

## **Nigeria Perception of HIV Risk and Sexual Behaviour of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study was conducted to assess the perception of HIV risk and the sexual behaviour of commercial motorcycle operators in Anyigba, Kogi state-Nigeria. Data were collected through the application of a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that three quarters of the respondents were able-bodied young adults who were sexually active. Most of the commercial motorcycle operators were aware of HIV and had accurate knowledge of its transmission. The commercial motorcycle operators identified sexual intercourse as a major means of HIV/AIDS and the use of condom as a means of protection. Despite the awareness, the perception was low and attitude of the motorcycle operators was discouraging as they still engaged in multiple sexual relationships which are capable of exposing them and their sexual partners to HIV/AIDS. The study suggested that more awareness campaigns on health education should be put in place to help increase the commercial motorcycle operators' (and youth in general) perceived risk. This is imperative because as young people the operators engage in behaviours that are likely to endanger their health in general and reproductive health in particular. The campaigns should be designed in such a way that the factors that affect young people's risk perception are taken care of so as to ensure positive behavioural change.*

**Key Words:** *Perception; HIV Risk; Sexual behaviour; Commercial Motorcycles; Operators*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

HIV is a generalized epidemic. It affects people across gender and generation. That is, it can affect anyone regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender or age. Nigeria has the second largest HIV epidemic in the world with a total HIV population as at 2016 of 3.2 million (UNAIDS, 2016). The epidemic is fuelled, amongst other sources, principally by sexual risk-taking behaviours. In Nigeria, like elsewhere, young people are the most active group of persons in risky behaviours. In terms of risky sexual behaviours, they are also the most active but view their behaviours poorly. Studies by Azwihangwisi and Mavhandu (2016), Lwelamira (2015) have shown that youth are at high risk of acquiring HIV due to their risky sexual practices. Scholars like Layowin and Kanthula (2010), Agardh (2011) have argued that these risky sexual behaviours are part of a larger pattern of young people's health risk behaviours including alcohol and drug use. Related studies by Barden O'Fallon et al (2004), Ijadunola, Abiona, Odu and Ijadunola (2007) have unfortunately shown that young people do not always perceive themselves to be at risk despite their involvement in many high risk behaviours.

The term risk is defined by the Business Dictionary (2016) as threat of damage, injury, loss, or any other negative occurrence that is caused by external or internal vulnerabilities, and that may be avoided through pre-emptive action. This means it is not uncertainty, a peril or hazard. It is the likelihood that a person may be harmed or suffers adverse health effects if exposed to a hazard. It is something that might happen in the future with completely unpredictable consequences. Most of the commercial motorcycle operators in Nigeria are young people who are sexually active. Most of these operators are within the low income class. These young people constitute the highest number of people living with HIV. For

instance, in 2016 UNAIDS reported that 240,000 adolescents were living with HIV in Nigeria.

Scholars, medical practitioners and policy makers have maintained that HIV epidemic has become one of the biggest social problems Nigeria is facing. The epidemic has not only affected the health of individuals but has also impacted negatively on households, communities, and the development and economic growth of Nigeria including food security. To curb the menace of the epidemic, concerted efforts through awareness creation campaigns have been put in place by all tiers of government including development partners and civil society organizations to sensitize the public about the dangers associated with risky sexual behaviour. However, young people including commercial motorcycle operators have found this risk very hard to grasp. For example, in 2016, UNAIDS reported that unprotected sex accounted for 80% of new HIV infections in Nigeria. Indeed, studies by Adedimeji (2015), Magnani, Ali, Lisa, Bond, Lamba and Morgan (2002) have shown that in spite of the effort, perception of the risk is not consistent with behaviour. It is on the basis of this assertion that this study sought to assess the perception of HIV risk and sexual behaviour of commercial motorcycle operators in Anyigba, Kogi state-Nigeria.

## **2. STUDY SETTING**

Anyigba is a fast growing town in Dekina local government area of Kogi State-Nigeria. It is strategically situated along Ankpa-Itobe road. Anyigba is popularly referred to as the “Heartland” of Kogi state. Anyigba enjoys a very pleasant and healthy climate, with its beautiful weather that is mild in nature. The town is accessible by road from all parts of the country and there is regular road transport between the town and all parts of Kogi state. Anyigba is largely heterogeneous because of the presence of the state owned university-the Kogi State University. However, the predominant ethnic group is Igala. Anyigba is the communication town of the state with Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) station and the Radio Kogi AM station located at Ochaja, a few kilometres away from the town. There is also a Post Office, Cyber Cafes with telephone services and internet connectivity. There is also a Police station.

Anyigba boasts of the presence of branches of First Bank Nigeria PLC, United Bank for Africa PLC, Zenith Bank Nigeria PLC. Others include Union Bank Nigeria PLC and First City Monument Bank. Most importantly, the town hosts the prestigious state university- Kogi State University. The town is heavily dotted with petrol stations and other business outfits that provide employment opportunities to the youth. Anyigba has a bubbling market that operates both as daily market and as a periodic market with sellers and traders coming from far and near to transact business. There are also brothels as well as decent hotels. The presence of these facilities and services has continued to attract migrants, especially young adults, from the rural areas and elsewhere to move to Anyigba.

## **3. DATA COLLECTION**

Commercial motorcycle business in Anyigba is well organized. There are two groups of operators namely; KSU and NIMOTA. KSU group operates under the watch of the Management of the state university- Kogi State University while NIMOTA operates under the watch of private individuals who have come together to form a social group in a manner of speaking. Each of these has a specific operational jacket which carries the operational registration number of the operator. There were 11 motorcycle parking stations with over 320 registered members (at the time of collecting this information). It should be borne in mind that all the commercial motorcycle operators were males.

Data were collected through the application of a structured questionnaire. Three research assistants were employed and were helpful in the distribution and retrieval of the copies of the distributed questionnaires. Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of the designed questionnaire were distributed to the commercial motorcycle operators in all the parking stations. Out of the number of the 250 copies, 191 copies of the distributed questionnaire were correctly filled and returned representing a response rate of 76.4% which is significant. The questionnaire was structured in three parts. Section A dealt with the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their period of operation. Section B was concerned with the sexual behaviour of the respondents while section C covered the respondents' personal perception of the risks. The information is presented in analytical, descriptive and quantitative form where necessary.

#### **4. THEORETICAL ANCHORAGE**

This study is anchored on the health belief model which was propounded by Kurt Lewin but later modified by Becker (1986). According to the model, the life space in which people live is made up of regions. The first region has negative valence (one would seek to avoid) while the second one has positive valence (one would seek to approach) and the third one has neutral valence (one would neither seek to approach nor avoid). The central concern of the model is to determine why some people who are illness-free take actions to avoid illness while others fail to take protective action. The model speculates that before an individual decides to embark on any course of action- whether smoking or engaging in unprotected sex, the individual usually assesses the action whether it would create harm or serious health problem. If the individual discovers that the action will not be beneficial he or she will either modify or stop the behaviour.

The model believes that a person's vulnerability or susceptibility to disease and the perception of the severity of harm depends, to a large extent, on the person's knowledge of the disease and its potential outcome. The model however argues that but for the change process to begin there must be a combination of perceived susceptibility to harm and severity of harm which must provide the action and the perception of high benefits and low barriers. The explanatory power of this model is thus relevant to this study because in spite of the continuous prevalence of HIV/AIDS, many people in Nigeria are yet to believe that HIV/AIDS is real. This means people's perceived susceptibility is low. This low perceived susceptibility is exacerbated by cultural influences and the way diseases and illnesses are defined. In many communities in Nigeria, including the study area, people define illness as the work of witches and ancestral curses. This profile of the beliefs of the study population makes the model even more relevant because its arguments allow for relevant and efficient interventions

#### **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 presents the age distribution of respondents. A careful examination of the table shows that most of the commercial motorcycle operators were able-bodied young adults. Majority of the respondents were within the active age range of 25-29. Generally, more than three quarters of the operators were below thirty four years. This implies that they fall within the sexually active age category

**Table 1: Age distribution of respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
19 years and below	7	3.67
20-24	20	10.47
25-29	121	63.35

Age	Frequency	Percentage
30-34	31	16.23
35 years and above	12	6.28
Total	191	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

In terms of ethnicity, table 2 shows that 97 (50.79%) of the respondents were Igala while 27 (14.14%) were Ebiras. The Igbos were 29 (15.18%), Bassa were 15 (7.85%), Yoruba were 12 (6.28) while Hausas were 11 (5.76%). This ethnic composition clearly presents Anyigba as a heterogeneous community. It should also be observed that the presence of these diverse groups in Anyigba could possibly be because of migration into the town.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage.
Igala	97	50.79
Ebira	27	14.14
Bassa	15	7.85
Igbo	29	15.18
Yoruba	12	6.28
Hausa	11	5.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey 2018

On the basis of religion, neither Christianity nor Islam can boast of a clear predominance over the other. Hence, while 98 (51.31) of the commercial motorcycle operators were Christians, 93 (48.69%) were Muslims. However, it is important to state that the slight disparity in favour of Christians may be because at the time data were being collected the Muslims were observing their Ramadan fast (see table 3).

**Table3 Distribution of respondents based on religion**

Religious sect	Frequency	Percentage.
Muslim	93	48.69
Christianity	98	51.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey 2018

With regards to educational attainment, table 4 shows that more than three quarters of the respondents were literate. For instance, the table shows that 99(51.83%) had secondary school education, 37 (19.37%) had diploma while 31 (16.23%) had National Certificate of Education (NCE). Only 5 (2.62%) had no formal education. This level of literacy indicates that the respondents were learned enough to appreciate the dangers associated with risky sexual behaviours

**Table 4: Educational level of respondents**

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	5	2.62
Primary	19	9.95
Secondary	99	51.83
NCE	31	16.23
Diploma	37	19.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey 2018

With regards to marital status, 37 (19.37%) of the respondents were married while 11 (5.76%) were widowers. Majority of the operators (113 or 59.16%) were single. The active involvement of both the married, single and widowers in the commercial motorcycle business in the study area underscores the importance of the business as a poverty alleviation strategy since formal employment opportunities in Nigeria are inadequate (Kakwagh 2017).

**Table 5: Marital status of respondents**

Status	Frequency	Percentage.
Married	37	19.37
Single	113	59.16
Widower	11	5.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source Field survey 2018

In terms of the number of years on the business as commercial motorcycle operators, 97 (50.79%) of them said they had being on the job for between 4 and 6 years while 68 (35.60%) said they were on the job for between 7 and 9 years. Fifteen (7.85%) of the commercial motorcycle operators said they had being on the job for more than 10 years. Only 11 (5.76%) said they were on the job for between 1-3 years. This gives a mean number of years on the job as 6.37 years which is relatively significant (see table 6). This clearly shows that most of the commercial motorcycle operators have been on the job for a considerable number of years in spite of the levels of their education. This could be attributable to the lack of or inadequacy of formal employable opportunities in Nigeria.

**Table 6: Years of operation**

Duration	Frequency	Percentage.
1-3	11	5.76
4-6	97	50.79
7-9	68	35.60
10-12	15	7.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey 2018

The results revealed that most of the commercial motorcycle operators were staying with their friends and relatives. For instance, table 7 shows that 87 (45.55%) were staying with relatives while 49 (25.65%) were staying with friends. Thirty eight (19.90%) of the commercial motorcycle operators were staying alone while only 17 (8.90%) were staying with their wives. Comparing table 5 with this table it can be seen that even some of the operators who were married were not staying with their wives. Since most of the operators was either staying alone or with friends/relatives, it is likely that they were exposed to risky sexual practices.

**Table 7: Housing arrangements of respondents**

Housing arrangements	Frequency	Percentage.
Relatives	87	45.55
Friends	49	25.65
Wife	17	8.90
Alone	38	19.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey 2018

## 6. SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS OF RESPONDENTS

Results of the survey show that majority of the respondents indicated that they had had sex. With regards to the age category within which they had their first sexual experience, most of the respondents (180 or 94.24%) said they had their first sexual experience when they were between 18 and 25 years. For example, table 8 shows that 97 (50.79%) of the operators said they had sex when they were between 18 and 21 years while 83 (43.46%) said they had sex when they were between 22 and 25 years. Six of the respondents (3.14%) said they had their first sex when they were between 26 and 29 years. Surprisingly 5 (5.50%) indicated that they had their first sex when they were between 14 and 17 years (see table 8). The mean age at first sex was therefore 18.85 which are congruent with the estimates of 20.4 years for Nigeria and 19.7 for north central Zone (Mishra, Praween, Soumya, Yuan and Shanxiao, 2009). It is also within the estimated Sub-Saharan Africa range of 16.6 to 22.00 years (Wusu, 2011).

**Table 8: Age at first sex**

Age at first sex	Frequency	Percentage.
14-17	5	2.62
18-21	97	50.78
22-25	83	43.46
26-29	6	33.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey 2018*

With regards to the number of life time sexual partners, the result was astonishing as even those who claimed to be married indicated that they had other sexual partners apart from their wives. Table 9 shows that most of them (113) had between 1 and 2 sexual partners while 71 had between 2 and 4 partners. Seven of the respondents indicated that they had up to 5 partners and above. The mean number of life time partners is therefore 1.61. This implies that the proportion of multiple life time partnering was low. However, this high number of sexual partners clearly shows risky and uncontrolled sexual behaviour which is capable of exposing the operators and their sexual partners to HIV/AIDs

**Table 9: Distribution based on the number of life time partners**

Number of partners	Frequency	Percentage.
1-2	113	59.16
3-4	71	37.17
5-6	7	3.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey 2018*

In response to whether they were aware of the dangers associated with having multiple sexual partners, almost all the operators said they were aware. To avoid the dangers therefore, 91 (47.64%) said they always use condom. However, 93 (48.69%) said they only sometimes use condom while 7 (3.67%) indicated that they do not use condom at all. Considering the number of those who use condom only when they want and those who do not at all, it can be said that 53.36% (or 100) of the respondents are highly vulnerable to contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Ninety one (47.64%) of the respondents who claimed to always use condoms said they do so in order to protect themselves against contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and to guard against unwanted pregnancies since they were not yet ready to contract any marriage. Though, almost all the commercial motorcycle operators were aware of HIV, their perception of the dangers associated with the epidemic varied. For example, 97 (50.79%) perceived the risk as low while 52 (27.23%)

perceived the risk as moderate. Only 42 (21.98%) perceived the risk as high. On the whole one can conclude that 149 (78.01%) of the operators perceived the risk as low.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study have shown that most of the commercial motorcycle operators in Anyigba were aware of HIV and had accurate knowledge of its mode of transmission. The commercial motorcycle operators identified sexual intercourse as a major means of HIV/AIDS and the use of condoms as a means of protection. Despite this knowledge, the perception of the motorcycle operators was low and their attitude discouraging. Many of them still engaged in multiple sexual relationships. This clearly shows that the risk of the operators contracting HIV was high due to their risky sexual habits. It is therefore suggested that more awareness campaigns on health education should be put in place to help increase the commercial motorcycle operators' (and youth in general) perceived risk. This is imperative because as young people the operators engage in behaviours that are likely to endanger their health in general and reproductive health in particular. The campaigns should be designed in such a way that the factors that affect young people's risk perception are taken care of so as to ensure positive behavioural change.

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