

BARRIERS TO CONDOM USE BY YOUTHS IN RURAL AREAS OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Condom is one of the means of preventing sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies, especially among sexually active youths. The study sought to ascertain the barriers to condom use by rural youths in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. 120 youths completed a pre-tested questionnaire. Frequencies, percentages, means and ranks were used to analyse the data obtained using a two-stage sampling procedure. Results show that the mean age of the respondents were 25 years with 77.5% being single and 60.0% of them being males. Majority of the respondents (67.5%) agreed that they have used condom during sexual intercourse in the last six month while 32.5% reported not using condom in the last six months. The most severe barriers to condom use the rural youths faced in the study area were: stigma attached to condom use because of its association with HIV/AIDs, familiarity with sex partners and perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction and hinders sexual interest. The Government (State and Local) as well as development agencies in the State should embark on sexual behaviour enlightenment programmes specifically targeted at rural youths with the aims of eradicating the negative association of condom with HIV/AIDS infection and the negative perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction and hinders sexual interest.

Keywords: Barriers, Condom, Rural youths, Akwa Ibom State

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INTRODUCTION

The sexual behavior of young people has become a crucial social and public health concern (Mehra *et al*, 2012). Many sexually active youths engage in behaviours that are considered risky or unsafe which may have great impact on their future health and fertility (Kotchick *et*

al, 2001). The current bio-social gap in the society has led to an increase in pre-marital sexual activities which exposes vulnerable youths to the risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. According to Ogbe (2011), sexual interaction is a major means of transferring sexually transmitted infections. People still engage in unprotected sex, even in countries with high HIV prevalence rates where unprotected sex entails high risks (<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/files/fap>). Akpan *et al* (2014) reported that the prevalence rate of HIV infection in adults aged 15 to 19 years - which are youths – is 3.7%.

The use of condom is one of the identified means of preventing sexually transmitted infections (Ogbe, 2011). The use of latex condom reduces the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission by 80-95% (Wald *et al*, 2005); increases the rate of human papiloma virus (HPV) clearance and cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) regression; and reduces the transmission of genital herpes in both men and women. Condoms work by blocking fluid transfer between sexual partners so that semen, vaginal mucous, anal mucous, menstrual fluid or blood of one group is prevented from coming into contact with a mucous membrane of a sexual partner (Dodds, 2010)..The effectiveness of condoms in preventing unintended pregnancies and acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases depends on consistent and proper use, and avoidance of breakage, spillage or leakage (Sarkar, 2008). The male condom, according to (Burknam, 2007), is probably the most widely used mechanical contraceptive in the world today.

In spite of the numerous benefits of using condom, Udoeyop (2014) reported that certain barriers hinder its use in rural areas of Nigeria. This study therefore aims at ascertaining these barriers to condom use among youths in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the socio-economic characteristics of youths in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State,
- ii. determine the frequency of use of condoms by the respondents, and
- iii. ascertain the barriers to condom use by the respondents.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State is located within the South-eastern axis of Nigeria, wedged between Cross River, Abia and Rivers on the Sandy Deltaic plain of the Guinea Coast. On the Southern Margins of the State is the Atlantic

Ocean which stretches from Ikot Abasi Local Government Area (L.G.A) to Oron L.G.A. The State lies between latitudes 4°31" and 5°31" North, and longitudes 7°35" and 8°25" East. It occupies a total land area of 7,245,935km² ; with estimated population of 3,920,208 (National Population Commission, 2006). Dry and rainy seasons are the two major seasons prevalent.

A two-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. The first stage involved the simple random selection of four out of the six Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Project (AKADEP) zones. The selected AKADEP zones were Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Etinan and Oron. The second stage involved the purposive selection of forty (40) rural-based youths from each of the four selected AKADEP zones arriving at a total sample size of 160. Purposive sampling was carried out in the second stage to ensure that only rural-based youths were selected for the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the rural youths and their frequency of condom use. In order to ascertain the barriers to condom use, 16 barriers identified through literature were presented to the respondents. Respondents were rated on a 3-point scale of "Not a barrier", "Minor barrier" and "Major barrier" scored 0, 1 and 2 respectively. A mean score was computed for each item and used to rank the severity of the barriers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of rural youths in Akwa Ibom State: Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of rural youth in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. Data from the Table reveals that the mean age of youths in the rural areas of the State was 25 years. This age period, according to Oyediran *et al* (2011), is a stage of increased sexual activity. Sixty percent of the respondents were males and majority of them (77.5%) were single. This could be due to the fact that most youths in the study area are either students or school leavers with no viable means of livelihood hence their inability to support a family. All the respondents had some level of formal education. This could be attributed to the free and compulsory education policy of the Akwa Ibom State Government. Apart from the education policy of the State, the report of Foundation for Economic Research and Training, FERT (2011) identified Akwa Ibom State as an educationally advantaged State with numerous educational opportunities in Nigeria. A greater percentage of the respondents (77%) were not employed which further affirms the status of the respondents as youths. The employed youths had an average income of ₦6,000.00 which is relatively low. Majority (95.8%) of the respondents

were Christians. The finding agrees with Anele (2013) who stated that Christianity is the main religion of Southern Nigeria.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of rural youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

S/N	Personal characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	15-19 years	12	10.0
		20-24 years	47	39.2
		25-29 years	39	32.5
		30-34 years	18	15.0
		35-39 years	4	3.3
2.	Sex	Male	72	60.0
		Female	48	40.0
3.	Marital Status	Single	93	77.5
		Married	19	15.8
		Divorced/Separated	3	2.5
		Widowed	5	4.1
4.	Educational Status	Primary Education	12	10.0
		Secondary Education	81	67.5
		Tertiary Education	27	22.5
5.	Employment Status	Employed	43	35.8
		Non-employed	77	64.2
6.	Monthly Income (in naira)	1-20,000	16	37.2
		20,001-40,000	22	51.2
		40,001-60,000	3	7.0
		60,001-80,000	2	4.7
7.	Religion	Christianity	115	95.8
		Non-christianity	5	4.2

Source: Field survey, 2014

Frequency of condom use by respondents: Table 2 shows the frequency of condom use by the respondents. Majority of the respondents (67.5%) agreed that they have used condom during sexual intercourse in the last six month while 32.5% reported not using condom in the last six months. The result shows that condom is widely used by rural youths in the study area. The finding agree with Asa and Daniel (2015) who reported that condoms were the most utilized contraceptive method in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Out of the respondents that reported that they used condom during sexual intercourse in the last 6

months, Table 2 reveals that 28.7% of them stated that they always use condom during intercourse, 47.2% often used condom while 24.17% rarely used condom.

Table 2: Frequency of Condom Use by the Respondents

S/N	Frequency	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Condom use during sexual intercourse in the last six months	Yes	77	67.5
		No	43	32.5
		<i>Total</i>	120	100
2.	Frequency of condom use	Rarely	19	24.7
		Often	36	46.8
		Always	22	28.6
		<i>Total</i>	77	100

Source: Field survey, 2014

Barriers to condom use by the respondents: Table 3 shows the barriers to condom use faced by rural youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The Table reveals that stigma attached to condom use because of its association with HIV/AIDs ($\bar{x} = 1.63$), familiarity with sex partners ($\bar{x} = 1.58$) and perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction and hinders sexual interest ($\bar{x} = 1.49$) constituted the most severe barriers to condom use by the respondents. The finding agrees with Varga (1997) who stated that the primary obstacle to condom use is the fear of emotional rejection or being branded promiscuous or HIV positive; Lammers *et al* (2013) also noted that stigma is a factor inhibiting safe sexual behavior. Olley (2003) averred that sex does not feel as good as when using a condom – which agrees with the finding. Lack of sexual decision making power by women/domineering behavior of male sex partners ($\bar{x} = 1.43$) is another severe barrier to condom use faced by the respondents. This could be due to the fact that the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State are basically a patriarchal social system as reported by Ekong (2003). The least barriers to condom use faced by rural youths were: long distance to source of buying condoms ($\bar{x} = 0.70$) and cost of condom in the area ($\bar{x} = 0.67$). The finding agrees with Olley (2003) who stated that condoms cost very little money and a readily available contraceptive choice. Udoeyop (2014) also reported that condoms are easily accessible and relatively cheap in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Barriers to condom use faced by rural youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

S/N	Barriers	Mean	Rank
1.	Cost of condom in the area	0.67	16
2.	Long distance to source of buying condoms	0.70	15
3.	Scarcity of female condoms	1.23	5
4.	Lack of skills in condom use	0.84	14
5.	Stigma attached to condom use because of its association with HIV/AIDS	1.63	1
6.	Lack of dialogue among partners with regards to condom use	1.08	8
7.	Perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction and hinders sexual interest	1.49	3
8.	Peer pressure	0.94	9
9.	Discomfort during use	0.85	13
10.	Religious beliefs that does not encourage condom use	0.86	12
11.	Familiarity with sex partners	1.58	2
12.	Number of sex partners	0.90	10
13.	Consumption of alcohol or use of drugs prior to sexual Intercourse	1.10	7
14.	Lack of sexual decision making power by women/ domineering behavior of male sex partners	1.43	4
15.	Lower perceived risk of contracting STIs	1.16	6
16.	Cultural practices that prohibits population control measures	0.88	11

Source: Field survey, 2014

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDTION

The study has shown that stigma attached to condom use because of its association with HIV/AIDS, familiarity with sex partners, and perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction were the most severe barriers to condom use faced by youths in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Government (State and Local) as well as development agencies in the State embark on sexual behaviour enlightenment programmes specifically targeted at rural youths with the aims of eradicating

the negative association of condom with HIV/AIDs infection and the negative perception that condom use reduces sexual satisfaction and hinders sexual interest.

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