



## Awareness of HIV/AIDS in Pregnancy Among Female Adolescents in Rivers State Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Human immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in Pregnancy is of Public Health concern globally. HIV/AIDS is the commonest cause of death among adolescents worldwide and also an indirect cause of Maternal Mortality.

**Aim:** To determine the awareness of HIV/AIDS in pregnancy among Adolescents in Rivers State and recommend strategies in reducing the prevalence in this age group.

**Methods:** The survey was a cross sectional study carried out among adolescents attending an adolescent holiday camp meeting in Rivers State comprising 10 secondary schools and undergraduates from 5 universities in South-South and South East Nigeria, randomly selected. Two hundred and Twenty questionnaires were distributed. The data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

**Results:** Two hundred questionnaires were retrieved. Thirty (15%) of the subjects were below 13 years, 60(30%) between ages 14 – 16, 110(55%) between ages 17 – 19 years. The

awareness level of HIV/AIDS in the study population was 70%; with the highest level of awareness among the age group of 17 - 19 years representing 50%. The information on commonest mode of transmission was through heterosexual means which was 60%, use of unsterilized instruments/transmission of HIV infected blood 20% and the awareness of Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT) of HIV/AIDS contributed to 10% of the respondents. The awareness of HIV/AIDS in pregnancy were through the; media 50%, school 40% others 10%.

**Conclusion:** The study revealed that the level of awareness HIV/AIDS in pregnancy is at best average. Adolescents are at risk HIV/AIDS especially when the pregnancy is unwanted. Paucity of information in this part of the world is a major factor. More enlightenment is needed among adolescents.

**Key words:** HIV/AIDS, Pregnancy, awareness, adolescents.





## INTRODUCTION

During the adolescent age, developmental changes are marked by discovery and experimentation as a result of physical and emotional changes<sup>1</sup>, for this reason they are at risk of having unwanted pregnancies and contacting HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases(STDs).<sup>1,2</sup> Adolescents are expected to remain abstinent from sex irrespective of pressures from peer groups images from television movies and magazines of people having sex, smoking and drinking.<sup>1,2</sup>

In the name of culture and religion, young people are denied access to information about their bodies and health risks that can help keep them safe.<sup>1,3</sup>

As a result of improved treatment and care in the developing countries, the number of new cases of HIV/AIDS among children have reduced<sup>1,4</sup>. However, the proportion of newly infected adolescents growing to adulthood continues to rise as a result of unsafe sex and risky behaviours.<sup>1,3</sup>

There is paucity of information in this part of the world on the estimation of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the adolescent age group.<sup>1,3</sup> However, evidence suggest that infection rates are higher in urban areas among adolescents.<sup>1,6</sup>

It is disheartening because health programmes are targeted at children and adults, often adolescents are left behind.<sup>7</sup> There is need for government and non-governmental organizations to focus on adolescents through well-structured programmes to address their health education and social needs.<sup>8</sup>

In order to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy amongst this age group, awareness is of utmost importance hence the reason for conducting this research.

## METHODOLOGY

**Study Site:** The study was carried out in Rukpokwu town, one of the towns that make up Obio-Akpo Local Government Area of River State. This densely populated town contributes significantly to the five (5) million population of Rivers State. Hallel College the site of the camp, is a government approved Private college in Rivers State.

**Study Design:** A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used. Structured interviewer administered questionnaire was used for data collection. A total of 208 questionnaires were distributed, 200 retrieved. A randomized sampling method was used.

**Ethical Consideration:** The purpose of the study was explained to each of the respondent and informed consent obtained.

**Data Analysis:** The analysis of the data was done using SPSS version 16. Data were presented in tables and text.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** below shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

The total respondent is 200

The mean age was  $15 \pm 2$ years



AGE GROUP ( <i>in years</i> )	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
11 - 13	30	
14 - 16	60	30
17 - 19	110	55
TOTAL	200	100

The highest number of respondents were 110(55%) and were between the age group of 17 – 19 years, while the least percentage of respondents was 15% representing 30 of the respondents.

**Table 2.** Socio-Demographic Characteristics

AWARENESS DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WITH RESPECT TO HIV/AIDS IN PREGNANCY		
AGE(YEARS)	AWARE Number/Percentage	NOT AWARE Number/Percentage
11 - 13	10(5%)	20(10%)
14 - 16	30(15%)	30(15%)
17 - 19	100(50%)	10(5%)
TOTAL	140(70%)	60(30%)

  

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE(%)	
JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	40	20
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	60	30
UNDERGRADUATE	100	50
TOTAL	200	100

Table 2 shows that level of awareness of HIV/AIDS in Pregnancy among the female adolescents was 70% with the highest level of awareness among the age group of 17 – 19 years, majority of which were undergraduates and the least level of awareness were among the age group 11 – 13 years which comprised mainly those in junior secondary.

**Table 3.** Source of Information

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE (%)
MEDIA	70	50%
SCHOOL	56	40%
OTHERS	24	10%
TOTAL	140	100%



**Table 4.** Awareness on the Mode of Transmission of HIV/AIDS in Pregnancy

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Heterosexual means	84	60%
Unsterilized instruments	28	20%
Mother to Child Transmission(MTCT)	14	10%
LESBIANISM	14	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Tables 3 and 4 show the levels of awareness and the information on the mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS in pregnancy.

The most common means on information of the awareness of HIV/AIDS in Pregnancy was through the media 70(50%)

Information on the Awareness on the most common means of Transmission was through heterosexual means comprising of 84 (60%) of the respondents; MTCT/LESBIANISM were the least most aware modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS in each pregnancy comprising of 10% of the respondents respectively.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Our study found that among adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria, awareness of HIV/AIDS in pregnancy was above average. This was however lower than the study conducted at Osun state, south-west Nigeria, where 85% awareness was recorded among adolescents.<sup>1</sup> The highest awareness was among undergraduate adolescents aged 17-19 years which was 100(50%) of the respondents. This was in agreement with studies conducted but locally and internationally.<sup>1,5-7</sup>

The age group 11 - 13 years mainly of the junior secondary students had the lowest level of awareness 20 (5%).

The study was conducted in an urban setting. The reason was that previous studies both locally and globally HIV/AIDS prevalence was commoner among urban adolescents compared to rural dwellers.<sup>9-12</sup>

The media was the commonest means of information about HIV/AIDS in pregnancy which contributed to 50% of the 70% of the level of awareness among the adolescents. This was in keeping with reports from other parts of the country.<sup>1-3</sup>

Awareness of heterosexual means of transmission was the commonest for HIV/AIDS transmission in pregnancy among adolescents from our study. This was in agreement with studies done in other parts of the country<sup>1-4</sup> but different from studies in developed countries of the world where use of unsterilized materials (intravenous drug users was the commonest mode of transmission).<sup>6</sup> Globally, 36.7 million people were living with HIV infection at the end of 2015, and 2.1 million of these infections were



newly acquired in that year. Sub-saharan Africa bears an inordinate share of the HIV burden, with epidemics perpetuated primarily through sexual transmission of infections to successive generations of young people. HIV accounted for the second largest number of deaths among adolescents in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

In WHO African region, young people accounts for nearly half of new HIV infection in most region in the continent.<sup>9</sup> It is believed that cases of HIV infection diagnosed among 15-24 years old are indicative of overall trends in HIV incidence because this group has likely initiated high risk sexual behavior and HIV infection is likely to be recently acquired.<sup>9,10</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Awareness of HIV/AIDS in pregnancy is still poor among the adolescent age group especially the secondary school pupils. There are challenges at providing and disseminating information, there is need for enlightenment by health care providers, religious groups, government and non-governmental organizations to help prevent unwanted pregnancies and STDS including transmission of HIV/AIDS. In addition, school health programmes should include Reproductive Health awareness to cover Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) including HIV/AIDS

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