

## KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF UNIVERSAL SAFETY PRECAUTION (USP) OF HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION STRATEGY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the study was to determine knowledge and the extent of practice of universal safety precaution (USP) of HIV and AIDS prevention strategy among secondary school students in Abia State. The study utilized the descriptive survey design in order to achieve the purpose of the study. Two research questions were posed and four null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The Yaro Yamane sampling technique was adopted to sample 942 senior secondary school students (SSS) out of a population of 199,562 in three Education Zones of Abia State. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded 0.85. Percentage statistic was used to analyze the data collected while chi-square and t-test were used to test the hypotheses. Findings of the study revealed that SSS in Abia State possessed high knowledge of but utilized to a low extent the USP prevention strategy of HIV and AIDS. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among other things the continued provision of health education and awareness campaign on the prevention strategies of HIV and AIDS to SSS in Abia State.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Practice, USP, HIV and Aids, Prevention Strategy, Secondary School Students

### **Introduction**

HIV stands for Human Immune-deficiency Virus. It is the micro-organism that causes the disease called AIDS. The micro-organism belong the virus family known as the retro-viruses. The human body has a natural in-built immune system (the body's defense mechanism) that protects it against germs and viruses. The absence of this immune system leaves the body defenseless. The destruction of the immune system by HIV gives rise to the condition called AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). AIDS is a condition of sickness in which the immune system of an infected person is totally destroyed, resulting in serious infections or disease combinations (Achal, 2008).

Also, HIV is usually found in body fluids like blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk of infected persons. AIDS develops over a period of time, taking on opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis, or untreated sexually transmitted diseases in individuals, male or female. The immune system of human beings protects him or her from attack of various diseases associated with human beings. HIV infection is potentially a fatal sickness in that it destroys the immune system of an infected individual. Therefore, without the usual immunity, the body is at high risk of infection by any disease. HIV and AIDS are therefore described as a life-threatening disease (Briggs, 2010).

There seems to be very high prevalence of HIV and AIDS among secondary school students (SSS), aged 10-20 years. Personal observations as a health worker in the health care system revealed that over a hundred students are diagnosed of the disease monthly in Abia State health facilities. Majority of these students drop out of school and eventually die few years after being diagnosed. This may be as a result of late diagnosis of the disease, delayed initiation of treatment, lack of or avoidance of treatment, coupled with the fact that the disease has no cure.

However, it is discouraging that in this modern time when people are supposed to be enlightened concerning disease prevention and health promotion, most students do not care of HIV and AIDS and other related diseases. Instead of taking precautions, carrying out screening tests, and practicing HIV and AIDS prevention strategies, they are unperturbed and would rather seek medical attention when it is rather too late. This can be attributed to ignorance or lack of knowledge of the prevention strategies.

HIV and AIDS can be transmitted through many ways. According to the Federal Ministry of Health (2010), the route of HIV and AIDS transmission include: sexual intercourse, transfusion of unsterilized blood, use of unsterilized skin piercing objects such as needles, syringes, razor blades, scissors, etc, and from mother to child (during pregnancies and breast feeding), use of unsterilized materials (for haircuts and beauty salons, giving of the traditional birthmarks, circumcision), and practice of homosexuality. World Health Organization (WHO, 2008), added that, those who are most likely to be infected with HIV and AIDS are those who have multiple sexual partners, those who engage in casual sex, people with sores especially at the genitalia, people who patronize prostitutes, and homosexuals, people who receive injections or drugs with unsterilized needles and those who receive untested blood from donors.

HIV and AIDS, though a preventable disease still remains a very significant health problem both in Nigeria and in many other parts of the world. According to Gesto (2004), the good news is that the infection is largely preventable. He said that for one to be free from the risk, one must adhere to the prevention and control measures of the disease, as its prevention is better than the cure. Many researchers seem to support this assertion hence Onyeagolu (2016), remarked that students being sexually active needs to be provided with adequate information and messages on HIV and AIDS prevention and control, since they are most likely to contract the disease and spread it fast.

In most cases, it is believed that HIV and AIDS are diseases that are associated with people with loose morals. This Uwalaka and Matsuo (2002) confirmed in their study. The result of their study also showed that abstinence was the best method for prevention of HIV. In spite of this knowledge, most of the students did not abstain and instead 80% of them used protective devices such as condoms. They also observed that students involvement in activities geared towards HIV and AIDS prevention such as counseling, teaching in class and general discussions about the disease are good factors in the reduction of the menace of HIV and AIDS scourge.

However, HIV and AIDS prevention did not always correspond with the sexual behaviors of students. Marcus (2001) wrote that despite student's knowledge and utilization of HIV and AIDS prevention strategies that large number of them who were sexually active showed tendency towards indulging in casual sex without necessarily practicing safe sex by using condoms. Instead they generally showed negative attitude towards the use of condoms that most female students tend to be more worried about being pregnant than becoming infected with HIV and AIDS.

Good and adequate education influences one's way of life and behavioral pattern hence Mishra (2005) was of the opinion that adolescents, male and female, who were well informed about HIV and AIDS had positive knowledge and were more conscious of not contracting the disease as they practiced the disease prevention strategies. He argued that knowledge positively or negatively influences one's behavior and pattern of life; therefore the student's acquisition of knowledge of the disease means that a greater level of

understanding and protection has been secured against contracting of the disease as well as spreading it to the general public. However, a large number of HIV and AIDS cases are reported and prevention strategies advanced in many parts of the world including Nigeria, yet many people appear to have negative approach on how these strategies would prevent the spread of the disease. Ironically, students are in the group of those who acted in that direction (WHO, 2016). However, Wallack (2005) had pre-empted when he asserted that it is necessary to assess student's level of knowledge and awareness of HIV and AIDS, the mode of transmission and the extent of application of preventive measures and other related issues as it would help increase or reduce mortality rate, and the menace of the disease which has impacted on the adolescent's educational growth and generally, the society's overall welfare.

It is important to highlight the fact that several variables influence knowledge and utilization among different class of people. These variables include sex, age, and location. Omelehin, Babasanya, Ogunbanaeru, Adeniji, & Omokore (2008) in their study explained that in Nigeria much of the HIV and AIDS campaigns have been concentrated at the urban cities and mostly through the mass media. They explained that there was great neglect of the rural areas where it is also believed that HIV and AIDS is present and may be spreading at a high rate.

Knowledge influences utilization of HIV and AIDS. Knowledge is the fact of understanding events, issues and objects that are acquired either through learning or experience (Young, 2004). Similarly, knowledge is seen as the ability of someone being aware and to have understanding of something (Hornby, 2012). He states that knowledge is the perception of agreement or disagreement of two ideas. He argued that knowledge can be viewed as an essay concerning human understanding and the key determinant of attitude and behavior. Adequate knowledge he said, may make people to be efficient or effective in whatever condition and environment they find themselves.

The Universal Safety Precaution (USP) is one of the known HIV and AIDS prevention strategies. It includes routine hand washing with soap and water, use of barrier or protective clothing, safe handling and consistent use of condoms, and use of condoms correctly during sexual intercourse, injection safety procedures, safe blood transfusion, and disposal of sharp instrument and equipment including needles and syringes (FMOH, 2008).

It is important to ascertain the level of knowledge of students and their extent of utilization of HIV and AIDS prevention strategies. Consequently the researcher undertook this work to determine same. Students have knowledge of the factors that can expose them to hazards of contracting the disease. HIV and AIDS have become a common household name. The infection cuts across all strata and manner of persons to the point of challenging human dignity and affecting man's functions and activities. No part of the world is spared of the disease and it is generally believed to have become a developmental issue than a public health problem (Grebremedhin, Grebremedhin, Desse, Alemayehu, Abreha, Berhare & Fisseha, 2016).

Globally, HIV and AIDS statistics are staggering as millions of people are estimated to live with the virus and several other millions of people have died from the disease. In Nigeria and in many other developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa, HIV and AIDS have spread from the high-risk group to the general population with a majority of the infections occur among people aged 10-24 years. The reasons for this development may be due to lack of knowledge of the disease by the young and the adolescents which made them vulnerable to contracting the infection hence the need for them to know and practice USP as one of the ways curb it.

However, in Abia State, the prevalence rate is on a consistent increase, cutting cross urban and rural areas, affecting the people, especially the youths (male and female) in which secondary school students belong. The disease posed numerous challenges which hitherto may result in high morbidity and mortality

rates of the students. Abia State is one of the South Eastern States that presented very high prevalence of HIV and AIDS infection. (Abia State Agency for Control of AIDS (ABSACA), (2012).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Generally, this study sought to determine the level of knowledge and extent of utilization of HIV and AIDS prevention strategies among secondary school students in Abia State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were; to determine the

1. Level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) among secondary school students in Abia State;
2. Extent to which secondary school students in Abia State utilized USP;
3. Level of knowledge and extent of utilization of USP by male and female secondary school students in Abia State;
4. Level of knowledge and extent to which secondary school students in urban and rural locations of Abia State utilized HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the level of knowledge of USP possessed by secondary school students in Abia State?
2. What is the extent of utilization of USP by secondary school students in Abia State?
3. What is the level of knowledge and extent of utilization of USP by male and female secondary school students in Abia State?
4. What is the level of knowledge and extent of utilization of USP by secondary school students in urban and rural locations of Abia State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses (Ho) which guided the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance and appropriate degrees of freedom (df);

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the responses of male and female secondary school students in Abia State on the level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention Strategies;

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the responses of urban and rural secondary school students in Abia State on the level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention Strategies;

Ho3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students in Abia State on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention Strategies;

Ho4: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students in Abia State on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention Strategies;

### **Methodology**

The researcher used the descriptive survey research design for this study. Nworgu (2006) asserted that this design facilitates the description of a situation in its current state and solicits information directly from respondents whose opinions will be generalized. The design for the study is therefore appropriate.

A sample size of nine hundred and forty-two (942) with a return of nine hundred and thirty (930) respondents comprising 448 males and 494 females were sampled from a population of 199,562 students

and used for the study. The sample size was determined by the Yaro Yamane formulae (Determining the Sample, 2011). However, multi-stage sampling technique involving random sampling technique was adopted to choose male and female, number of schools and urban and rural locations.

The instrument for the data collection was structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after a thorough review of the related literature based on research questions and purpose of study. The questionnaire consists of two sections (A & B). Section A sought information on the personal data of the respondents regarding their sex and location while section B was made up of two parts; I and II and each comprised 7 questions with a total of 14 questions eliciting answers to the research questions. Section A attracted responses of “Yes and No” because the level of knowledge was tested. Sections BI and BII which elicited answers to the extent of utilization were rated using the four point scale thus: 3.50 and above - Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4; 2.50-3.49 - Great Extent (GE) = 3; 1.50-2.49 – Low Extent (LE) = 2; & 1.00-1.49 – Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of knowledge of USP possessed by secondary school students in Abia State?

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage of secondary school students in Abia State according to their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) for HIV and AIDS infection N=930**

S/N	USP HIV & AIDS Prevention Strategies include the following:	YES		NO		Decision
		Freq	%	Freq	%	
1	Use of clean, sterile, unused needle & syringes	922	99.14	08	0.86	Very Low Knowledge (VLK)
2	Early treatment & cure of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)	861	92.14	69	7.72	High Knowledge (HK)
3	Sex education in schools & colleges	928	99.78	02	0.22	VHK
4	Routine blood tests & screening	88	9.46	842	90.54	Very Low Knowledge (VLK)
5	Avoid unnecessary blood transfusions	895	96.24	35	3.76	VHK
6	Avoid use of unsterilized sharp objects /instruments in barbing salon, tattoo, etc	914	16	16	1.72	VHK
7	Avoid drug abuse especially in the use of intravenous injections	840	90.32	90	9.68	VHK
<b>Average</b>		<b>778</b>	<b>83.69</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>16.31</b>	<b>VHK</b>

The above table shows that 99.14%, 92.58%, 99.78%, 96.24%, 98.28%, and 90.32% of the respondents agreed with items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 respectively, thereby indicating very high knowledge of the items as Universal Safety Precaution (USP) against HIV infection. On the hand 9.46% of secondary school students (SSS) agreed with items 4 as a safety precaution. However, an average of 778 SSS representing 83.69% of the sample generally agreed with all the items as universal safety precaution against HIV and AIDS, thereby indicating very high knowledge (VHK) of the USPs.

**Research Question 2:** What is the extent of utilization of USP against HIV and AIDS infections by secondary school students in Abia State?



**Table 2: Mean ratings of secondary school students in Abia State regarding the extent of their utilization of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) measures against HIV and AIDS infection N=930**

S/N	To what extent have you utilized the following USP HIV and AIDS Prevention Strategies? Indicate;	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Decision
8	Use of clean, sterile, unused needle & syringes	261	288	218	100	2.76	0.98	GE
9	Early treatment & cure of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)	100	246	319	265	2.19	0.97	LE
10	Sex education in schools & colleges	115	255	250	310	2.19	1.03	LE
11	Routine blood tests & screening	433	281	200	16	3.22	0.84	GE
12	Avoid unnecessary blood transfusions	190	201	368	171	2.44	1.10	LE
13	Avoid use of unsterilized sharp objects /instruments in barbing salon, tattoo, etc	222	211	270	227	2.46	1.10	LE
14	Avoid drug abuse especially in the use of intravenous injections	38	112	328	452	1.72	0.83	LE
<b>Grand Mean &amp; SD</b>						<b>2.42</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>LE</b>

Table 2 shows that high mean ratings of 2.76 and 3.22 were obtained for items 29 and 32 respectively. On the other hand, low mean ratings of 2.19, 2.19, 2.44, 2.46, and 1.72 were obtained by the respondents for items 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 respectively. A grand mean of 2.42, with standard deviation (SD) of 0.44 was obtained for all the seven items indicating that all the secondary school students in Abia State utilized the universal safety precautions to a low extent. The low standard deviation obtained for all the items shows that there was not much variation in the opinions of the respondents concerning the subject matter.

### Testing of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses (Ho) which guided the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance and appropriate degree of freedom (df);

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the responses of male and female secondary school students in Abia State on the level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Table 3: Summary of table of chi-square test of difference between the responses of male and female secondary students in Abia State regarding their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies**

SEX	YES	NO	TOTAL	Df	X2-cal	X2-crit	Decision
MALE	378	71	449	1	0.18	3.84	<b>Do not reject</b>
FEMALE	400	81	481				
TOTAL	778	152	930				

Table 3 shows that the calculated X2-value at 0.05 level of significance and one degree of freedom is 0.18 while the critical X2-value is 3.84. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the responses of male secondary school students and their female counterparts, regarding their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between the responses of urban and rural secondary school students in Abia State on the level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Table 4: Summary of table of chi-square test of difference between the responses of urban and rural secondary students in Abia State regarding their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies**

LOCATION	YES	NO	TOTAL	X2-cal	X2-crit	Decision
URBAN	413	83	449			Reject
RURAL	365	69	481	30.08	3.84	Ho
TOTAL	778	152	930			

**Df = 1**

Table 4 shows that the calculated chi-square value (X2-cal) at one degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance is 30.08 while the critical value (X2-crit) under the same condition is 3.84. Since the calculated value (X2-cal) is more than the critical value (X2-crit), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is significant difference between the responses of urban and rural secondary school students in Abia State regarding their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students in Abia State on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Table 5: t-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female secondary school students regarding their extent of utilization of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies**

SEX	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
FEMALE	448	2.86	0.86	928	2.20	1.96	Reject Ho
MALE	482	2.98	0.94				

Table 5 shows the calculated value (t-cal) at 0.05 level of significance and 928 degrees of freedom is 2.20 as against the critical value (t-crit) of 1.96. Since the t-cal. is greater than the t-crit., then the null hypothesis is rejected. This invariably means that a significant difference exists between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students in Abia State regarding the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Ho4:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of urban and rural secondary school students in Abia State on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

**Table 6: t-test of difference between the mean ratings of urban and rural secondary school students on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies**

LOCATION OF STUDENTS	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
URBAN	452	3.16	0.86	928	2.32	1.96	Reject Ho
RURAL	478	3.02	0.98				

Table 6 shows the calculated value (t-cal) at 0.05 level of significance and 928 degrees of freedom is 2.32 as against the critical value (t-crit) of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the t-cal value is greater than the t-crit value. This implies that a significant difference exists between the mean ratings of urban secondary school students and their rural counterparts on the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

### Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study from the analysis of data collected are as follows:

1. Secondary school students in Abia State generally possess very high knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) against HIV and AIDS infection.
2. Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategy is utilized by secondary school students in Abia State to a low extent.
3. There is no significant difference between the responses of male secondary school students and their female counterparts, regarding their level of knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.
4. A significant difference exists between the mean ratings of responses of urban and rural secondary school students in Abia State regarding their knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.
5. There is a significant difference that exists between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school students in Abia State regarding the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.
6. A significant difference exists between the mean ratings of urban and rural secondary school students regarding the extent to which they utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) HIV and AIDS prevention strategies.

### **Discussions**

The respondents possessed very high knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) prevention strategies against HIV and AIDS infections as only few of the students showed low knowledge of USP, that is observing regular blood tests and routine screening exercises, use of clean, unused and sterile needles and syringes. Also, early diagnosis and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), Sex Education in schools/colleges, avoiding unnecessary blood transfusion, avoiding use of unsterilized sharp objects in tattoos, barbing and hair salon, and avoiding intravenous injections in drug use and abuse; were scored very high to an average of 83.69%. This findings is completely in consonance with the submissions made by Wallack (2005) that it is necessary to assess students level of awareness on HIV and AIDS, its mode of transmission and the extent of application of preventive measures and other related issues as it would help increase or reduce mortality rate and the menace of the disease which has impacted greatly on the adolescents educational growth and generally the society's overall welfare. However, Mattey (2005) confirmed that knowledge is perception, acquired information that helps an individual solve his health problems.

Also, on the extent to which secondary school students in Abia State utilize Universal Safety Precaution (USP) prevention strategies against HIV and AIDS infections, findings shows that the tested elements had a grand mean of 2.42. It also indicates that the students utilized to great extent two of the items- use of clean, sterile needle and syringes and in the screening exercise for HIV and AIDS- all blood and blood products before transfusion or use. In the rest of the 5 items, the result showed low extent of utilization of USP items. This may be due to lack or unavailability of or fear of utilizing such facilities. This fact is confirmed by World Health Organization (WHO, 2008) when they reported that an estimated 80% of people living with HIV in low and middle income countries of the world remain undiagnosed. Also, UNAIDS (2008) wrote that non-governmental informants report that HIV counseling and testing services were not available in 70% of countries that report data to United Nations. On the other hand, people refuse to undergo blood/HIV screening tests thereby underutilizing available facilities. This equally corroborates with the assertion of WHO (2010) which states that only about 26% Of the estimated 125 million pregnant women in low and middle income countries of the world received blood/HIV screening tests. Hence some women refused to be tested because they feared that learning that they have a life-threatening condition; because they distrust HIV test, or because they do not expect their result to remain confidential and moreover they fear of stigma and discrimination following a positive result. Sometimes people who tested HIV positive do not return to clinics for follow up visits and even do not take the drugs they have been given thus their avoidance of carrying out HIV screening and other blood tests.



## Conclusion

The major finding of the study shows that secondary schools students in Abia State possess have very high knowledge of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) against HIV and AIDS infection. The students utilize to low extent the Universal Safety Precaution (USP) prevention strategies. The findings also reveal that some level of significance exists on the utilization of HIV and AIDS prevention strategies between secondary schools students in urban and rural locations of Abia State. Students in the urban utilize available facilities more than their counterparts in the rural locations. However, no significant difference exists between male and female students in the possession of knowledge and utilization of Universal Safety Precaution (USP) prevention strategies.

## Recommendation

The recommendations includes; introduction of sex education in the school curriculum, provision of HIV and AIDS prevention facilities in both urban and rural locations, and intensification of HIV and AIDS educational prevention campaigns particularly in the rural areas. Also, the teachings of morals, ethics and responsibilities should be revisited in all the Abia State secondary schools. Suggestions for further studies were made, one of which was that a similar study be conducted to cover other geographical zones of the nation.

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