

In-school Adolescent Girls' Reproductive Health Information Needs and Resources in Public Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

Stella Ngozi Ifeoma Anasi

Kenneth Ivo Ngozi Nwalo (PhD)

Stella Ngozi Ifeoma Anasi is the Acquisition Librarian at the University of Lagos Library, Nigeria. She can be reached at: sanasi@unilag.edu.ng or anasistella@yahoo.com.

Kenneth Ivo Ngozi Nwalo is a senior lecturer at the Department of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He can be reached at: Knwalo@yahoo.com.

Introduction

Information is critical to the healthy development of a woman right from infancy and childhood, to adolescence and the reproductive years, to the post reproductive period. In fact, to a large extent the quality of life of women depends on the quality of information at their disposal and the purpose to which it is used. Every girl, therefore, should have the right to information which will enable her to assess the alternatives and make an informed decision.

Literature on adolescent reproductive health information needs is very sparse. This is because adolescents' access to reproductive health information remains a contentious issue for parents, government and many religious groups. Yet, young people have a special need for information on sexual and reproductive health in order to avoid becoming victims of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies.

The most basic reproductive health information needs of adolescents are accurate and complete information about their body functions, sex, safer sex, reproduction, and sexual negotiation and refusal skills (Bearinger, Sieving, Ferguson and Sharma, 2007).

Schools can be a hub for the provision of accurate and a ge-appropriate reproductive health information. In Nigeria, a study by Araoye (1998) showed that adolescents who received sexuality education in school had more accurate information than the other students. School based reproductive health information provision is especially

important for girls for whom school constitutes the major outside source of information.

Libraries are not only a means of obtaining access to required information but also of providing the user independent access to all kinds of ideas and information (Alegbeleye, 1981). People see libraries as familiar, accessible and as a reliable source of information (Lancaster, 2003). According to Ajayi and Omotayo (2010) libraries are also open to the community and generally safe. They can therefore be uniquely comfortable places for students to spend time to find out more about HIV/AIDS without fear of stigmatization. Consequently, libraries have a moral vindication to provide access to information for children and young adults with special attention to AIDS issues (Batambuze, 2003). In the same vein, Ajayi and Omotayo (2010) agreed that librarians can play a significant role in the provision of health information if they listen carefully to the needs of students, develop cultural competence and work with them. A study conducted by Deering and Harris (1996) indicated that 60% of the respondents agreed that libraries were among their preferred sources of health information. On the contrary, another study by Odusanya and Bankole (2006) revealed that libraries and librarians were the least important sources of HIV/AIDS information in secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. Out of the 1,404 students, only 166 (11.8%) either utilized or sought HIV/AIDS information from libraries and librarians.

The state of the libraries in Nigeria may be responsible for this anomaly. The result of the study by Ajayi and Omotayo (2010) showed that information resources on HIV/AIDS in libraries were outdated and therefore not useful to the students. In Calabar, most school libraries are not adequately stocked and staffed to provide the needed information to the teenagers (Ottong and Nwalo, 2001). Indeed, Nwalo (2004) stated that school libraries in Nigeria are neglected and they are virtually non-existent especially in public schools. Studies carried out in some parts of Nigeria by Opeke (1994), Achebe(2001), Oguntase (2004), Adetoro (2005), Akinlolu (2008), and Enem (2010) identified poor funding, inadequate accommodation, inadequate and outdated collection, lack of library integration in the educational programmes and lack of a vibrant school library association as major obstacles to school libraries development. Thus only few public schools in Nigeria have any semblance of what might be referred to as libraries. Consequently, they are incapable of providing information resources to meet the users' needs.

In the final analysis, the state of school libraries in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. Where there are no libraries in schools, provision of information services to students in meeting their needs would be hamstrung. Yet, school libraries and librarians in Nigeria, like in developed countries, can play a significant role in the provision of reproductive health information to students. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the reproductive health information needs of in-school adolescent girls' and reproductive health resources available in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- to determine the reproductive health information needs of in-school adolescent girls in Lagos State,
- to investigate the state of the school libraries and level of reproductive health materials in the schools in Lagos State and
- to ascertain the in-school adolescent girls access to libraries and librarians in Lagos State.

Research Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. A questionnaire complemented with focus group discussion and observation was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered on a total population of 1800 students randomly selected from 18 schools in six local education districts in Lagos State, Nigeria. Out of the 1,800 copies of the questionnaire, 1367 were fit for statistical analysis, representing a response rate of 76%.

The researchers also visited the schools and the school libraries to observe the resources in the schools which promote access to reproductive health information. Considering the teeming population of students in public secondary schools in Lagos State, schools that had less than 10 reproductive health materials were considered to be very poor; those that had between 11-20 reproductive health materials were regarded as being poor; those that had between 21-50 reproductive health materials were deemed to be fairly good while the ones that had over 50 reproductive health materials were considered to be good.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the reproductive health information needs of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The means score computed indicates that the in-school adolescent girls' most important reproductive health information need is how to maintain healthy friendship with men without sex (= 3.22). This was closely followed by information on how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (=3.04), how to control sexual desire (=3.02), where to go for HIV test (=2.92), how to identify signs of HIV/ AIDS (=2.89), how to avoid premarital sex (=2.86), and how to identify signs of sexually transmitted infections (=2.83). Others are information on how to refuse teenage marriage (=2.72), health effects of female circumcision (=2.55), and different methods of pregnancy prevention (= 2.50). The reproductive health information that in-school adolescent girls least desired were information on how to terminate pregnancy safely (=1.90) and where to buy condoms (=1.66).

Respondents seem to be aware of the fact that unwanted pregnancy, HIV can disrupt their school career (Grant and Hallman,2008; Juarez, LeGrand, Lloyd and Singh,2008).The in-school adolescent girls greatly desired information on the prevention and management of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. It seems that with the growth of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the hunger for HIV/AIDS information has increased (Opeke, 2004). Similarly, the respondents' desire for information on how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid premarital

sex is in line with the findings of other studies on information needs of different user groups which revealed that the respondents expressed that they need information on how to protect themselves from contacting HIV/AIDS (Mabawonku, 1998).

The participant at the Focus Group discussion indicated that they need reproductive health information to guide their actions and decisions. A Focus Group participant at CMS Girls Grammar School 2 stated that: "We need reproductive health information so that we know the right things to do at the right time for now I know that what I should do is to focus on my studies. No boy friend, no sexual intercourse and all that".

The in-school adolescent girls' least desired reproductive health information is information on where to buy condom. The fact that condom is conspicuously displayed and sold everywhere in the chemist shops may have contributed to their response. This is consistent with the results of the study which revealed that young people generally felt that the services offered by patent medicine dealers were sufficient to meet their contraceptive needs as these dealers are located on street corners (Otoide, Oronsaye and Okonofua, 2001).

The findings also revealed that majority of in-school adolescent girls are in dire need of information on how to refuse teenage marriage and health effects of teenage marriage. This finding is not surprising as early marriage might likely disrupt their educational career as experience has shown that despite the promises by men to their prospective wives that they will be allowed to pursue an education after marriage, the young bride would inevitably need to drop out of school to nurse her babies and run her home (Uwais,2010).

From the analysis many of the respondents indicated that they need information on the health effects of female genital mutilation. Access to such information will empower the respondents to insist on their rights and also advocate for its eradication. Their protest might prompt the community leaders to have a rethink and publicly decry the practice.

Data collected revealed that majority of the respondents need information on different methods of pregnancy prevention and how to use them. This finding is supported by the study which reported that almost 50 per cent of unmarried sexually active adolescent in Sub Saharan Africa have an unmet need for contraception (Sedgh, Rubina, Akinrinola and Susheela, 2007). Indeed, high levels of unwanted pregnancy and abortion are evidence of the large unmet need for family planning among adolescents (Juarez, LeGrand, Lloyd and Singh, 2008).

The in-school adolescent girls' least desired reproductive health information is information on how to terminate pregnancy safely. Perhaps, they take safe way of terminating pregnancy as common knowledge. Previous studies indicated that adolescent girls resort to non-physicians such as patent medicine dealers who are located on street corners for their abortion needs and therefore they felt that they do not need such information (Olukoya, 2002; Olukoya, 2004). Their response may also be a reflection of their ignorance of the consequence of unsafe abortion.

Table 1: The Reproductive Health Information Needs of the Respondents

Information needs	Very greatly needed		Greatly needed		Occasionally Needed		Not at all		No response		Mean
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
HIV/STDs prevention/management											
How to maintain healthy friendship with men without sex.	759	58.2	268	19.6	140	10.2	137	10.0	27	2.0	3.22
How to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.	704	51.5	297	21.7	136	9.9	178	13.0	52	3.8	3.04
How to control sexual desire.	673	49.2	324	23.7	146	10.7	179	13.1	45	3.3	3.02
Where to go for HIV test	630	46.1	290	21.2	195	14.3	218	15.9	34	2.5	2.92
How to identify signs of HIV/AIDS.	629	46.0	303	22.2	156	11.4	211	15.4	68	5.0	2.89
How to avoid premarital sex	658	48.1	252	18.4	135	9.9	256	18.7	66	4.8	2.86
How to identify signs of sexually transmitted infections	573	41.9	329	24.1	193	14.1	208	15.2	64	4.7	2.83
Health consequences of STDs/AIDS.	554	40.5	294	21.5	152	11.1	279	20.4	88	6.4	2.69
Negative effects of casual sex	402	29.4	273	20.0	213	15.6	366	26.8	113	8.3	2.35
Correct use of condom	341	24.9	148	10.8	171	12.5	671	49.1	36	2.6	2.06
Where to buy condoms	170	12.4	133	9.7	196	14.3	794	58.1	74	5.4	1.66
Teenage marriage											
How to refuse teenage marriage	568	41.6	274	20.0	186	13.6	254	18.6	85	6.2	2.72
Health effects of teenage marriage	463	33.9	273	20.0	218	15.9	348	25.5	65	4.8	2.53
Genital mutilation											
Health effects of female circumcision.	502	36.7	262	19.2	190	13.9	310	22.7	103	7.5	2.55
Family planning											
Different methods of pregnancy prevention	509	37.2	211	15.4	161	11.8	433	31.7	53	3.9	2.50
How to use different methods of pregnancy prevention	366	26.8	255	18.7	195	14.3	442	32.3	109	8.0	2.24
Unsafe abortion prevention											
Health consequences of unsafe abortion	341	24.9	226	16.5	217	15.9	516	37.7	67	4.9	2.19
How to terminate pregnancy safely	271	19.8	159	11.6	152	11.1	732	53.5	53	3.9	1.90

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Table 2 reveals that 7 of the 18 schools surveyed had no reproductive health materials available at all. Only 2 of the schools had a place dedicated to the sole purpose of being a library. Many were mere empty reading space than a library. The two school libraries were fairly spacious, well furnished but have inadequate and outdated learning resources. The library at Ansar-Ud-deen Girls High School was furnished through Education Trust Fund in 2003. However, at Festac Girls Secondary School, there was an attempt at developing an e-library. The library is equipped with one computer, one television, a video player and diskettes. Eleven of the schools visited had less than 10 reproductive health materials and they were regarded as being very poor. They had only a few copies of biology, and integrated science textbooks with relevant information on reproduction. A few posters and stickers that convey reproductive health information were pasted around some of the schools. All the participants at the Focus Group Discussion maintained that they do not have functional libraries and therefore rarely have access to reproductive health information through the libraries. The poor state of the libraries in Lagos public secondary schools implies that Lagos State Government is not committed to the development of school libraries as entrenched in the National Policy on Education, 1981. None of the libraries visited had a qualified school librarian.

The finding of the study on the state of the school libraries and level of reproductive health materials available in the schools revealed that most of the schools have no functional libraries. Where libraries exist at all, they are in a deplorable state and the level of reproductive health materials is very poor. The findings of Okiy(2004) which revealed that most schools in Nigeria lack libraries and the few that are available are poorly funded, lack adequate collections and accommodation supports this result. The finding is consistent with the observation of Hart (2000) that the materials in the libraries in Swaziland were outdated and not useful and the libraries as agents of social change and information providers were not participating actively in the dissemination of reproductive health information to the communities. The result is also similar to what was found by Ayankogbe, Omotola, Inem, Ahmed and Manafa (2003) that only 4.5% of students got HIV information from their schools. They reported that this is rampant all over Africa and a perennial problem in Nigerian schools in general and Lagos schools in particular. In Uganda also a report indicated that school libraries are lagging behind in the provision of HIV/AIDS information (Batambuze, 2003). Details of the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The State of the School Libraries and Level of Reproductive Health Materials Available in the Schools

Name of Schools	Location	State of the library	Level of reproductive health materials.
Girls Senior High School	Agege	A reading room with few dusty old books on the shelves	Very poor
Dairy farm sec schl	Agege	A fairly spacious library with no furniture, very few dusty old books	Very poor
Sango Sec. School.	Agege	No library due to reconstruction	None
CMS Girls Grammar School	Bariga	Very few books, the library serves as both reading room and staff	Very poor

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2		room	
Angus Mem.High Sch I	Shomolu	No library	Very poor
Gbagada Senior Grammar Schl 2	Gbagada	No library	None
Girls' Senior Grammar Schl.	Obalende	A reading room with a few dusty old books on the shelves	Very poor
Kuramo College	Victoria Island	A fairly spacious library with no furniture, very few books	Very poor
Falomo High School	Falomo	No library	None
Wesley Girls' Sec. Schl.	Sabo	No library	None
Eletu- Odibo High Schl.	Abule Oja	No library due to reconstruction	None
Fazil Omar High Schl.	Onike	No library due to reconstruction	None
Festac Girls Secondary School	Festac Town	A fairly spacious reading room, with one computer, one television, one video player, discs	Very poor
Agboju Sec School	Agboju	A fairly stocked library, well arranged with good furniture	Very poor
Amuwo-Odofin High Schl.	Mile 2	No library	None
Ansar-ud-deen Girls High Sch.	Mushin	A fairly spacious library with furniture, many dusty and outdated books	Very poor
Ilupeju Grammar Sch.	Oshodi	A reading room with a few books	Very poor
Estate Grammar Schl.	Oshodi	A reading room / staff room with a few dusty old books	Very poor

Investigation into respondents' access to libraries and librarians revealed that a good number of them 1123(82.2%) have no access to school libraries. A remarkable number of them 761(55.7%) do not have access to the public libraries. Most of them 1160((84.9%) do not have access to librarians. The study has shown that majority of the respondents have no access to libraries and librarians. The librarians are trained to provide the right information to the right person at the right place and at the right time in the right format. They are, therefore, professionally prepared to disseminate reproductive health information to adolescents in the context of unprotected sexual relations and the consequences of early pregnancy, unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and other health hazards. This is in line with the assertion by Odusanya and Bankole (2006) that librarians as professionals in the collection, organization and dissemination of information and as agents of social change have crucial roles to play in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Librarians and libraries can do what teachers seldom can that is tailoring reproductive health information to the immediate needs and interests of the adolescent girls. The advantage of having libraries as providers of reproductive health information such as HIV/AIDS information is that no stigma is associated with visiting the library, as there is with a clinic and that the libraries have better setting for the task of disseminating such information (Hart,2000).

Table 3: Respondents’ access to libraries and librarians

Statement	No of respondents	%
Do you have access to school library?	244	17.8
Yes	1123	82.2
No	1367	100.0
Total		
Do you have access to public library?	606	44.3
Yes	761	55.7
No	1367	100.0
Total		
Do you have access to a librarian?	207	15.1
Yes	1160	84.9
No	1367	100.0
Total		

Conclusion and Recommendations

In-school adolescent girls need reproductive health information in order to avoid becoming victims of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, teenage marriages and teenage pregnancies. Unfortunately, the reproductive health information resources in the school libraries are grossly inadequate. There is an urgent need for a deliberate and planned reproductive health information provision among adolescents in Lagos State in particular and Nigeria in general. Therefore, parents, educators, librarians, healthcare providers, policy makers and religious leaders must make concerted effort to ensure that adolescents have access to information on the biological, socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual dimension of sexuality.

Literature suggests that the school is the most effective place for health information, given the extra domestic burden girls bear especially in Nigeria. Teachers and librarians in schools should endeavour to provide age-appropriate reproductive health

information to the students. This will help them to develop more rational attitudes and responsible sexual behavior.

To meet the reproductive health information needs of the female students, the Lagos State government and non- governmental organizations in the state should be committed to the development of school libraries as entrenched in the National Policy on Education, 1981. The government should also equip the school libraries with reproductive health information resources that address the special reproductive health information needs of the adolescents.

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