COUNSELLING AND LITERACY ADVOCACY AS STRATEGIES FOR CURBING HIV/AIDS INCIDENCE AMONG YOUTHS

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Abstract

HIV/AIDS, acquired immune Deficiency syndrome appears to be one of the global problems confronting mankind today. It has no cure. It has affected the economic growth of many nations because youths are mostly affected by this epidemic. Its effects among our youths is as a result of unemployment, poor parenting, poverty of parents and poor social economic back ground, lack of awareness about HIV/AIDS scourge, anti-social behaviour, peer influence etc. This study therefore recommends counselling and literacy advocacy as the best way of creating awareness and information to fight against this scourge among youth.

Human immunodeficiency virus, infection is agent that causes acquired immudeficiency syndrome aids. it is a disease that leaves a person vulnerable to life threatening infections. HIV/AIDS is a world known diseases. It is the retrovirus that causes AIDS. (kalichmay 2003) .The symptoms of AIDS are rapid loss of weight, constant fever chronic diarrhea dry cough that lasts for weeks, Painful genital Ulceration, rashes and itching.

HIV/AIDS cases have been reported in all regions of the world, it has claimed many lives and brought anguish to the victims. It is considered a threat to the economic well being, social and political stability of many nations it is one of the greatest humanitarian and development challenges facing the world including Nigeria Osagbemi, Joseph, Adepetu, Nyoing & Jopede 2002, United nation, 2005; Lloyd 2004; map report, 2004 and Kapungwe, 2003)


There is also a recorded information that HIV is destroying the lives of the youths due to features that are peculiar to this stage like sexual experimentation, invulnerability and a general belief of invincibility (Adekeye 2005; Adegoke, 2004) its prevalence rates among the young people between the ages of 20 and 24 were 5.6% (Avert 2007). Over 60% new infections with HIV are among the 15 -23 years old age groups (Gunfire, 22005). The highest rate of HIV infection is constantly recorded among
youths. As most of them begin to engage in sexual relations at a much earlier age than in the past, cases of HIV/AIDS infection are being reported among pre-teenage youths in schools.

According to the Bureau of HIV/AIDS of the Florida Department of health, the reported cumulative number of persons aged 13-24 with HIV/AIDS within Duval country was 407 (165 HIV and 242 AIDS) at the end of 2000. There were 87 cases reported in 13-19 year old group and 320 cases in the 20-24 year old group. More importantly the number of HIV and AIDS cases reported per year among youths continues to rise.

Though government supported by NGOs such as UNICEF, USAID, NACA etc made every effort to curb the scourge of HIV/AIDS disease among our youths but despite all these action taken by these groups, it is still very clear that HIV/AIDS incidence is still prevalent among our youths this scenario poses a serious concern to the author and this necessitated the study.

This paper therefore focused on the following.

1. The meaning of Counselling
2. Risk factors for HIV Infections Among Youth
3. Modes of transmitting HIV/AIDS
4. Causative factors of HIV/AIDS Among youths
5. Counseling strategies needed to sustain youths in the society
6. Use of literacy Advocacy in curbing HIV/AIDS among youths
7. Counselling tips, suggestions and recommendation for reducing HIV/AIDS among youths.

Counseling is a learning process designed to increase adaptive behaviour aid to exterminate maladaptive behaviours. Counseling is aimed at making an individual know his/her society, understand himself/herself, take wise decision on issues such as career, peer relationship, reproduction/sex health and environmental living to ensure functional and lively existence free of health hazards.

Counseling has important role to play in curbing risk behaviours of youths that might lead to spread of HIV/AIDS. Risk, such as unprotected sexually intercourse, sharing of sharp objects like knives bladerazors, syringes etc. In fact, adequate counseling services will help the youths to benefit from the following.

- Educating the youths on problems in the society that may pose health hazards and dangers to their lives.
- Counselling assistance that will help the youths to take wise decisions about their personal living.
- Adequate selection of friends and maintaining good peer relationship
- Educating them on basic life survival skills that would enhance their positive adjustment in the society.
- Creating awareness about sexually transmitted diseases ravaging mankind.
- Maximizing the potentiality of the youths for timely absorption and survival in an uncertain technological future.
Helping them in the development of skills, attitudes and potentials so as to realize their fullest possible capabilities for national development.
- Enhancing positive capacity building helping the youth to resolve personal conflict and become more self-directive.
- Assisting the youths to have the knowledge of ways to change maladjusted behaviours.
- Counseling helps the youths to develop positive affixtures towards themselves and the ability to acknowledge areas of expertise and to be free to make positive choices.

Risk Factors for HIV Infections among Youths
The risk factors for HIV Infection in adolescents and young people can be classified into three categories:

a. Behavioural
b. Socioeconomic
c. Biological

High-risk behaviors that adolescents often experiment with include:

Sexual Activity
- Initiated at young age.
- Multiple partners, many of which are older males, drug users, or individuals who have multiple partners themselves.
- Prostitution, particularly is common among homeless youths.

Socioeconomic factors that increase youths risk for HIV infection include: poverty, lack of medical care, poor education, lack of positive family, and /or social support, history of physical or sexual abuse and involvement with juvenile justice system.

Biological risks in youths include; The lack of maturation of the cellular lining of the cervix which is the beginning of puberty consists of a single layer columnar epithelium. This epithelium is much more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases (STDS). In Addition the inflammatory process that occurs, during STDS facilitates the transmission of HIV.

Modes of Transmitting HIV/AIDS among Youth
The leading mode of transmission in this age group is through heterosexual contact with an infected person, The virus is present in the infected persons semen or vaginal fluids during sexual intercourse the virus gains access to the blood of the uninfected person by passing through openings in the Mucous membrane the protective tissue layer that lines the mouth, vagina, rectum and through breaks in the skin of the penis.

Causative Factors of HIV/AIDS among Youths
There are many factors that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS among youths. The nation’s economic problem influences the life of the youths and this exposes
them to immoral and anti-social behaviours. The males take to rape, drug addiction e.t.c while the girls take to prostitution as a means of getting extra funds to satisfy their needs and this exposed them to HIV/AIDS infection. Low income of parents have prevented them from taking care of the needs of their adolescent children especially the female ones.

Watching of western movies, magazines, pornographic (blue) films and pictures through computer browsing have usually aided youths engaging in illicit sex. Poor parenting, gross parenting deprivation and attention are among the causes of high rate of Pre-marital sexual permissiveness among youths. Some parents do not care about their youths social life. Some parents start discussing sex with adolescents when they have started enjoying sex.

Unemployment spurr frustration and erratic thinking in youths and this makes the females to get involved in commercial sex business as a means of survival.

Some youths are often deceived by their friends or peers to engage in sexual intercourse which might result into contracting HIV/AIDS Another causative factor is lack of proper counseling on reproductive health education. Living in slum and poor environmental conditions have encouraged early imitation of youths in sexual activities. Pressure from the opposite sex and male adults taking advantage of the naivety of female youths play a majority role in their immature exposure to illicitly sexual practices for survival.

Counseling Strategies Needed To Sustain Youths In The Society.

Individualized counseling services is one of the strategies needed to re-orientate the youths to utilize their inner and personal resources in order to cope with the problems of life more adequately and more comfortably. For example, the girls who are involved in commercial sex work are trained in reproductive health skills.

Group counseling is another effective strategy that will be, used to sustain youths in the society group counselling according to Okobia (1991) is a process whereby a counsellor assists a number of individuals to discuss their common interpersonal problems with a view of finding solutions to them. Through group counselling, a number of female prostitutes and sex workers are brought together and counselled on health protection. Group involvement is anti-social maladaptive behaviours.

Another strategy through which the youths could be sustained in the society is by the use of interventive/preventive counselling. Guidance and counselling services should be introduced in primary and secondary schools so as to start intervention work in time before it is too late. If youths are taught early in life about the menace of HIV/AIDS, they will be well equipped to know how to prevent its scourge easily in life. Community counselling is also very important because majority of our youths live in communities.

Youths should be taught to cultivate the habit of safe sexual relationship by using messages that will inform them about HIV/AIDS scourge in their indigenous languages. Handbills, tracks and colour souvenirs should be provided to the youths and will also be written in their local languages.
Aderinoye (1997) recommended one-counsel-one approach to transmitting vital information in society. This will go along way in changing the youths sexual behavoir.

Counselling tips on ways to prevent HIV/AIDS should be provided to the youths through modern electronic communication outfits such as MTN, M-Tel e.t.c and this could be done by sending GSM text and e-mail messages.

Youths should be acquainted with experiments, researches and findings on HIV/AIDS carried out by health organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, NGOS through browsing the internets and websites.

Counselling the youths on the importance of voluntary counselling test so as to know their HIV status early. Early detection of disease is necessary in both care and management of such disease.

Use of Literacy Advocacy in Curbing HIV/AIDS among Youths.

Advocacy is a way of reaching significant targeted individuals in society with hot information and messages capable of changing their erratic or negatively acquired behavoir. Ways through which Advocacy messages can reach the targeted youths could be achieved through forming youths anti-AIDS club/ Dramatic societies where problems concerning HIV/AIDS and other youths related problems will be discussed, showcased and exposed.

Through anti- AIDS club and dramatic society information on the ways through which HIV/AIDS are contracted, causes, signs, symptoms and prevention strategies will be discussed .

Information on the following issues will also be displayed to the youths:
- The dangers of practicing unsafe sex
- Dangers of engaging in sexual behaviours that increase the risk of infection.
- That the best way to avoid HIV/AIDS Is through avoidance of sex. i.e. abstinence or zipping up.
- Importance of family planning and reproductive health management
- Dangers of multiple sexual relationship and partnership.

Literacy Advocacy as a Strategy for Curbing HIV/AIDS among Youths

Effective literacy Advocacy as strategy for curbing HIV/AIDS among youths could be achieved through the following:
- Use of Bill boards and oil paintings carrying special inscriptions and messages against drug addiction, pornography, illicit sexual habits and sexy mode of dressing should be adopted in educating the youths
- Youths who are known and are successful in their fields could be invited to talk to youths on issues like crime, HIV/AIDS, sex and alcohol.
- Use of mother tongue to create information on how male and female condoms could be used. Use of mother tongue in disseminating information will help the youths to understand the information properly.
- Encouraging youths who have HIV/AIDS on the need for taking up anti retroviral drugs, showing love to those who have HIV/AIDS. People living with
HIV/AIDS Need love, care and support, inorder to avoid psychological devastations. According to Anayaegbunam (2010) people living with HIV/AIDS suffer stigma consciousness—a psychological internal state that disposes an individual to believe or feel that he or she will be negatively stereotyped. This psychological condition can cause people infected with HIV/AIDS to manifest some form of abnormal behaviour including tendency to commit suicide

- Peer counselling should be encouraged. This is a situation where youths are trained in other to use them train and counsel their targeted peers on reproductive health skills capable of keeping them away from contracting HIV/AIDS.
- Advocacy, using tracts, books and coloured Souvenirs, for youths in schools hospitals vocational rehabilitation centers, homes and so on for personal counselling of youths, so as to beware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS disease.
- Using counselors, social workers priests, parents, community leaders and other stake holders as facilitators to hold talks with youths in their community.
- Printing out innovative and advocacy messages capable of evoking functional health habits, to the youths in order to change their health habits that are poor for example having an unprotected sexual intercourse sharing of sharp objects blood transfusions etc which invariably leads to contacting HIV/AIDS.

Conclusion

Spreading of information and educating the youths on reproductive health using tested psychological inventions with retroviral tests involving Counsellors and social workers would help in detection of diseases on victims and also help in curbing of the disease HIV/AIDS in the society.

Counselling Tips, Suggestion and Recommendation for Reducing HIV/AIDS among Youths

For reduction and prevention of HIV/AIDS among youths, the following measures are recommended:

1. Functional counselling could be used to educate the youths on means of contraction, spread and prevention of HIV/AIDS.
2. Educating the youths on the dangers inherent in AIDS, so as to avoid risky behaviours that might lead them to contacting HIV/AIDS
3. Formation of AIDS groups according to classes: This will help the groups meet regularly to discuss the symptoms of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
4. Counselling should also provide opportunities for the adolescents to develop inter-personal communication whereby the adolescent will be free to disclose his reproductive health problems under confidential atmosphere.
5. Counsellors should be able to help the adolescents make informed choices about their reproductive health.
6. Counsellor should observe the youths very closely to be able to identify those who exhibit AIDS symptoms and make necessary referrals.
7. Using innovative methods such as cartoons, posters, bill boards and radio broadcasting programmes to reach the youths.
8. Youths should be counseled on the need to undergo retroviral test to detect early and determine their HIV/AIDS status.
9. More counselors should be recruited to strengthen advocacy work on reproductive health.
10. Parents should be counselled to take the education of their children seriously especially the females to help them to acquire basic academic and vocational skills that will make them self-dependent, rather than being coerced into sex network business.
11. Adult education and functional literacy programmes as effective means of creating awareness to people in the communities on important projects like HIV/AIDS illiteracy should be intensified.

References


