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KNOWLEDGE AND PREVENTIVE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PORT HARCOURT LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Six research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 4,264 public senior secondary school students in the area. Simple

Introduction

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) formerly referred to as "Veneral disease" and now are referred to as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) because an individual may be infected without necessarily developing the disease. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are transmitted from one person to another through intimate contact. Studies have shown that, STDs are among the most common infectious diseases in the world with an estimated 333 million new cases of curable sexually transmitted diseases occur each year among adults (Rugeh, 2020). Rugeh adding that approximately one million people contract sexually transmitted infections every day and 50% of them are adolescents aged 15-24 years.

random sampling techniques was used to select a sample of 405 respondents for the study. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Knowledge and Preventive Behaviour towards Sexually Transmitted Infections Questionnaire" (KPBSTIQ) was used for data collection. The face and content validation of the instrument was done by two experts; one in Public Health Sciences, and another in Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of r=0.79 (79%). Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3 while mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions 4, 5 and 6. Chi-square was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 while Independent t-test was used to test hypotheses 3 and 4 at 0.05 level of significance. That there was low level of knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Also, there was no significant association between gender (15.933, Df=2, p=.067), age (12.201, Df=4, p=.084) and knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. That there was no significant association between gender (p>0.071), age (p>0.099) and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. It was recommended among others that; health education lesson can act as an effective channel in creating awareness about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Therefore, there is a need for Health Education lesson to be sustained in the school.

Keywords: Behavior, infections, knowledge, preventive, sexually, secondary, students

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) include many different sexually transmittable infectious diseases such as Chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, human papilloma virus (HPV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and syphilis. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) is transmitted through vaginal, oral and anal sexual contact as well as through blood products (Yusuf, 2020). The incidence of STIs is fast increasing worldwide with the young, youth and adolescent placed at high risk.

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) in adolescence may have adverse effects on sexual and reproductive health in adulthood. However, sexual contact among adolescents is often not protected (Francis, 2018). Risks of STI in adolescents encompass both behavioural and biological sexual features. From a behavioural perspective, adolescents

are more likely to keep multiple sexual partners. The other dimension is that adolescent females are particularly susceptible to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) like Chlamydia and human papillomavirus (HPV) which is attributable to the biological proclivity of the immature cervix for infections. This makes adolescent females more susceptible to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) than adults (Siegel, 2019). Most research is concentrated on infections and treatment among adults (Klausner, 2018) with little attention given to the cognitive and behavioural characteristics that increase the risk of infection among adolescents.

In sub-Saharan Africa, knowledge of HIV is widespread among adolescents. However, knowledge of other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is limited especially for adolescents and teenagers (Finlaye, 2020) .This may be due to the widespread publicity accorded HIV, neglecting other STIs which may predispose them to HIV. School aged children who may have little or no knowledge of STIs may not recognize symptoms and may not seek prevention or treatment services. This is reaffirmed by a study which determined that adolescents inferred sexually transmitted infection risk from attractiveness associated with personal profiles in online dating (Krish, 2020). The study explained that adolescents held a belief system that, the more attractive a person, the less likely that person may have Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Globally, measures have been put in place to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes of adolescents (Klausner, 2018).

Adolescents face serious obstacles such as discrimination when they try to access information on sexual and reproductive health services. Global strategy should aim at ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services which would contribute to increased knowledge on STIs and hence more responsible sexual health behaviour among adolescents. Traditional sources of information, such as parents and schools, play an important role in sexual health education. Sexual communication between adolescents and their parents has been shown to lead to safer sex behaviour (Widman, 2016). Evidence also shows that adolescents' exposure to school-based sexual education can be linked to sexual and reproductive health knowledge levels and to sexual behaviours and related health outcomes (Liue, 2017).

The level of sexual activity (pre-marital sex) among adolescents is high as well as the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (Widman, 2016). Therefore, the increase in the incidence of these infections and their scourge poses greater challenge on the health care system as they contribute to increase in morbidity and mortality rate among adolescent, exert a high physical and emotional toll on the afflicted individual as well as an economic burden on the individual, family, community and the health care system in general. In order to properly tackle the high Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) rates

among adolescents, teenagers and secondary school students, it is of paramount importance to understand adolescent infections and then prevent them. An important starting point will be the understanding of their existing knowledge and education on the subject matter as well as exploring their preventive behavioural tendencies.

The adage that prevention is better, as well as cheaper than cure is a common saying, yet many preventable diseases such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain one of the health problems confronting the human race. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are the most common contagious infection with attendant complications. For instance, untreated chlamydial and gonococci infections may result in pelvic inflammatory disease, which can lead to infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Sexually transmitted infections as reported by Petto (2020) can also result in adverse outcomes in pregnancy, including spontaneous abortion, still birth, premature birth, and congenital infection if they are not adequately prevented. Thus, prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) needs to be given high priority.

Health behaviours are those personal attributes such as beliefs, expectations, motives, values, perceptions, and other cognitive elements (e.g. personality characteristics), actions and habits related to health maintenance, health restoration, and health improvement (Petto, 2020). Preventive sexual health behaviours are those behaviours that promote sexual health. Sexual health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. This implies that sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences void from coercion and discrimination (Petto, 2020). Hence the study explored the knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students at this digital age are supposed to have adequate knowledge of sexuality and sex, and the health consequences of engaging in high risk sexual activities. This is because they can easily access sexual health information via the internet. Moreover, more teenagers now attend secondary institutions when compared to what existed in the past and therefore are supposed to be more knowledgeable about sexual health issues, as well as promote their sexual health with the sexual health knowledge acquired especially through sex education. Perhaps, the non-application of knowledge about sexual health may be the reason behind the high incidence rate of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among secondary school students.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have a negative effect on sexual/reproductive health. Although many sexually transmitted infections are not fatal, they lead to complications in pregnancy, infertility, and deterioration of general health status, as well as play a role as a predisposing factor for transmission of HIV/AIDS. There is still an obvious spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among the secondary school aged adolescents as the researcher observed in the study area; complains among this aged bracket about these Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Could it be that student's vulnerability to these Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is as a result of misconceptions about the complications of STIs or fear of stigmatization to seek for cure, knowledge and preventive behaviour towards Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Thus, it became imperative to examine knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. determine the extent of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
2. ascertain the extent of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender
3. ascertain the extent of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age
4. find out the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
5. examine the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender
6. determine the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?

2. What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender?
3. What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age?
4. What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?
5. What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender?
6. What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant association between gender and knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
2. There is no significant association between age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
3. There is no significant association between gender and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
4. There is no significant association between age and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The study was conducted in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The population of the study comprised 4,264 public senior secondary school students. The sample size used for the study was 405 public senior secondary school students. Simple random sampling technique was used to select sample units from the sample population. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher titled "Knowledge and Preventive Behavior of Sexually Transmitted Infection Questionnaire" (KPBSTIQ). The instrument was made up of three sections. Section A; contained socio-demographic information's while section B;

consisted of 10 item statements on knowledge, Section C; consisted of 10 item statements on preventive behaviour. Items in Section B; was structured on a 2-piont modified Likert scale of Yes = 2 and No = 1. While items in Section C; was structured on a four point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The reliability coefficient for (KPBSTIQ) was established using test-retest reliability method which yielded a reliability index of r=0.79. The face and content validation of the instrument was done by two experts; one in Public Health Sciences, and another in Measurement and Evaluation. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3 while mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions 4, 5 and 6. Chi-square was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 while Independent t-test was used to test hypotheses 3 and 4 at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Result

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?

Table 4.1: Simple Percentage showing the level knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	Yes%	No%
1	Can infections such as gonorrhea and chlamydia be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	35%	65%
2	Can infections such as herpes and syphilis be cured?	29%	71%
3	Can sexually transmitted infections be without symptoms?	49%	51%
4	Can sexually transmitted infections be prevented?	46%	54%
5	Can having redness, intensive itching, pain or swelling near the vagina, penis or anus a sign of STIs?	27%	63%
6	Can infections such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	49%	51%
7	Having discharge from the penis or vagina is a sign of sexually transmitted infection?	30%	70%
8	Can sexually transmitted infection lead to infertility in both men and women?	25%	75%
9	Can having unprotected sexual intercourse expose one to sexually transmitted infections (STI's)?	15%	85%
10	Can sexually transmitted infections if left untreated lead to other chronic health complications	40%	60%
11	Can having painful sex a sign of STIs?	50%	50%
12	Can vaginal bleeding when a girl is not on her period a sign of STIs?	37%	63%

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	Yes%	No%
13	Are painful or frequent urination a symptom of STIs?	20%	80%
14	Are chills, fever, aches and pains are symptoms of STIs?	29%	69%
15	Is unexplained sore throat or oral sore symptoms of STIS?	38%	62%

Table 4.1 shows the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Specifically, items 1-15 had a low percentage revealing the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. From the table above it is revealed that there is low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Research Question Two: What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender?

Table 4.2: Simple percentage showing the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	Male N=196		Female N=209	
		Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%
1	Can infections such as gonorrhea and chlamydia be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	25%	75%	40%	60%
2	Can infections such as herpes and syphilis be cured?	21%	79%	35%	65%
3	Can sexually transmitted infections be without symptoms?	44%	56%	27%	77%
4	Can sexually transmitted infections be prevented?	20%	80%	20%	80%
5	Can having redness, intensive itching, pain or swelling near the vagina, penis or anus a sign of STIs?	27%	73%	30%	70%
6	Can infections such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	40%	60%	35%	65%
7	Having discharge from the penis or vagina is a sign of sexually transmitted infection?	42%	58%	29%	71%
8	Can sexually transmitted infection lead to infertility in both men and women?	36%	64%	50%	50%
9	Can having unprotected sexual intercourse expose one to sexually transmitted infections (STI's)?	30%	70%	18%	82%

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	Male N=196		Female N=209	
		Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%
10	Can sexually transmitted infections if left untreated lead to other chronic health complications	10%	90%	45%	55%
11	Can having painful sex a sign of STIs?	20%	80%	26%	74%
12	Can vaginal bleeding when a girl is not on her period a sign of STIs?	29%	69%	33%	67%
13	Are painful or frequent urination a symptom of STIs?	38%	62%	48%	52%
14	Are chills, fever, aches and pains are symptoms of STIs?	30%	70%	30%	70%
15	Is unexplained sore throat or oral sore symptoms of STIS?	21%	79%	22%	78%

Table 4.2 shows the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender. Specifically, items for male respondents indicated a low percentage revealing low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among male secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. For female respondents the items indicated a low percentage revealing low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among female secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Research Question Three: What is the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age?

Table 4.3: Simple percentage showing the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	13-16years N=256		17-Above N=119	
		Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%
1	Can infections such as Gonorrhea and Chlamydia be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	22%	78%	36%	64%
2	Can infections such as herpes and syphilis be cured?	29%	71%	35%	65%
3	Can sexually transmitted infections be without symptoms?	27%	83%	33%	67%
4	Can sexually transmitted infections be prevented?	13%	87%	30%	70%
5	Can having redness, intensive itching, pain or swelling near the vagina, penis or anus a sign of STIs?	14%	88%	27%	73%
6	Can infections such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B be transmitted through sexual intercourse?	42%	58%	30%	70%
7	Having discharge from the penis or vagina is a sign of sexually transmitted infection?	32%	68%	39%	61%

S/N	Knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection	13-16years N=256 Yes%	No%	17-Above N=119 Yes%	No%
8	Can sexually transmitted infection lead to infertility in both men and women?	46%	54%	40%	60%
9	Can having unprotected sexual intercourse expose one to sexually transmitted infections (STI's)?	40%	60%	28%	72%
10	Can sexually transmitted infections if left untreated lead to other chronic health complications	20%	80%	35%	65%
11	Can having painful sex a sign of STIs?	40%	60%	20%	80%
12	Can vaginal bleeding when a girl is not on her period a sign of STIs?	45%	55%	27%	73%
13	Are painful or frequent urination a symptom of STIs?	15%	85%	50%	50%
14	Are chills, fever, aches and pains are symptoms of STIs?	41%	59%	46%	62%
15	Is unexplained sore throat or oral sore symptoms of STIS?	34%	66%	29%	71%

Table 4.3 shows the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age. Specifically, items for respondents aged 13-16years indicated a low percentage revealing low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among younger secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. For respondents aged 17years-Above, the items indicated a low percentage revealing low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among older secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Research Question Four: What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?

Table 4.4: Mean and standard deviation showing the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	$\bar{X}$	SD
18	Abstinence is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	2.01	0.34
19	Not having multiple sexual partner is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.60	0.54
20	The use of condom is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	2.19	0.77
22	Getting vaccinated can prevent someone from contracting STIs	1.53	0.45
23	Not receiving unscreened blood is a way of preventing the spread of sexually transmitted infections	2.40	0.64
24	Avoiding sex with commercial sex workers is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	2.34	0.87
25	Being faithful is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	1.88	0.62
26	Washing ones genitalia before and after sex is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	2.63	0.81

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	$\bar{X}$	SD
27	Not attending any sex entertainment establishments reduces the chances of contacting sexually transmitted infection	2.11	0.37
28	Not having any alcoholic drinks before sex can minimize the chances of contacting STIs	2.00	0.76
29	Using condom during sexual intercourse can prevent STIs	2.18	0.79
30	Avoiding having sex with anyone who has genital sore, discharge and rashes can prevent STIs	2.23	0.30
31	Avoiding sharing of towels and under wears can prevent transmission of STIs	1.55	0.91
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	**2.01**	**0.41**

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 4.4 shows the level of preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean of ($\bar{X} = 2.01; SD = 0.41$), which is less than the criterion mean of (<2.50). This further indicates that there is low level of preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Research Question Five: What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender?

Table 4.5: Mean and standard deviation showing the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	Male N=196		Female N=209	
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
18	Abstinence is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.75	0.43	1.84	0.55
19	Not having multiple sexual partner is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	2.00	0.69	1.53	0.74
20	The use of condom is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.50	0.82	1.99	0.70
22	Getting vaccinated can prevent someone from contracting STIs	1.51	0.28	1.72	0.91
23	Not receiving unscreened blood is a way of preventing the spread of sexually transmitted infections	2.08	0.21	1.85	0.33
24	Avoiding sex with commercial sex workers is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	1.88	0.64	1.90	0.87
25	Being faithful is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	2.00	0.57	1.82	0.58
26	Washing ones genitalia before and after sex is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	1.99	0.86	2.09	0.98
27	Not attending any sex entertainment establishments reduces the chances of contacting sexually transmitted infection	2.00	0.51	2.14	0.57

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	Male N=196 $\overline{X}$	SD	Female N=209 $\overline{X}$	SD
28	Not having any alcoholic drinks before sex can minimize the chances of contacting STIs	1.54	0.95	1.71	0.56
29	Using condom during sexual intercourse can prevent STIs	1.61	0.38	1.90	0.85
30	Avoiding having sex with anyone who has genital sore, discharge and rashes can prevent STIs	2.17	0.61	1.92	0.36
31	Avoiding sharing of towels and under wears can prevent transmission of STIs	1.66	0.73	1.81	0.89
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	**2.30**	**0.22**	**1.85**	**0.41**

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 4.5 shows the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean for (male respondents as $\overline{X} = 2.30; SD = 0.22$) and (female respondents as $\overline{X} = 1.85; SD = 0.41$) which is less than the criterion mean of (*<2.50*). This further indicates that there is low level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area irrespective of gender.

Research Question Six: What is the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age?

Table 4.6: Mean and standard deviation showing the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	13-16years N=256 $\overline{X}$	SD	17years-Above N=119 $\overline{X}$	SD
18	Abstinence is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.54	0.10	1.86	0.91
19	Not having multiple sexual partner is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.52	0.74	2.35	0.12
20	The use of condom is a preventive measure for sexually transmitted infection	1.59	0.58	1.86	0.91
22	Getting vaccinated can prevent someone from contracting STIs	2.31	0.74	1.31	0.70
23	Not receiving unscreened blood is a way of preventing the spread of sexually transmitted infections	2.06	0.90	1.71	0.66
24	Avoiding sex with commercial sex workers is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	2.09	0.93	1.05	0.73

S/N	Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections	13-16years N=256 $\bar{X}$	SD	17years-Above N=119 $\bar{X}$	SD
25	Being faithful is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	1.52	0.44	2.01	0.20
26	Washing ones genitalia before and after sex is a way of preventing sexually transmitted infection	1.63	0.99	1.56	0.97
27	Not attending any sex entertainment establishments reduces the chances of contacting sexually transmitted infection	2.00	0.94	1.46	0.52
28	Not having any alcoholic drinks before sex can minimize the chances of contacting STIs	1.78	0.10	1.96	0.95
29	Using condom during sexual intercourse can prevent STIs	1.80	0.30	2.05	0.69
30	Avoiding having sex with anyone who has genital sore, discharge and rashes can prevent STIs	2.18	0.84	1.76	0.17
31	Avoiding sharing of towels and under wears can prevent transmission of STIs	1.90	0.87	1.62	0.74
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	**1.67**	**0.53**	**1.49**	**0.13**

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 4.6 shows the level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean for (respondents aged 13-16years as $\bar{X} = 1.67; SD = 0.53$) and (respondents aged 17years-Above as $\bar{X} = 1.49; SD = 0.13$) which is less than the criterion mean of (*<2.50*). This further indicates that there is low level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area irrespective of age.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant association between gender and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

Table 4.7: Chi-square analysis showing significant association between gender and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	15.933[a]	2	.067
Likelihood ratio	13.030	2	.015
Linear-by-linear association	10.121	1	.013
N of valid cases	405		

Table 4.7 showed the chi-square analysis as=15.933, Df=2, p=.067, This shows that there is no
significant association between gender and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant association between age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

Table 4.8: Chi-square analysis showing significant association between age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	12.201[a]	4	.084
Likelihood ratio	9.281	4	.020
Linear-by-linear association	8.004	1	.015
N of valid cases	100		

Table 4.8 showed the chi-square analysis as=12.201, Df=4, p=.084, This shows that there is no significant association between age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant association between gender and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

Table 4.9: T-test analysis showing significant association between gender and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

Preventive Behaviour	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	P-Value	Remark
Male Students	196	2.30	0.22	404	0.071	Not Significant
Female Students	209	1.81	0.41			

Table 4.9 shows that the P-value is 0.071 and at 404 degrees of freedom. Since the P-value (0.071) is higher than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant association between gender and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant association between age and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

Table 4.10: T-test analysis showing significant association between age and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students

Preventive Behaviour	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	P-Value	Remark
13-16Years	196	2.30	0.22	404	0.099	Not Significant
17years-Above	209	1.81	0.41			

Table 4.10 shows that the P-value is 0.099 and at 404 degrees of freedom. Since the P-value (0.099) is higher than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant association between age and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Discussion of the Findings

Level of Knowledge about Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

The finding of research question one (Table 4.1) revealed that there is low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding is not surprising to the researcher that secondary school students in the locality have low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection since the area is a rural suburb where there are not enough awareness campaigns organized by either government or non-governmental organizations on sexual and reproductive health issues which would have helped to boost the knowledge base of students regarding sexually transmitted infection. The result of the study is in line with the revelation of Finlaye (2020) who observed that students most secondary school students indicated having low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection and this was a major factor responsible for students engaging in risky sexual behaviours.

Level of Knowledge about Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area Based on Gender

The finding of research question two (Table 4.2) revealed that there is low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on gender. And hypothesis one (Table 4.7) revealed that there is no significant association between gender and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding is in tandem with the observation of Siegel (2019) who observed that the knowledge level of male and female students in Zula district was low despite government introduction of sex education to secondary school curriculum.

Level of Knowledge about Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area Based on Age

The finding of research question three (Table 4.3) revealed that there is low level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area based on age. And hypothesis two (Table 4.8) revealed that there is no significant association between age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding is however a bit surprising to the researcher as ordinarily, one would have thought that age would have influenced the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection as senior students should have been more knowledgeable on the issue than the younger ones. The finding is in line with the observation of Yusuf (2020) who revealed that in private secondary schools, age played no factor in influencing the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students.

Level of Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area

The finding of research question four (Table 4.4) revealed that there is low level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding is in agreement with the study of Klausner (2018) who revealed that practice of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted was significantly low among public secondary school students.

Level of Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area Based on Gender

The finding of research question five (Table 4.5) revealed that there is low level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area gender. And hypothesis three (Table 4.9) revealed that there is no significant association between gender and preventive behavior

of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding concurs with the study of Rugeh (2020) who revealed that gender of secondary school students in Freetown did not significantly influence high level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among the students.

Level of Preventive Behaviour of Sexually Transmitted Infections among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area Based on Age

The finding of research question Six (Table 4.6) revealed that there is low level of preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area age. And hypothesis four (Table 4.10) revealed that there is no significant association between age and preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The finding is in line with the study of Petto (2020) who revealed that preventive behavior of sexually transmitted infection was low among undergraduates with age range of 21-24, and worse among secondary school students with age range of 15-19years.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that there is low level of knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. That there was low level of knowledge and preventive behaviour towards sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area irrespective of gender and age. That there was no significant association between gender, age and knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. That there was no significant association between gender, age and preventive behaviour of sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Health care workers should intensify awareness campaign programmes on ways to identify situations that can increase susceptibility to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among secondary school students in rural areas.
2. Health Education lesson can act as an effective channel in creating awareness about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Therefore, there is a need for Health Education lesson to be sustained in the school.

3. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) club as it exists in some secondary school should be encouraged to serve as an additional source of information on risks factors that predisposes school-aged children to STIs.
4. Drug abuse and negative use of social media should be discouraged by the school authority through intensive awareness campaign
5. Government, non-governmental agencies should establish youth friendly and supportive programmes. Such programmes should be gender and age specific, with the aim of promoting preventive sexual health behaviours among adolescents and youths, through dissemination of adequate sexual health knowledge and skills to promote and improve their sexual health.

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