
**Facts and Awareness of HIV/AIDS Infection among Female
Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State
Nigeria**

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to investigate the students' facts, transmission awareness, attitude towards infected person and the source of information about HIV. The study was carried out among undergraduate female students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Four research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised all the female students in Unizik. The sample consisted of 210 undergraduate female students in the randomly selected three departments. The range of respondents' age was between 18-25 in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The data was collected and analyzed statistically using SPSS version 19. The instrument was validated by two Lecturers in measurement and evaluation and Health and Physical education departments of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. They were asked to criticize the questionnaire items to see if they addressed the research questions. Their remarks and ideas were used to amend the questionnaire. Findings revealed that there is lack of vital information regarding certain important aspects of HIV/AIDS among the female students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns must be conducted frequently among college students especially among females and these must pay particular attention to specific issues on the knowledge, modes of transmission and management of HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: *HIV, AIDS, facts, Awareness, Sexually Transmitted infection and Education*

Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes Aids. The Epidemic and upsurge of the disease in Nigeria makes it a serious health problem and it is considered to be one of the most complex health issues threatening human life. Despite the progress made toward its prevention and treatment, no country in the world remains unaffected (Adegoroye, 2011). In Awka and other towns in Anambra State, the incidence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS are low in Anambra States. However, the majority (46%) of HIV/AIDS cases reported in Awka have been found to be associated with sexual activity, 17% has been the result of blood transmission, while the mother to child transmission accounts for five percent (5%) and twenty-nine percent (29%) of the affected population did not specify how they contracted it (Curvey, Johnson & Ogden 2009). The remaining HIV cases resulted from intravenous drug abuse (2%) and organ transplant (1%). Since, the effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection and complete treatment for HIV/AIDS are not available currently, the community's awareness levels, facts about HIV as well as individual's attitudes toward infected person are essential key factors in controlling the disease (Quinn, 2012).

Achalu (2011) revealed that the highest affected populations among Middle East countries are young people. Therefore, young generation must be exposed to proper educational programs to improve their awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS modes of transmission and preventive measures. A study on AIDS related facts showed lack of scientific facts regarding HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention among Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Unizik) medical students. Another study conducted at Igbariam, for assessing HIV/AIDS Facts among 150 adolescent students showed that the majority of the adolescents had an average Facts of HIV/AIDS, yet they did not know much about modes of transmission and prevention of this disease Achalu, (2011). A low level of awareness and serious misunderstandings about HIV/AIDS were observed among Madonna university students where more than 30% of participants believed that HIV virus infects only homosexuals Fageeh (2011). In a recent study by Achalu (2011) at Unizik to assess the Facts and awareness level about sexually transmitted Infection (STIs) among male students he found that the majority of the participants were familiar with HIV more than other STIs. Positive attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS was found to be very low in a number of studies done in different countries (Caplow 2000).

In a study by Ewuzie, 2003 wrong behaviors and negative attitudes were observed among health workers. A variation in the attitude towards HIV/AIDS individuals in Federal University and Technology Owerri (Futo) was reported, and the overall positive attitude was higher within married teachers than unmarried teachers. Ogbalu (2012), estimated that the female university students expressed more positive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS individuals than male students. He also observed that students who had greater Facts about HIV had higher positive attitude scores.

In Anambra state, discussion on sexually transmitted infections with parents or other family members is considered to be a taboo where ethical and social factors give rise to many obstacles, Radio, television and magazine are playing a crucial role in spreading the awareness and Facts about HIV and its transmission. A study conducted among male and female students at Universities in Anambra state has showed that

friends were the main source, of information regarding HIV/AIDS for male students while booklets were the main source of information among females (Onuzulike, 2016). In Owerri, Imo state, Onuzurike (2016), observed that majority of the women had acquired information about HIV/AIDS from the mass media, especially television. In 2011, a study carried out among secondary school students (aged 11-19years) showed that more than 50% of the respondents had heard about HIV/AIDS from television and 46.9% from radio (Clegg 2011).

Information Impact on HIV/AIDS Awareness

Information increases the level of certainty in any human decision process; little wonder, Edewor (2010) posits that information is indispensable for human development. Likewise, Nwafor-Orizu (2003) while describing sources of information dissemination in the rural areas in Nigeria, avers that, oral sources like face-to-face interaction, radio, television, traditional institutions, associations, and written sources like newspapers and magazines aims to facilitate rural information transfer as a way of eliminating ignorance and superstition. The present information and education campaign to forestall the spread of the disease should be pursued with vigor but some energy has to be dissipated to the care of people already afflicted. (Akanmu and Akinsete 2006)

Mooko and Aina (2007) opine that every individual, whether literate or illiterate, needs information for a variety of issues essential for his or her survival. It is therefore, not surprising that information is needed for awareness, increase productivity and health. They further assert that users of information are complex, while some are homogenous such as professionals, students, policy makers, researchers, some could be heterogeneous like rural inhabitants and artisans. Adeyemi and Ilo (2010) in their own opinion submit that information is the most potent weapon available for the prevention and cure of HIV & AIDS.

HIV is a daily companion, In order to control the HIV epidemic, we all need to learn as much as possible about the disease. As for those living with HIV, comprehensive and up-to-date information is an essential part of a healthy life. There is no better place to start the education than at the beginning. Moreover, various campaigns have been mounted by both governmental and non-governmental associations (NGOs) to curtail the spread of HIV/AIDS. Olaleye (2003) posits that these campaigns focused on measures to prevent HIV/AIDS infection. The measures include total abstinence from sex, use of condom to avoid infections from unprotected sexual intercourse, screening of blood meant for transfusion, keeping to one sexual partner, use of sterilized sharp object like blades, knives, needles, syringe, shaving and barbing instruments, Intending couples are also advised to do HIV/AIDS test before being joined in marriage.

Omoniyi and Tayo-Olajubu (2006) submit that people diagnosed with AIDS may get life-threatening diseases called opportunistic infection which are caused by microbes such as viruses and bacterial that usually does not make healthy people sick. However, What the HIV does is to gradually damage the immune system so that an infected person would be vulnerable to all sorts of diseases and illnesses, which may

eventually lead to the total collapse of the immune system. It is at this point a person is said to be suffering from AIDS.

Mode of Transmission

The HIV which causes AIDS could be spread through blood, semen containing sperm and the vaginal fluid. The virus enters the body in one of the several recognized ways including

- Through sexual intercourse with infected person. This occurs when semen comes in contact with the mucous membrane, lining of the vagina, rectum or mouth with wounds
- Through shared contaminated needles or other skin piercing instruments such as knives, razors, needles.
- Through blood transfusion.
- Through shared tooth brushes and from barber shop.
- From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy and at birth.

Adler (2013) enumerated major signs of HIV/AIDS, they include:-

- ❖ Prolonged unexplained fatigue
- ❖ Fever lasting for more than one month
- ❖ Persistent severe diarrhea larger than one month.
- ❖ Unexpected weight loss greater than 10% of the weight (Mahat & Scoloven 2016).

Minor Signs of AIDS

- ✚ A persistent severe cough for more than one month.
- ✚ Unexplained swollen lymph nodes lasting for several months.
- ✚ Purplish or discoloured lesion on the skin that do not go.
- ✚ Cold sores all over the body(Adler 2013).

Government Intervention in Nigeria

In Nigeria an estimated 3.1 percent of adult between ages 15-49 are living with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 170,000 people died from AIDS in 2007 alone (UNAID 2008). The first two cases of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria were identified in 1985 and were reported at an international AIDS conference in 1986. In 1987, the Nigerian health sector established the National AIDS Advisory Committee which was shortly followed by the establishment of the National Expert Advisory Committee on AIDS (NEACA). Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2004).

Initially the Nigerian government was slow to respond to the increasing rates of HIV transmission and it was only in 1991 that the federal ministry of health made their first attempt to Nigeria's AIDS situation (Adeyi and Kanki 2006). The result then showed that 1.8 percent of the Nigerian population was infected with the deadly disease. However, when Olusegun Obasanjo became the president in 1999, HIV prevention, treatment and care became one of the government primary concerns. The National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) was created and in 2001, the government set up a three-year HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan (HEAP).

Subsequently, the president hosted the organization of Africa Unity's first African summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases Fageeh (2014). A recent report from the Director General of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) during a stake holders meeting with the National Steering Committee on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), revealed that about one thousand (1,000) fresh cases of Human Immune Virus (HIV) is being recorded daily in Nigeria and that it was prevalent among the youths. Achala (2011).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to:

1. find out the modes of acquiring information about HIV/AIDS among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
2. find out the mode of transmission awareness of HIV/AIDS among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
3. find out the attitude toward HIV/AIDS patients by female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Significance of the Study

The result of this would create awareness, increase knowledge and bring positive attitudinal change to students, health educators, curriculum planners, future researchers government and non- governmental organization.

The finding would help students to know that having casual sex will lead them to contract HIV/AIDS. Health Education teachers would benefit from the study if they utilize the result in classroom instruction.

The finding would also provide guidance towards the development, review and functional implementation of sex education curriculum.

The results of the study are expected to assist future researchers to explore further areas of HIV/AIDS and may help those who may want to replicate the work elsewhere and make further contributions to the body of knowledge in this area. Finally, results of the study may be useful to governmental and non-governmental agencies that have interest in HIV/AIDS, they may utilize the finding in developing appropriate methods, approaches in teaching and handling HIV/AIDS cases.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the work

1. What are the modes of acquiring information about HIV/AIDS among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
2. What are modes of transmission awareness of HIV/AIDS among female female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
3. What are the attitudes toward HIV/AIDS patients among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Methodology

This research study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The reason of adopting this research design was to extract data from a target population through questionnaire. Ifeakor and Osegbo (2009), stated that a survey research is regarded as one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be illustration of the entire group or population. The study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State which is one of the states in the South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria. The accessible population for the study consisted of all the students from three randomly drawn departments in NAU. The sample consisted of 210 female students from three randomly drawn department in NAU. Three stage sampling by balloting with replacement technique was used in drawing three departments-computer, economics and HPE. In stage two all the students in the departments were listed. The range respondents age was between 18- 25 were selected from each department through simple random sampling technique by replacement. In stage three non- probability (chance selection) was used in choosing the first seventy students that attended the general course for the month of March 2018. The instrument used for data collection was a structured pattern questionnaire which was developed by the researchers.

The questionnaire was structured to incorporate the necessary information on facts and awareness of HIV/AIDS infection among female Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. The instrument was validated by two Lecturers in measurement and evaluation and HPE. The researcher travelled to the area of study to administer the questionnaire to the students and the respondents provide the answers to each item on the questionnaire. The validators recommendations and suggestions were adequately effected in restructuring the instruments. The copies of the questionnaire were collected and used for data analysis. The data were analyzed statistically using SPSS version 19.

Results

A total of 210 undergraduate female students from Unizik studying at three different departments (computer science, economics and HPE) completed the survey. The range of respondents' ages was between 18- 25 years. All the participants were from Anambra state. From the analysis , students were aware of the full name of HIV, however, 61% (128/210) did not know the relationship between HIV and AIDS and 59% (86/210) of the respondents did not know the full form of AIDS. Regarding the awareness of modes of HIV transmission the vast majority of participants were aware of the link between sharing needles and HIV 91% (190/210).The lowest level for transmission awareness that was observed among the participants was 28% (58/210) and it was related to transmission of HIV through coughing and spitting Only 40% (83/210) and 43% (89/210) were aware that HIV could not be transmitted through sharing toilet seats with HIV infected person and drinking from the same glass respectively.

Negative attitude and discrimination towards patients living with HIV/AIDS was found to be very high and there were many items in this section, which needed

attention. Only 21% (44/210) of participants had an opinion that HIV/AIDS person can work in places where food is handled by them. Surprisingly, 70% (147/210) of the respondents were willing to play sports with persons affected with HIV. However, more than 40% of the study participants revealed that they were not willing to have a colleague with HIV in their classroom or their work place, which could be basically due to the fear of discrimination from society.

The media including television, radio, newspaper and magazines play important role in educating people about HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention through their wide reach and ability to break taboos and misconceptions. Thus, this study asks the participants about their source of facts about HIV/AIDS and found that the media was a predominant one among all the students at the three different departments; computer science, economics and HPE with 61%, 80% and 68% respectively. HIV/AIDS is recognized as a global health issue. Of all the various age groups affected by the pandemic, the adolescent age group is the one that is most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STI's. Against the background that more than half of newly infected HIV adolescents are female's, the facts and awareness of female adults on HIV/AIDS is of immense concern in developing countries with increasing number of HIV infections. It will be instrumental not only in preventing the spread of the virus but also in addressing the threats posed by HIV/AIDS to mankind.

The study concluded that although 67% of the respondents could correctly mention the meaning of the acronym HIV, only 41% knew the full form of AIDS. These results are in contradiction by the studies done earlier by Alkye and Duke (2006) which explain that AIDS is more often used to represent HIV/AIDS in most African societies. It is worrisome to note that 61% of the female participants could not make a clear distinction between HIV and AIDS. This finding is in agreement with studies by Ewuzie 2003, from these results that there is dearth of clear understanding as far as general facts of HIV/AIDS is concerned. This suggests that particular attention must be paid in increasing their level of awareness in demonstrating basic facts about HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, the study revealed that a large proportion of students (91%) were aware of the association between shared drug needles and HIV infection. Though, their level of awareness was comparatively Very low for another aspect of mode of transmission, that is, coughing and spitting, only 28% believed that HIV cannot be transmitted through this mode. Also alarming were the responses with regards to HIV Transmission not by sharing toilet seats and drinking from the same glass (40% and 43% respectively). Most of the females believed that hugging or holding (84%) and sharing clothes with AIDS patient (69%) did not transmit the virus. Also, 72% of the students knew well the association between breast feeding by HIV infected mothers and its transmission. Sixty four Percent of the respondents knew about mother to child transmission of HIV during pregnancy. The facts regarding transmission through mosquito bite and sharing swimming pool with AIDS patients was disheartening (51% and 56% respectively). Stigmatization of HIV and AIDS is a serious problem. Many people living with HIV/AIDS are afraid to tell anyone about their status.

In this study, an overall negative and non-accommodating attitude was revealed among the 210 participants. The only point where majority (70%) showed an accepting attitude was playing sports with HIV infected person whereas only 21% believed that HIV/AIDS patients can work in places where food is handled by them. A study by Adler (2013) also reported attitudes among the respondents. Regarding from where the students learned about HIV/AIDS, 70% answered that media was responsible for this. The second most common answer was others (unspecified 28%) followed by family (9%) and friends (3%). This finding is consistent with previous researches (Chatterjee, 2010; Srivastarva Esam & Mishra, 2011) where they have talked about the impact of social exposure to be more effective in all areas of awareness among males in comparison to females. They also recommend that programs should be undertaken with regard to HIV/AIDS to increase the awareness of adolescents especially for females as they are less aware as well as more vulnerable.

Table 1 Modes of Acquiring Information about HIV/AIDS among Undergraduate Female Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

S/No	Way of acquiring information about HIV	Computer Science %	Economic %	Science %	Total
1	Family	9	9	10	
2	Friends	3	1	1	
3	Media	31	50	38	
4	Others	28	10	20	
	Total	71	70	69	210

Table 2: Transmission Awareness of HIV/AIDS among Female Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

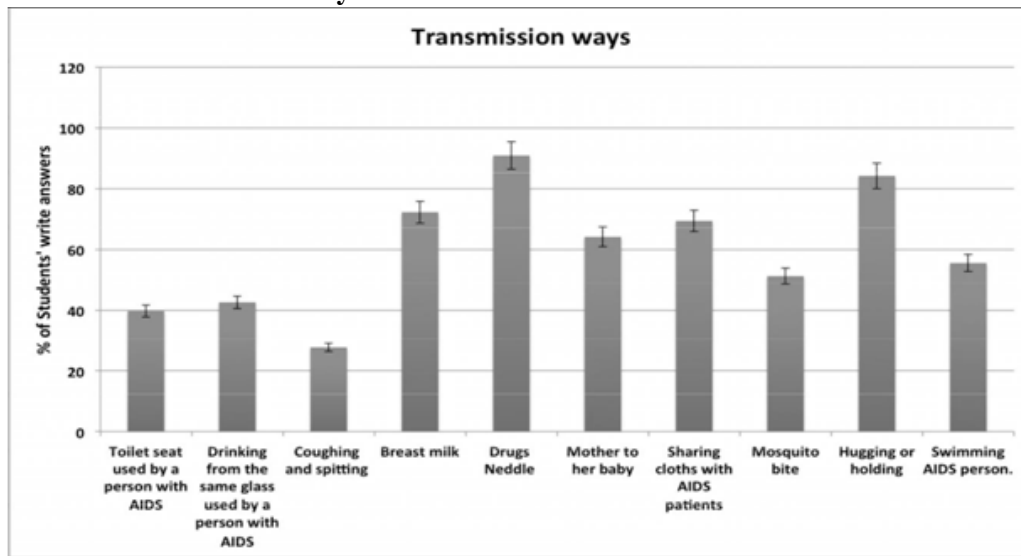
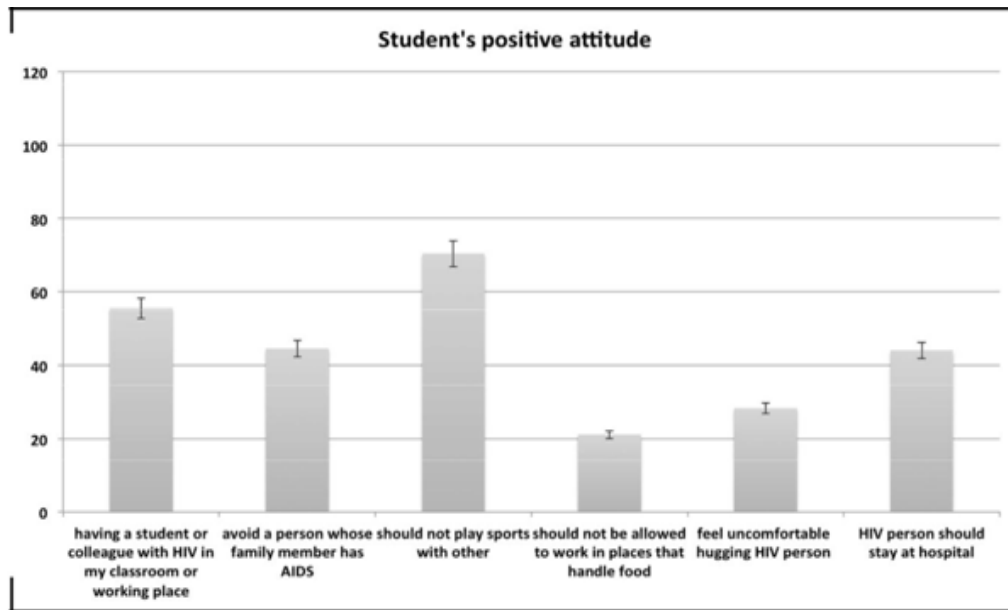


Table 3: Attitude Toward HIV/AIDS Patients Among Female Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka



Conclusion

Although the students disclosed adequate understanding of some basics concept of HIV/AIDS, the study reveals that there is lack of vital information regarding certain important aspects of HIV/AIDS among the female students. The researcher concludes that HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns must be conducted frequently among university students especially among females and these must pay particular attention to specific issues on the facts, modes of transmission and management of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS prevention drives must move beyond curriculum into encouraging and enhancing voluntary counseling and testing services among student population. This will not only help in fostering enhancement of their existing facts about the disease but will also help to reduce the stigma associated with the disease as well as the negative attitudes that are prevalent in the society for HIV infected patients.

Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusion the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should establish AIDS screening centres in the state, to enable patients of AIDS to screen their blood.
2. AIDS patients should be confined to hospitals for treatment and control of it's spread to other people.
3. Government should conduct national campaigns to educate the public on the deadly disease to enable them to be aware of it.

- ~~4. Blood donor centres should screen blood donors thoroughly before accepting.~~
5. Implements such as razor, blades, tooth brushes and injection needles should not be shared with friends.

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