

# KNOWLEDGE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND PRACTICE OF UNSAFE ABORTION AMONG FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY.

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## **Abstract**

*Reproductive health is the complete state of human in all matters that concerns the reproductive system. This study examined level of knowledge of reproductive health and practice of unsafe abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University. Descriptive research design was used while 300 respondents were purposively sampled. The research instrument was a "Reproductive Health and Unsafe Abortion Questionnaire" (RHUAQ) which was distributed and collected adopting the on-spot technique while Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84 was the reliability gotten. Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) tested all stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance; In conclusion there was a very good level of knowledge of reproductive health and significant practice of unsafe abortion significant practice of unsafe sex practice among female undergraduates in Lagos State University ( $X^2=189.60$ ;  $p<0.05$  at 12<sup>0</sup>). Therefore, it was recommended that Health educators harness efforts on the need to provide information on safe sex practices and reproductive health which focuses on updating information, addressing new concerns, and reinforcing existing knowledge for the teeming vulnerable population.*

**Keywords:** Reproductive health, safe sex practice and unsafe abortion

## **Introduction**

As days unfold, issues regarding the health of individuals begin to experience broader and in-depth attention. Positive ideas about health place an emphasis on one's own abilities, social and personal resources. The ability to have a fulfilling and safe sexual life, the capacity to reproduce, and the freedom to choose whether, when, and how frequently to do so are all indicators of reproductive health (Godha, Hotchkiss & Gage, 2013). Langer *et al.*, (2015) opined that the reproductive health of women deserves full attention especially among women of reproductive ages. Khaled & Al Khalifa (2022) opined that reproductive health encompasses health issues on family planning, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), maternal health, and sexual education which in turn affects the overall wellbeing of individuals.

Nigeria has a population of approximately 218.5 million people and about 150 million who are sexually active and maybe faced with reproductive health challenges (Chimbindi, 2017). Teixeira *et al.*, (2019) opined that many female undergraduates (young adults) begin sexual activity early enough with little information and are more likely to be victims of unintentional pregnancy, self-induced abortion and contraction of STDs like HIV/AIDS. Jwanle *et al.*, (2023) revealed that there were 1.9 million HIV-positive individuals

in Nigeria in 2021 with young female adults making up a large portion of the numbers. Faundes *et al.*, (2020) estimated 17 million fewer safe abortions performed annually including 8 million unsafe abortions using other techniques without guidance or assistance from a trained professional with 97% of these occurring in developing nations. According to Fatusi *et al.*, (2021) the world health organization in 2019 revealed that 55% of unintended pregnancies among young females of reproductive age end in abortions. Many researches revealed the need for promotion of knowledge on safe sex practices as well as need to boycott practices of unsafe induced abortion among female undergraduates.

Nigeria has a large youthful population which are susceptible to sexually transmitted infections and faces health issues related to sexual health, including high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception's, unplanned pregnancies, and unsafe abortions. Okpokumoku *et al.*, (2017) opined that despite efforts to improve sexual health education, many female undergraduates lack comprehensive knowledge about safe sex practices, which predispose them to unhealthy behaviour and sex practices. The cultural and religious beliefs as well as socio-economic factors complicates the spread of healthful information that will help improve the level of knowledge

To promote the wellbeing and health of a nation, there is a need for prevalent practice of safe sex among youths which young female undergraduates are a major part of. Kurebwa (2017) revealed that there is a dearth in availability of reproductive healthful knowledge, public health campaigns and educational programs. Consecutively, the actual adoption of unsafe sex practices is a major source of concerns and public health challenge hence, the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancies, and unsafe abortions among this group necessitate the need for effective interventions (Francis *et al.*, 2018).

Inadequate sex education, unsafe sexual behaviour, low knowledge of ovulation, the menstrual cycle, and conception, ignorance of STIs and HIV/AIDS have all played a significant role in the rise of unwanted pregnancies among female undergraduates (Maqbool *et al.*, 2019). The rise of HIV/AIDS has become the single biggest threat to human rights, development, and public health over the years. Therefore, this study assessed the level of knowledge of safe sex practices and practice of unsafe abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University?
2. Will there be practices of unsafe induced abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University?

The following hypotheses were tested during the study:

1. There will be no significant difference in the level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

2. There will be no significant practices of unsafe induced abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive research design of survey type was adopted because of its capability to examine the relationship between variables under study, hypotheses testing and development of generalization. The population for this study comprised of all female undergraduate students in Lagos State University. The sample for this study were three hundred (300) selected female undergraduate students from Lagos State University, multistage sampling technique was adopted. Simple random sampling technique was used in selection of five major faculties/college/schools (Education, Art, Communication, Social Sciences and Engineering) from fifteen faculties/college/schools (Agriculture, Arts, Basic Medical Sciences, CESSSED, Clinical Sciences, Communications, Dentistry, Engineering, Education, Law, Library, Management Sciences, Science, Social Sciences and Transport) in Lagos State University. The second stage involved the use of Convenience technique in selection of sixty (60) female undergraduate students from each selected faculties, college and schools. The research instrument for this study was a self-developed questionnaire, titled "Reproductive Health and Unsafe Abortion Question" (RHUAQ). The questionnaire was divided into three sections: A, B and C. Section A contained demographic data of respondents, while Section B and C was structured to test the hypotheses. Section B comprised 20 'true or false' items on reproductive health knowledge encompassing knowledge on contraception, sexually transmitted infections abortion and unwanted pregnancy. Section C comprise items on practice of unsafe abortion among female undergraduates and the questionnaire adopted a four (4) point Likert modified scale ranging from Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by a panel of three experts in the departments of nursing. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach alpha technique after administering ten (10) copies to selected undergraduates in Lagos State University of Education, Ijanikin Lagos State. An r-value of 0.82 was obtained and used as basis for the adoption of the instrument for data collection. Three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher with the help of three trained research assistants to the respondents. Copies of the administered questionnaires were checked to ensure that they were well completed. Daily review meetings were held at the beginning and end of each day with the research assistant's data collection lasting two weeks. 300 copies of questionnaires were administered and Percentages were used to describe the respondents' reproductive health knowledge. Further, a proportion of less than 40% was considered "poor" knowledge, 41 –49% "fair", 50 –69% "good" and above 70% very good knowledge Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for demographic data. While the inferential statistics of chi-square was used to test stated hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 was used for analysis.

## Results

### Hypothesis One

There will be no significant difference in the level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University. The result is presented on the table below.

**Table 1: knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University. (n=300)**

Knowledge of Safe Sex Practice	% of Correct Response	Decisions
Contraception	83.1	Very Good
Sexually Transmitted Infections	84.0	Very Good
Pregnancy and Abortion	77.0	Very Good
Health Literacy	82.3	Very Good
Overall	81.6	Very Good

Table 1 shows the respondents' level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University. The results showed that respondents had very good knowledge of contraception (83.1%), very good knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (84.0%), good knowledge of pregnancy and abortion (77.0%), and very good knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases (82.3.0%). Overall result showed that female undergraduates in Lagos State University had very good knowledge of reproductive health (81.3%). This therefore implies that there is a very good level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

This finding is in agreement with Akinsoji et al., (2015) in their study which determined current knowledge of sexual practices and contraceptive usage among female undergraduate students in Tertiary Institution South West Nigeria. Three hundred and fifty respondents were sampled.

A cross sectional study design was used while multivariate logistic was used For a study of 350 sampled students the study revealed high knowledge of sexual activity and low contraceptive use among female undergraduate students in Southwest Nigeria. Consecutively, this finding disagrees with Chukwu et al., (2015) in their study that investigated knowledge and practice of safe sex among students of College of Medical Sciences, University of Maiduguri, Borno State. Two hundred and eighty students from the University's College of Medical Sciences selected from five departments were surveyed. Inferential statistics of (Chi-square) was used while the finding revealed that majority of the student of college of medical sciences have knowledge on safe sex but do not always practice it and of those who practice it avoidance of STIs and pregnancy were the leading factors.

It could therefore be inferred that there was significant knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

**Table 2: Chi-Square result on practice of unsafe abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.**

Responses	Freq	%	DF	LS	Cal X <sup>2</sup>	P-Value	RMK
SA	18	6.0					
A	30	10.0					
D	85	28.33	12	0.05	189.60	0.071	Sig
SD TOTAL	167	55.67					
	300	100					

Table 2 revealed the data collected from the respondents on hypothesis one. It shows that 6.0% of the respondents strongly agreed while 10.0% respondents agreed, 28.33% respondents disagreed and 55.67% respondents strongly disagreed to the items. However, it further reveals a calculated X<sup>2</sup> value of 189.60 which is statistically significant at  $p > 0.05$  at 12<sup>o</sup> of freedom hence the acceptance of the null hypothesis. It therefore implies that there was no significant practice of unsafe abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

This finding is in disagreement with Lamina (2015) study which determined the rate of abortion among women who repeatedly carry out abortion in Western Nigeria. A prospective cross-sectional study which used a questionnaire to collate information from respondents from the four geopolitical zones of Ogun State. Six hundred (600) women below the age of 40 years were examined. Hence result of this finding revealed that 23% of the respondents have had one or more previous unsafe induced abortions in the past. This showed practice of unsafe abortion among respondents from this region.

Also, this finding is in disagreement with Mitiku et al., (2015) study that assessed the magnitude of induced abortion and associated factors among Wachamo University Ethiopia regular female students. A cross-sectional study design was adopted for this study while data were collected from 461 randomly selected female students by using pre-tested structured questionnaire from January to March, 2015. Identified factors associated with induced abortion were analysed using multivariate logistic regression. this study revealed prevalence of induced abortion which was conducted in unsafe condition. Based on the result, living out of campus, Substance use and earning enough pocket money were significantly associated factors with induced abortion. While the study revealed a prevalence of induced abortion among the respondents. A significant proportion of pregnancies among students in higher educational institution are terminated with induced abortion.

It therefore infers that there was no significant practice of unsafe induced abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University.

## Conclusion

In this study there was a very good level of knowledge of safe sex practices among female undergraduates in Lagos State University and also there was no significant practice of unsafe induced abortion among female undergraduates in Lagos State University. Based on the conclusions of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Health educators should harness efforts on the need to provide information on safe sex practices and reproductive health which focuses on updating information, addressing new concerns, and reinforcing existing knowledge for the teeming vulnerable population.
2. The Government should collaborate with health educators and agencies with the need to offer support and resources towards wholesome mental wellbeing of young adults in order to preserve their knowledge of safe sex practices and help them make right decisions about their health
3. Undergraduates should be selective about their peer association and be mentored on peer education initiatives within the undergraduate community which resultantly has an effect on the practices they adopt.

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