

The Role of Parents in the Prevention of Hiv/Aids Among Secondary School Students in Ijebuode Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was an assessment of the role of parents in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS among adolescents in Nigeria. The study was conducted among students of selected secondary schools in Ijebu-Ode Nigeria. Two Hundred and Thirty (230) students were randomly selected as sample for the study. The instrument consisted of a set of questionnaire covering the areas of investigation. The data collected were analysed with simple percentage and chi-square statistical tool. The results showed that parents' role in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS among students included teaching of sex education and the dangers of sexually - transmitted diseases especially HIV/AIDS to students; discouraging them from having multiple sexual partners and encouraging them to visit counselling centres. It was observed that activities of parents had a significant influence on the practice of precautionary measures among the respondents. The study concluded that parents are indispensable in the prevention of HIV/AIDS among secondary school students and that effective health education is the antidote for the prevention and spread of the pandemic disease.

Key words: HIV/AIDS; Adolescents; Parents' role

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

One of the leading causes of premature death in the last thirty years has been the scourge of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The disease, AIDS, was first clinically observed in 1981 (Gerald et al, 2010). From then, it has spread to all continents of the world and remains a great killer, a disease to which no man has found solution. In 1988 alone, about 5.8 million new cases occurred, bringing the total number of people living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/AIDS by December, 1998 to approximately 33.4 million. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2011) estimates that as at 2010, there were 34 million people living with HIV or AIDS worldwide. Since the beginning of the epidemic, AIDS has killed more than 25 million people worldwide. Fifteen million children have been orphaned by the epidemic. Young people worldwide are the sub-group most affected, while about half of new HIV cases are occurring in people within the age bracket 15-24.

Nigeria, like other nations of the world, is not left out of this epidemic. Although the virus was first identified in Nigeria in 1988, over 4 million Nigerians were estimated to have contacted the virus by the end of 1998. This makes Nigeria the second country in Africa with the heaviest burden of the disease, in terms of absolute number of those afflicted, second only to South Africa. Ologun (2002) reported that HIV/AIDS is now found in all states of Nigeria. It is equally believed that Nigeria ranked second in HIV infection in the sub-Saharan Africa. The Federal Ministry of Health / UNAIDS (2001) technical report further reveals that about 2.6 million Nigerians between ages 15 and 49 years are HIV positive. The figure increased to 3.1 million in 2002 with a national zero-prevalence rate of 5.8. Globally, UNAIDS (2003) gave a rough estimate that the 10% world HIV/AIDS infection is

from Nigeria. As at 2004, it was confirmed that about 3.5 million Nigerians live with HIV/AIDS. This affirmation was made during the launching of National policy on HIV/AIDS held in Abuja on August 4, 2004.

The disease is fast destroying the most productive age groups within the Nigerian population. It affects men and women in urban and rural areas, as well as adolescents, commercial sex workers, traders, high profile politicians and socialites; servicemen and women, truck drivers and students. Indeed, several thousands have died from the disease, and this has brought untold hardship and disorganization to many families (Awake, 2002; Odusanya et al).

One fundamental issue that remains high on international agenda is the vision of getting to zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths according to UNAID Global Report for 2012. Hence many countries of the world in 2011, embraced the United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS with the aim of intensifying efforts to eliminate epidemic and to take specific steps to achieve ambitious goals by 2015. The countries, 186 UN Member States, further committed themselves to monitor and report the progress and challenges encountered in their national AIDS responses. A ray of hope that achieving an AIDS-free generation is not only possible, but imminent was given by the UNAID Global Report for 2012. According to the report, 60% more people have accessed life saving HIV treatment, with a corresponding drop in mortality. New infection rates have fallen by 50% or more in 25 countries – 13 of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Half of all the reductions in HIV infections in the past two years have been among children. However, in spite of the world wide efforts and the ray of hope, report still shows that in many countries, people living with and affected by HIV still face stigma, discrimination and injustice. Women and girls are still at higher risk because of gender inequality and sexual violence. There is still a 30% gap between resources that are available and what is needed annually to reduce the occurrence of HIV infection or to eradicate it by 2015.

Hence, the report of Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2009 & 2011) on HIV/AIDS among youth is instructive. The reports which found that many adolescents begin having sexual intercourse at early ages concluded that HIV education should take place before young people engage in sexual behaviours that put them at risk and that parent communication and monitoring may play an important role in reaching youth early with prevention messages.

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS IN HIV/AIDS PREVENTION

The role of parents in the prevention of HIV/AIDS should not be under estimated. The home and of course

the parents, serve as the first agent of socialization for all human beings. It is in the home that the values, customs, tradition and general life style of the society are learnt. Thus the home can be seen as an informal school and the parents and other significant adults are the teachers and counsellors who impact these virtues into the children. According to WHO (2007), various studies have examined the influence that types of parenting have on the behaviours of young people, including risk-taking behaviour. Parents are expected to monitor their children's activities, as well as identify, sift and package information and services for their children. Because parents are in regular contact with children, they help to shape both their behaviour and the social context in which they grow up. The role of the parents, like the school counsellors, should include diagnosis, assessment of individuals' potential, information, students' orientation, consultations and referral, counselling both at individual and group setting, follow-up of their activities in school and knowing who their friends are as well as letting them know the danger of sexually transmitted diseases.

This study seeks to underscore and present in clear terms, the significant role parents have to play in preventing the spread of the menace of the HIV/AIDS disease among adolescents in our society, especially secondary school students. This role will empower parents to adopt exemplary lifestyles which will enable them to serve as good role models and better counsellors to their children on how to imbibe best practices to keep them safe from the incursion of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study specifically aims at investigating the role of parents in the prevention of the pandemic disease among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Ogun State. Inadequate knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents and the alarming rate of progression of the disease amidst this group of people, particularly secondary school students, call for a study that will assess the role of parents in the prevention of the spread of the disease amongst this vital class of the society. Presently, the only effective way of controlling HIV/AIDS is by prevention through awareness creation among adolescents, who are mainly at risk of contracting the disease. How parents react to adolescents and how they communicate their feelings are of critical importance in counselling them. Adolescents come to the parents for help and understanding. They express to the parents confused feelings, ideas, fears and hopes which they are struggling with. The parents' attitudes toward them determine in large measure the extent to which they will attempt to cope significantly with their problems and undertake positive actions for remediation. If parents demonstrate genuine acceptance of

these adolescents, they will feel that they are accepted and parents are concerned with their plight.

This study attempted to answer the following questions: What activities have parents been engaged in to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among students in Ijebu Ode? Do the activities of parents have any significant influence on the secondary school students' practice of precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) identify the role played by parents in preventing HIV/AIDS among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode local government area of Ogun State, Nigeria
- b) assess the effect that the activities of parents have on the secondary school students' practice of precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis of the study states that:

There is no significant relationship between the activities of parents and secondary school students' practice of precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

METHODOLOGY

	Sex	
Male	118	51.3 %
Female	112	48.7%
Total	230	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11 – 15yrs	144	62.6
16 – 20yrs	86	37.4
Total	230	100
Educational Status of Parents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No education	4	1.7
Primary school leaving certificate	13	5.7
Secondary school leaving certificate / Teacher Grade II Certificate	36	15.7
Graduate of tertiary institution	177	76.9
Total	230	100
Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	166	72.2
Islam	64	27.8
Total	230	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 1 revealed that there were more male (51.3%) respondents than female who took part in the study. Most (62.6%) of the respondents were between ages 11 – 15 years while 37% were between 16 and 20 years. With respect to the educational background of the parents of respondents, 76.9% were graduates of tertiary institutions. This implied

that majority of the respondents' parents were graduates. Majority (72.2%) of the respondents were Christians, while 27.8% were Muslims.

Research Design and Site

This research is a descriptive survey on the role of parents in the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS among Students in four (4) public secondary schools located in Ijebu – Ode Ogun State, Nigeria.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population of the study was the adolescents in all the four Senior Secondary Schools selected for investigation. These secondary schools with the largest student population in the local government area were used and a total of two hundred and thirty (230) students were randomly selected for the study.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a set of questionnaire divided into two parts. Part one contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while part two reflects questions that bother on the parents' knowledge of HIV/AIDS, their attitude to sex education and counselling of their children on precautionary measures against the transmission of the disease.

Method of Data Analysis

Simple percentage was used to analyse the demographic information gathered from the responses, while the hypothesis was analysed using the Chi-square statistical tool.

RESULTS

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Respondents

	Sex	
Male	118	51.3 %
Female	112	48.7%
Total	230	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11 – 15yrs	144	62.6
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Total	230	100

Table 2
Frequency Table Showing the Role of Parents in Their

Children’s Practice of Precautionary Measures Against the Transmission of HIV/AIDS.

S/N	Items	*A	(%)	**D	(%)
1.	My parents are not well educated	49	21.3	181	78.7
2.	My parents are well knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS	190	82.6	40	17.4
3.	My parents do not teach me sex education and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases especially HIV/AIDS	65	28.3	165	71.7
4.	My parents encourage me to have multiple sexual partners	28	12.2	202	87.8
5.	The counselling department in my school provides us with information on HIV/AIDS	195	84.8	35	15.2
6.	My parents usually encourage me to visit voluntary counselling centres	159	69.1	71	30.9
7.	My parents do not believe there is anything like HIV/AIDS	30	13.0	200	87.0
8.	I am from a polygamous family	58	25.2	172	74.8
9.	I find sex interesting and there is no problem attached to it.	63	27.4	167	72.6

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

* A – Agree ** D – Disagree

Table 2 revealed that 78.7% of the respondents’ parents were well- educated, 82.6% of them have in-depth knowledge about HIV/AIDS, 87% believe in the existence of HIV/AIDS, and 71.7% taught their children about sex education and the dangers of sexually -transmitted diseases, while 28.3% did not. The table further revealed the activities of parents of the respondents which included encouraging them (students) not to have multiple sexual partners (87.8%), and allowing them to visit counselling

centres (69.1%). Most (72.6%) were of the opinion that there are problems attached to having sex at their age and found sex not interesting.

The result of the chi-square analysis is presented below to test whether the activities of parents have any significant influence on the students’ practice of the precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Table 3

Chi-Square Table testing the significance of influence of parents’ role on the students’ practice of the precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Responses	Observed Value	Expected Value	Df	X ² -Calculated	X ² -Critical Value	P	Decision
SD	137	115.0	1	8.417	3.84	0.05	Reject the hypothesis
SA	93	115.0					

Source: SPSS result and field survey, 2012.

X²-Calculated value = 8.417

X²-Critical value = 3.84

Since the calculated value was greater than the critical value the hypothesis that parents’ role will have no significant influence on the secondary school students’ practice of precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV / AID was rejected. This implied that the activities of parents had significant influence on the students’ practice of precautionary measures against the transmission of the disease.

DISCUSSION

The parents’ effectiveness in the performance of their duties as it relates to the provision of information on sex education and health related issues assisted students in the various steps that they take against the transmission of HIV/AIDS. This finding supports that of Odebiyi and Olowu (1991) in their survey study of attitudinal and behavioural factors in the transmission of the HIV virus. The result also corroborates the CDC Reports (2008, 2011) that HIV education should take place before young people engage in sexual behaviours that put them at risk and that parent communication and monitoring may play an important role in reaching youth early with prevention messages.

Another major finding of this study was that majority

of the parents were graduates of tertiary institutions – they were well - educated and had in-depth knowledge about HIV/AIDS. This probably explained why majority of them taught their children sex education and the dangers of sexually- transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The same explanation may account for majority of the parents not encouraging multiple sex partners but allowing their children to visit voluntary counselling centres.

However, a few of the negative findings need to be addressed. About 28% of parents did not teach their children sex education and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. This is not surprising because of the cultural dimension which poses a challenge to communication/ awareness creation for the deadly disease. However, parents should be encouraged to teach their children sex education.

Furthermore, findings also revealed that about 12% of the parents encouraged their children to have multiple sex partners. This may not be unconnected with poverty and the need for survival. Such parents have turned their children to ‘money making machine’. Moreover, about 25% of the students found sex interesting and saw no problem attached to it. This finding is mind boggling considering the fact that the subjects were teenagers/ adolescents. This is a confirmation of studies (UNAIDS, Global Report, 2012; CDC, 2009 & 2011) which found

out that many adolescents have started to have sexual intercourse before the age of 15years - a situation that breeds HIV/AIDS.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that the role of parents in preventing HIV/AIDS cannot be underestimated. They play important role in promoting students' personal understanding and growth. Pending the discovery of an effective vaccine or therapy, effective health education is the only antidote for the prevention and spread of the pandemic disease among secondary school students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested with the hope that if implemented, they would help to improve the attitude and behaviour of secondary school students in adopting safe precautionary measures against the transmission of HIV/AIDS:

- Parents should serve as role models and train up their children to adopt safe precautionary measures against HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases.
- The parents themselves must be skilful, knowledgeable about the mode of transmission of the virus as well as engage in preventive measures to provide meaningful assistance to the children. The parents' personal effectiveness will determine the rate of success or failure of the counselling relationship. This can either facilitate or inhibit the counselee. It follows also that parents must be a people of stability, flexibility and understanding. The goal of the parents is to assist the children to develop and carry out a course of action voluntarily. This must be done with all sense of purpose.
- Parents should start to give their children proper education on HIV/AIDS early enough and before they start to engage in sexual behaviours which can put them at risk.
- One technique for preventing the socially-undesirable sexual behaviour is to counsel the youth in creativity strategies. Homes and School counselling and psychological services must be made in such a way that the repercussion of unsafe sexual intercourse might be used as aspect of group counselling.

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