



Research Article

Interrogating the Awareness Level of National Strategic Framework (NSF) Hiv/Aids Campaign Among Youths In Ekpoma, Edo State

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns have been severally reported by scholars to have a positive influence on the youths' behaviour. Well-crafted HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns such as National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) are vital in ensuring that youths have accurate knowledge to make informed health decisions. This study therefore interrogated the awareness level of National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS campaign among youths (15-29 years), sources of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign and the influence of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign awareness level on youths' sexual behaviour in Ekpoma Community, Edo State. The Health Belief Model (H.B.M) underpinned this study while the descriptive design and survey (questionnaire) method was adopted. Data was then analysed using SPSS version 26 and presented in frequency counts and tables. Finding revealed that most youths in Ekpoma are aware of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign as they indicated familiarity with the topic and also received formal education and even participated in NSF information sessions on HIV/AIDS campaign. Most of the youths also considered the disease a serious public health concern. Social media was identified as the most accessed source of NSF HIV/AIDS information. Hence, NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign has a positive influence on youths' perception towards HIV/AIDS in Ekpoma community. NSF HIV/AIDS campaign stakeholders are therefore urged to develop more campaigns that are relatable, engaging, and presented in formats that resonate with youths, such as short videos, drama series and interactive sessions for platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook in order to sustain interest and reinforce key messages on HIV/AIDS prevention and testing.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) remain significant public health challenges across the globe since its emergence in the early 1980s. HIV/AIDS has caused millions of deaths and continues to affect the health, economic, and social well-being of individuals and communities worldwide (UNAIDS, 2023). According to UNAIDS (2023), approximately 39 million people globally were living with HIV at the end of 2022, with over 1.3 million new infections recorded that year. Although antiretroviral therapy (ART) has significantly improved the life expectancy and quality of life for people living with HIV, the disease still claims over 630,000 lives annually (UNAIDS, 2023).

In Nigeria, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has evolved considerably over the past three decades. Nigeria has the second-largest HIV epidemic in the world, with an estimated 1.9 million people living with HIV in 2022 (UNAIDS, 2023). Although the national prevalence rate has declined to about 1.3%, regional disparities persist, with some states in the South-South and North-East zones reporting higher infection rates (National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), 2022).

Awareness campaigns however play a crucial role in the global response to HIV/AIDS, particularly among vulnerable populations such as youths. These campaigns aim to inform, educate, and influence positive behavioural change by addressing misconceptions, reducing stigma, and promoting preventive measures such as condom use, regular testing, and access to antiretroviral therapy (Okoli, Van de Velde, Richman, Allan, Castellanos, Young, Brough, Eremin, Corbelli, McBritton, Hardy, & de Los Rios, 2021).

In recent years, targeted awareness campaigns, mobile health interventions, and youth-centered outreach programmes have emerged as essential tools for changing risky behaviours and reducing new infections (McCoy, Lipira, Kemp, Nevin,

Huh, Turan, Mugavero, Cohn, Bahk, Simoni, Andrasik, & Rao, 2020). The global HIV/AIDS response now emphasizes not only biomedical solutions but also behavioral and structural interventions, especially in community-based settings.

In Nigeria, various governmental and non-governmental agencies, including the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) collaborates with media houses, religious groups, and schools to disseminate HIV/AIDS awareness messages (Orukwogu, George, and Ene-Peter (2022). However, the influence of these campaigns varies based on factors such as message content, frequency of exposure and audience engagement level. For communities like Ekpoma in Edo State, where youth engagement with reproductive health issues may be shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors, well-designed HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns such as National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) on HIV/AIDS are vital to ensuring that young people have accurate knowledge to make informed health decisions.

At Ekpoma community, where this study is situated, it is expected that media platforms such as local radio stations, posters, and student-focused campaigns reflect the NSF's communication strategies then possibly identify the relationship between awareness and youth behavioural change towards HIV/AIDS. Against this background, this study sought to examine the awareness level of youths about National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) on HIV/AIDS among Youths in Ekpoma Community, Edo State, sources of NSF HIV/AIDS information and influence of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness level on youths' sexual behaviour.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Addressing youths' vulnerability requires a comprehensive approach that includes targeted awareness campaigns, life skills training, access

to youth-friendly health services, and the involvement of stakeholders such as schools, religious institutions, parents, and community leaders. As this study explores the impact of awareness campaigns in Ekpoma, it is essential to understand the depth of youths' vulnerability to design and implement interventions that are both effective and sustainable.

In Nigeria, the burden of HIV among youths is also linked to deep-rooted a socio-cultural norm that discourages open discussion about sex and reproductive health. This creates an environment where misinformation thrives, and access to preventive tools like condoms and HIV testing remains limited (Folayan, Harrison, Brown, Odetoyinbo, Stockman, Ajuwon, and Cáceres, (2016) In community like Ekpoma, cultural taboos and religious beliefs may hinder NSF dissemination and reception of HIV awareness messages among the youths and may consequently influence their behaviour.

Additionally, economic hardship drives some youths into transactional sex or exploitative relationships, further increasing their exposure to HIV (Chimbindi et al., 2020). The influence of social media and peer networks also plays a critical role in shaping youth behaviour, often normalizing risky sexual practices while underplaying the importance of protection and regular testing.

Furthermore, socio-cultural beliefs, peer influence, poor access to youth-friendly health services, and persistent stigma against people living with HIV continue to undermine the effectiveness of these campaigns (Folayan et al., 2016). These factors contribute to the vulnerability of young people, despite their exposure to awareness messages.

1.1.1 Significance of this Study

This study will provide insights into how effective existing HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns are in influencing the attitudes and

behaviours of youths by assessing the reach, relevance, and behavioural outcomes of these campaigns. Findings will benefit public health authorities and policy makers, such as the Edo State Ministry of Health and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), by supplying data-driven evidence to support the design of more targeted, culturally appropriate, and youth-friendly awareness programmes.

This study will be useful to health educators, NGOs, and campaign designers by offering a deeper understanding of how different communication approaches and message formats influence youth decision-making in semi-urban settings like Ekpoma. Hence, this study aims to inform better policy, education, and communication interventions, ultimately contributing to the reduction of HIV prevalence and the promotion of healthier behaviours among Nigerian youths.

The situation raises critical questions about the adequacy, relevance, and delivery of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in Ekpoma community and how the awareness campaign addresses the vulnerability among youths regarding HIV/AIDS. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate awareness level of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and its influence on youth behaviour in Ekpoma, Edo State with the goal of informing more effective communication strategies and interventions.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to investigate the awareness level of National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) on HIV/AIDS campaign among youths in Ekpoma Community, Edo State. Other objectives include:

1. To examine the awareness level of youths about National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS campaign among Youths in Ekpoma Community, Edo State.
2. To evaluate source of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign among Youths in Ekpoma

Community, Edo State.

3. To assess the influence of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign awareness level on Youths behavior in Ekpoma Community, Edo State.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaigns in Nigeria

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, continues to grapple with a significant HIV burden, especially among its youth population. While HIV/AIDS awareness has improved over the years due to national campaigns and the efforts of organizations such as the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), there remain deep gaps in comprehensive knowledge, especially among adolescents and young adults.

According to NACA (2020), over 90% of Nigerian adults aged 15-49 have heard of HIV/AIDS. However, only about 39% of young women and 48% of young men possess comprehensive knowledge of HIV prevention defined as correctly identifying ways to prevent sexual transmission, rejecting common myths, and knowing where to get tested. These statistics reveal a superficial level of awareness that does not necessarily translate into preventive behaviour. In Nigeria, the HIV prevalence rate was estimated at 1.3% in 2022, with youth accounting for a substantial percentage of new infections (NACA, 2022). Despite national efforts like the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and multiple awareness campaigns, challenges such as stigma, misinformation, and behavioural resistance persist (Orukwou et al., 2022).

Orukwou et al (2022) examined the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes among Nigerian youths and found that while knowledge levels were generally high, actual behavioural change remained limited. The study highlighted that awareness alone is insufficient to drive behavioural transformation

without addressing underlying socio-cultural and psychological barriers.

Awareness campaigns have long been employed as strategic tools in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially among vulnerable populations such as youths. These campaigns often utilize media outreach, community mobilisation, peer education, and school-based interventions to disseminate accurate information and promote preventive behaviour.

Similarly, Chimbindi et al. (2020), similarly corroborated that although intensified campaigns increased awareness, the success of these programmes was often hindered by gender norms, poverty, and stigma. The authors emphasized the need for multi-layered interventions that combine awareness with economic empowerment, access to health services, and community engagement. Oyo-Ita, Oduwole, Arikpo, Effa, Esu, Balakrishna, Chibuzor, Oringanje, Nwachukwu, Wiysonge, Meremikwu (2023) investigated in-school youths in northern Nigeria and discovered that although 85% of respondents had heard of HIV/AIDS, only 30% could correctly identify all major prevention strategies. Furthermore, respondents who had received formal sex education were significantly more likely to demonstrate accurate and comprehensive awareness.

In the southern regions including Edo State, awareness levels of HIV/AIDS are comparatively higher due to urbanization and the presence of higher institutions. A study by Okolie et al. (202) on university students in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria revealed that 89% had high awareness levels. However, only 56% had undergone voluntary HIV testing, and a considerable proportion still held misconceptions regarding casual transmission and the effectiveness of condoms.

Religious and cultural barriers further complicate the effectiveness of awareness campaigns such as

that of NSF. In many Nigerian communities, HIV/AIDS is still associated with promiscuity, sin, or supernatural punishment, making open discussions about prevention, testing, and treatment difficult (NACA, 2020; Strauss, Rhodes, & George, 2015).

Given the mixed urban-rural setting of Ekpoma, and the presence of Ambrose Alli University, there is a relatively high potential for youth-focused HIV/AIDS education. However, students from surrounding rural areas may still have limited access to reliable information and be influenced by myths, stigma, and traditional beliefs. This suggests the need for localized, culturally sensitive awareness campaigns that go beyond surface-level exposure to promote accurate understanding and behavioural change.

Access to accurate and timely information about HIV/AIDS is critical in shaping the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of young people. In Nigeria, multiple channels serve as sources of HIV/AIDS information, with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on demographic, geographic, and socio-economic factors.

3.1.1 Sources of NSF HIV/AIDS Information

The mass media especially radio, television, and newspapers remain major platforms for disseminating HIV/AIDS information across Nigeria. These platforms are valued for their wide reach and cost-effectiveness in different areas of the country. A study by Oyo-Ita, et al. (2023) found that radio was the most frequently cited source of HIV/AIDS information among adolescents in Northern Nigeria, especially in areas where literacy rates are low. Similarly, Oyekale (2017) observed that mass media significantly increased HIV-related knowledge among youths, but emphasized the need for tailored messages that resonate with cultural values.

Antabe, Sano, and Amoak (2024) in their assessment of youth responses to media-based HIV campaigns in Nigeria. They found that while

many young people had been exposed to televised and radio messages about HIV prevention, their understanding of risk and adoption of safe sex practices varied widely. The study concluded that message design, frequency, and cultural relevance significantly affected campaign outcomes. HIV/AIDS remains a public health issue that not only threatens health outcomes but also affects education, productivity, and social cohesion.

With the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet access, social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram have emerged as popular sources of health-related information among Nigerian youths. According to Okolie et al. (2021), university students in South-South Nigeria, including Edo State, often relied on social media for HIV/AIDS updates, peer discussions, and campaign content. However, the unregulated nature of digital content poses a risk of misinformation, highlighting the need for government and NGO interventions to monitor and verify online health information.

Educational institutions also play a crucial role in promoting accurate HIV/AIDS knowledge, particularly through health education curricula and peer-led awareness programmes. Liu, Lu, Wang, Wilkinson, Ren, Wang, Zhang, Gao, and Liu (2020) reported that students who received formal HIV education in schools were more likely to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and engage in preventive behaviours. School-based campaigns, such as those organized in collaboration with NGOs and government agencies, have also proven effective in reducing stigma and encouraging voluntary counselling and testing (VCT).

Healthcare professionals are among the most trusted sources of NSF HIV/AIDS information. According to Agu, Mbachu, Okeke, Eze, Agu, Ezenwaka, Ezumah, and Onwujekwe (2020), Nigerian youths who access information from health workers regarding NSF were more likely to understand the benefits of ART, the importance of

regular testing, and the modes of transmission. However, limited youth-friendly services and stigma in healthcare settings can discourage young people from seeking information.

In many Nigerian communities, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and community influencers serve as gatekeepers of information and morality. Their involvement in any HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns can enhance credibility and reach, especially in conservative or rural communities. Strauss, et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of engaging religious institutions to dispel myths and encourage open discussions about sexual health and HIV prevention.

In furtherance, family members, especially parents and older siblings, often serve as initial sources of health information. However, open discussions about sexuality and HIV are frequently hindered by cultural taboos. Agyei, Kaura, and Bell (2025) noted that peer groups often fill this gap, though the accuracy of peer-shared information can vary widely.

3.1.2 National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS Campaign

The National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS campaign serves as Nigeria's central policy guide for responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic spearheaded by (NACA), the NSF is designed to coordinate a multi-sectoral and evidence-based approach to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support across the country. The most recent framework (2019-2021) emphasizes key strategic pillars, including prevention of new infections, improved access to treatment, and elimination of stigma and discrimination, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youths (NACA, 2020).

A significant component of the NSF is the use of mass media as a strategic communication tool. The framework recognizes that widespread misconceptions, low testing rates, and risky sexual behaviours among Nigerian youths are partly due to a lack of accurate and accessible

information. As a result, mass media campaigns under the NSF utilize platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, online media, social media, community theatre, and school-based programs to promote HIV testing, condom use, abstinence, and adherence to antiretroviral therapy (Okonkwo & Yusuf, 2020).

These campaigns are often tailored to specific demographics, employing local languages, relatable scenarios, and youth influencers to enhance engagement. For example, the “Zip Up” and “Know Your Status” campaigns have been prominent in reaching out to secondary school and university students across various states, including Edo State (Ogundipe, 2022). The NSF also collaborates with local NGOs and media houses to organize awareness events, talk shows, and jingle broadcasts aimed at influencing behaviour positively.

In the Ekpoma community, where the study is situated, media platforms such as local radio stations, posters, and student-focused campaigns reflect the NSF's HIV/AIDS communication strategies. However, despite these interventions, youth behaviour often remains inconsistent with the prevention messages, indicating a possible gap between awareness and behavioural change. This highlights the need to assess how effectively NSF-driven campaigns are received and acted upon by youths in specific communities.

The framework also aligns with global strategies such as the UNAIDS 95-95-95 goals, aiming to ensure that 95% of people living with HIV know their status, 95% of those who know their status are on treatment, and 95% of those on treatment achieve viral suppression (UNAIDS, 2022). As such, the NSF reinforces the role of health communication and media advocacy in achieving these ambitious targets within the Nigerian context.

In the context of Ekpoma community in Edo State, where a large student population resides due to institutions like Ambrose Alli University, MTV

Shuga Naija holds potential as an effective awareness tool. Young people in Ekpoma are highly exposed to mobile phones, internet streaming platforms, and campus-based screenings thereby providing opportunities for increased access to MTV Shuga content. However, despite high exposure, behaviour change is not always guaranteed. Factors such as cultural norms, peer pressure, and misinformation can influence how youths interpret and act on the messages from such campaigns (Ogundipe, 2022).

This study, therefore seeks to assess not only youths' awareness level of NSF HIV/AIDS campaigns in Ekpoma community but also its impact on youth behaviour. It questions whether increased awareness translates into responsible sexual behaviour and how effectively NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign messages influence decision-making among young people in this locality.

3.1.3 Youth Behaviour

Youth behaviour is shaped by a unique set of psychological, social, and environmental factors that make this age group particularly vulnerable to health risks, including HIV/AIDS. Adolescents and young adults often exhibit a mix of experimentation, identity exploration, and a desire for peer approval, which can lead to both risk-taking and resistance to behavioural regulation (Arnett, 2015). One of the key characteristics of youth behaviour is risk-taking. This developmental tendency is associated with sexual experimentation, substance use, and resistance to authority can increase susceptibility to HIV infection (Blum et al., 2019). Risk-taking is often influenced by the belief in personal invincibility or the underestimation of consequences. Another defining characteristic is peer influence: youths are highly sensitive to the opinions and behaviours of their peers, which can either promote or undermine healthy choices. Umar & Ibrahim (2019) observed that Nigerian youths often model their sexual behaviour on peer

norms rather than formal education or parental guidance.

Additionally, media exposure and digital engagement on social media, television, and online content can influence their perceptions of sexuality and health practices therefore playing a significant role in shaping their behavior towards HIV/AIDS. While these platforms offer opportunities for education, they can also spread misinformation if not well monitored (Okigbo et al., 2020).

Youths also engage in spontaneous behaviour driven by emotion rather than reasoned judgment. This trait, when coupled with a lack of comprehensive sex education, can result in unprotected sex or inconsistent use of preventive measures like condoms (Akintunde et al., 2021). Economic vulnerability and lack of access to reproductive health services are contextual factors that affect behavioural choices among youths, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas like Ekpoma (Chikwari et al., 2020). Furthermore, peer influence and media exposure can either reinforce or challenge risky behaviours. Without critical media literacy and strong social support systems, youths may adopt harmful behaviours promoted through unregulated digital platforms (Umar & Ibrahim, 2019).

In Ekpoma, where traditional norms intersect with modern influences, youths' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS remains a pressing concern. Despite the presence of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, behavioural change is often hindered by the multidimensional nature of vulnerability. Acknowledging and addressing these layered risks is crucial for designing impactful HIV/AIDS interventions. Understanding these behavioural characteristics is therefore crucial for designing NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns that resonate with youths and address their specific social and developmental realities.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HEALTH BELIEF MODEL (HBM)

The HBM is relevant for this study as it provides a theoretical lens to assess whether HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns are effectively changing the perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately, behaviours of young people in Ekpoma. It helps identify which elements of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign (e.g., risk messaging, benefits communication, removal of barriers) are most effective and what areas need improvement.

By evaluating youths' levels of perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, and their response to cues to action and self-efficacy, this study can determine whether awareness efforts are leading to responsible sexual behaviour, HIV testing, and reduced vulnerability to infection. Several studies support the use of HBM in assessing HIV/AIDS interventions. For instance, Agu, et al (2020) found that Nigerian adolescents with high perceived susceptibility and severity of HIV were more likely to adopt protective sexual behaviour. Similarly, Oyo-Ita, et al. (2023) demonstrated that enhancing self-efficacy and reducing perceived barriers led to increased uptake of voluntary counselling and testing among rural youths.

The Health Belief Model offers a robust explanatory framework for this study. It not only justifies the choice of variables such as awareness level, risk perception, and behavioural response but also helps in formulating targeted recommendations for improving the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns among youths in Ekpoma. By understanding the health beliefs that drive behaviour, policymakers, educators, and campaign designers can tailor interventions that resonate more deeply with their target audience.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design and survey method using a questionnaire. The population of this study is youths between the

ages of 15-29 years residing in Ekpoma community in Edo State, Nigeria. This study was limited to youths because of their increased vulnerability to HIV infection due to factors such as peer influence, risk-taking behaviour, limited access to accurate health information and other factors.

The estimated youth population in the community is over 20,000, based on projections from local demographic data and educational enrolment figures (National Population Commission (NPC), 2018; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020). This study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure the representative of the youth population in Ekpoma community. In the first stage, Ekpoma town was purposively selected due to its central role in Esan West Local Government Area and the entire youth population. In the second stage, the population is stratified into key subgroups such as Secondary school students, University undergraduates, Apprentices/artisans and Unemployed/self-employed youths. This stratified sampling ensures that the perspectives of youths from different educational, occupational, and social backgrounds are adequately represented. In the third stage, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select individual respondents thereby ensuring that every youth in the selected subgroups has an equal chance of participation.

The sample size for this study will be determined using the Finite Population Correction:

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z^2 \cdot P(1-P)}{e^2 (N-1) + Z^2 \cdot P(1-P)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (20,000 in this case)

Z = Z-score for confidence level (1.96 for 95%)

p = estimated proportion (0.5 is used when the true proportion is unknown, to ensure maximum variability)

e = margin of error (0.05 for 5%)

Therefore:

$$n = \frac{20000 \cdot (1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}{(0.5)^2(20000-1) + (1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{20000 \cdot 3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0025 \cdot 19999 + 3.8416 \cdot 0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{20000 \cdot 0.9604}{49.9975 + 0.9604}$$

$$n = \frac{19208}{50.9579}$$

$$n = 376.9 = 377$$

Using a population of 20,000, a confidence level of 95%, and 5% margin of error, the statistically valid sample size is approximately 377. The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a self-developed questionnaire and to

ensure validity of the questionnaire, it was subjected to content and face validation. Experts in mass communication, public health, and research methodology from Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, were consulted to review the questionnaire items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot test conducted among 40 youths in a nearby community with similar characteristics to Ekpoma. The responses from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to assess internal consistency and 0.81 value was obtained. Questionnaire administration and collection was carried out physically by trained research assistants. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages and presented in tables for clarity and easy interpretation

5.1 Results

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Social Characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	15 - 19 years	66	18%
	20-24 years	157	44%
	25-29 years	132	38%
	Total	355	100.00
Gender	Male	199	56%
	Female	156	44%
	Total	355	100.00
Status	Secondary School Student	84	23%
	University/Polytechnic Student	127	37%
	Apprentice	40	11%
	Unemployed	36	10%
	Self-employed	68	19%
	Total	355	100.00
Religion	Christianity	211	59%
	Islam	123	35%
	Traditional	21	6%
	Total	355	100.00

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 1 showed that out of the 355 individuals that took part in the research, 56% are male while 44% are female. The largest age group among respondents was 20-24 years (44%), followed closely by those aged 25-29 years (38%). Participants aged 15 - 19 years comprised 18% of the sample.

The data on respondents' status indicates that the highest number of respondents is University/Polytechnic students 37%, followed by Secondary School students 23%, Self-employed youths 19%, Apprentices 11%, and Unemployed individuals 10%. Additionally, in terms of religion, the majority of respondents identify as Christians 59%, followed by Muslims 35%, and Traditionalists 6%.

Table 2: Level of NSF HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign among Youths in Ekpoma Community

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Have you ever heard about NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign?	Yes	355	100%	
	No	0	0%	
	Total	355	100.00	
Have you received any information about HIV/AIDS through NSF?	Yes	271	76%	
	No	84	24%	
	Total	355	100.00	
Do you believe HIV/AIDS is a serious health issue?	Yes	342	96%	
	No	10	3%	
	Not sure	3	1%	
	Total	355	100.00	
How knowledgeable are you about HIV/AIDS transmission through NSF?	Very knowledgeable	291	82%	
	Somewhat knowledgeable	58	16%	
	Not knowledgeable	6	2%	
	Total	355	100.00	
Which of the following are ways HIV/AIDS can be transmitted?		YES (100%)	NO (100%)	TOTAL
	Unprotected sex	351 (98.8%)	4 (1.2%)	355
	Sharing needles	354 (99.7%)	1 (0.3%)	355
	Blood transfusion	354 (99.7%)	1 (0.3%)	355
	Kissing	24 (7%)	331 (97%)	355
	Mosquito bites	50 (14%)	305 (86%)	355

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 2 showed that all respondents (100%) reported having heard about NSF HIV/AIDS indicating universal awareness of the disease through NSF within the study population. Furthermore, 76% of the participants stated that they had received HIV/AIDS information through NSF while 24% had not. In terms of perceived severity, a majority (96%) of respondents acknowledged that HIV/AIDS is a serious health concern. However, 3% did not share this view, and 1% were uncertain. Regarding knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission through NSF, 82% of the respondents considered themselves

very knowledgeable, 16% felt somewhat knowledgeable, and only 2% admitted to having little or no knowledge. This demonstrates a high level of HIV/AIDS awareness level through NSF among the youth in Ekpoma. About 98.8% even identified unprotected sex as a HIV/AIDS transmission route, 99.7% recognized sharing needles and contaminated blood transfusion as risks. Conversely, 93% rightly disagreed that kissing can transmit HIV, and 86% correctly identified that mosquito bites do not transmit the virus.

Table 3: Major sources of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign for the Youths in Ekpoma Community

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often

Source	1	2	3	4	5
Television/Radio	1(0.3%)	3(0.8%)	49(13.8%)	182(51.3%)	120(33.8%)
Internet/social media	0(0%)	0(0%)	10(2.8%)	151(42.4%)	194(54.6%)
Posters/Flyers/Billboards	50(14.6%)	70(19.1%)	199(56.1%)	30(8.5%)	6(1.7%)
School-based programmes	70(19%)	212(59%)	70(19%)	3(3%)	0(0%)
Health centres/medical professionals	150(42%)	150(42%)	38(10.7%)	15(4.2%)	2(6.5%)
Friends/Peers	4(1.1%)	7(2%)	73(20.6%)	170(47.8%)	101(28.5%)
Religious organizations	138(38.8%)	202(57%)	10(2.8%)	5(1.4%)	0(0%)

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 3 indicated that: 51.3% of respondents indicated they often receive HIV/AIDS information through TV/Radio, 33.8% selected very often, totaling 85.1% who regularly rely on this medium while only a negligible 1.1% reported never or rarely. As regards Internet/social media as a source of information, 54.6% of respondents selected very often, and 42.4% chose often, making a combined 97% while widely visible, posters, flyers, and billboards appear to be fewer effective sources of HIV/AIDS information. 56.1% of respondents said they only sometimes get information from these sources, and only 10.2% chose often or very often. A notable 33.7% indicated never or rarely.

school programmes and educational institutions, 19% never did so, while 3% selected often. Health Centres/Medical Professionals as sources of HIV/AIDS information. A combined 84% of respondents stated never or rarely receiving awareness messages from these sources. Only 4.2% said often, and just 0.6% reported very often. Peer-to-peer communication as regards sources of information in HIV/AIDS awareness 47.8% of respondents noted they often receive HIV-related information from friends and peers, and 28.5% said very often. Only a small 3.1% reported never or rarely. Finally, on religious organizations as sources of information, 57% of respondents selected rarely and 38.8% never, only 1.4% indicated any level of frequent engagement.

Majority (59%), of respondents said they rarely received NSF HIV/AIDS information through

Table 4 depicted majority of the respondents (94.2%), reported that NSF HIV/AIDS campaigns have significantly influenced their views on unprotected sex. Only 1% strongly disagreed, while 4.8% disagreed. On motivation to get tested for HIV, the responses to this statement were more mixed. Only 14% strongly agreed and 21% agreed that awareness campaigns motivated them to get tested for HIV. In contrast, a combined 65% (27% strongly disagreed and 38% disagreed) indicated that the campaigns did not motivate them to test. Another high-impact area is the avoidance of risky sexual behaviour. A significant 93.7% (50% strongly agreed, 43.7% Agree) stated that they now avoid risky sexual practices because of what they learned from the campaigns. Only 6.3% expressed disagreement. Also, concerning the reduction of HIV-related stigma, 93.5% (45.3 strongly agreed, (48.2%) agreed) acknowledged that campaigns have made a positive difference in their communities. Only 6.5% disagreed. Finally, a combined 87.6% of respondents (46.2% strongly agreed, 41.4% agreed) indicated that awareness messages have made them more likely to discuss HIV/AIDS with friends. Only 12.4% disagreed. This demonstrates the effectiveness of campaigns in breaking social silence and encouraging peer education, a known catalyst for wider behavioural change.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study assessed the awareness level of youths about National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS campaign, sources of NSF HIV/AIDS campaign and the influence of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign on Youths behavior in Ekpoma Community, Edo State.

Findings of this study revealed respondents (100%) heard about NSF HIV/AIDS indicating universal awareness of the disease through NSF within the study population. Furthermore, 76% of youths stated that they had received HIV/AIDS information through NSF while 24% had not. This demonstrated a high level of HIV/AIDS awareness level through NSF among the youth in

Ekpoma. This is in line with Agu, etal (2020)'s study which revealed general awareness of HIV/AIDS was high through campaign was high and those with accurate knowledge were more likely to practice safe sex and undergo HIV testing. The study highlights that awareness alone does not ensure behavioural change; rather, the quality and correctness of the information play a crucial role.

Findings of this study also revealed that 51.3% of respondents indicated they often receive NSF HIV/AIDS information through TV/Radio, 54.6% often receive HIV/AIDS information from internet/social media while 10.2% youths often receive HIV/AIDS information from visible, posters, flyers, and billboards appear to be fewer effective sources of HIV/AIDS information. About 3% of youths receive HIV/AIDS information very often from schools and educational institutions. Only 4.2% often receive HIV/AIDS information from health centres/medical professionals. About 47.8% receive HIV/AIDS information from peer-to-peer communication (peer and friends)

Also, 3% youths in Ekpoma Community receive HIV/AIDS information from schools and educational institutions. Health Centres/Medical Professionals as sources of HIV/AIDS information while 47.8% youth receive HIV/AIDS information from peer-to-peer communication and 1.4% indicated level of frequent engagement with religious organizations as sources of HIV/AIDS information.

The finding of this study is in line with of Oyekale (2017) observed that mass media significantly increased HIV-related knowledge among youths, but emphasized the need for tailored messages that resonate with cultural values. Findings of this study however negates that of Oyo-Ita, et al. (2023) which found that radio was the most frequently cited source of HIV/AIDS information among adolescents in Northern Nigeria, especially in areas where literacy rates are low.

Finding is also in line with that of Okolie et al. (2021) which confirms that university students in South-South Nigeria, including Edo State, often relied on social media for HIV/AIDS updates, peer discussions, and campaign content. Also, is the study of Liu et al (2020) which posits that students who receive formal HIV education in schools were more likely to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and engage in preventive behaviours. School-based campaigns, such as those organized in collaboration with NGOs and government agencies, have also proven effective in reducing stigma and encouraging voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). Findings are also consistent with that of Agyei, Kaura, and Bell (2025) which noted that peer groups often fill this gap, though the accuracy of peer-shared information can vary widely.

In addition to the findings of this study, majority of the respondents (94.2%), reported that NSF HIV/AIDS campaigns have significantly influenced their views on unprotected sex. In fact, 21% agreed that NSF awareness campaigns motivated them to get tested for HIV. A significant 93.7% stated that they now avoid risky sexual practices because of what they learned from the campaigns. Also, concerning the reduction of HIV-related stigma, 93.5% acknowledged that NSF campaigns have made a positive difference in Ekpoma community. A combined 87.6% of respondents indicated that awareness messages have made them more likely to discuss HIV/AIDS with friends. This demonstrates the effectiveness of NSF campaign in breaking social silence and encouraging peer education, a known catalyst for wider behavioural change.

Finding of this study is consistent with that of Antabe, Sano, and Amoak (2024) which confirms that while many young people had been exposed to televised and radio messages about HIV prevention, their understanding of risk and adoption of safe sex practices varied widely. The study concluded that message design, frequency, and cultural relevance significantly affected

campaign outcomes. HIV/AIDS remains a public health issue that not only threatens health outcomes but also affects education, productivity, and social cohesion.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This study explored the awareness level of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign and its influence on the behaviour of youths in Ekpoma community, Edo State, Nigeria. Most of the youths demonstrated a high level of knowledge regarding NSF HIV/AIDS related messages and nearly all considered the disease a serious public health concern. Social media was identified as the most accessed source of NSF HIV/AIDS information. Hence, NSF awareness campaign has a positive influence on youths' perception towards HIV/AIDS within Ekpoma community.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings of this research, the following recommendations are made to strengthen the impact of NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns on youth behaviour in Ekpoma:

1. There is a need for more NSF youth-targeted campaigns that address the specific realities and challenges young people face. Campaign content should be relatable, engaging, and presented in formats that resonate with youths, such as short videos, drama series, and interactive sessions.
2. NSF Stakeholders should invest in creating content tailored for platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. This will help to sustain interest and reinforce key messages on prevention and testing.
3. Awareness programs should be embedded more strongly into the educational curriculum at both secondary and tertiary levels. Periodic workshops, talks, and peer education initiatives should be facilitated in schools and higher institutions.
4. Health centres and professionals should be

encouraged to adopt more youth-friendly approaches in delivering HIV/AIDS education. Free counseling services, outreach programs, and clinic-based awareness campaigns can help bridge the gap between health knowledge and service access.

Contribution to Knowledge

Studies relating to HIV/AIDS awareness level among youths, sources of HIV/AIDS information among Youths and the influence of HIV/AIDS awareness level on Youths behavior have come a long way in a country like Nigeria but there are sparing studies concentrated on the awareness level of National Strategic Framework (NSF) HIV/AIDS campaign among youths in Ekpoma, Edo state. This study confirms previous studies that there is a high level of awareness of HIV/AIDS through NSF, youths majorly receive NSF HIV/AIDS information through the internet and NSF HIV/AIDS awareness campaign has a positive influence towards HIV/AIDS among youths' in Ekpoma community.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies could employ in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, or ethnographic methods to explore underlying beliefs, perceptions, and barriers affecting youth responses to HIV/AIDS messaging. Subsequent studies should also explore gender differences in knowledge, exposure to NSF awareness campaigns and behavioural responses. This would allow for more targeted intervention strategies

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