



The causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students and its impact on their academic performance in FCE Pankshin, Plateau state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study Investigates the Causes of Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion Among Female Students and its Impact on their Academic Performance in Federal College of Education Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed and the population comprises of 206 Degree students and 825 NCE students from Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, PHE, Computer Science and Integrated Science departments. Simple random technique was employed to select the sample size of 30 Degree students and 70 NCE students from Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, PHE, Computer Science and Integrated Science respectively giving a total of one hundred (100) respondents. Four research questions were raised to guide the investigation. Questionnaire was used as instruments for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 27 computer software. The findings in table 1 indicated that many causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students some of which are economic hardship, peer pressure, carelessness, social media, lack of family support and proscurocity. The findings in table 2 shows that hemorrhage, uterine perforation, cervical injury, infections, low birthweight, midtrimester spontaneous abortion, premature delivery and increased risk of both morbidity and mortality are the health implications of unwanted pregnancies and abortion amongst female students in FCE Pankshin. The findings in table 3 revealed that provision of prevention education to teach students critical personal and social skills that promote health and well-being and help them avoid indulging in premarital sex that leads to unwanted pregnancy and abortion, creation of sexual abstinence awareness and creation of awareness of the community laws that prohibits alcohol and premarital sex are the possible means of curbing this menace among the female students. The researchers recommended that adolescents students should be educated about sexuality, dangers of safe and unprotected sex and its adverse health implications by parents, educational psychologists, counsellors, teachers, curriculum planners and even government to avoid cases of unwanted pregnancy and abortion in schools and society at large. In conclusion, the causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion had a great impact on the academic performance of students in the study area.

Keywords: Unwanted pregnancy, abortion, female students, academic performance

Introduction

Tertiary institutions as a centre for character and learning is expected by the society to inculcate the moral values of the larger society especially in promoting desirable sexual behavior. This is to be achieved through teaching and learning, on the one hand and through rules and regulations. Students learn new behavior in order to adjust to the demands of the new environment. Each student comes to the higher level of learning with his/her own perspective of life, relative to his social background. Because of the multi ethnic and social nature of higher institution environment, there is thus the likelihood of finding carriers of deviant norms who possibly teach others in the process of daily association (Ariyo, 2017) ^[5].

According to Ariyo (2017) ^[5], modern sex education has been the tool of the devil because of biology and mechanics of sex are being taught without restraint. However modern dressing styles are designed to make the side walk classroom and living room into garlic show, little have been left for imagination. Miniskirts and hot pants have been designed to break down any form of modesty and morality that will exist in our society.

Females Students (girl-students) in higher places of learning specifically FCE Pankshin are in a state of rapid physical

and psychological change. They have curiosity and urge to experience new phenomena (Lewis, 2007). Nevertheless, our females students are exposed to different circumstance like fears, worries and different desires, they feel ashamed to get advice and guidance from their parents and elders. Over a life cycle approach, female students and their communities need to know about reproductive health so that, they can make informed decisions about their reproductive health and sexuality (Baryamutuma & Baingana, 2011).

One major contemporary social problem confronting most societies today is unwanted pregnancy. According to Sambo (2009), "unwanted pregnancy refers to pregnancies which occur when the girl child is below the age of 18 years and unwillingness to get married. Unwanted, unplanned and out of wedlock". Unwanted pregnancy may occur as a result of early maturity with good physical features, sometimes coupled with the onset of menstruation that varies from person to person, especially exposing a young girl to peer's influence (Ede, 2011) ^[12]. Ede (2011) ^[12] observed that a well mature adolescent girl knows that she can be attractive to opposite sex. Her image and self-esteem are in

wholesome. It, in turn, enables her to venture out to get the different sex attracted. Ede (2011) ^[12] further stated that such well-matured female students without adequate social training and self-discipline usually see sex as a means of social, economic and emotional gratification and hastily go into it and become pregnant. He added that it is indeed an over-pressing problem because of the enormous demands that sexual issues make on young persons. Sometimes, teenage pregnancy occurs as a result of sexual abuse that is rampant in our society today. Given the above factors, Nweke (2012) stated that it is evident for a child abused at a very early to fulfill an adult or older siblings need the rest of her life with the feelings which he had to give too much of himself. The result of sexual abuse, however, is not restricted to problems in one's sexual life; they impair the development of themselves as an autonomous personality.

Abortion is an important topic of discussion, particularly in regards to reproductive health and family productivity. According to Shiers (1999), abortion is "the termination of pregnancy before 24 weeks of gestation". In other words, abortion is the act of bringing a pregnancy to an end before the sixth month. The World Health Organization (2004) defines abortion as "the termination of pregnancy before the embryo/fetus attains the age of viability". In defining the age of viability, Okoye (2006) ^[24] explains that in Nigeria and many other countries, the age of viability is accepted to be 28 weeks of gestation which is the 7th month of pregnancy. This connotes any removal of fetus from the uterus at the 7th month of pregnancy or after that can be considered as birth rather than abortion. In consonance with the view of Ramalingan (2006), abortion is the 'premature termination of pregnancy and from the seventh month, a fetus could be considered as matured.

In modern age of ours, people still get upset and feel shy sometimes at the mere mention of the word 'abortion. Also, most students are still ignorant about abortion related issues. As a result of this crude attitude towards abortion, more harm have been done than good to many innocent souls whose lives would have been saved if the right steps and attitudes had been taken at the appropriate time to savage such situation (Fisher, 2008) ^[17].

A close observation of the incidence of abortion in Nigeria shows that abortion is very rampant. It is a common practice among female undergraduates and secondary school students. Personal experiences by the researchers of frequent occurrence of complications from abortion which often result in death across the states and in various hospitals throughout the country confirm the high rate of abortion in Nigeria. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey affirmed the high rate of abortion when it revealed that 91.73 percent of government hospitals and 97.58 percent of private hospitals in Nigeria have attended to patients suffering from abortion complications on an annual basis, National Population Commission Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN; 2014). In Port Harcourt (October 28, 2017) a girl of 17-year old in one secondary school died as a result of complications from abortion of a pregnancy of about three months old. Another case was an undergraduate student who aborted a pregnancy in a roadside chemist. Few

hours, later she complained of pains in her lower abdomen and was rushed to University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital where she died of the complications, (National Statistical Service, Ministry of Health, and ICF, 2017). Cases of this nature are frequent occurrence in various parts of Nigeria. Enquiries have shown that abortion is done for several reasons. The most common and obvious reason of all the considerations is that abortion as a last resort to unwanted pregnancy. For female undergraduates and secondary school students, a pregnancy is principally unwanted because of the fear and shame of interruption in education, fear of parents' rejection, and the stigma associated with bringing up a child born out of wedlock, as well as the fact that a pregnant female may be ignorant of the person responsible for the pregnancy.

The causes of unwanted pregnancy which is unintended pregnancy leading to abortion is a pregnancy that is mistimed, unplanned, or unwanted at the time of conception. It mainly results from the lack of, inconsistent, or incorrect use of effective contraceptive methods (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). It may also result from rape in which emergency contraception is not used. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, women who are more likely to experience unintended births include unmarried women, black women, and women with low educational status and income. A pregnancy can change from wanted to unwanted (and vice versa) during the course of a pregnancy through the reactions of others or external economic pressure (Monga and Dobbs, 2011) ^[23]. In some instances, a change of circumstances (e.g. the lack of support from a partner) might lead to the pregnancy becoming unwanted, and thus an initially intended/wanted pregnancy may eventually be terminated (aborted). In other cases, an unexpected pregnancy may be welcomed due to prevailing circumstances. It is upon this background that the researcher deems it fit to investigate into the causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students and its impact on their academic performance in Federal College of Education Pankshin, Plateau State.

Research methodology

Study area

The study was carried out at the Federal College of Education, Pankshin in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the town of Pankshin. It has an area of 1,524 km² and a population of 191,685 at the 2006 census. Pankshin is popularly known for its trade hub as most of the people are farmers growing a vast range of food crops such as millet, guinea corn, maize, tomatoes, rice, onions, cabbage, carrot and collections of fruits. Mondays in Pankshin is specifically for trading – buying and selling, hence the name "Monday market" as traders, merchants and people in the environs and as far as away as Bauchi come to buy and sell.

The College started as the Federal Advanced Teachers College (FATC) in 1974 at a temporary site in Mararaba Pushit, some 17 kilometres to Pankshin town about thirty two years ago. The researcher used all the final year students in school of sciences of Federal College of Education, Pankshin, NCE and B.Ed. programmes. Below is the map of the study area:



Source: Google map retrieved January 15th May, 2023

Fig 1: Map showing the study site

Research design

This study used survey research design, specifically; the descriptive survey design, to investigate into the causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students and its impact on their health and academic performance in FCE Pankshin, Plateau State. Survey design according to Adeniji (2016) is the method associated with research situations, where the research subjects run into hundreds and even thousands spreading across a large area. The reason for choosing the descriptive design is because it seeks the opinions of individuals on a particular problem, whereby the consensus of these opinions provides the needed solution to the problem at hand.

Population and sample of the study

Population

The target population of the study will be all the final year students in School of Sciences of Federal College of Education Pankshin. It’s important to note that the choice of this target population for this research is purposive; this is because they constitute a better source for obtaining the necessary and accurate data needed for this research. The population comprise of two hundred and six (206) Degree students and eight hundred and twenty-five (825) NCE students. The population of the study is presented as thus:

Population for the Study

S/No	Departments	NCE Students	Degree students
1	Biology	192	95
2	Computer science	180	1
3	Integrated science	258	16
4	Chemistry	130	42
5	Mathematics	7	12
6	Physics	30	25
7	Physical and Health Education	28	15
	Total	825	206
	Grand Total		1031

(Source: School of Sciences Statistics, 2020/2021 Academic Session).

Sample

Mwansa (2012) defines sample as a subset or portion of the research population selected to be studied, rather than studying the whole population. He went further to say that an appropriate sample is one that provides an estimate or a sample value that will be obtained from the whole population itself, which in turn will not give experimental error.

The sample of this study is gotten from both the Degree and NCE students in School of Sciences of Federal College of Education Pankshin. The sample comprise of thirty (30) Degree students and seventy (70) NCE students all from School of sciences of Federal College of Education Pankshin making a whole total number of one hundred (100) sampled respondents respectively. The sample of the study is presented as thus:

Sample of the Study

S/No	Departments	NCE Students sampled	Degree students sampled
1	Biology	20	8
2	Computer science	10	1
3	Integrated science	15	7
4	Chemistry	10	5
5	Mathematics	5	2
6	Physics	5	4
7	Physical and Health Education	5	3
	Total	70	30
	Grand Total		100

(Source: School of Sciences Statistics, 2020/2021 Academic Session).

Sampling technique

The technique adopted for selecting the samples for this research is simple random sampling technique. A simple random technique is a subset of individuals chosen from a larger set (population) (Omolewa, 2009). Here, each individual or sample in the population has the same

probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process. However, this technique is found to be ideal and appropriate for the study because the researcher selects the samples based on certain characteristics required in the study. Therefore, the researcher used balloting system for choosing the respondents. He cuts pieces of papers based on the number of respondents required and write YES and NO on them, dumped in a bag and shuffled together and allow some people outside the study area to pick one each. Those that picked YES were considered as the respondents while those that picked NO were exempted. This is done so to avoid being bias in the selection by the researcher.

Instrument (s) for data collection

The instrument is a structured questionnaire which is divided into two sections; A and B. Section A. obtained the demographic information, while Section B. is a questionnaire items design for the students in School of Sciences of Federal College of Education Pankshin to seek their opinions on the causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students and its impact on their health and academic performance. The researcher adopted a five likert rating scale approach, which are Strongly agree (5) points, Agree (4) points, Disagree (3) points, Strongly disagree (2) points and undecided with (1) point respectively.

Validity and reliability of the research instrument

Validity

The instrument used for data collection in the study will be validated by experts from Biology Education department,

suggestion and corrections will be properly carried out by the researcher’s supervisor.

Reliability

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a test- retest method will be used. The instrument will be administered to some people outside the study population which after 2weeks, the same instrument will be re-administered to the same group of respondents. The results of the two tests given to respondents from the different periods will be compared. Having seen that the results yield the same response, it will then considered reliable.

Procedure of data collection

The researcher will carry the questionnaire to the study area by himself (face-to-face administration) this is to ensure a one hundred percent return of the questionnaires and also to ensure that any question or area that requires clarification can equally be handled by the researcher.

Method of data analysis

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS Version 27 Computer Software. Mean score was used for the research questions. A mean score of 2.50 and above was chosen as the acceptance level for each of the items. Any item with a mean rating of less than 2.50 was rejected.

Result and discussion

Research Question 1

What are the causes of unwanted pregnancies and abortion among female students in FCE Pankshin?

Table 1: Analysis of Mean score of the causes of unwanted pregnancies and abortion among female students in FCE Pankshin

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean	Decision
1	Carelessness and proscuroisity result to unwanted pregnancy and abortion among our female students	50	39	8	1	2	4.30	Accepted
2	Family economic hardships limit reaching to the needs of female child while in school which can lead to indulging in premarital sex for money leading to unwanted pregnancies and abortion	44	40	10	6	0	4.20	Accepted
3	Peer pressure altered female students behaviour which can result to unwanted pregnancy and abortion	28	53	14	5	0	4.00	Accepted
4	Lack of family, social and professional support can result to unwanted pregnancy and abortion among our female students	34	39	17	10	0	3.90	Accepted
5	Social issue can be one of the big factors which cause abortion rate increase day after day among our students	30	38	22	9	1	3.80	Accepted
	Mean Aggregate						4.04	Accepted

The table above presents the frequency and the mean of respondents to questionnaire items on the causes of unwanted pregnancies and abortion among female students in FCE Pankshin. Five (5) items were presented in which all the (5) items were accepted based on the 2.50 decision point set in the study because they were above the accepted decision point mean 2.50. The overall mean score was 4.04 which is above the accepted decision rule 2.50. This implies

that all the listed items on the causes of unwanted pregnancies and abortion among female students in FCE Pankshin are true.

Research Question 2

What are the health implications of unwanted pregnancies and abortion amongst female students in FCE Pankshin?

Table 2: Analysis of Mean score of the health implications of unwanted pregnancies and abortion amongst female students in FCE Pankshin

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean	Decision
11	Female students are faced with hemorrhage, uterine perforation, cervical injury, and infection, which is often due to unwanted pregnancy and incomplete abortion	49	37	9	2	3	4.20	Accepted
12	Female students are negatively confronted with low birthweight, midtrimester	32	40	20	4	4	3.90	Accepted

	spontaneous abortion, and premature delivery due to unwanted pregnancy and abortion								
13	Female students are more likely to have medical complications during pregnancy and prolonged labor as a result of frequent abortion while in school	36	47	9	5	3	4.00	Accepted	
14	Female students are faced with increased risk of both morbidity and mortality with increasing gestational age as a result of abortion.	28	47	12	3	10	3.80	Accepted	
15	Female students are faced with a form of posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of unwanted pregnancy leading to abortion.	26	54	13	4	3	3.90	Accepted	
	Mean Aggregate						3.96	Accepted	

The table above presents the frequency and the mean of respondents to questionnaire items on the health implications of unwanted pregnancies and abortion amongst female students in FCE Pankshin. Five (5) items were presented in which all the (5) items were accepted based on the 2.50 decision point set in the study because they were above the accepted decision point mean 2.50. The overall mean score was 3.96 which is above the accepted decision

rule 2.50. This implies that all the listed items on the health implications of unwanted pregnancies and abortion amongst female students in FCE Pankshin are true.

Research Question 3

What are the possible means of curbing this menace among the female students so as to enhance and improve their academic development and performance in school?

Table 3: Analysis of Mean score of the possible means of curbing this menace among the female students so as to enhance and improve their academic development and performance in school.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean	Decision
16	Effective information dissemination can increase knowledge and alter attitudes about issues related to alcohol, abortion, and unwanted pregnancies	38	41	13	3	5	4.00	Accepted
17	Provision of prevention education to teach students critical personal and social skills that promote health and well-being and help them avoid indulging in premarital sex that leads to unwanted pregnancy and abortion	48	36	11	3	2	4.20	Accepted
18	Provision of community-based process to enhance community resource involvement in unwanted pregnancies and abortion prevention through building interagency coalitions and training community members and agencies in health education, sex education and prevention	24	52	13	4	7	3.80	Accepted
19	Creation of awareness of the community laws that prohibits alcohol and premarital sex leading to unwanted pregnancy and abortion	35	48	12	4	1	4.10	Accepted
20	Creation of sexual abstinence awareness that implies staying away from the opposite sex will help to eradicate premarital sexual relationship leading to unwanted pregnancies and abortion.	34	49	10	2	5	4.00	Accepted
	Mean Aggregate						4.02	Accepted

The table above presents the frequency and the mean of respondents to questionnaire items on the possible means of curbing this menace among the female students so as to enhance and improve their academic development and performance in school. Five (5) items were presented in which all the (5) items were accepted based on the 2.50 decision point set in the study because they were above the accepted decision point mean 2.50. The overall mean score was 4.02 which is above the accepted decision rule 2.50. This implies that all the listed items on the possible means of curbing this menace among the female students so as to enhance and improve their academic development and performance in school are true.

Discussion of the findings

Based on the data obtained on the field, table 1 revealed that there exist many causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among female students some of which are economic hardship, peer pressure, carelessness, social media, lack of family support and proscurocity among others. These findings was in agreement with the findings of Ali, Tikmani, and Qidway, 2016) who states that various estimates have been given for the causes of unwanted/unintended pregnancies leading to abortion ranging from 13% to 82% of pregnancies worldwide. However, only a few studies are available from the Middle East and North Africa, giving a prevalence of 40% in Iran and 24% in Egypt. This is as a result of conflict and

economic hardship, and also social determinants might play a role, valuing large families and negating the occurrence of unintended pregnancies.

Table 2 revealed that the problem of unwanted pregnancy and abortion among our female students is one of the main challenges facing developing countries due to its effect on uncontrollable population growth and mother and child health. This is because Unplanned or unwanted pregnancy and abortion interfere with health and wellness in different ways and that it does not only affects various aspects of individual and family health state, but also reduces the labor productivity. The findings above commensurate the view of Daling *et al*, (2014)^[11] who are of the opinion that as with any surgical procedure, unwanted pregnancy leading to abortion carries an inherent risk of medical complications, including death. Complications known to be directly related to the procedure include hemorrhage, uterine perforation, cervical injury, and infection, which is often due to incomplete abortion.

Table 3 revealed that unwanted pregnancies and abortion has traditionally been viewed as rural, urban and inner city problems that calls for measures to effectively tackle it. However, with the past decade’s increase in prevalence of sexual activity leading to high growth of unwanted pregnancies and abortion, there are effective prevention strategies that can combat these menaces. These strategies according to David Hawkins, (2009) share a common goal: strengthening “protective factors,” such as well-developed social skills, strong family bonds, attachment to school, and

active involvement in the community and religious organizations, while reducing “risk factors” that increase vulnerability to unwanted pregnancies and abortion. He further asserts that promising prevention strategies are often designed to address different levels of risk. Universal prevention efforts, like sex education and health education target all youth without identifying those at particularly high levels of risk. Selective interventions concentrate on those who are particularly vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies and abortion as a result of pre-marital sex because of personal, family, and community risk factors.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the causes of unwanted pregnancy and abortion are very high among students in the study area. Sex education, health education and also youths programmes should be designed specifically to target female students to provide them with adequate knowledge on reproductive and sexual issues, change their attitude about sexual risk and motivate them to understand behaviour that reduce sexual risks especially the consistent use of condoms which has a dual purpose of both preventing unwanted pregnancies and also preventing sexually transmitted infections.

It is very clear from the findings that the sexual behaviours and attitudes of students are a danger to their own lives. The prevalence of unwanted pregnancy and abortion was high among female undergraduates. This was irrespective of marital status. The task for policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, community and opinion leaders, health professional bodies, and family planning service providers is to develop more effective strategies to curb this problem. Reproductive health education schemes need to focus more on undergraduate females. More robust studies especially comparative would also be helpful.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study made the following recommendations:

1. Considering the upsurge of unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, educating adolescents about sexuality requires joint effort by parents, educational psychologists, counsellors, teachers, curriculum planners and even government. Educational psychologists and Counsellors as a first step, have the task of demystifying sexuality by providing the youngsters with adequate and relevant information regarding sexuality and reproductive health. Parents should be awake to their responsibility and teach certain aspects of sexuality at home so that their children will be well prepared for family life.
2. Health Care centre with the help of those in authority should educate students about the dangers of unprotected sex and safe sex before they contract STI's and HIV/AIDS.
3. Students themselves should be more involved than ever in designing strategies that could help them cope with pressures that they face in institutions of higher learning where some students engage in unsafe sex.
4. Teachers should teach certain aspects of sexuality at school so that the adolescents will be familiar with societal expectations of their future roles as wives and husbands.

5. Government should promote issues of family and regulate influx of foreign films as well as monitor and censor our local films to protect our adolescents from the adverse effects of exposure to pornographic films.

Conflict of interest

The authors have all declared no conflict of interest.

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