

**HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND ADOLESCENTS
INVOLVEMENT IN SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

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ABSTRACT

This is a correlation research aimed at determining the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and adolescents' involvement in sexual intercourse. The study was carried out in Cross River State. Three research questions guided the conduct of the research while three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. All the 6449 SS2 students in all the 18 public secondary schools in Calabar municipal council and Ogoja Local government council constituted the population of the study. The sample used consisted 200 SS2 students who were randomly drawn from ten secondary schools.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire named HIV/AIDS Awareness and Adolescents involvement in sexual intercourse questionnaire (HAAISIQ). One expert each in Health Education, Educational psychology and measurement and evaluation validated the instrument. Reliability coefficient scores of 0.84 and 0.86 for HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse sub – sections of the HAAISIQ were respectively obtained through the test – re – test method. Two research assistants helped in the administration of copies of the instrument on the respondents. Data collected were analyzed with mean (\bar{x}), pearson (r) and t – test. Results gotten after data analysis showed that there is a significant negative relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and adolescent involvement in sexual intercourse; it was also found that significant negative relationship exists between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse of adolescents in urban and rural areas. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is unarguably one of the world's most deadly diseases. Mc Sweeney (1992) described it as the greatest scourge of modern times. AIDS is a human viral disease which destroys the human immune system; thereby rendering the body incapable of defending itself from different infections and or diseases. This could be the reason AIDS is described as an ill health which occurs in a situation where one is seriously sick because the immune system has been seriously destroyed by other infections (Kelly 1996, Kalichman, 1996). AIDS is caused by the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV). This virus attacks and destroys the CD4⁺ t – cells, which is an important part of the human immune system (Mc Sweeney, 1995, Prescott, Harley & Klein, 1999). AIDS was first discovered in 1981 in the U.S.A among homosexual men users of intravenous drugs (Achal, 1993, Egbuonu, 1997, Unachukwu, 2003). It has been argued that AIDS appears to have had its origin in central Africa as early as the 1950's. The recent isolation from African green monkeys of the Simian Immune Deficiency Virus (SIV) which is related to HIV – 1 and HIV – 2, the strains that primarily cause AIDS, (Prescott et al, 1999) Could be used to support this claim. Information regarding the origin of AIDS may not be too important or useful at present. What is important to note according to the above authors is that AIDS, epidemiologically, occurs world wide, spreading to the Caribbean, United States, Europe and Africa, (Nigeria inclusive), with very high prevalence rates. For instance, 30 million people were by 1997 estimated to be infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide. This estimate was expected to double

by the year 2000 to between 60 to 70 million cases of HIV/AIDS infection worldwide. (United Nations, in Prescott et al, 1999).

The prevalence level of AIDS in Nigeria by 1986 when it was first diagnosed in a 13 year old girl was almost zero, but by 2005, 5% of Nigerian population was infected with AIDS (Osotimehin, 2005) Many lives may have been lost, many children may have been made orphans, having lost their parents to the AIDS scourge. As its spread rages on, it is possible that many more people are at the risk of being infected – men and women, old and young. Osetimehin, (2005) however, lamented that adolescents are the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection in Nigeria. This situation according to this author spells doom for the Nigerian nation as her future generation is being compromised. Those adolescents are found to be the most vulnerable group to AIDS is understandable. It is at this stage in human development that the individual engages in all sorts of experimentation including sexual intercourse, which is one of the easiest modes of transmitting the HIV virus (Achal, 1993, Unachukwu, 2003). Unfortunately AIDS is pandemic and has no known cure at present. (Prescott, Harley & Klein, 1997). There is a need therefore to find ways of ensuring that its continued spread is checked or prevented. Regarding this prevention of HIV spread, Achalu (1996) sees education as an effective way of achieving success. Through education, awareness is created concerning the nature, cause, clinical presentations, and mode of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS infection (Unachukwu, 2003). For this reason, in the year 2002, the federal government of Nigeria set up the National Action Committee on HIV/AIDS (NACA). Osotimehin (2005), believes that through education and awareness campaigns being mounted

by NACA since its inception, the war against HIV/AIDS in Nigeria would be won.

Consoling as this may sound, it is not yet clear how aware adolescents (the most vulnerable group to HIV/AIDS infection) are of issues relating to HIV/AIDS. It is also not certain how their level of awareness relate to their involvement in sexual intercourse, one of the easiest means of HIV/AIDS transmission. The question one may ask in the light of the above statements is how aware are adolescents of issues relating to HIV/AIDS awareness relate to their involvement in sexual intercourse? In other words, what is the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents? This study was designed to answer this question.

The under stated research questions directed the conduct of this study.

1. What is the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in secondary schools?
2. What is the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in urban located secondary schools?
3. What is the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in rural located secondary schools

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. HO₁: there is no significant relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in secondary school.
2. HO₂: There is no significant relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in urban located secondary schools.
3. HO₃: There is no significant relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in rural located secondary schools.

METHODS

This is a correlation research designed to determine the relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse among adolescents in secondary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of all the senior secondary class two (SS2) students (totaling about 6449) in all the 18 public secondary schools in Calabar municipal council and Ogoja Local government area of Cross River State. Sample of the study however was made up of 200 SS2 students from ten public secondary schools. In drawing this sample, simple random sampling technique by balloting was used to select 5 public secondary schools and 100 SS2 students from each of the two local government areas under study.

An instrument named HIV/AIDS Awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse questionnaire. HAAISIQ was used to collect data for this work. The instrument, a five point likert scale was divided into three sections – A, Band C. Section A assessed, the personal data of the respondents, section

B contained items used to determine the level of HIV/AIDS awareness among the respondents and section C contains items used to assess the respondents level of involvement in sexual intercourse. The HAAISIQ was validated by an expert each in Health Education, educational psychology and measurement and evaluation. The test re – test method was used to determine the reliability coefficients of sections of the instrument. The coefficient obtained was 0,84 for HIV/AIDS awareness and 0.86 for involvement in sexual intercourse. The data collected were analysed with mean (\bar{x}), pearson (r), and t – test.

Results

The results elicited from analyses of research questions 1, 2 and 3 were presented in table 1

Table 1: Correlation coefficients (r) for HIV/AIDS Awareness and Involvement in sexual Intercourse among adolescents

Variables	HIV/AIDS Awareness mean	Involvement in sexual intercourse mean (\bar{x})	N	r
Overall Adolescents	58.51	72.29	200	-0.69
Urban Adolescents	60.69	74.08	100	-0.63
Rural Adolescents	58.96	73.36	100	-0.48

On table 1, it was observed that an r of -0.69 was obtained for relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and adolescents involvement in sexual intercourse. For the relationships between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse by adolescents in the urban areas and r of -0.63 was obtained while an r of -0.48 was obtained for the relationship

between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse by adolescents in the rural areas.

Table 2: t – test of r for significance

Variables	R	t-calculated	t-critical	Alpha level	Df
Overall Adolescents	-0.69	-18.67*	-1.96	0.05	198
Urban Adolescents	-0.63	-11.16*	-1.96	0.05	98
Rural Adolescents	-0.48	-7.70*	-1.96	0.05	98

Keys: * means significance beyond 0.05 alpha level and df of 198 and 98.

An observation of the results in table 2 showed that the three calculated t values (i.e -18.67, -11.16 and -7.70) were respectively less than the critical value of t (-1.96) at 0.05 alpha level and df of 198 and 98. In the light of this all the three null hypotheses were rejected.

Hence,

1. There is significant negative relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and adolescent's involvement in sexual intercourse.
2. There is significant negative relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and involvement in sexual intercourse by adolescents in urban and rural areas.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between HIV/AIDS awareness and adolescents' involvement in sexual intercourse. This implied that the adolescents HIV/AIDS awareness was low while their involvement in sexual intercourse was high. Information

in Table 1 clearly showed this; as it indicated HIV/AIDS awareness mean (\bar{x}) score of 58.51 and involvement in sexual intercourse mean (\bar{x}) score of 72.29 for all the adolescents. This trend was maintained among adolescents in the urban areas who obtained HIV/AIDS awareness mean (\bar{x}) score of 60.69 and involvement in sexual intercourse mean (\bar{x}) score of 74.08. In the rural areas, the adolescents obtained HIV/AIDS awareness mean (\bar{x}) score of 58.96 and involvement in sexual intercourse mean (\bar{x}) score of 73.36. Thus, low HIV/AIDS awareness was found to be associated with high involvement in sexual intercourse among the adolescents studied.

Earlier researches conducted in this area by Onyemelukwe (1998), Jatau and Kajang (2002), Onuzulike (2002) and Unachukwu (2003), all reported adolescents low HIV/AIDS awareness and high involvement in sexual intercourse.

Significantly Unachukwu (2003) found that adolescents lacked awareness of the use, modes of transmission and nature of HIV/AIDS disease. According to this author, the adolescents' studies believed that HIV/AIDS is punishment from God and the origin is unknown. They also believed that HIV/AIDS could be Whiteman's disease, brought to Africa to control population growth. The reason for low HIV/AIDS awareness as found in this present study could be attributed to adolescents' misconceptions regarding the HIV/AIDS disease, as found by Unachukwu (2003) and stated above. Again the reason for high incidence of sexual intercourse among adolescents as also found in this study could be attributed to the fact that the adolescence stage of development is characterized by high incidence of heterosexual relationships which can culminate into intimate sexual relationships (Unachukwu and Ebenebe, 1997, Papaplia and Olds, 1998).

The fact that adolescents also engage in a lot of experimentation including in sexual intercourse, (Achal, 1993, Unachukwu 2003) could also be a reason for high incidence of sexual intercourse found among them in this study. These explanations hold for adolescents in both urban and rural areas, and could be as a result of similarity in their experiences as adolescents. The findings of this study as stated above are disheartening. They seem to give evidence to the claim made by Osatimetin (2005) that we are still far from winning the HIV/AIDS war in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this work, it was concluded that low HIV/AIDS awareness among adolescents is associated with high involvement in sexual intercourse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These authors recommended that;

1. The campaigns against HIV/AIDS by government, World Health bodies well – to – do members of the society and other organizations should continue since adolescents involvement in sexual intercourse was found high.
2. There is need for more effective campaign strategies against the HIV/AIDS scourge to be adopted.
3. Guidance counselors are needed in secondary schools to help in school adolescents understands their sexualities so as to avoid victims to sex related problems.

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