

ASSESSMENT OF ENUGU STATE AGENCY FOR THE CONTROL OF HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE PREVALENCE AMONG YOUTHS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed Enugu State agency for the control of HIV/AIDS educational strategies to reduce the prevalence among youths in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 10,242 respondents. The sample for the study was 920 which comprised 231 of males and 689 of females. Simple and proportionate random sampling techniques were used in drawing the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured 11-items questionnaire titled "Assessment of HIV/AIDS Educational Strategies Questionnaire (AHAESQ)". The instrument was face validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha method was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The computation yielded .72 and .58 respectively. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that both respondents' awareness creation has a great extent. The respondents differed significantly only in the mean rating scores on the level of provision of free counseling and testing services. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made among others that adequate public enlightenment campaign should be carried in both urban and rural communities to educate the people on the effect of HIV/AIDS in the study area.

Keywords: assessment, education, HIV/AIDS/ agency prevalence, reduce

Introduction

Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) have multiple terms, names and are variously known by people and tribes. Some call them the silent epidemic while others describe as a plague. All the descriptions, including the local nick names, carry the same message: HIV/AIDS presents itself as a fast growing, notorious and multifaceted disaster known to mankind. Although HIV/AIDS is generally seen as a global problem, the statistics presented during the past 18 years shows that Africa in general, and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is at the epicenter of the disease. Within the Africa continent, twelve countries in the East, Central and Southern Africa region account for 30% to 40% of HIV/AIDS cases (UNAIDS, 2015). Historically, citizens have been neglected in HIV/AIDS research, treatment, care and prevention efforts around the world including Enugu State in Nigeria (Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS, 2018). This lack of attention to citizen's health issues, combined with biological differences in the ways HIV affects men and women, social and economic inequalities, and environmental factors, have led to a dramatic rise in the number of people living with HIV, as well as an increase in AIDS related deaths among youths. These factors along with research and prevention efforts that focused on men only, have left many women unaware that they are vulnerable to the disease (ENSACA, 2018). As a result, the proportion of youths living with HIV/AIDS has tripled since the beginning of the epidemic. In 2005, women represented 26 percent of HIV/AIDS diagnoses, compared with 8 percent in 1985 (National Agency for Control of AIDS, 2021).

Globally, more than four to five percent of HIV infections in women result from sex primary partner. At the beginning of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS was first viewed as a disease of

men who have sex with men, (Oboqua, Bessong & Bessong, 2019). Although the illness was later identified in women, the scientific community failed to address women as a target population and instead quickly grouped it with other risk groups, such as partners of drugs users. Additionally, when prenatal transmission of the virus from mother to child was identified in the 1980s, efforts focused on testing and treatment to prevent transmission to children, rather than on reducing women's risk factors for acquiring HIV, (UNAIDS, 2016). The rising rate of HIV/AIDS among youths is not limited to the study area alone, but that about 46 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide in 2016 totally about 15.4 million were women in some locations and within certain age groups, the percentage of females with HIV/AIDS had already surpassed that of males, and recent studies suggest that the rates of HIV infection in women continues to rise (FMH, 2015). There is a stunning revelation that Nigeria has the highest number of HIV/AIDS infected adults in West Africa UN cited in (Oboqua, Bessong & Bessong, 2019) and is the third country in the world after South Africa and India with the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS (Agbor, 2015). Unfortunately, it was projected by USAID (2013) that, by 2020 there will be 10-15 million HIV cases in Nigeria. Research data in Nigeria shows that HIV/AIDS is evident in rural as well as urban areas of the communities, therefore education and prevention efforts should not be concentrated only in the urban centres (Agbor, 2015). Poverty, ignorance and illiteracy make it difficult for some men and women to have access to worthwhile information as it pertains to the issue of HIV/AIDS.

The number of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral drugs for preventing mother to child transmissions was 33,323 and the percentage coverage was 17.7%. Enugu state has the highest prevalence (6.5%) of HIV/AIDS in the South East and the fourth in Nigeria (ENSACA, 2018). To implement the commitment in 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS increase progress towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, Nigeria has developed the President's Comprehensive Response Plan (PCRP). Enugu State Agency for Control of HIV/AIDS determined the implementation of these preventive services by health care providers in Enugu State (Ezeudu, 2016). The Enugu State Agency for the Control of AIDS (ENSACA) in collaboration with the saving one million lives programmes (P for R) embarked on massive sensitization and awareness creation campaigns on Prevention of Mother to child Transmission of HIV and AIDS (PMTCT). The activities included radio jingles in multiple stations, radio and television (TV) interviews, involving the executive secretary of ENSACA and the state commissioner for health. Other activities were visit to health facilities in rural communities antenatal clinic days to sensitize the pregnant mothers on PMTCT as well as general health promotion issues. The State Agency for the Control of AIDS engaged selected communities in HIV and AIDS preventive measures in the midst of COVID19. The campaign involved local stakeholders like traditional rulers (Igwe) town union presidents, and the various opinion leaders in the communities (Enugu State Agency for the Control of AIDS, ENSACA, 2019). Other health promotion activities that were carried out of these programmes involved erection of health education bill boards at strategic points in the local government areas of the state. These bill boards informed people about the fact that HIV/AIDS is real and remained a present danger. Target audiences were also informed that the virus is preventable and treated with availability of services at health facilities and points throughout the state. Other intervention during the state wide activities were awareness messages in various interviews national print media by the ENSACA (ENSACA, 2019).

The Enugu State Agency for the Control of AIDS (ENSACA) says it is currently treating 28,973 people living with HIV/AIDS in the state. The Executive Secretary of the agency, Dr. Chinedu Authur Idoko, told newsmen in Enugu that the figure represented 30 percent of the people within the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of the state. Idoko further said that "so we are covering just 30 percent coverage (ENSACA, 2018) That the agency has 22 major centres where the engagement was taking place in health facilities across the state. According

to him, the HIV/AIDS prevalence in the state is almost the entire population of the state. The executive secretary said that the agency had adopted the Tests and Treat Model (TTM) strategy to sustain the fight against HIV/AIDS in the state. The executive secretary also noted that funding had been a serious challenge affecting the agency especially sustaining the medicare for those engaged already. Another is the willingness of the people coming forward to access the free counseling and treatment services (ENSACA, 2018).

As at 2012, 3,400,000 million people (allages) were living with HIV in Nigeria. The estimated new HIV infection is 260,000 and estimated AIDS death is 240,000. The reported number of adults on ART (Antiretroviral Treatment) was 459,465 and ART coverage based on world Health Organizations (WHO) guideline was 36%. The new survey results indicate that Nigeria has an HIV prevalence of 1.4% among adults aged 15-49 years. Previous estimates had indicated a national HIV prevalence of 2.8%. United Nations AID (UNAID) and the National Agency for the Control of AIDs estimate that there are 1.9 million people living with HIV in Nigeria (UNAID, 2019). While Nigeria's National HIV prevalence rate is 1.4% adults aged 15-49 years are more than twice as likely to be living with HIV there men (1.9% versus 0.9%). The difference in HIV prevalence between women and men is greatest among younger adult, with young women aged 20-24 years more than three times as likely to be living with HIV as young men in the same age group. Among children aged 0-14 years. Significant efforts have been made in recent years to stop new HIV infections among children (National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA, 2021). In response to the rise in prevalence, intervention activities were re-focused with the involvement of more Civil Society Organizations CSOs, thus causing the prevalence to drop to the present 7.1%. ENSACA (2019) reported that Enugu State has about 80 support groups of people living with the virus (HIV), with a minimum of 25 persons in each group. This was confirmed in her statement that one in every 55 persons living in Enugu State, lives with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS. The Director-General of the Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA), maintained that the state, with a population of 3.1 million according to 2006 census has 56,350 persons currently living with HIV/AIDS. Awareness creation programme is aimed to prevent the spread of HIV and also aims to reduce negative perception of people living with HIV/AIDS. The programme is linked to life skills and values such as negotiation, problem-solving and assertiveness. Awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention, encouraging people living with HIV to get in care, stay in care, live well. World AIDS day is a global movement to unite people in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Since 1988 communities have stood together on world AIDS day to show strength and solidarity against HIV stigma and to remember lives lost. (Oboqua, 2016) about 80%. 90% incidence of HIV/AIDS cases occur through sexual intercourse, while 10% of these cases occur through other means and could be reduced to about 5% if blood transfusion exercise is properly screened. The process through which HIV/AIDS is contacted is conterminous with human life and has made it a number one killer disease. However the ignorance of majority of people on the use of condom as a means of controlling the spread of the deadly infection is one major factor that has enhance the progressive spread of the infection. This awareness is directed mostly to those considered as high risk individuals such as commercial sex workers, taxi drivers, military personnel and sailors, the majority of the people in the society are guided by ignorance and misinformation about HIV/AIDS, especially those living in the rural areas and urban slums.

HIV and AIDS counselling is an active process of communication and dialogue between a trained counsellor and the client who presents with problems related to HIV or AIDS in a view to assist the client to deal with these problems adequately and appropriately. HIV/AIDS Counseling/testing is another basic need which aids to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and is required to improve life style of the citizens. HIV/AIDS Counseling/testing is perceived as the entry point to prevention, statement, care and support. According to the Federal Ministry

of Health (FMOH, 2019) it contributes to the reduction of stigma and discrimination that surrounds HIV/AIDS. Federal Ministry of Health FMOH (2019) defined HIV counseling as a confidential dialogue between a person and caregiver aimed at enabling the person cope with stress and make informed personal decisions relating to HIV/AIDS. In spite the attractive objectives of ENSACA strategies in Enugu State, most of the citizens are still not aware of the HIV and AIDS programmes. The frightening increase in HIV and AIDS prevalence rates which also affects citizens, has compelled the Enugu State Agency for the Control of AIDS (ENSACA) to step up its prevention activities. The focus of these ENSACA strategies are on HIV/AIDS awareness creation, free counselling and testing, health education programme and distribution of condoms. The efficacy of these ENSACA programmes must be ascertained especially among citizens. It is based on this that this study assessed the extent of which ENSACA strategies reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years frantic efforts have been made by both government, international organizations and donor agencies to stamp out the spread of HIV/AIDS or to reduce the spread to significant minimum. The Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS claims to have done a lot to caution the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, it seems the HIV/AIDS prevalence in Nigeria generally and Enugu State in particular, is still on the rise and people in the study area are still ignorant as it pertains to the danger and threat HIV/AIDS pose. Free counselling and testing tend not to be effective, health education programmes non-existent and condoms tend to be limited in supply. Enugu State HIV/AIDS technical report shows a frightening 5.1% of HIV/AIDS infection and women are most victims of the disease. In view of the increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence situation, this study is initiated to find out the efficacy of the Enugu State Agency for Control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) strategies for the control and reduction of HIV/AIDS in Enugu State, but with particular focus on youths. The aforementioned situation causes the researcher concern and ponder, hence the decision to carry out a research to assess the Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) with the view to determine the level of success in the area of awareness creation, HIV/AIDS free counselling and testing. This is the thrust of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the Enugu State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) strategies on the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the extent to which;

1. Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) awareness creation has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.
2. Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS (ENSACA) free counselling has reduced the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent has Enugu State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDS awareness creation reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths?
2. To what extent has Enugu State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDS free counseling and testing reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance

- H₀₁** There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which awareness creation strategy has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Enugu State.
- H₀₂** There is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which free counseling and testing strategy has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Enugu State.

Methods

The study investigated the assessment of Enugu State agency for the control HIV/AIDS educational strategies to reduce the prevalence among youths in Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population was 10,242 respondents. The sample for the study was 920 which comprised 231 of males and 689 of females youths. Simple and proportionate stratified random sampling were used in drawing the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured 16 – items questionnaire titled “Assessment of Enugu State Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS Educational Strategies Questionnaire (AESACHAESQ)”. The instrument was validated by three experts. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha method was used to compute the internal consistency of the instrument. The computation yielded .78 to .88. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while null hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The study area is Enugu state, located in the South Eastern Region of Nigeria. The state comprises seventeen (17) local government areas, with three senatorial zones. This zone includes Nsukka Senatorial Zone, Enugu East Senatorial and Enugu West Senatorial Zone. The inhabitants are primary civil servant, traders, farmers and artisans. The study revealed that both respondents of awareness creation provided by ENSACA educational strategies in the study area has a great extent. The respondent differed significantly only in their mean rating scores on the level of provision of free counseling and testing in Enugu State. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers’ recommended among others that adequate public enlightenment campaign should be carried out in both urban and rural communities to educate people on the effect of HIV/AIDS in the study area.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent has Enugu State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDS awareness creation reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths?

Table 1: Mean rating scores of respondents on the extent to which ENSACA awareness creation strategies reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths n= 920

S/N	ITEMS	Male = 231			Female = 689		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
1	I have heard about HIV/AIDS	2.60	0.91	GE	2.67	1.00	GE
2	I have been taught how to protect myself against HIV infection	2.61	0.91	GE	2.70	0.99	GE
3	I now know that HIV/AIDS is incurable	2.57	0.95	GE	2.58	0.98	GE
4	I know that sexual intercourse with HIV infected persons is one of the means HIV/AIDS spread	2.56	1.01	GE	2.63	0.97	GE
5	I am aware that premarital sex can cause HIV/AIDS	2.69	0.89	GE	2.59	0.97	GE

6	infection I know there is reduction in HIV/AIDs disease through awareness creation by ENSACA	2.54	0.94	GE	2.61	0.97	GE
GRAND MEAN		2.60	0.94	GE	2.63	0.98	GE

From Table 1 the grand mean for respondents (male) was 2.60 with standard deviation of 0.94 while the grand mean for respondents (female) was 2.63 with standard deviation of 0.98. This result indicate that the ENSACA awareness creation strategy reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS to a great extent in Enugu state.

Research Question Two: To what extent has Enugu State Agency for the control of HIV/AIDS free counseling and testing reduced the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among youths?

Table 2: Mean rating scores of respondents on the extent to which ENSACA free counseling and testing strategies reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths
n= 920

S/N	ITEMS	Male = 231			Female = 689		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
7	I have received HIV/AIDs counselling and testing services by ENSACA	2.22	0.93	LE	2.07	0.97	LE
8	I am scared by the HIV/AIDs counselling and testing services provided by ENSACA	2.17	0.93	LE	2.01	0.99	LE
9	Through HIV/AIDs counselling and testing, I now know my HIV/AIDs status	2.13	0.94	LE	2.17	0.93	LE
10	I know HIV/AIDs counselling and testing services are rendered free	2.13	0.91	LE	2.11	0.94	LE
11	I am aware ENSACA HIV/AIDs counselling and testing service center are cited conspicuously	2.26	1.06	LE	2.09	0.88	LE
12	I lean to say “No” to sexual pressure and overcome being HIV/AIDs victim	2.90	1.03	LE	2.39	1.02	LE
GRAND MEAN		2.17	0.97	LE	2.14	0.96	LE

From Table 2 the grand mean for respondents (male) was 2.17 with standard deviation of 0.97 while the grand mean for respondents (female) was 2.14 with standard deviation of 0.96 respectively. This result indicates that the respondents rated ENSACA free counseling and testing as reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths to a low extent in Enugu State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female on the extent to which awareness creation strategy has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean rating scores of male and female respondents on the extent of ENSACA awareness creation strategy reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	Level of sig.	p-value	Dec
Male	231	2.60	0.94	918	0.09	.05	.061	H0 not rejected
Female	689	2.63	0.98					

From able 3, for respondent of males and females youths on the extent to which ENSACA strategy awareness creation strategy reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State. The study revealed that the calculated value obtain was 0.09 at 918 degree of freedom with a p-value of .061 which is greater at .05 level of significance. the null hypothesis was therefore, not rejected as stated, this implying that there is no significance difference between the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which awareness creation strategy has affected the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which free counseling and testing strategy has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which ENSACA free counseling and testing strategy the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	Level of sig.	p-value	Dec
Male	231	2.17	0.97	918	0.14	.05	.101	H0 not rejected
Female	689	2.14	0.96					

From able 4, for respondent of males and females youths on the extent to which ENSACA strategy awareness creation strategy reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State. The study revealed that the calculated value obtained was 0.14 at 918 degree of freedom with a p-value of .101 which is greater at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore, not rejected as stated, this implying that there is no significance between the mean rating scores of male and female youths on the extent to which awareness creation strategy has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youths in Enugu State.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that both male and female respondents agreed that ENSACA strategy to which awareness creation are provided in Enugu State is to a great extent. The hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female on ENSACA strategy on the extent to which awareness creation are provided in Enugu state. This finding is in consonance with Rinechart (2016) who stated that everyone in the society irrespective of age and social class needs the same basic information about AIDS. The author further suggested that education programmes must incorporate this information and package in such ways as would easily enhance understanding and would be culturally appropriate and convincing to specific audiences. This implies that, while the content, tone and complexity of the message will vary from each audience, the basic information intended to be passed across must be made available.

The findings in the research question two indicated that both respondent males and females in ENSACA strategy to which free counseling and testing are provided in Enugu State is to a low extent. The hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female in ENSACA strategy on the extent to which free counseling and testing are provided in Enugu State. This finding is in line with Federal Ministry of Health FMOH (2019) who sees HIV counseling as a confidential dialogue between a person and caregiver aimed at enabling the person cope with stress and make informed personal decisions relating to HIV/AIDS.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study it was concluded that awareness creation, health education and condom promotion and distribution of ENSACA strategy provided in Enugu State were to a great extent while free counseling and testing of ENSACA strategy provided in Enugu state is to a low extent. Also, there is need for ENSACA strategy to partner with international organizations, community-based organizations and other agencies to improve in the area of free counseling and testing in order to have citizens trust and confidence.

Recommendations

1. Adequate public enlightenment campaign should be carried out both in urban and rural communities to educate the people on the effect of HIV/AIDS.
2. More poverty reduction programs should be established to improve the living standard of infected persons.
3. Government should establish more free counseling and testing centres in each of the political wards to reduce mother to child infection.

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