

Assessment of Awareness and Compliance with the Use of Condoms Among Adolescents in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: The use of condom is an important strategy for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Other than sexual abstinence, it is the most reliable method, for the prevention of STIs.

Objective: The objective of this study was to evaluate the level of awareness and compliance with use of condom among adolescents and explore facilitators and barriers to the use of condom in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria.

Methodology: A 28 item self-administered pre-tested questionnaire assessing awareness, attitude, availability, accessibility, and use of condoms was administered to 200 students randomly selected from six communities, four secondary and two post-secondary schools in Port Harcourt City, Rivers State. The questionnaire was administered to 40 students each and 30 students each from two post-secondary schools and four secondary schools respectively. Responses were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed with instant version 2.05. Categorical data was expressed as frequencies and percentages.

Results: The modal age group was 15-16 years (41.2%). About half, 42.1% indicated they have no partner and therefore were not sexually active. Majority, 92 (60%) were aware of the benefits of condom use but only 45 (30%) admitted ever using condoms. Prevention of STD/HIV/Pregnancy was the most common reason for using condom. There was evidence of inconsistent use of condom. Majority, 92(60%) reported that condoms were readily available and 78(51.6%) were of the opinion that condoms were affordable. More than one quarter 54(35.5%) correctly perceived the risk of not condom to be high. The most common reason for not using condom were trust of partner (27%) followed by those who never had sex (25%) and not interested in contraception (4%).

Conclusion: Awareness of the benefits of using condoms and knowledge of condom use was adequate but condom use was inconsistent among adolescents surveyed. Although attitude towards condom use was large, more than half of the respondents were afraid to purchase condoms openly. The major reasons for not using condoms were trust in partner and a lack of sexual pleasure. Of those who were not presently using condoms, one quarter indicated intention to use them within the next 6 months.

Recommendations: *There is urgent need for a collaborative approach to be adopted involving religious, community leaders and teachers in delivering culturally appropriate reproductive and sexual health messages or sensitization to adolescents on the benefits of the use of condoms during sexual intercourse and the consequences of unprotected sex without the use of condoms.*

Key words: *compliance, condom, adolescents, sexual intercourse, risky behavior, HIV/AIDS*

1. Introduction

Heterosexual transmission remains the main mode of spread of HIV/AIDS virus. Many young persons in Sub-Saharan Africa engage in unprotected sex, often times with multiple sexual partners.¹ The Nigerian 1999 Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) puts the median age of sexual debut as 17.8 years for females and 20.3 years for males, with females aged between 15 – 19 years being twice as likely to report sexual activities in the last four weeks preceding the survey than their male counterparts.² However, more recent studies reveal that the mean age at sexual debut and mean age of early sexual debut could be as low as 13.3 ± 1.4 years and 12.2 ± 1.2 years respectively.³⁻⁴ The high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections and reported cases of HIV/AIDS (about 4 out of every 25 adolescents) coupled with transactional sex, which is now common place, among this segment of our population has serious consequences and implications for the control and prevention of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.⁵⁻⁶

The use of condom is an important component in the prevention of STIs, including HIV, and is, in fact, the most reliable method, other than sexual abstinence, to prevent infection with an STD.⁷⁻⁸ About half of all the people infected with HIV and STIs are under age 25 years, according to World Health Organization's estimates, and in less developed countries up to 60% of all new infections are among 15 to 24 years olds.⁹ Although knowledge of condoms is relatively high and increasing in many African countries, a large gap remains between knowing about and using them. Many young persons are sexually active, they rarely or never use condoms and fewer used it consistently.¹⁰⁻¹¹ This underscores the need to examine factors within the generalized population that influence the sexual behavior of individuals as well as groups, which make them susceptible to HIV/AIDS. In particular, it is important to have a clearer understanding of the characteristics of adolescents in relation to their sexual behavior with a view to designing appropriate and relevant HIV/AIDS intervention programmes and activities that would in turn lead to the practice of safer sex and the adoption of HIV/AIDS preventive behaviors. The objective of this study was to evaluate knowledge and compliance with condom use among adolescents and explore facilitators and barriers to condom use in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Good numbers of Nigerian adolescents have the knowledge that the use of condom during sexual intercourse can be effective in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy. However, a significant proportion of the adolescent population do not consistently use condom during sexual intercourse. [32] A study conducted in Southern Nigeria reported that only 47.3% of undergraduates use male condom consistently in the southern part of the country. [33] A study among students in south-south region of Nigeria indicated a low practice of the use of condom and they barely bothered about sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. [32] Studies have also reported that only 33. % of students in Ethiopia and 30% in People Republic of China use condom consistently. [34-35].

Another study among undergraduates in South Eastern Nigeria showed that religious belief

(33.3%) was the commonest reason why most undergraduates/adolescents in Nigeria do not use condom [34]. Another study of undergraduates in South Eastern Nigeria reported that 62% of the students were aware of female condom however 5.1% of students have ever used a female condom [32]. In another vein, a study on the evaluation of condom use among university undergraduates in Port Harcourt, Nigeria concludes that there is a high level of condom awareness among Port Harcourt University undergraduates. It was also reported in that study that the practice of unprotected sexual intercourse is still high among the undergraduate students/adolescents.[36]

2. Methodology

Study design: The study is a cross sectional survey involving both quantitative and research-techniques.

Setting: The setting of the study is Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State occupies an area of about 37,000 square kilometers and is bounded by Bayelsa, Imo, Abia, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers states. It has an estimated population of about Five million. It is Nigeria's second commercial and industrial center and has the second busiest sea port in the country; with two oil refineries, a petrochemical plant, a fertilizer company and a liquefied natural gas plant. The state has three tertiary health care facilities (University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), Rivers State University Teaching Hospital and a Psychiatric hospital and few private Teaching Hospitals, Madonna University Elele, Pamo Medical University and many secondary health facilities including military based hospital and over 298 private clinics, Pharmacies and many traditional herbal clinics. The city is inhabited by mixed population of people attracted by opportunities inherent in the oil and gas industry. A large proportion of city dwellers are self- employed and engage in small scale businesses and petty trading. The city boasts of a rich night life and there is a high involvement of youths in various social activities.

Study Population: The population of the study comprises male and female adolescents from schools located in 6 communities in Port Harcourt Area, Rivers State. The schools are located in (1) Rumukwurushi, (2) Igwuruta, (3) Elekahia, (4) Rumuobiakani, (5) Rumuola and (6) Woji communities. They were purposely selected to reflect geographical spread in the city. The schools were (1) County Grammar School, Ikwerre/Etche (Iguruta); (2) Community Secondary School, Rumukwurushi; (3) Doman College, Woji; Community Secondary School Elekahia, Elechia Amadi Polytechnics Rumuola and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni.

Data Collection: The survey was conducted using a 28 item self-administered questionnaire designed by the principal researcher, Face and content validity was done by senior academic staff of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Abia State Univeristy. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using test-retest method. The questionnaire is composed of two parts – The first part collected information on the respondents' socio-demographic profile while the second part collected information on sexual behavior of the study population, current safe sex practices, availability, accessibility, acceptability and use of condoms.

Inclusion criteria: Only respondents who expressed a willingness to participate in the

study by signing a written informed consent form were included in the study.

Sample size and sampling technique: The questionnaire was administered to six schools at 40, 40 for the two post-secondary schools and 30, 30, 30, 30 for the four secondary schools.

Data Analysis: The responses from the study were entered into Microsoft Excel computer package for sorting and were analyzed with instant version 2.05 (Graph Pad Inc., USA). Chi-Square test was performed in estimating possible difference in proportion.

3. Results

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to adolescents of the surveyed schools. 153 of the questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed giving a response rate of 76%. Half of the respondents were females (50%). The modal age group was 15-16 years(41.4%), single (69.1%). More than one quarters of respondents were on average monthly income of less than 10,000 (38.2%), Table 1. More than half, 92(60%) were aware of the protective effect of condoms for preventing HIV, STDs and pregnancy. And majority, 135(88%) knew the various pseudonyms / street names for condom. More than half, 90(59) had never used a condom and only 21 (13.8%) said they used it in their first sexual intercourse. The major reason for use of condom was to prevent HIV, STDs and Pregnancy, 77(50.6 %), Table 2

Table 1 Demographic characteristic of the Respondents. N=153

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	77	50.3
Female	76	49.7
Age		
15-16	63	41.4
17-18	27	17.3
19-20	14	9.2
21-22	8	5.3
23-24	27	17.6
Above 24	14	9.2
Marital Status		
Married	47	30.7
Single	106	69.3
Education		
JS3	8	5.3
SS1	20	12.5
SS2	64	42.1
SS3	49	32.2
No response	12	7.9

Characteristics	f (%)
Are you aware of the protective effect of condoms	
Yes	92(60)
No	22(14)
No response	39(26)

Have you ever used a condom during intimacy?	Yes	46(30)
	No	90(59)
	No response	17(11)
Did you use a condom during your first intercourse?	Yes	21(13.6)
	No	87(56.8)
	Cant' remember	5(3.3)
	No response	40(26.3)
Who initiated condom use?	Self	23(15.1)
	Partner	23(15.1)
	Mutual	17(10.7)
	No response	90(59.2)
Reason for condom use	Prevent pregnancy	15(9.9)
	Prevent STD	14(9.2)
	Prevent HIV/AIDS	13(8.6)
	Prevent STD/HIV/Pregnancy	77(50.6)
	Others	3(0.3)
	No response	31(20.4)
Pseudonyms for condom	Rain booth	15(8.0)
	Rain coat	35(24)
	CD	88(58)
	No response	15(10)

Table 2: Knowledge and practice of use of condoms among respondents
Majority, 92(60%) reported that condoms were readily available and 78(51.6%) were of the opinion that condoms were affordable. More than one quarter **54(35.5)** correctly perceived the risk of not condom to be high. The most commonly used brand of condom was Gold Circle, followed by Rough rider. Only 56, 36.8% could buy condom freely without hiding. More than one quarters, 54(35.5) considered the risk of not using condom to be high. Nearly half 67(44.1%) claimed they could easily convince their partners to use a condom.

Table 3 - Respondents attitudes towards the use of condoms

Characteristics		f(%)
Are condoms readily available?	Yes	92(60)
	No	20(13)
	Don't' Know	41(27)
Are condoms affordable?	Yes	78(51.3)
	No	22(13.8)
	I don't buy condoms	53(34.9)
How would you rate the risk of not using condoms?	High	54(35.5)
	Low	13(8.5)
	None	34(22)

	No response	52(34)
Brands of condom used by respondents	Gold circle	51(33.6)
	Rough rider	17(11)
	Durex	4(2.6)
	Protector	4(2.6)
	Others	19(12.6)
	No response	58(37.6)
Can convince partner on condom use	Yes	67(44.1%)
Purchase of condoms	Openly without any fear	56 (36.8)
	Wait until alone in the pharmacy before purchase	21 (13.8)
	Hide /pretend while purchasing	9 (5.3)

The most common reason for not using condom was trust in partner, 27%, followed by never had sex, 26%, not interested in contraception, 14% and no pleasure while using condom, 11%. Of those not using condoms, 25% indicated their intention to start using condoms in the next 6 months, Figures 1 and 2

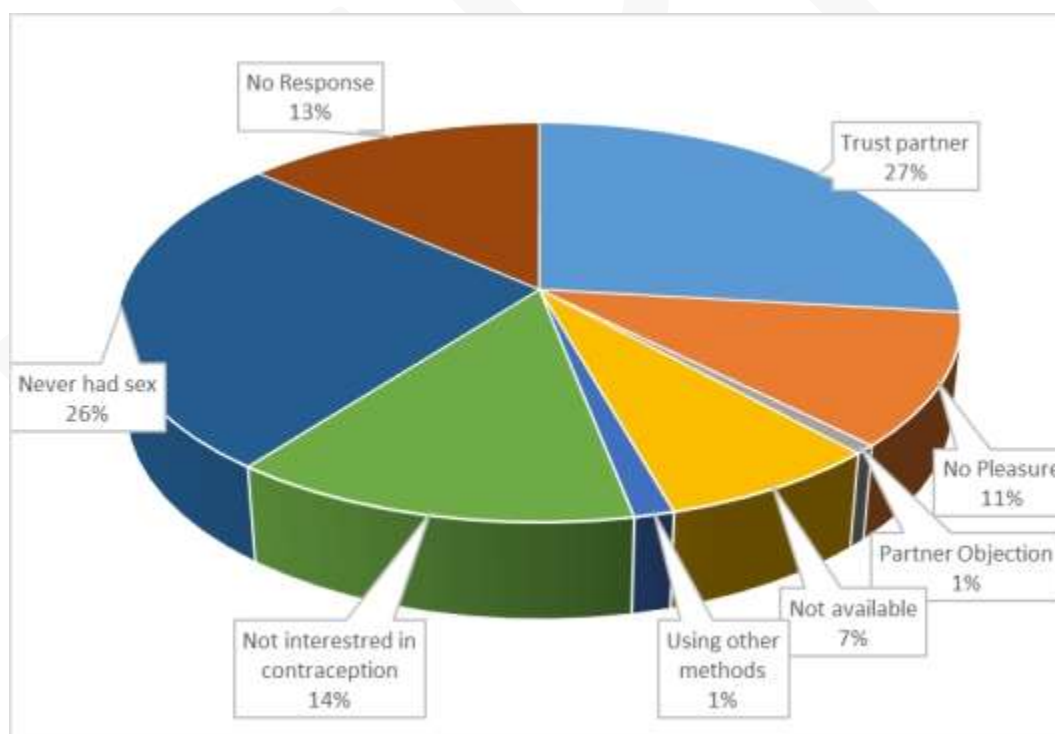


Figure 1- Reasons for not using condoms

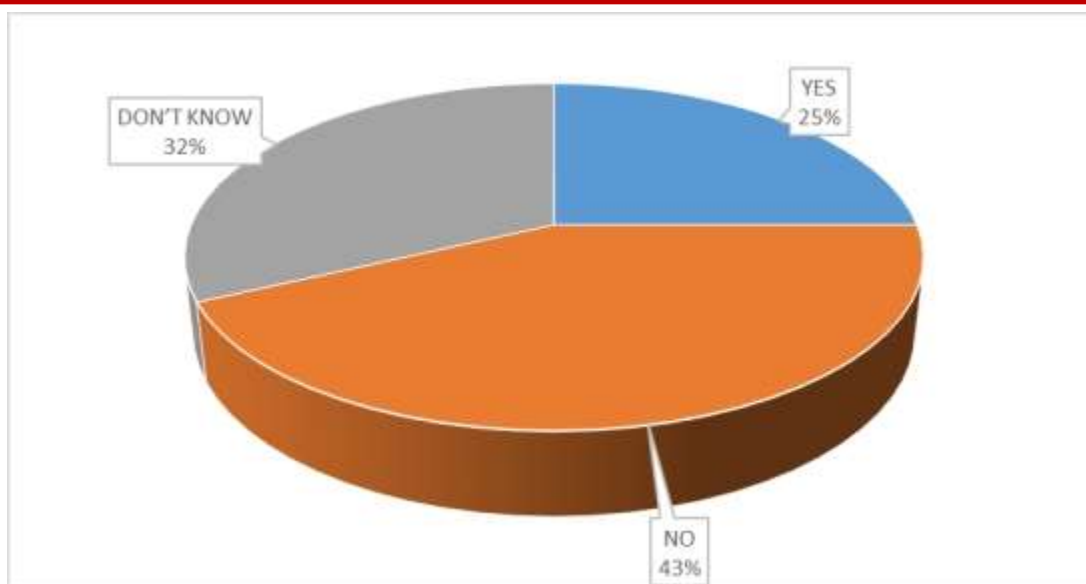


Figure 2 –Intention to use condom in the next 6 months

4. Discussion

This study explored the awareness, practice and attitude of adolescents towards use of condoms. Adolescents in this study considered use of condoms to be an important strategy of the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and reduction of HIV infection. Next to abstinence, condom is the most reliable method for the prevention of STIs.¹² Although the level of awareness of the benefit of use of condoms among adolescents in this study is quite high, this did not translate into high level of condom use. Similar findings have been noted by other scholars.¹³⁻¹⁴

The availability and accessibility of condoms was confirmed by adolescents in this study. This observation is quite significant since quite often, sexual activities may be unplanned. Weekend social activities may sometimes lead to unanticipated and potentially risky sexual encounters. In such circumstances, availability of condoms where they live is a useful indicator to assess how supportive the environment is in enhancing HIV/pregnancy prevention through condom use.¹⁵ Adolescents in this study had a positive attitude towards the use of condoms. As in other studies, prevention of infection and avoidance of pregnancy was the most common motivating factor for use of condoms among the study population.¹⁶ That adolescents are positively disposed towards condom use has been established by other scholars.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ In contrast though, some other scholars have reported a negative attitude to use of condoms among adolescents. This may be due to cultural and religious influences.²⁰⁻²¹ It would appear that adolescents had preference for certain brands of condom. This may be due to low cost as a result of social marketing by Non-governmental organizations.²²⁻²³ The use of pseudonyms for condom by adolescents continues to be of concern. In addition, a significant proportion of youths felt uneasy about purchasing condoms and would prefer to do so in secret. Inhibitions to buying condoms as a result of embarrassment at point of purchase of condoms are widespread in almost all societies. Even though the embarrassment associated with buying condoms is gradually on the decline as HIV prevention campaigns become more and more strident, surveys still show that some people avoid buying condoms especially if other shoppers are around. They either postpone purchase and the

condom at some later time or would buy but conceal the fact that they were buying condoms. A free and open access to condoms by adolescents is a crucial predictor of usage by young persons and should be encouraged.²⁴⁻²⁶ A significant proportion of non-users of condoms indicated intention to use them within the next six months. This is a positive development as it has been shown that stronger intention to use condoms in the future is a reliable predictor of consistent use of condoms by adolescents.²⁷ Among the reasons for not using condom was the fact that more than one quarter were not sexually active and an almost equal number claimed to trust their partners. About 14% were not interested in contraception. In other studies, not using condoms has been associated with the perception that condoms reduce sexual pleasure and that that partners will not approve of condom use, and less discussion with partners about condoms.²⁸ Other issues include cultural barriers, guilt, unnaturalness of condom in love making inability of females to assert themselves, wrong orientation to sexual right of females, age and economic bases to sexual intercourse.²⁸ Promoting consistent use of condoms among adolescent will require that adolescents possess adequate knowledge about condom use. Therefore, more stakeholders should be involved in the provision of knowledge on condom use among adolescents. Educational interventions should also involve dispelling inhibitions and barriers to condom use.²⁹⁻³¹

5. Conclusion

Although majority of adolescents in the study population are aware of the benefits of using condoms and have adequate knowledge of condom use, only a small proportion of adolescents actually use the device. Most respondents had a positive attitude towards condom use; however, more than half of the respondents were afraid to purchase condoms openly. The major reasons for not using condoms were that they trusted their partners and a lack of sexual pleasure. Of those who were not presently using condoms, one quarter indicated intention to use them within the next 6 months.

6. Recommendations

There is urgent need for a collaborative approach involving religious and community leaders as well as teachers to be adopted in delivering culturally appropriate reproductive and sexual health messages or sensitization to young people/adolescents on the significance of the use of condoms during sexual intercourse and the consequences of unprotected sex without the use of condoms. . Also important is the initiation of a biennial national behavioral survey to track the challenges of reproductive and sexual health behavior and evaluate impact of devised interventions on reproductive health especially of adolescents.

7. Limitations of the study

The small-sized data used in the course of the study is a limitation in itself. Therefore, the study's outcome may not be generalized as larger data and more robust materials and methods could produce more generalized, different and predictive results.

Conflict of interest: The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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