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**TRANSFORMING THE STRATEGIES FOR THE REDUCTION OF SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED DISEASES AMONG ADULTS THROUGH ADULT LITERACY
PROGRAMS IN OPOBO/NKORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to examine adult literacy programme strategies for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State. In order to achieve this objective, two research questions were posed. A population of 120 members of six community-based organizations was purposively adopted for the study because of its small size. Questionnaire on Adult Education Programme and Creation of Awareness for Reduction of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (QAEP CARSTD) was the main data collecting instrument for the study. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two lecturers in Department of Adult Education and Community Development and one from Department of Guidance and Counseling/Educational Psychology. The reliability coefficient value of 0.93 was obtained through Crobach Alpha method. Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean and grand mean. The findings showed that adult literacy strategies, such as community leaders, media, religious leaders and seminars help in reducing STDs among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area. The researcher therefore recommended among others, that community leaders should invite health workers to carryout STDs testing and counselling in their communities.

Keywords: Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Adults, Adult Literacy Programs, Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area, Rivers State.

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Introduction

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are diseases caused by pathogens and contracted through sexual activity (intercourse, oral and anal sex). Some of the most common STDs result from bacterial (Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis) and viral (HIV/AIDS, herpes, hepatitis B, human papillomavirus or HPV) exposure. In addition to bacterial and viral culprits, protozoa and fungi also cause STDs, including those that cause trichomonas vaginitis and jock itch, respectively (Shim, 2011). In other words, Sexually Transmitted Diseases are diseases that are spread primarily through person-to-person sexual contact and through the use of infected needles or breast feeding by an infected person, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) have been known for hundreds of years. In the 1990's STDs were commonly known as venereal diseases in an attempt to unravel the history of the infection.

Tansey (2003) opined that STDs have been known since antiquity. STDs are the major global cause of acute illness, infertility, long term disability and death, with serious medical and psychological consequences to millions of men, women and infants. Over 30 bacterial, viral and parasitic pathogens have been identified to date that can be transmitted sexually (Madani, 2006). World Health Organization (2011) stated that STDs are one of the most under-recognized health problems worldwide.

In addition, World Health Organization (2005) stated that, the estimated global annual incidence of curable STDs (excluding HIV and viral hepatitis) is 333 million cases; gonococci Diseases 62 million cases; Chlamydia Diseases, 89 million cases; syphilis, 12 million cases, and trichomoniasis, 170 million cases. WHO (2005) also estimates, 448 million new cases of curable STDs (Syphilis, gonorrhoea, Chlamydia and trichomoniasis) occurring annually throughout the world in adults aged 15-49 years. This does not include HIV and other STDs which continue to adversely affect the lives of individuals and communities worldwide. In developing countries, STDs and their complications rank in the top five disease categories for which adults seek health care (WHO, 2005). The most common conditions they cause are gonorrhoea, Chlamydia infection, syphilis, trichomoniasis, chancroids, genital herpes, genital warts, human immune deficiency virus (HIV) infection and hepatitis B infection (WHO, 2013).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP, 2011) has reported that 85 percent of the most prevalent infectious disease in the United States are sexually transmitted. The rate of STDs in United States is 50 to 100 times higher than that of any other industrialized nation (CDCP, 2000). The report further states that about 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases occur in the United State each year, and almost 65 percent of world's STDs cases. The health risk behavior of adolescent places them at increased risk of exposure to STDs. Such behavioural risk factor includes the age of sexual activity, number of sexual partners, use of contraceptives, use of drugs and alcohol. The prevalence rate of adults (aged 15-49) living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria is 3.6 percent (CIA World Fact Book 2011).

According to the Medical News (2010), STI is an illness that has a significant probability of transmission between humans or animals by means of human sexual behavior including vaginal intercourse, oral sex and anal sex. The Medical News (2010) further explains that a person may be infected and may potentially infect others without showing signs of disease, this group of persons

are called potential career. In the context of this study, STDs are those illnesses caused by infectious pathogens like bacteria, fungi, protozoa and viruses that are transmitted from one person to another by means of sexual contact.

Some STDs can also be transmitted through the use of needles as well as through child breast feeding. STI is a term used to describe more than 20 different Diseases that are transmitted through exchange of semen, blood, and other body fluids; or by direct contact with the affected body areas of people with STDs (CDCP, 2000). According to Farely (2013), STDs are diseases passed on from one person to another through unprotected sex (sex without a condom) or sometimes through genital contact. Mayo Clinic (2013) stated that STDs are generally acquired by sexual contact. It can also be contacted via exposure to bodily fluid of an infected person, blood transfusion, tissue transplant, sharing of infected needles, infected objects, clothing and prenatal transmission. The organisms that cause sexually transmitted diseases may pass from person to person in blood, semen, or vaginal and other bodily fluids. Some of these diseases can also be transmitted non sexually, such as from mother to infant during pregnancy or childbirth. Many STDs may show no sign or symptom. However, signs and symptoms may appear in the genital area and include discharge from penis, vagina or anus, pains or discomforts during sex or when urinating, lumps and bumps on the genitals abnormal bleeding, a rash or itching on the genital (Samuel, 2010).

Bircher (2005) defines health as 'a dynamic state of well-being characterized by a physical and mental potential, which satisfies the demand of life commensurate with age, culture, and personal responsibility'. In the context of this work, health is the general condition of a person's mind and body, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain. CDC (2010) states that some bacterial STDs including syphilis, gonorrhoea and Chlamydia can have long term consequences including pelvis inflammatory disease (PID) which may cause infertility in women (CDCP, 2011).

The physical health implication of STI according to CDCP (2000), can be very painful with long term consequences as well as immediate health problems. They can cause birth defects, blindness, bone deformities, brain damage, cancer, heart diseases, infertility and other abnormalities on the productive system (CDCP, 2000). The mental health implications of STDs according to Okoye (2006) include shock, denial, regret, guilt, anxiety, fear, and frustration. Howson (2001), observed that both STDs and their complications have far greater social significance for women than they do for men. They noted that STDs typically cause personal embarrassment and domestic conflict, but whoever is responsible for bringing a given infection into the relationship, it is the women who are typically blamed and who endures the most serious consequences. The consequence includes domestic violence, divorce, and social ostracism.

Most writers seem to agree that adult education geared towards the adult. This gives rise to the question "who is an adult". An adult as a concept, just like adult education, has been defined by many different authors and writers from different perspectives. One may ask "what then can be said about the concept of an adult"? (Bown, 2009 and Ibeh, 2008) see an adult as one who has achieved full physical development and is expected to have the right to participate as a responsible homemaker, worker and member of a society. Nzeneri (2010) perceives an adult as a person who is physically and psychologically mature, and the individual is socially, economically, politically, culturally and environmentally responsible. Looking at the above definitions of an adult, two key

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words exist, which are maturity and responsibility. It is on this regard that the UNESCO general conference of defining Adult Education in its conference held in Nairobi, Kenya on 26th November, 1976 conceived adult education as:

the entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behavior in the two fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

This definition is broad and encompassing in the sense that it does not only define adult education but it also defines its content and scope. Simply put, adult education is the education (formal, informal and non-formal) given to any person regarded as an adult by society in order to socially, economically, and culturally improve and empower him/her, so that the person will be able to contribute meaningfully as a useful and the acceptable member of society.

Essentially the provisions of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2014), section 4, regarding the goals of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education in the country, could be seen to align with the global view on the definition and broad concerns of adult education. The policy stipulates that the goals of adult education in Nigeria are thus:

- 1) To provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include the migrant folks, almajiri pupils, illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents; persons who left the formal school system are now willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories of disadvantaged groups; who are unable to have access to the conventional educational system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances;
- 2) To provide remedial and lifelong education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; and
- 3) To provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

A careful perusal of the above goals shows that our world is always in a constant flux. It is ever changing. In order to keep abreast of the contemporary, there is need for a continuous learning which adult education provides. In doing this, the learner appreciates the aesthetic, cultural and civic education prevalent at a given time for effective living in society. Adult education offers dynamic and flexible educational programmes to all adults based on their needs. The dynamism and flexibility of an adult education programme enables it to satisfy the heterogeneous characteristics and needs of the different adult learners who need education. Unlike the rigid formal school curriculum, an adult education programme is planned to meet each group at the level of their entry background. The target of adult education programme is helping an individual

to be fully developed and to be fully actualized. This means helping an individual to improve on his performance as an individual, community member, worker, parent, mate, religious affiliate and in other numerous roles which an adult performs to himself and to his community (Obi, cited in Peterside, 2014).

With the spread sexually transmitted diseases in Opobo/Nkoro local government, most writers have not addressed adult literacy programme as an awareness creation strategy to reduce the scourge of sexually transmitted diseases in the local government. Therefore, this study seeks to address adult literacy programme strategies for the reduction of sexual transmitted diseases among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Adult literacy plays an essential role in improving the lives of individuals by enabling economic security and good health that enriches societies by building human capital, fostering cultural identity and tolerance, and promoting civic participation. The ways adults can learn through adult literacy includes visual, oral and verbal aids, with the use of adult literacy programme strategies in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State. There is a firm hope that the spread of sexually transmitted diseases will be reduced to the barest minimum. However, the use of adult literacy awareness creation strategies such as community leaders, the church, the mass media to create awareness for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases among adults have not been concentrated on by most scholars. Therefore, this study attempts to study the strategies in adult literacy programme for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research work is to examine adult literacy programme strategies for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. To ascertain how the use of community leaders as a strategy in adult literacy programme would help in the reduction of sexually transmitted disease among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. To ascertain how the use of the religious leaders as a strategy in adult literacy programme would help in the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- How has the use of community leaders as a strategy help in the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases among adults in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State?
- How has the use of religious leaders as a strategy in adult literacy programme help in the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State?

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Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The population of the study comprises 120 members of six (6) Community Based Organizations in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State which include: Opobo Women Development Union, United Brothers of Opobo Kingdom, Nkoro Town Development Union, Pennbreeds Club of Opobo, Kalaibiana Development Union and Minima Improvement Union. The researcher used the entire population of the study. Hence there will be no sampling as the population was small and manageable. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study is a constructed questionnaire titled 'Questionnaire on Adult Education Programme and Creation of Awareness for Reduction of Sexually Transmitted Diseases' (QAEP CARSTD). The instrument adopted a 4-points rating scale with a response option of Strongly Agree (SA), 4 points, Agree (A), 3 points, Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 points and Disagree (D), 1` point.

The instrument was administered by the researcher and collected from the respondents after they had filled the questionnaire. Mean analysis was used to answer the research questions at a decision point of 2.5 which determines the level of respondents' agreement to the item.

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on ways community leaders can create awareness for reducing Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among adults through community leaders

S/N	Item statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Total Score	Mean Score	Remarks
1.	Community leaders in collaboration with health workers organize seminar on STDs	216	93	40	10	359	3.20	Accepted
2.	Community leaders alongside medical Experts organize talk shows on symptoms of STDs	152	129	24	31	336	2.80	Accepted
3.	Community leaders in collaboration with Health workers produce handbills and Posters on prevention and treatment of STDs	124	123	62	10	316	2.90	Accepted
4.	Community leaders invites health workers to Carryout STDs testing and counseling in the Community	243	63	12	7	325	3.50	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.10	Accepted		

The table shows that the mean scores of the response of the respondents on ways. Adult Education programmes helps in reducing sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among adults through community leaders in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State are as follows: Community leaders in collaboration with health workers organize seminar on STDs has 3.20, community leaders alongside medical experts organize talk shows of symptoms of STDs 2.80, community leaders in collaboration with health workers produce hand bills and poster on prevention and treatment of STDs 2.90, Community leaders is invite health workers to carryout STDs testing and counseling in the community 3.50. the analysis above shows that item 1,2,3,4 were accepted as strategies Adult Education programmes helps in creating awareness for reducing Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among adults through community leaders. The grand mean score was 3.10 which means that community leaders can help in creating awareness for the reduction of Sexually Transmitted Diseases to a high extent.

Research Question Two (RQ2): How has the use of religious leaders as an awareness strategy in adult literacy programme helped in the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on the role of religious leaders in creating awareness for reducing STDs.

S/N	Item statement	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	Total Score	Mean Score	Remarks
1.	Preaching and promoting sexual abstinence	120	201	20	83	424	3.10	Accepted
2.	Training religious leaders on STDs	108	186	28	10	332	2.90	Accepted
3.	Production and distribution of materials concerning STDs	300	75	12	1	388	3.40	Accepted
4.	Promoting voluntary sexual abstinence	324	45	20	7	396	2.50	Accepted
5.	Work for the promotion of religious values and marital fidelity	208	93	40	10	351	3.10	Accepted
6.	Promoting voluntary and confidential Testing and counseling services	264	93	18	7	382	3.40	Accepted
7.	Educating people of the danger of STDs	152	129	40	12	333	2.90	Accepted
8.	Informing people on how to detect the symptom of STDs	192	105	32	14	343	3.10	Accepted
9.	Informing people on how to prevent STDs and treatment.	120	153	44	10	327	2.80	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.14			Accepted

The table above shows that the mean scores of the responses of the respondents on the role of religious leaders in creating awareness for reducing STDs in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area in Rivers State are as follows: preaching and promoting sexual abstinence with mean score of 3.10, training religious leaders on STDs 2.90, production and distribution of materials concerning STDs 3.40, promoting voluntary sexual abstinence, 3.50, work for the promotion of religious values and marital fidelity 3.10, promoting voluntary and confidential testing and counseling services 3.40, educating people on danger of STDs 2.90, informing people on how to detect the symptom of STDs 3.10, and informing people on how to prevent STDs and treatment with mean score of 2.80.

The analysis above shows that all items were accepted as the roles of churches in creating awareness for reducing STDs. The grand mean score was 3.14. This implies that the respondents agreed to a great extent that religious leaders can help in creating awareness for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases.

Discussion of the Findings

In research question one; the ways Adult Education programmes create awareness in reducing STDs among adults through the use of community leaders in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State were identified. Result reveals that community leaders can help to create awareness in reducing STDs among adults in Opobo and Nkoro. This is in line with

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Feinstein (2003), who opined that community leaders can help prevent STDs transmission and create positive environments for people already infected by virus by spreading the right information throughout the community.

In research question two, the respondents accepted that Adult Education Programmes help to reduce Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) through teachings of various religious bodies. The items which were overwhelmingly agreed upon: preaching and promoting sexual abstinence, Training religious leaders on STDs, Production and distribution of materials concerning STDs, promoting voluntary and confidential testing and counseling services, educating people of the danger of STDs, informing people on how to detect the symptom of STDs, and Informing people on how to prevent STDs and treatment. This is in line with Pillay (2003), many churches in various communities engage in “caring’ work, and they conduct regular “awareness” workshops on HIV and AIDs and other STDs.

Conclusion

From the result obtained and the investigation of learning environment as major determinant of adult learners’ performance in Adult Education centers in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State, the researcher came up with the following conclusion; the findings identified that, to a high extent, adult education programmes can be used to create awareness in reducing STDs among adults through community leaders in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area. To high extent adult education programmes helps to reduce sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) through preaching in churches in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Recommendation

To forestall, prevent and reduce the spread of menace of STDs and HIV/AIDS among adults within Nigeria, especially, the following measures are recommended;

1. Community leaders should invite health workers to carryout sensitization campaigns, STDs testing and counseling in the community, Community leaders in collaboration with health workers should produces handbills and poster on prevention and treatment on STDs.
2. The church with collaboration with NGOs and donor agencies should and distribute materials concerning STDs, the church should also work for the promotion of religious values and marital fidelity and church should promote voluntary and confidential testing and counseling services.

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