

Sexual Practices and Attitudes of Men towards Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the sexual practices and attitudes of men towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. A population-based survey was conducted using a total number of 1,400 Nigerian men aged 15–24 years. These men were randomly selected from the general population. The researcher gave an adopted anonymous self-administered questionnaire to respondents. The questionnaire has reliability co-efficient of 0.80. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the data while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test all hypotheses, which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that majority of men practice risky behaviors, which could promote HIV transmission that most men would neither abstain from sex nor insist on a condom to have sex in order to avoid HIV infection. Other findings showed that men have discriminatory attitude towards people living with HIV, many felt they would be embarrassed to get an HIV antibody test. A correlation exists between negative attitude and the risky behavior of men. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the role of men in the transmission of HIV virus needs to be understood and given relative attention in researchers and that role of men in HIV transmission should not be overlooked if HIV prevention is to succeed in Nigeria.

Keywords condom; discriminatory attitudes; HIV/AIDS; HIV transmission, sexual practice

INTRODUCTION

Many factors drive the International AIDS Pandemic. They include risk behaviors, such as sex with more than one partner and without a condom, and social conditions, such as poverty, that discourage people from protecting themselves. One of the strongest influences on how quickly the epidemic spreads is the sexual behaviour and attitudes of men. It is usually men, not women who determine when and how often to have sex, and whether or not a condom is used. It is generally men who have multiple sex partners; and therefore more opportunity to transmit HIV to either partner (Akanle, 2001). Kelly (2004) observed that in many countries, men are the most frequent purchasers of sex, not all men behave this way. Most men protect themselves and their partners from the virus by abstaining from sex, remaining faithful to their partners or consistently using condoms. But hundreds of millions of men have sex without a condom because they believe this is how men do and should behave. Society frequently reinforces men in the belief. As observed by Ogundana (2005) spousal relationship in the traditional Yoruba and amongst most ethnic groups in Nigerian society epitomized that male usually play dominant roles on sexual issues, socio-cultural and religious norms throughout Nigeria reinforces male dominance. He stated further that most men have numerous sexual partners, and this was considered natural as part of the Yoruba custom while women with many sexual partners are considered as prostitutes.

Although, AIDS is a physical disease and such requires medical management and treatment, the transmission of the virus is largely a volition activity subjected to psychological factors and influences. The primate causes of being infected with HIV are biological and a person's sexual behavior is the most primate cause. Decisions, which individuals make about sexual practices, the practice of safer sex, wiliness to be involved in HIV testing and one's attitude generally toward HIV issues counts in HIV prevention. Durex (2001) observed that sexual pleasure is a more important consideration to some individuals than protection from diseases. Cochran (1990) reported that people lie about AIDS test when they had actually had no test and that HIV-positive men and women did not disclose their status to sexual partners. Research according to Durex (2001) affirmed that individuals lack the attention to safer sex. Many people do not use condom consistently with stead partner. This is because men may not consider the problem of HIV/AIDS as overriding factor in how they conduct their sexual practices or relationships, because they may not perceive themselves at the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Young men's attitude towards condom can be complex. They may think they signify lack of trust in a partner, others report lack of sensation when using them. Some do not think condom is reliable. Others think use of condom is immoral, some believe condom is a good idea in theory, but difficult

to use in practice. Due to short term initiated sexual relationship in which young people frequently find themselves, condoms are often considered as awkward and an intrusion into fragile situations. A report in condom too costly for Ghana’s Youth (1996) stated that young men complain that condoms are too expensive; it may break, the sizes are not available causing them to be too tight or slip off.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The growing problem of HIV infection appears to change people’s sexual behavior in various countries but not in Nigeria. In some states in Nigeria, the rate of infection has continued to rise. Many men do not make conscious efforts to avoid the risk that could lead to HIV infection. In most cases, open demonstration of current use of condom have been carried out, people who practice risky behavior have been encouraged to seek confidential counselling so as to find out their HIV status. However, some men have been found to make careless decision in regards to their personal protection against HIV. Although men are central to the course of HIV epidemic, they remain peripheral to the response of HIV. Until now, this response has largely focused on protecting vulnerable groups from the virus, and neglecting groups that, often unwittingly create vulnerability. Women, particularly have been the targets of many AIDS-Education programmes. This attention is imperative, but it is also important to address the needs of those whose behavior seems to be responsible for spreading the virus. Young men have been found to create risk for others—and often highly at risk themselves. The needs of men and their role in the transmission of HIV epidemic needs to be properly understood and given relative attention in researches. If young men are to be included in the response to HIV/AIDS, their views must be heard. Hence, there is a need to study and understand the sexual practices, and attitudes of young men towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the promotion of safer sex in Nigeria. This is to be able to find answers to the following general questions:

1. What percentages of men get involved in the different sexual practices?
2. What is the attitude of men towards safer sex practices?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the attitude of men towards HIV/AIDS prevention and their sexual practices

METHODOLOGY

To assess the sexual practices and attitudes towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the promotion of safer sex by men in Nigeria. A population-based survey was conducted. A total of 1,400 men years 15-24 who were randomly selected from the general

population participated in the study. The researchers gave anonymous self-administered questionnaire to respondent who recorded their immediate reaction to each statement by writing the letter that corresponds to their answers in response to Turbah and Yarber developed HIV prevention attitude-scale. Respondents recorded their immediate reaction to each statement by writing the letter corresponding to the answers. The scale consists of 15 items which sought information on the attitude of respondents towards HIV prevention and their attitudes towards safer sex practices. The respondents also answered questions on their sexual behavioral practices, other risks and protective behaviors. The research instrument has a reliability co-efficient of 0.80. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the data while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the only hypothesis. The data collection was restricted to sexually experienced respondents. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Question 1: What are the sexual behaviors of South West Nigerian men?

In analyzing this question, scores of sexual behaviors of young men were used. The data were collected and the analysis was made on the basis of the responses of the participants, using frequency counts and percentages. The findings are shown in *table 1*.

Table 1: The different percentages and frequency counts of the sexual practices of men

Items	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Casual sex	784	56	616	44
Regular sex	840	60	560	40
Commercial sex	350	25	1050	75
Anal sex	490	35	910	65
Find it difficult to refuse sex	630	45	770	55
Use of condom	640	46.2	752	53.7

Table 1 shows the percentages and frequency counts of the sexual behavior of men in Nigeria.

Question 2: What are the attitudes of men towards safer sex practices?

In analyzing this question, responses of men concerned with the idea of using condom for sex, limiting sex to just one sex partner to avoid HIV, using condom to avoid HIV, avoid sex, if the partner has the chance of HIV, insisting on condom use and not sharing an injection needle were collected and analyzed. Using frequency counts and percentages in the analysis, the result is shown on table 2.

Table 1: The different percentages and frequency counts of the sexual practices of men

Items	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
I am comfortable with the idea of using condom for sex	840	60	560	40
I would dislike the idea of limiting sex to one partner to avoid HIV	840	60	560	40
Using condom to avoid HIV is too much trouble	896	64	504	36
The chance of getting HIV makes using injection stupid	980	70	420	30
I would avoid sex if my partner has a chance of having HIV	560	40	840	60
I would insist on condom to have sex	490	35	910	65
If I use injection drug I would nor share a needle	700	50	700	50

Table 1 shows that most men are comfortable with the idea of safer sex; however, some would not avoid sex to prevent the chance of having HIV or insist on condom to have sex.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the attitudes of men towards HIV/AIDS prevention and the sexual practices of men.

To analyze this hypothesis, scores of sexual practices of men and the data on attitudes of men towards HIV/AIDS were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the two. Table 3 shows the result of the analysis.

Table 3: Correlation between attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and sexual practices

Variables	Number of cases	r-value	r-table	Level of significance
Attitude towards HIV/AIDS (prevention)	1400	0.422	0.195	P<0.05
Sexual practices	1400			

Table 3 shows r-value 0.422 and r-table 0.195. The null hypothesis was not rejected since r-table is less than r-value. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the attitudes of men towards HIV/AIDS prevention and the sexual practices. This implies that the negative attitudes towards HIV-

infected people or HIV/AIDS are associated with the risky behavior or sexual practices of men.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the sexual practices, attitudes of men towards HIV prevention and promotion of safer sex in Nigeria. Table 1 for example shows that a very high percentage of young men aged 15-24 years are still involved in casual, regular, anal and commercial sexual practices, while about 54.3% do not use condom or use it consistently. The findings of this research is supported by that of UNAIDS (2000) which reported that men and women across all age groups are among people with the riskiest attitudes and behavior relating to HIV/AIDS—from injecting and multiple sexual partners through unprotected sexual practices between men and men. The finding of this study might be so because having a large number of sexual partners among boys can be a way of expressing virility and manliness. As boys grow up, they might be under pressure to have sex. The finding of this study shows that men would not insist on condom use or avoid sex to prevent HIV. This finding is consistent with that of UNAIDS (2000) which reported that most men protect themselves and their partners from the virus by abstaining from sex, remaining faithful to their partners or consistently using condoms. But hundreds of millions of men have sex with more than one partner and without a condom because they believe this is how men do and should behave—and society at large frequently reinforce them in that belief.

This study reveals that a correlation exist between negative attitude towards HIV/AIDS prevention and risky behavior or sexual practices. This finding agreed with that of Lui (2005) who found that migrants who lack accurate preventive behaviors have higher level of sexual behaviors and lower level of protective behaviors than others. They may justify their behaviors while assuming that they themselves are not at risk or they may endorse mainstream belief in efforts to blend in with others who do not engage in risky behaviors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Most men still practice risky behaviors. Most men would not avoid sex to prevent the chance of having HIV or insist on condom to avoid HIV. The role of men in the transmission of HIV virus needs to be given attention, be understood and not overlooked. This is to ensure the success of HIV prevention in Nigeria. Men need to be educated about safer sex and the need to change discriminatory attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

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