human growth and development, interpersonal relations, family resource management etcetera (NCRF 2016).

Preparing the youth for adult life reduces the rate at which they engage in risky behavior and helps them cope with the challenge of life. Before the youth can benefit from the Family Life Education services, they have to be aware of the existence of the services and have knowledge of the services. Studies by Doctor, Findley, Afenyadu & Ashir (2013), Simisaye & Adeyeoye (2015) projected that awareness of a program helps to increase a person's understanding of the program and chances of the utilization of the services. Researchers (Oyedele, Emmanuel, Gaji & Ahure (2015), Ilori, Awodutire, Ilori (2020) Oladere & Ogili (2013), Oyira & Opia (2019) also postulated that youths have various degrees of awareness of the services provided for them while Oyedele, Emmanuel, Gaji & Ahure (2015) in their study on awareness and acceptance of premarital genotype screening among 150 youth in Tina community of Jos, Nigeria presented that only about half (50.7%) of the youth are aware of the screening services.

However, Ilori, Awodutire, & Ilori (2020) in their study on awareness and utilization of adolescent reproductive health services (ARHS) among in-school adolescents in urban and rural communities in Oyo-State Nigeria posit that majority of the adolescents, (88.9% for rural, and 84.9% for urban) were not aware of the ARHS provided in the state. This shows that a good number of the youth population are not aware of premarital counselling services which is an aspect of FLE. Invariably, Oyira & Opia (2019), in their study on awareness and attitude towards the utilization of adolescent reproductive health services in Calabar municipal Nigeria, noted that there was high awareness of programme among the adolescents as 64.7% of the adolescents were aware of the programme. These studies show that adolescents have various degrees of awareness of FLE services among the youths. Some of the youths aware of the FLE services provided in their communities while some are not aware.

Ajibade, Olagunju and Oyediran (2013) in their study on knowledge and opinion towards sex education among 300 secondary school girls in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State in Nigeria, ages between 11-19 showed that the girls had inadequate knowledge of sex education as about half (50.3%) of the girls did not understand the meaning of sex education while Oludare and Ogili (2013) in their study on pre-marital counselling on sickle cell disease among 280 youth in Yaba Nigeria, revealed that there was high knowledge with (80%) of pre-marital counseling among the youth. The study showed that more than two-third of the girls had low reproductive health knowledge which indicates that awareness and knowledge of FLE services vary among youths in different communities.

Moreso, Elden, Kaiyru, and Elsabaie (2019), Mudingayi, Lutala, & Mupenda 2011, Baku, & Nyarko, (2018), Oludare & Ogili 2013, Hussaini, Derbunde, Jobbi, Lssac, Ummulkulthum, Bolanle, & Kambai 2019, Aboagye, & Aboagye 2018) postulate that various factors affect awareness and knowledge of FLE among the youth which include age, gender, residence, and education. On age, Mudingayi, Lutala and Mupenda (2011) in their study on HIV knowledge and risky behaviour among adolescents in Kinshasa, found that the older adolescents were more knowledgeable than younger adolescents. Similarly, Ravinskar (2013) on Timiliandu reported that awareness

about FLE was higher among late adolescents (20-24years:75.0%) than girls aged 15—19 years. It shows that age affects the awareness and knowledge of the FLE services as older youth tends to be more knowledgeable of FLES than younger ones.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the Afro centrality theory of Molefi Kete Asante. Afrocentricity theory of was developed by Molefi Kete Asante in the 1980s. Afrocentricity is a theory that proposes that centrality of African interest, values and perspectives. Afro centrality proposes three major assumptions about the African. These assumptions are human identity, spiritual nature and affective knowledge. The assumption of human identity views a human as a product of a collective identity developed from the interconnectedness of the individual and other people both living and deceased. The assumption of spiritual nature, sees a man as being connected to a Supreme Being or Creator which affects his behavior, and finally, the assumption on affective knowledge proposes that affect is important and essential for understanding of human behavior. This paper is based on the assumption of human identity which sees a person as being connected to people(both living and dead). This can be referred to as his environment. Effective operations with the human being needs an understanding of this fact. Thus effective work with the African youths underscores that the person(researcher, practitioner, government) must take cognizance of this assumption and look at the African youth in relation with his environment. To effectively work with the African youth, the government need to understand the youths and their environment. FLE education was developed to assist the youth overcome poverty and live meaning adult life. The poor awareness and poor knowledge of the FLE among the youths can be attributed to the fact that African youths were not involved in the planning and setting up of the programme, This created a sense of apathy towards the FLE programme among the youths. Awareness and knowledge of the FLE among the youths can be increased if the youths are involved, and their relationship with their environment (other people) considered in the planning and implementation of the FLE programmes in the communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out on the youth in Enugu -North Senatorial Zone of Nigeria. The projected population of youth in the Zone is 620,067. (NPC 2006) A sample of 400 youth was selected for the study using Yamane method (Yamane 1967).Data for the study was collected using the questionnaires. The multi staged random sampling technique was used to select the 400 youth. At the first stage, two Local Government Areas (LGA) –Nsukka and Igbo-Eze South LGAs were randomly selected, secondly, four towns namely Nsukka, Obukpa, Ovoko and Ibagwa-Aka were also randomly selected from the two Local Government Areas, two towns from each local government area; at the third stage, households were selected, and finally at the fourth and last stage, the youth were individually selected. The questionnaire was validated by the Department of Social Work, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and was used as the instrument for data collection. Questionnaires were given to the youth and data generated from the responses formed the basis of analysis and discussion of the paper. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed,395 were correctly filled and returned. Hence, analysis was done based on the responses of the 395 youth, data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and Chi-square (χ^2) was used to test the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the youth

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	195	49.4
Female	200	50.6
Education		
No formal education	24	6.1
First school leaving certificate (FSLC)	50	12.7
West African School Certificate (WASC)	215	54.4
Ordinary National Diploma (OND)	25	6.3
National Certificate of Education (NCE)	28	7.1
Degree/Higher National Diploma (HND)	52	13.2
Master's Degree (M.Sc)	1	.3
Religion		
Roman Catholic	303	76.7
Protestant	80	20.3

Muslims	11	2.8
African Traditional Religion(ATR)	1	.3

Table I reveals that majority of the youth are between 12 to 30 years, students and Christians. The high number of students may be as a result of the age bracket and most of them are in school.

Research question 1: Awareness of family life education among the youth

The study showed that there is a low level of awareness of FLE services in the SWD among the youth. Half (50%) of the youths were not aware of the FLE services in the area probably due to lack of sensitization programs on the existence of FLE services. It implies that the youth do not participate much in the programme and are not benefitting. It also indicates that the SWDs are not doing much in the area of sensitization. The findings differ from that of Oludare and Ogili (2013) who posit that there was high level of awareness of pre-marital counseling among youth in Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. The disparity may be because Lagos is a high cosmopolitan town in Nigeria. Hence, residents have more access to information on issues in the country. Nsukka, where this study was carried out is not a cosmopolitan town and consist more of semi-urban and rural communities. Therefore, access to information is limited. Of those that aware of the FLE, majority, (34.4%) got it from their friends while 14.2% got it from Social Workers.

Research question 2: Knowledge of family life education among the youth

This study shows that the youths have poor knowledge of the FLEs provided in the zone because when asked to indicate the services provided by the SWDs in the zone, 55.3 % of the youth indicated marital counseling while 22.4% indicated FLE. This shows that only 22.4% of the youth know about the FLE services provided in the SW. In the findings, majority of the respondents are not aware of the existence of the FLE which is similar to that of Aboagye, & Aboagye (2018) which indicates that there is low knowledge of premarital screening among students in Ghana. The researchers also opined that the youths have a wrong perception of the functions of the Social Welfare Department. They view it as an agency set up to settle disputes between couples. This may be as a result of the societal perception of the social welfare agencies as an agency established to treat marital disputes among couples. They are not aware that the SWD provides several other services for the youth. The low level of awareness of the FLEs among the youths is not good for sustainable development as it will prevent them from participating effectively in the activities of the agency and the community. For effective sustainable development, everybody should be carried along and basic step towards it is creating awareness of government programs among the people. Therefore, awareness and knowledge of the FLE in the SWDs is basic and essential step towards integrating the youths into the national development programs and activities.

Research question 3: Factors that affect awareness of FLE

The socio-economic factors that influence the awareness of FLE among the youth are as shown on table 2.

Table 2 -Socio-economic characteristics and awareness of FLES among the youth

Socio-economic characteristics	Awareness of FLE	Chi-square(χ^2)
Gender	Awareness of FLE	$\chi^2 = .023; df=1, p \leq .878$
Residence	Awareness of FLE	$\chi^2 = .203; df=1, p \leq .652$
Age	Awareness of FLE	$\chi^2 = 4.039; df=1, p \leq 0.044$
Education	Awareness of FLE	$\chi^2 = 15.973; df=1, p \leq .000$

Table 2 shows factors that affect the awareness of FLE among the youth. The chi (χ^2) analysis of the awareness of the family life education and some of the socio-demographic data of the youths revealed that awareness of the FLE services provided was affected by education ($\chi^2=15.973, df=1, p \leq .000$) and age ($\chi^2=4.039, df=1, p=.044$). The variables analyzed were gender, residence, education, and age. The analysis gave the following results sex ($\chi^2=.023; df=1, p=.878$), residence ($\chi^2=.203; df=1, p=.652$), education ($\chi^2= 15.973, df=1, p \leq .000$) and age ($\chi^2 = 4.039, df=1, p=.044$). This implies that there is a significant relationship between education and age of the youths and awareness of the FLEs. Thus, age and education of the youth affected the awareness of the FLEs.

Those with higher level of education (ordinary national diploma certificates and above) and older youths (23 years and above) were more aware of the FLE than (those with secondary education and below) and the younger youths (13years to 22 years). This implies that education and age impact on the life of the youths greatly. This may be as a result of the fact that age and education expose one to new ideas and opportunity to seek for more information. Education increases and exposes one to more knowledge. It also enhances the desire and quest for

more knowledge. It is a very vital tool that can be used to increase awareness of the existence and relevance of FLE program among the youth in the Zone.

The findings corresponded with the works of Baku, & Nyarko, (2018), Ravinskar (2011), Baku, & Nyarko, (2018) who noted that education was positively related to knowledge of female fertile period among the adolescents; and Ravinskar, (2011) in his study on Tamilnadu that postulate that older adolescents are more aware of FLE than the younger adolescents. Youth should be encouraged to go to school and participate in various educational programmes on FLE in Nigeria.

Factors that affect knowledge of FLE among the youth

The socio- economic factors that influence the knowledge of FLE among the youth are shown on table 3 below

Table 3-Socio-economic characteristics and knowledge of FLES among the youth.

Socio- economic characteristics	Knowledge of FLE	Chi-square(χ^2)
Gender	Knowledge of FLE	$\chi^2 = .736; df=1, p \leq .391$
Residence	Knowledge of FLE	$\chi^2 = .003; df=1, p \leq .954$
Age	Knowledge of FLE	$\chi^2 = 3.120; df=1, p \leq .077$
Education	Knowledge of FLE	$\chi^2 = .964; df=1, p \leq .326$

The study showed that there is a poor knowledge of the FLE programs among the youth irrespective of the socio-demographic characteristics. The variables analyzed were gender, residence, education, and age, and the following results derived: sex ($\chi^2 = .736, df=1, p=.391$), residence ($\chi^2 = .003, df=1, p=.954$), age ($\chi^2 = 3.120, df=1, p=.007$), education, ($\chi^2 = .964, df=1, p=.326$). This shows that the youths have a poor knowledge of the FLE services provided by the SWD irrespective of their socio demographic characteristic. This findings contradict with findings of most researchers such as Oludare & Ogili 2013, Aboagye, & Aboagye 2018 which show that there is usually a positive relationship between age, education, residence and knowledge of social services among population in general; however it goes to show that there is need for the Social Workers to carry out more sensitization programs on FLE in the area.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

Following the findings, the study has some implications for Social Work profession in Nigeria. It implies that the relevance of Social Work especially the family social work has not been fully appreciated in Nigeria thereby undermining the relevance of Social Work to the national development and attainment of the SDGs. There is therefore need for Social Workers to carry out sensitization program on FLE in the country both at the national and grass root levels. The sensitization program can be carried out using various mediums such as social media, mass media, religious and youth organizations. This will enable the youth to be aware and have adequate knowledge of FLE services in the country.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development goals of year 2030 are plausible goals for human living and FLE is relevant for the effective development of youths and their participation towards the attainment of the 2030 goals paramount. Current activities in most countries show that the youth are disfranchised from developmental activities and this gives them a sense of alienation which consequently does not have any program in plan for them. There is no platform for them to mobilize and contribute to the national development using their various talents which may contribute to the increasing rate of suicide among them. In view of this, the researchers, examined the awareness and knowledge of FLE among the youths in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu-State of Nigeria. The study like some others, confirmed poor awareness and knowledge of FLE among the youths thereby, suggesting need to reach out to the youths using various media, organs, offices and programs so that the youths can be efficient participants to the nations development programs.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researchers got Ethical Clearance from the University of Nigeria Health Research Ethics Committee which covers the Southern part of Nigeria where the study area is located; and the community leaders of each community before collecting data from the youth. Before the collection of the data from the youth, the researchers got approval from the traditional leaders of the various communities used for the study. The researchers met the traditional leaders of the various communities, explained the objective and purpose of the study and got their consent to carry out the study with the youth in the communities. The traditional leaders gave their consent orally for the study to be carried out in their communities. The researchers also discussed with the youth also got their consent orally as well.

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