

## PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONDO STATE ABOUT EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

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### Abstract

This study investigated the perception and attitude of secondary school students towards Ebola Virus Disease. The study employed descriptive research design of the survey type. The population for the study consisted of all secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. The sample for the study was four hundred (400) secondary school students consisting of 200 males and 200 females selected from 20 secondary schools using multistage, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire titled "Perception and Attitude of Students towards Ebola Virus Disease (PASEVD)" was constructed and validated by the researcher. The study shows that there is no significant difference in the perception and attitude of male and female students towards Ebola Virus Disease. It is therefore recommended that students should maintain vigilance against the outbreak of contagious diseases like Ebola Virus Disease without prejudice to sex or gender.

**Keywords:** Perception, Attitude, Students, Ebola, Virus Disease.

### Introduction

Ebola Virus Disease, which is also known as Ebola Hemorrhagic fever, is a disease of both human and non-human primates. The disease is named with the causative agent Ebola Virus. Ebola Virus belongs to the Filovirus family. Ebola Virus Disease is highly dreaded because of the casualty that usually follows its outbreak at any time in history in any community. The 2014 outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease that started in Guinea and spread to Nigeria unexpectedly caused mix-feelings, panic, pandemonium and suspicion among the people. To many people, Ebola Virus Disease is a death sentence. Secondary school students were not left out of this scourge. All large gatherings, including holiday coachings were suspended. The resumption of schools was put on hold so as to reduce the spread of the disease.

There are individual differences in perceptual abilities. Two people may perceive the same stimulus differently. Perception can be said to be a process of a present stimulus on the basis of past experience. Factors affecting the perception of people are perceptual learning, mental set, motives, needs and cognitive styles (Sharma, 2013). There may be differences in the perception and attitudes of male and female secondary school students, considering the vast differences in how males and females are raised as well as other physical and psychological differences. Women and men commonly get frustrated with each other because they see many issues differently.

Tauber (2015) posited that attitude is a favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction toward something or someone exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings or intended behavior. Attitude is the result of perception. Thomas (2013) submitted that, directly or indirectly, women and girls are statistically more likely to be affected by Ebola than

men. Geraldine (2014) agreed with Thomas (2013) in her assertion that women have been most affected by the Ebola virus disease because they are often caregivers to their families and professionally, nurses are predominantly female. According to Njabili (1999) in Akanbi and Olaleye (2005) gender is a socially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as society ascribes different roles and duties, behaviours and mannerism to the two sexes. In line with Njabili (1999), Davies (1999) in Akanbi and Olaleye (2005), also submitted that gender is a social construct, which is culturally determined. It is based on beliefs and traditions of a given society and refers to the roles, behaviours and qualities ascribed to each sex. It is how people define what it means to be a male or female.

However, according to Ugbomam, Kooffreh and Nwauche (2011), there is a relationship between male and female students' behaviour and their knowledge as both males and females have positive and health attitudes towards the control of HIV/AIDS. Johnson (2014) posited that most students had positive attitudes towards the oral health status and that maintaining positive attitudes will go a long way in preventing health problems.

The outcome of this study therefore gave insight to understanding the perception and attitude of secondary school students about Ebola Virus Disease, thereby assisting policy makers and stakeholders to design and adopt more appropriate strategies that would enhance prevention and safety attitude towards Ebola Virus Disease.

### Research Questions

The study answered the following questions:

1. Will there be a difference in the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease?

2. Will there be a difference in the attitude of male and female students towards Ebola Virus Disease?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease.
2. There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease.

### Research Method

The study employed descriptive research design of the survey type. This was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researchers to obtain the opinion of the representative sample of the target population. The researchers intended to investigate the perception and attitude of the male and female students towards Ebola Virus Disease, using the survey design.

### Population

The population of the study consisted of all secondary school students in Ondo State. As at the time of this study, there were 250,156 secondary school students in Ondo State.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 400 students, consisting of 200 males and 200 females were selected from 20 secondary schools, using multistage, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques. At the first stage, 5 local governments were randomly selected out of the 18 local government areas in Ondo State. At the second stage, 2 towns were selected using stratified random sampling to select one urban and one rural town. The third stage used stratified sampling to select one public and one private school from each town. At the fourth stage, stratified random sampling was used to select the required number of

male and female students from the selected schools (10 males and 10 females from each school). This gave a total of 400 samples from both the urban and rural areas.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire on Perception and Attitude of Students about Ebola Virus Disease (PASEVD) constructed and validated by the researchers was for the purpose of data collection. The instrument comprised two parts. The first part solicited bio-data information on respondents. The second part comprised two sections. The first section solicited responses on perception towards Ebola Virus Disease while the second section solicited responses on attitude towards Ebola Virus Disease. Both sections employed the Likert four-point scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*). The reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained for the instrument and this was considered high enough.

### Administration of the Instrument

The instrument was administered on the students by two trained research assistants and a counsellors of the selected schools under the supervision of the researchers.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages while the hypotheses generated were tested at 0.05 level of significance, using students' t-test analysis.

### Analysis of Data and Results

**Question One:** - Will there be difference in the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease?

**Table 1:** Frequency counts & Percentage of Students' Perception about Ebola Virus Disease.

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD	
		F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
1	Ebola Virus Disease is to be feared	200	50	152	38	31	7.7	17	4.3
2	Ebola Virus Disease is a fatal disease	244	61	136	34	8	2	12	3
3	Ebola Virus Disease can re-occur in Nigeria if adequate precautions are not taken	201	50.3	154	38.5	29	7.4	16	4
4	Only cities are prone to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease	52	13	37	9.3	154	38.4	157	39.3

Table 1 shows that 88% agreed that Ebola Virus Disease was to be feared while 12% disagreed that Ebola Virus Disease was to be feared; 95% agreed that Ebola Virus Disease was a fatal disease while 5% disa-

greed that Ebola Virus Disease was a fatal disease. Furthermore, 88.7% of the respondents agreed that

Ebola Virus Disease can re- occur in Nigeria if adequate precautions are not taken while 11.3% disagreed that Ebola Virus Disease can re- occur in Nigeria if adequate precautions are not taken; 22.3% agreed that Only cities are prone to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease while 77.7% disagreed that Only cities are prone to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease.

**Question Two:** - Will there be a difference in the attitude of male and female students about Ebola

Virus Disease?

**Table 2:** Frequency counts & Percentages of Students' Attitude about Ebola Virus Disease.

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD	
		F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
1	I am afraid of hugging people since the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease	146	36.4	127	31.8	73	18.3	54	13.5
2	I have been keeping the environment clean to avoid outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease	236	59.0	116	29.0	22	5.5	26	6.5
3	I have been having regular hand washing since the news about outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease	225	56.3	118	29.5	34	8.5	23	5.7
4	I always avoid hand shaking with anyone for fear of contacting Ebola Virus Disease	158	39.5	122	30.5	71	17.7	49	12.3

Table two shows that 68.2% of the respondents agreed that they were afraid of hugging people since the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease while 31.8% disagreed that they were afraid of hugging people since the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease; 88% of the respondents agreed that they had been keeping the environment clean to avoid outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease while 12% Disagree that they had been keeping the environment clean to avoid outbreak of Ebola Virus; 85.8% agreed that they had been having regular hand washing since the news about outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease while 14.2% disagreed that they had been having regular hand washing since the news about outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease; 70% of the respondents agreed that they always avoid hand shaking with anyone for fear of contacting Ebola Virus Disease while 30% disagreed that they always avoid hand shaking with anyone for fear of contacting Ebola Virus Disease.

*There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease.*

**Table 3:** Students' t-test summary table for students' Gender and their Perception about Ebola Virus Disease.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>
Male	20	44.83	4.5			
	2		0	39	0.39	1.96
Female	198	44.41	4.54	8	8	0

P>0.05 (Result not significant)

Table 3 shows that  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  (0.398) is less than  $t_{\text{table}}$  (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease was accepted. This implies that there was no significant difference between the perception of male and female Secondary School Students in Ondo State about Ebola Virus Disease.

*There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease*

**Table 4:** Students' t-test summary table for students' Gender and their Attitude towards Ebola Virus Disease

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>
Male	202	39.98	5.43			
Female	198	39.60	6.50	398	0.711	1.960

P>0.05 (Result not significant)

Table 4 shows that  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  (0.711) is less than  $t_{\text{table}}$  (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease was accepted. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the attitude of male and female Secondary School Students in Ondo State about Ebola Virus Disease.

## Discussion

The findings of this study on hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease. The result is supported by Njabili (1999) in Akanbi and Olaleye (2005), which observed that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as society ascribes different roles and duties, behaviours and mannerism to the two sexes. In line with Njabili (1999), Davies (1999) in Akanbi and Olaleye (2005) also submitted that gender is a social construct, which is culturally determined. It is based on beliefs and traditions of a given society and refers to the roles, behaviours and qualities ascribed to each sex. It is how we define what it means to be a male or female. Hence, both male and female students viewed Ebola Virus Disease the same way. Neither male nor female subscribed to

death threat. Both male and female desired to avoid an obviously fatal path.

The finding on hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students about Ebola Virus Disease. This is in agreement with Ugbomam, Kooffreh and Nwauche(2011) that had opined that both males and females have positive attitude towards control of viral diseases like HIV/AIDS. It also agrees with Johnson (2014) that maintaining positive attitudes will go a long way in preventing health problems. On the other hand, Thomas (2013) does not share this view as it otherwise submitted that women and girls are statistically more likely to be directly or indirectly affected by Ebola than men. Geraldine (2014) aligned with the findings of Thomas (2013) in her assertion that women have been most affected by the Ebola virus disease because they are often caregivers to their families and professionally, nurses are predominantly female. The result shows that Ebola Virus Disease threatened both male and female alike. Ebola does not respect sex.

### Conclusion

The following conclusion was drawn from this study based on data analysis and interpretation of results:

Both male and female students have almost the same perception and attitude about Ebola Virus Disease. Also, the attitude of students about Ebola Virus Disease did not depend upon sex as there was no significant difference in their perception and attitude towards Ebola Virus Disease.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that;

- (i) Since gender does not affect the attitude of students towards Ebola Virus Disease, students should maintain vigilance against the outbreak of contagious diseases like Ebola Virus Disease without prejudice to sex or gender.

- (ii) Gender friendly government and non-governmental organizations should establish centres to increase the perception of risk on contacting diseases.

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