



PARENTAL GUIDANCE, PEER ASSOCIATION AS CORRELATE OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES AGAINST SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKWUSIGO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted correlational survey design to established the relationship between parental guidance. peer association and preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students in Ekwusigo Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. It was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A sample of 266 SS2 students in six public secondary schools in the study area were selected using simple random sampling technique. One instrument titled "Source of preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (SPMSTQ) was developed by the researchers with the help of experts and used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire, established using Cronbach Alpha which ranges from 81 to .86. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parental guidance and peer association individually significantly relate to the preventive measure against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students in Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra State, Nigeria. it was concluded that preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students depend on effective parental guidance and positive peer association. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended amongst others that Schools and communities should encourage parents to engage in open discussions about sexual health with their children. This would help to minimize the rate of sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students

KEYWORDS: Parental guidance, peer association, preventive measures, sexually transmitted diseases

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INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) remain a significant public health concern, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Secondary school students, who are at a critical developmental stage, often lack comprehensive knowledge about STDs and their preventive measures. This gap in understanding leads to increased vulnerability to infections, unintended pregnancies, and long-term health consequences. The rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among adolescents, particularly secondary school students, poses a significant public health challenge (Ibok, & Ntibi, 2020; Akah, & Akpa, 2021; Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020). Despite the availability of information and resources, many young people remain inadequately informed about effective preventive measures against STDs. This lack of knowledge can lead to risky sexual behaviors, increased transmission rates, and adverse health outcomes. Kershaw et al. (2018) found that many adolescents do not fully understand the modes of transmission or the importance of using protective measures such as condoms. Furthermore, Bowers et al. (2020) highlighted that even when students receive sexual health education, the effectiveness of these programs is often undermined by cultural stigmas, misinformation, and limited access to healthcare resources. Heller et al. (2021) emphasized that stigma surrounding sexual health discussions can prevent adolescents from seeking information and support, ultimately hindering their ability to make informed decisions about their sexual health. According to Kirby, (2016), knowledge of preventive measures—such as condom use, regular testing, and understanding modes of transmission—is essential for empowering students to engage in safer sexual practices. Kershaw et al. (2018) stated that adolescents with a higher level of knowledge regarding STDs are more likely to adopt protective behaviors, thereby reducing their risk of infection.

Educational interventions have proven ineffective in enhancing awareness and knowledge among secondary school students. Bowers et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis that demonstrated the positive impact of school-based sexual health education programs on students' understanding of STDs and their prevention. Despite these efforts, barriers such as stigma, misinformation, and lack

of access to resources continue to impede the effective application of this knowledge. Enhancing the knowledge of preventive measures regarding STDs among secondary school students is crucial for promoting healthier behaviors and reducing the incidence of infections. This introduction sets the stage for exploring the current landscape of STD knowledge among adolescents, the effectiveness of educational interventions, and the challenges that remain in ensuring that students can effectively apply what they learn. This problem is particularly critical given that secondary school students are at a pivotal stage in their development, where they are likely to explore sexual relationships. Therefore, understanding the extent of their knowledge regarding STD prevention and identifying the barriers they face is essential for developing effective educational strategies that promote safer sexual practices. The preventive measures of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among secondary school students are influenced by several interrelated factors (Akah, Owan, Uduigwomen, & Akpa, 2022; Akah, & Akpa, 2021; Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020). Here in this study inadequate parental guidance and peer association are identified.

Parental guidance involves the support, communication, and education that parents provide to their children regarding various aspects of life, including sexual health. Open communication between parents and children about sexual health can significantly affect adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward STD prevention. Parents who provide accurate information and encourage safe practices can help their children make informed decisions (Ibok, Ogbeye, Alu, Joseph, Udobong, Collins, 2024; Ataben, Olofu, & Ifeoma, 2024; Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020). Parental guidance and communication play a critical role in shaping adolescents' knowledge and behaviors regarding sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Effective communication between parents and secondary school students can significantly influence the adoption of preventive measures against STDs. Miller, Whitaker, and Earp (2016) found that adolescents who reported higher levels of communication with their parents regarding sexual health topics demonstrated greater awareness of STDs and were more likely to engage in protective behaviors, such as using condoms.

Kahn, and Hodge, (2018) stated that parents who expressed positive attitudes towards discussing sexual health issues fostered an environment that encouraged open dialogue, leading to improved STD knowledge and preventive practices among their children. Heller, and Heller (2021) identified stigma, discomfort, and lack of knowledge among parents as significant obstacles that prevent them from discussing STD prevention with their children. These barriers can lead to misinformation and inadequate preventive measures being adopted by adolescents. Giordano et al. (2019) found that higher levels of parental monitoring correlated with lower rates of risky sexual behaviors among adolescents, suggesting that supportive parental involvement enhances protective measures. Pruitt, and Gallo, (2020) found that parents who participated in communication skills training reported increased confidence in discussing sexual health topics, positively influencing their children's behaviors regarding STD prevention. By fostering open dialogue, addressing barriers, and enhancing communication skills, parents can effectively contribute to their children's sexual health education.

Peer association refers to the relationships and interactions that adolescents have with their friends and peers. This includes the influence peers have on each other's attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making, particularly concerning sexual health. Peers can significantly impact adolescents' sexual behaviors, either positively or negatively. Positive peer influence can promote safe practices, while negative influence may lead to risky behaviors. A study conducted by Giordano, Longmore, and Manning, (2016) found that peers play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward sexual activity and the use of protective measures. Adolescents are more likely to adopt preventive behaviors when their peers are knowledgeable about STDs and encourage safe practices. A study conducted by Swain, and Choudhury, (2020) evaluated a peer-led sexual health education program and found that participants who engaged in these programs had significantly higher knowledge about STDs and reported increased use of preventive measures compared to those who did not participate. A study conducted by Kahn and Hodge, (2019) found that adolescents who experienced strong peer pressure to engage in sexual activity were less likely to use condoms and more likely to engage

in unprotected sex, highlighting the dual nature of peer influence. They further stated that while peer associations can promote positive behaviors, they can also lead to increased risky sexual behaviors. Shulman, and Kipnis, (2021) found that female adolescents are often more influenced by their peers regarding sexual health discussions and preventive measures compared to males, who may rely more on individual decision-making processes. A study conducted by Decker, McCauley, Lee, and Kershaw (2018) highlighted that when adolescents perceive that their peers view STD prevention as important, they are more likely to engage in preventive behaviors, such as using condoms and getting tested for STDs. Positive peer influences can lead to increased awareness and adoption of preventive measures, while negative peer pressure can result in risky behaviors. Addressing educational gaps, enhancing peer support, fostering open communication and guidance can collectively contribute to healthier behaviors in this population. This work is supported with Hall's theory propounded in 1904 which stated that adolescence is a critical period of development marked by emotional upheaval, identity exploration, and the quest for independence. He believed that these challenges are universal and influenced by both biological and cultural factors. The theory is lactated to this research work because effective parental guidance can mitigate risks associated with sexual behavior, including STDs. Parents who communicate openly about sexual health can foster a supportive environment, encouraging adolescents to make informed choices. Also, peer relationships can either promote positive health behaviors or lead to risky behaviors. Positive peer influences can encourage safe practices regarding sexual health, while negative peer pressure may increase the risk of engaging in unsafe sexual activities

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to examine parental guidance and peer association as correlate of preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students in Ekwusigo Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to established

- i) the relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students
- ii) the relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- i) There is no significant relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students
- ii) There is no significant relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students

METHODOLOGY

The study area was Ekwusigo Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. The research design used for this study was the correlational survey design. The correlation survey design was used to establish the relationship between the variables of study. The population of this study comprised all the 792 senior secondary school students in across all the six public secondary schools in Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. The simple random sampling techniques was used to select a sample size of 266 representing 33.586% of the entire population. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire Sources of preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (SPMSTD)". The instrument was developed by the researcher with the help of the two experts in Measurement and Evaluation Department and two experts in human kinetic department. The questionnaire contained two sections A and B. Section A was designed to elicit

information from respondents' demographic variables such as gender while section B is a 28 items four points scale designed to measure the sub-variables of the study. Each item required the respondent to indicate the frequency of his or her various opinions under strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The face and content validity were established by using two experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation; in the faculty of Education, and two experts in human kinetic department both from University of Calabar. The expert certified that the instrument (questionnaire), was face and content validity and could be used for the study. To establish the reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) through Cronbach alpha reliability, a trial testing was done using 40 students who were was not part of the study in public secondary schools were used to examine the internal consistency which give the reliability indices ranges .81 to .86 which indicated that the research instrument was reliable. The hypotheses formulated to guide the study were appropriately tested using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance for the two hypotheses.

Presentation of results

The result of the analysis is presented in tables 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students. The independent variable in this hypothesis is parental guidance while the dependent variable is the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction . The results are presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (N= 266)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Parental guidance	266	16.765	2.876	.863	.000
Preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases	266	26.865	3.876		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =264

The result presented on Table 1 shows the high positive significant relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (r=.863; p=.000). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more effective parental guidance and communication can significantly reduce the incidence of STDs among secondary school students. On the other hand, ineffective parental guidance and communication can promote incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students

The independent variable in this hypothesis is peer association while the dependent variable is the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction. The results are presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (N= 266)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Peer association	266	15.987	2.342	.788	.000
Preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases	266	26.865	3.876		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =264

The result presented on Table 2 shows the high positive significant relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases (r=.788; p=.000). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more positive peer association and communication can significantly reduce the incidence of STDs among secondary school students. On the other hand, negatively peer association and communication can promote incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between parental guidance and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students. The finding agreed with Miller, Whitaker, and Earp (2016) who found that adolescents who reported higher levels of communication with their parents regarding sexual health topics demonstrated greater awareness of STDs and were more likely to engage in protective behaviors, such as using condoms. The finding is in line with the finding of Kahn, and Hodge, (2018)

who stated that parents who expressed positive attitudes towards discussing sexual health issues fostered an environment that encouraged open dialogue, leading to improved STD knowledge and preventive practices among their children. The finding agreed with Heller, and Heller (2021) who identified stigma, discomfort, and lack of knowledge among parents as significant obstacles that prevent them from discussing STD prevention with their children. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Giordano et al. (2019) who found that higher levels of parental monitoring correlated with lower rates of risky sexual behaviors among adolescents, suggesting that supportive parental involvement enhances protective measures. The finding agreed with Pruitt, and Gallo, (2020) who found that parents who participated in communication skills training reported increased confidence in discussing sexual health topics, positively influencing their children's behaviors regarding STD prevention. The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between peer association and the preventive measures against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students. Peer association refers to the relationships and interactions that adolescents have with their friends and peers. This includes the influence peers have on each other's attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making, particularly concerning sexual health. The finding agreed with a study conducted by Giordano, Longmore, and Manning, (2016) who found that peers play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward sexual activity and the use of protective measures. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Swain, and Choudhury, (2020) who evaluated a peer-led sexual health education program and found that participants who engaged in these programs had significantly higher knowledge about STDs and reported increased use of preventive measures compared to those who did not participate. A finding is in line with a study conducted by Kahn and Hodge, (2019) who found that adolescents who experienced strong peer pressure to engage in sexual activity were less likely to use condoms and more likely to engage in unprotected sex, highlighting the dual nature of peer influence.

They further stated that while peer associations can promote positive behaviors, they can also lead to increased risky sexual behaviors. The finding agreed with Shulman, and Kipnis, (2021) who found that female adolescents are often more influenced by their peers regarding sexual health discussions and preventive measures compared to males, who may rely more on individual decision-making processes. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Decker, McCauley, Lee, and Kershaw (2018) stated that when adolescents perceive that their peers view STD prevention as important, they are more likely to engage in preventive behaviors, such as using condoms and getting tested for STDs.

CONCLUSION

Peer associations and parental guidance play critical roles in shaping adolescents' sexual behaviors. Positive peer influence and effective parental communication can significantly reduce the incidence of STDs among secondary school students. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at improving the knowledge and implementation of preventive measures against STDs among secondary school students. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that parental guidance and peer association significantly relate to the preventive measure against sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students in Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra State, Nigeria

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendation were made;

- i) Schools and communities should encourage parents to engage in open discussions about sexual health with their children. This would help to minimize the rate of sexually transmitted diseases among secondary school students
- ii) Schools should implement peer-led education programs that promote safe sexual practices and provide support.
- iii) Educational policies should mandate comprehensive sexual education that includes information on STDs, healthy relationships, and communication skills.

iv) The programs would help to educating both parents and students about STDs should be developed and promoted within communities.

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