

Tuberculosis Awareness, Perception and Stigma Among Adolescents in Tafa Local Government Area, Niger State

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Tuberculosis (TB) continues to be a serious public health concern in the world and in high-burden nations like Nigeria. Adolescents, described by the WHO as being between the ages of 10 and 19, are a vulnerable group whose health-seeking habits are influenced by their life stage and sensitivity to false information. In order to guide focused public health initiatives in line with national TB reduction objectives, this study aims to evaluate the degree of awareness, perception, and stigma around tuberculosis among adolescents in Tafa Local Government Area (LGA), Niger State. **Methods:** The study used a descriptive cross-sectional design. Adolescents in Tafa LGA's secondary schools made up the study population. Based on a 50% prevalence rate, the Cochran method was used to determine a total sample size of 422, and 409 completed questionnaires were collected and examined. A multistage random sampling procedure was used to recruit participants from five randomly selected public secondary schools. A questionnaire measuring sociodemographic characteristics, awareness of TB transmission and prevention, attitudes toward TB patients, and stigma-related beliefs was used to gather data. The Bingham University Teaching Hospital Health Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages) and chi-square tests were used in the data analysis. **Result:** The results showed that although most respondents (66.7%) had heard of tuberculosis, there were still a lot of misconceptions. Just 8.8% of respondents correctly identified bacteria as the cause of tuberculosis, and a significant minority (46.0%) did not know. There were several misconceptions, with 18.8% citing drinking alcohol and 15.6% citing contaminated water as causes. Regarding transmission, 59.9% of respondents correctly stated that coughing, sneezing, singing, or spitting could spread the disease, while 40.8% correctly identified that staying close to someone with TB can cause transmission. 50.6% of respondents agreed that people with TB should get medical help right away, reflecting a generally favourable opinion. High levels of stigma is recorded, as 87.5% of respondents said they would not want to associate with or purchase things from TB-affected people, and 55.6% said they would be reluctant to notify their friends if they found out they had the disease. According to bivariate analysis, perception and knowledge were substantially correlated with age and sex ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: The study highlights a glaring contradiction: whereas Tafa LGA teenagers exhibit excellent awareness (name recognition), their in-depth understanding of causation and transmission is inadequate, which fosters misconceptions. High levels of social stigma, which show up as avoidance and a reluctance to report one's infection status, are closely related with this lack of understanding and fear. Given the strong association between sociocultural characteristics (religion and ethnicity) and all four outcomes, it is imperative that interventions be culturally specific and not just general. Community outreach and school-based health education programs are desperately needed to debunk myths, advance correct biological knowledge about tuberculosis, and cultivate sympathetic, non-stigmatizing attitudes toward those who are affected.

