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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON MEDIA USE IN CURBING HIV/AIDS IN UYO METROPOLIS OF AKWA IBOM STATE.

BY

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Abstract

The study examined the perception of male and female students on HIV/AIDS education. The respondents consisted of 450 SS three students in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. The research instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Perception of HIV/AIDS and Educational Needs Inventory (POHAENI). Four hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. Chi-square was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study showed that male and female students do not differ in their perceptions regarding HIV AIDS Education. Based on the findings, it was concluded that although print media, electronic media conferences, symposia, workshops, seminars are the means of educating the public on HIV AIDS, teaching it as a subject in schools will further go a long way in reducing the incidences and the spread of the disease to the barest minimum. Some recommendations were made including that Akwa Ibom State government guidelines for reproductive health education which has already been developed should be implemented and youth should be encouraged to take positive health choices, make informed decisions, practice healthy behaviours, recognize situations and behaviours risky to health and avoid same.

Introduction

Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immnuo Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is a global scourge. It is a deadly disease that has claimed several lives and deprived families of their loved ones. According to Life Link organization (2002), the pandemic has already killed more than 25 million people, and more than 40 million more are currently infected. It was generally thought that this disease was principally a public health challenge. Human Immuno-Deficiency

Virus/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome as observed by World Bank report in The Pioneer, is reversing decades of development gains, increasing poverty and undermining the very foundations of progress and security.

Generally, the causes of the disease is not known but a new recognized retrovirus which is known by the internationally agreed name of Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) has been shown to be the cause of AIDS. This virus infects important cells in the human body

called CD4 positive (CD4+) t cells.

These cells are part of the body's immune system, which fights infections and various cancers. Without CD4+ T cells (white blood cells), the immune system which normally fights off infection loses its ability to defend the body against disease caused by bacteria viruses and other microscopic, organisms. Without enough CD+T cells, the body becomes vulnerable to certain rare cancers (Sunday Sun, April 3, 2005, page 45). According to Obuekwe, Diejomaoh and Donganokar (2002), when HIV penetrates a cell in the human body, an enzyme called reverse transcriptase transforms the genetic material of the retrovirus into deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). This new DNA is integrated into the host cell's own genetic material and every time the host cell reproduces, the new cells contain viral genes. There is no cure for AIDS, but medical treatment can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system. As with other diseases early detection offers more options for treatment and preventing complication.

As if the problem at hand is not enough, Ogwo (2005) reported that two new viruses from the same family as HIV have been discovered among Central Africans who hunt nonhuman primates. The two new viruses identified in the latest study come from a group known as the retro-viruses, which are known to cause serious illness in humans. They have been named Human T-lymphotropic virus types 3 and 4 (HTLV-3 and HTLV-4). The discovery of the HLTV-3 and 4 shows that far from being rare events, retro-viruses are actively crossing into human population. The study led by the US John Hopkins University was published in proceedings of the National Academy of

Sciences.

HIV/AIDS however, is not the only identified disease in medicine without a known cure, yet, no other disease receives the social stigma attached to AIDS once diagnosed. It is wrong to directly relate AIDS infection with sexual promiscuity, as there are other modes of transmission which are as follows:

- 1) Sexual intercourse: about 80-85% of transmission occur between an infected person and his/her partner
- 2) Frequent blood transfusion
- 3) Drug addiction.
- 4) Having multiple sex partners.

The epidemic demands a response that confronts the disease in every sector, but education has a particularly important role to play. In the absence of a cure, or vaccine, knowledge becomes imperative, (via information dissemination), if the scourge of Human Immuno- Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is to be contained. According to the World Bank publication (Education and HIV/AIDS, 2002), average life expectancy has now fallen to 47 years (compared with an estimated 62 without AIDS). It affects the entire nation. Young people - every country's future - are becoming infected and dying in large numbers. The epidemic has profound impact on growth and poverty.

Education is the key to change in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. Education about Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome must be improved in order to reduce gaps between policies and their grassroots implementation and to ensure the adoption of effective prevention

strategies. Much of the misinformation and myths surrounding Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome can be corrected with continuing education. Such education would reduce the fear, stigma, isolation and denial of care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Many researches have been conducted by various individuals and groups on the perception of HIV/AIDS. Effiong (1998) examined the attitude of 200 secondary school students in Calabar, Nigeria on HIV/AIDS and found that among age bracket 16-20 years, 76.47% showed positive attitude towards HIV/AIDS campaign strategies. Berhane and Zakus (1995) also conducted a survey in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to assess the community's knowledge on the disease, they used 530 adults. The result showed that 90% of them could identify the various sources of transmission of HIV/AIDS. These findings showed a high awareness level of the HIV/AIDS infections.

In a similar study conducted by the United Nations Agency for International Development (UNAID, 2002) in four African countries - Botswana, Cameroon, Guinea and South Africa, it was found that there was positive attitude towards preventive measures against HIV/AIDS. This was exhibited by young men aged 12-22 years by refraining from some forms of sexual activities and also by abstaining from sex. From the above researches carried out in other parts of Africa, it can be seen that education is very paramount to curb the present scourge of HIV/AIDS globally and in Akwa Ibom State in particular. This is urgently needed, especially by adolescents who are considered as a vulnerable group. This will enable them make wise choices

and decisions about their personal character and development as well as behaviour change.

The effective use of the mass media is a critical component of HIV/AIDS prevention. Hitherto, the use of state mass media for HIV/AIDS prevention was very underdeveloped. Unlike in other resource-rich countries where the earliest signs of an HIV/AIDS epidemic triggered an outburst of national media advertising, Nigeria was slow to respond. The utilization of the mass media in health promotion has progressed beyond narrow interpretations of behaviour change. There is the advent of new concepts such as media advocacy which aim at using the media to shape or change the citizenry.

According to Udousoro (2003), HIV/AIDS desk officers in the Ministry of Information work with the journalists in the state and local media; there are also information officers in rural areas that give them feedback and report the situations in the rural areas. He said so far, two workshops on sensitization have been organized for the journalists in the State. At the forum stickers, jotters and biro pens carrying messages on HIV/AIDS were distributed to the participants. Matters relating to HIV/AIDS are published twice in, the state Newspaper (The Pioneer), to remind the literate populace of the infection. Publications are made on any aspect of the disease for instance, stigmatization, discrimination and gender factor in the control of the epidemic.

The electronic media has also contributed immensely to curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the State through radio and the television advertisements. According to the HIV/AIDS desk officers

in Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC), people used to switch off their radio or television sets initially when programmes on HIV/AIDS started. They denied the existence of HIV/AIDS and attributed it to witchcraft. With perseverance, changes occurred. People (sufferers) came up with evidences and sought to know more about HIV/AIDS but preferred anonymity.

When the researcher sought to find out how the disease could be reduced or curbed through teaching outside classroom, it was revealed that State Action Committee on AIDS (SACA) and State Project Team (SPT) a 25 member multisectorial Committee, with the responsibility of coordinating all HIV/AIDS control programmes in Akwa Ibom State, were inaugurated by the state governor in the year 2000. Their main duty is to stem the spread of the deadly disease. This is done by mobilizing and capacitating line ministries, civil society organizations, faith based organizations and other stake holders to confront the dreaded scourge.

According to SACA News, LACA (Local Action Committee on AIDS) has been inaugurated to take care of the local governments. The officials were selected from affected councils to attend a four-day workshop in Uyo where they received training on the various areas of intervention for the smooth take off of the Local Action Committee On AIDS (LACA) in the benefiting area councils.

SACA News also reported that with support from the State government and World Bank, a lot has been achieved in the area of sensitization against stigmatization, behavioural change and how to stay alive if infected. A significant number of NGOs and

CBOs (non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations) have been registered and funded to educate, inform and mobilize the people for a collective fight against the AIDS pandemic. The results have been reduction in the number of new cases and the number of women through workshops, seminars and conferences in the state.

The central message of this paper is that the education of children and youths merits highest priority in a world afflicted by Human Immuno- Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It merits priority because a good basic education itself ranks among the most effective and cost effective means of HIV/AIDS prevention. It also merits priority because the very education system is being gravely threatened by the epidemic, particularly in areas of high or rising HIV/AIDS prevalence.

This should be done through the curricula approach in the school system. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary, education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills. One of the three main approaches to how we learn - contiguity approach- was considered and reviewed for this study. Contiguity approach is the process where learning is established when there exists an element of contiguity in the form of the occurrence together or an association between two or more characteristics in an experiential situation. There are two main models. These are the respondent or classical conditioning and operant conditioning. A Russian psychologist, Ivan P. Pavlov (1849-1936) and an American

psychologist, John B. Watson (1878-1958) have contributed much to the respondent conditioning models of learning.

Education to reduce risk is a learning/ teaching issue, a human right issue, a cultural issue, a community issue, an inter-sectoral issue (Bart, Burton and Peim, 2001). The researcher took notice of the fact that, from all efforts by various organizations to help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, not much was said about teaching it as a subject at all levels in schools that can reach further into the community than many other institutions. Attitudes and behaviour taught and learned in schools serve as examples far beyond the classrooms. The establishment of HIV/AIDS unit in the Federal Ministry of Education in 2002, Abuja, marked a major intervention of prevention education in the control of the spread of the epidemic in Nigeria. Similar units are established in all the thirty-six states of the country.

Series of workshops, seminars conferences, and symposia have been organized by HIV/AIDS Unit of the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Planning intervention with the aim of achieving positive behavioural change as a result of IEC strategies (The Pioneer Monday, March 15, 2004, p. 21). Education functions as a major engine of economic and social development. Research indicates that economic growth increases with more education and declines with less. Though culture in some parts of Africa is not favourably disposed to parental counselling on sexual matters, times have changed and there is no way of giving education about HIV/AIDS whether at school or at home without teaching on reproductive health.

Parents, teachers and the society in general should rise and embrace HIV/AIDS education in order to fight and win the war against the virus.

Education is a veritable tool for the training of individuals' mind and society; it is the key to change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Young people in Akwa Ibom state are variously challenged as they grow up to deal with various issues around and about them. Whilst some of these challenges may arise due to socio-economic and political determinants, others arise as a result of lack of access to developmentally appropriate and factual information on issues of sexuality.

This is even graver considering that our society is aptly described as having a culture of silence around sexuality. For instance, despite the ravaging impact of HIV/AIDS on especially the age group of 15-24 years, the desire to ensure access to information on sexuality seems not to be uppermost in the minds of a cross section of adults. Rather a wish for abstinence appears pervasive suggesting therefore that sexuality has to do with sexual intercourse only. Thus, the effort to ensure access of young people to gender sensitive, developmentally appropriate, factual information on sexuality had gone beyond advocacy efforts but the need to begin to facilitate provision of such information through the curricular approach in the school system.

The Executive summary of a World Bank project on "Education and HIV/AIDS" has it that education is a window of hope. This is because children, 5-14 years, are the least likely to be infected with HIV. Education, before they reach the peak vulnerable years, will

protect them; this protection will be reinforced by early training that promotes healthy life styles and avoidance of risky behaviours. The study seeks to examine the perception of male and female students on the use of different education media in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

There has been wide spread of HIV/AIDS among people of all ages, races, countries as well as continents. HIV/AIDS scourge has brought tales of woes for not just the afflicted persons but everyone related to them in one way or the other. HIV/AIDS education is very paramount to control the scourge of the disease globally. This is urgently needed, especially by the adolescents who are considered as a vulnerable group. The HIV/AIDS epidemic calls for awareness among the adolescents who are constantly influenced by the environment in which they live, particularly among their peers. Hence, there is the need for this research work to determine the curricular implications in counselling concerning HIV/AIDS education as part of school curriculum in a bid to check the rapid spread of the virus/syndrome.

Since education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools and colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills, the problem investigated in this study therefore is to determine the perception of male and female students regarding HIV/AIDS education as a means of curbing the spread of the disease.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of male and female students regarding HIV/AIDS education. Specifically, the study sought to find out how male and female students perceive HIV/AIDS education through the use of print media, electronic media, and teaching within and outside schools could be used to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically the purpose of this study was to find out if:

1. print media could be used to reduce the spread of Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome;
2. Electronic media could be used to reduce the spread of Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
3. Classroom teaching could be used to reduce the spread of Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
4. teaching outside schools through seminar, conferences, symposia, workshop, etc could be used to reduce the spread Human Immuno- Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were stated to guide the study.

1. Male and female students do not differ in their perception regarding the use of print media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom

- State.
2. Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to the use of electronic media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.
 3. Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to the use of conferences, seminars, workshops and symposia to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.
 4. Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to teaching HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools in order to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Method

The design is descriptive survey. The study covered final year students in senior secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. A total of four hundred and fifty students made up the sample. A simple random sampling through balloting method was used to choose the respondents.

A 20 item questionnaire designed by the researcher was the main instrument used for data collection. The students were expected to respond to each item indicating how strongly they agree or disagree on the perception of HIV/AIDS in secondary school curriculum. The face validity of the instrument was established by three lecturers from Department of Educational Foundations University of Uyo, Uyo whose ranks ranged from Associate professors to senior lecturers. The attempt was to ensure that the instrument measured what it was designed to measure. The instrument was trial tested on a representative sample of 30 SS 3 students who were not part of the study. The data generated from the test was subjected to Cronbach alpha for reliability and it gave an index of 0.78.

The questionnaire was personally administered to respondents and collected after they had responded to it. Chi-square was adopted to test the hypotheses postulated for the study under gender category. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Hypothesis 1: Male and female students do not differ in their perception regarding the use of print media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1: chi square analysis of the perception of male and female students regarding the use of print media to curb the spread HIV/AIDS

Gender	Responses		Total	Df	X ² cal	Critical value 0.05
	Agreed	Disagreed				
Male	110 (112.0)	100 (98.0)	210			
Female	130 (128.0)	110(112.0)	240	1	0.15	3.84
Total	240	210	450			

The critical x² value at 0.05 Level of significance = 3.84

The calculated chi-square value is 0.15. This is less than the critical value of 3.84. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted leading to the conclusion that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of print media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 2: Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to the use of electronic media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Chi square Analysis of the perception of male and female students regarding the use of electronic media to curb spread HIV/AIDS

Gender	Responses		Total	Df	X ² cal	Critical value 0.05
	Agreed	Disagreed				
Male	120 (111.1)	80 (88.8)	200			
Female	130 (138.8)	120(111.1)	250	1	2.84	3.84
Total	250	200	450			

The critical Chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance =3.84

The calculated Chi-square value =2.84

Table above shows that the calculated value of 2.84 is less than the critical value of 3.84. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted which implies that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of electronic media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 3: Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to the use of conferences, seminars, workshops and symposia to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: Chi square analysis of the perception of male and female students regarding the use of conferences, seminars, workshops and symposia to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS

Gender	Responses		Total	Df	X ² cal	Critical value 0.05
	Agreed	Disagreed				
Male	90 (83.1)	130 (136.8)	220			
Female	80 (86.8)	150(143.1)	240	1	1.76	3.84
Total	170	280	450			

The critical Chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance = 3.84

The calculated Chi-square value =1.76

Table 3 shows that the calculated Chi value of 1.76 is less than the critical value of 3.84 this implies that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of conferences, seminars workshops and symposia in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 4: Male and female students do not differ in their perception with regards to teaching HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools in order to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Chi-Square analysis of the perception of male and female students regarding teaching of HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools to curb the spread of it.

Gender	Responses		Total	Df	X ² cal	Critical value 0.05
	Agreed	Disagreed				
Male	160 (164.4)	40 (35.5)	200			
Female	210 (205.5)	40(44.4)	160	1	1.21	3.84
Total	370	80	450			

The critical Chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance = 3.84

The calculated Chi-square is 1.21.

The table above shows that the calculated Chi-square value of 1.21 is less than the critical value of 3.84, the null hypothesis was accepted leading to the conclusion that male and female students do not differ in their perception regarding teaching of HIV/ADIS as a subject in school to curb the spread of the disease in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion

The first hypothesis stated that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of print media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom. From the data tabulated using chi-square, the value of calculated Chi-square of 0.15 was less than the critical value of 3.84 at 0.05 significance level. This shows that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students regarding the use of print media to curb the disease

It was stated in the second hypothesis that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of electronic media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State. The data showed that calculated value of 2.84 did not exceed the critical value of 3.84 which implies that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of electronic media to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom state.

The third hypothesis stated that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of conference, seminars, workshops and symposia to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. The data collected showed the calculated value of 1.76 which was less than the critical Chi-square of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. This clearly indicated that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding the use of conferences, seminars, workshops and symposia to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akwa Ibom State.

The fourth hypothesis stated that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding

teaching HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools in order to curb the spread of the disease in Akwa Ibom State. From the data collected the calculated value of 1.21 which was less than the critical value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. This equally shows that male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception regarding teaching HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools in order to curb the spread of the disease in Akwa Ibom State. The result agrees with what a deputy director in the Federal Ministry of Education said in the report of the National Consultative Forum on Education Sector's Response to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Abuja that education helps provide the place with both what they want and need now (Njoku, 2003). In essence, the four hypotheses postulated for this study were accepted.

Summary

This research work focused on male and female students' perception on the use of different media for HIV/AIDS education in order to curb the spread of the disease. The findings suggest the use of different media for HIV/AIDS education including the teaching of HIV/AIDS as a subject in the schools to further help in curbing the spread of the disease as the most vulnerable group are in the schools. Education is a veritable tool for the training of individuals' mind and society; it is the key to change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Young people in Akwa Ibom state are variously challenged as they grow up to deal with various issues around and about them. Whilst some of these challenges may arise due to socio-economic and political

determinants, others arise as a result of lack of access to developmentally appropriate and factual information on issues of sexuality.

This is even graver considering that our society is aptly described as having a culture of silence around sexuality. For instance, despite the ravaging impact of HIV/AIDS on especially the age group of 15-24 years, the desire to ensure access to information on sexuality seems not to be uppermost in the minds of a cross section of adults. Rather a wish for abstinence appears pervasive suggesting therefore that sexuality has to do with sexual intercourse only. Thus, the effort to ensure access of young people to gender sensitive, developmentally appropriate, factual information on sexuality had gone beyond advocacy efforts but the need to begin to facilitate provision of such information through the curricular approach in the school system.

The Executive summary of a World Bank project on "Education and HIV/AIDS" has it that education is a window of hope. This is because children, 5-14 years, are the least likely to be infected with HIV. Education will protect them before they reach the peak vulnerable years. This protection will be reinforced by early training that promotes healthy life styles and avoidance of risky behaviours. From the foregoing, it has been shown that the use of print media electronic media, conference, workshop, symposia and teaching of HIV/AIDS as a subject in schools can help curb the spread of the disease in Akwa Ibom State.

Conclusion

Based on the afore-mentioned findings of the study, it is concluded that HIV/AIDS

education is the most effective means of equipping young people to adequately manage themselves and their environment. This is because schools can reach further into the community than many other institutions, because attitudes, behaviours taught and learned in schools serves as examples far beyond the classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, some counselling solutions which can help eradicate or minimize the spread of HIV/AIDS are hereby recommended

1. The counsellors could create awareness; sensitize youths using drama, quiz competitions and exhibitions in their schools.
2. State government guidelines for reproductive health education which have already been developed should be implemented.
3. A department for reproductive health education should be established in the Ministry of Education.
4. Youth friendly clinics, HIV/AIDS counselling clinics should be established in schools.
5. Translation of training materials into our indigenous languages.
6. Parents and other stakeholders should be educated, counselled regarding the concept of reproductive health education through parent- teacher associations (PTA)
7. Youths should be encouraged to take positive health choices, make informed decisions, engage in healthy behaviour, recognize situations and behaviours risky to health and avoid them.

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