

# Public Perception of Health Advocacy towards Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Amongst Reproductive Aged Women in Lagos Island Lagos Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This is a cross-sectional study of 400 respondents in Lagos Island, Nigeria. On “Public perception of health advocacy towards Human Papillomavirus (HPV) amongst reproductive aged women in Lagos Island Lagos Nigeria”. The was anchored on health Belief Model. The general objective is to ascertain the level of media advocacy regarding HPV prevalence amongst women in Lagos State, Nigeria. The primary objectives are; to find out the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos state, Nigeria; to determine the level of knowledge of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos state, Nigeria. The data was analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The data were presented on tables and frequencies.

**Keys:** Advocacy, vaccine, Human Papillomavirus, media, knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that can affect different parts of the body. They are epitheliotropic viruses with double-stranded DNA genomes, which refer to a family of more than 200 viruses, some of which are communicated by skin-to-skin contact and others through sexual contact. According to estimates from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, almost everyone who engages in sexual activity will at some point or the other in their life would have at least one kind of HPV infection. HPV infections are among the most prevalent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) worldwide. It is passed on through genital contact (such as vaginal and anal sex).

Globally, one of the most frequent causes of STDs in both men and women is the human papillomavirus or HPV. This viral infection generally affects both sexes alike. It is typically as a result occurring in the formation of warts on the skin or mucous membranes. While most HPV infections are benign, symptomless, and self-limiting, certain strains can result in genital warts or malignancy. Human papillomavirus (HPV) infections are the most common STDs in the world, both clinical and subclinical, and most sexually active individuals will most likely get an HPV infection at some point in their lives. (**Trottier & Franco, 2006**).

**Egawa and Doorbar (2017)** state that the majority of research on Human Papillomavirus (HPV) has focused on a subgroup of Alpha papillomaviruses, including HPV16 and 18 accounts over 5% of human malignancies globally. These viruses are referred to as ‘high-risk’ (hrHPV), to distinguish them from the over 200 prevalent HPV types that commonly cause only benign epithelial lesions. The ‘low-risk’ (lrHPV) term used to describe this group belies their cumulative morbidity. Human papillomaviruses (HPVs) are a large and diverse group of epitheliotropic double-stranded DNA viruses. There are up to 225 types of HPVs divided into 5 groups ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $\nu$ ).

The main source of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is the DNA tumor virus known as the human papillomavirus (HPV). In 1980, a direct link between HPV and cervical cancer was identified. One of the major sexually transmitted infections (STDs) that accounts for almost 5% of all cancer cases worldwide is persistent HPV infection. In other words, HPV is the cause of more than half of all cancers linked to infection worldwide.

Ironically, many people are unaware of HPV owing to its asymmatic nature. Sadly, a person may have HPV even years after they last had sex because there may not be any symptoms, anyone who has ever had sexual

contact with another person may be infected, and men and women can contract HPV and pass it on to others without realizing it. A person is more likely to get HPV if they have sex at an early age, have many sex partners, or have a sex partner who has had many partners. There is no cure for HPV but this doesn't imply that the virus can't be treated and managed without transforming into a more delicate situation of cancer. In other words, there can be proper treatment of HPV infection without it becoming cancerous.

According to **Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc. (PPFA)**, HPV can infect the vulva, vagina, cervix, rectum, anus, penis, and scrotum in roughly forty different ways. Sexual contact spreads certain kinds of HPV. Common warts, such as hand and planter warts on the foot, are caused by other types of HPV and are not spread through sexual activity. On the other hand, there are remedies for the health issues that HPV might bring about, like cervical cancer and genital warts. Certain vaccinations can aid in preventing you from ever contracting specific forms of HPV. It is challenging to identify HPV symptoms. The majority of individuals at high risk for HPV infection will never exhibit symptoms of the virus until they have developed severe health issues.

In the realm of public health, the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the most common sexually transmitted viruses, carrying substantial consequences for the health of individuals as well as the community. It is imperative to effectively disseminate knowledge and education regarding HPV to mitigate its incidence and the health hazards that are associated with it, such as cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases.

The media is a potent medium for disseminating health information. It includes digital and social media platforms and more conventional channels like radio, print, and television. In addition to providing information, it also influences how the general public feels and behaves when it comes to healthy habits and precautions. The media's role in HPV awareness efforts is crucial given its extensive reach and impact. **According to the World Health Organization (2018)**, the media are powerful actors in shaping health-related behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. They can influence individual and societal health through the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Health literacy is the ability to acquire, process, and comprehend fundamental health information and services, and it is essential for both public and individual health decision-making. A major factor in the development of health literacy is the media. Given the abundance of information available on print, digital, radio, and television, the media serves as a major source of health information for a large number of individuals. Good health communication in the media can dispel myths and misinformation, encourage healthy lifestyle choices, and increase public awareness of health issues.

Media awareness of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in Nigeria is limited and often insufficient, reflecting a broader issue of inadequate health education and awareness in the country. Although it appears as if HPV and related issues such as cervical cancer do not receive extensive media coverage in current day Nigeria. Most health interventions and advocacy seem to often focus on immediate health concerns like malaria, HIV/AIDS, and in recent times COVID-19. There are sporadic awareness campaigns, often driven by NGOs, international organizations, and sometimes the government, these campaigns are usually time-bound and limited in reach. Social media platforms are increasingly being used to spread awareness about HPV, especially among younger, urban populations, however, the reach is still limited. Although some radio and television health programs touch on HPV, these are not regular or widespread. When covered, the information is often not detailed enough to educate the public effectively. There is a need for more consistent and widespread coverage of HPV in the media because the media can significantly contribute to better public understanding and prevention of HPV-related health issues.

Media awareness refers to the degree to which individuals understand and engage with media material, assess media messages critically, and recognize the influence of media on their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. This knowledge is crucial in the information-rich world of today, where the media has a significant impact on cultural norms and public opinion. The collection of viewpoints we deliberately employ while exposing ourselves to the media to decipher the meaning of the messages we come across is known as media literacy (**potter, 2013**). A media awareness campaign is a strategic effort to inform and educate the public about specific issues using various media channels. These campaigns use targeted messages to reach specific

audiences, utilizing platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, social media, and outdoor advertising. The goal is to raise awareness, change perceptions, and encourage specific actions or behaviors.

A public awareness campaign is designed to educate the public about a specific issue to influence behavior and attitudes. According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.)**, it is “a concerted effort to inform or educate the public about an issue or cause to influence behavior and attitudes.” This campaign leverages various media channels to disseminate information widely, ensuring that key messages reach and resonate with the target audience. A health awareness campaign is a coordinated effort to inform and educate the public about various health issues, promote healthy behaviors, and encourage preventive measures. Through increasing knowledge about illnesses, medical conditions, and healthy lifestyle options, these programs significantly contribute to the improvement of public health outcomes.

A well-known example of a successful health awareness campaign is the "Let's Move!" initiative launched by former First Lady Michelle Obama. This campaign focused on combating childhood obesity through encouraging physical activity and healthier eating habits. **Michelle Obama (2010)** emphasized the importance of community involvement in health campaigns, stating, "We can't just leave it up to the parents. We have to do our part, both in our own homes and in our communities". Similarly, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** frequently spearheads global health campaigns to address pressing health issues. On World Health Day 2021, the WHO focused on building a fairer, healthier world, stressing that "To improve health, we must take action to address inequities, ensuring everyone can access quality health services". Health awareness campaigns are pivotal in fostering a healthier society. They enable people to take proactive measures to preserve and improve their health in addition to educating them about potential health hazards.

In the present world, media awareness is an essential ability that has significant implications for public health education. As stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), "Media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors related to health" (**World Health Organization, 2021**). Media awareness refers to the ability to assess and critically examine the numerous forms of media content we encounter daily. When people critically assess the information they are exposed to, they are better equipped to make educated judgments. People can better avoid content that fosters harmful habits and instead concentrate on media that promotes positive health behaviors by being aware of how media might affect behavior.

According to the **American Public Health Association (APHA)**, "Public health communication strategies that leverage media literacy can significantly enhance the public's understanding of health information, leading to better health outcomes and more proactive health behaviors" (**APHA, 2019**). Effective public health communication relies on the public's ability to understand and interpret health information accurately. False information can have disastrous effects, particularly when it comes to health. Epidemics related to vaccinations, therapies, and medical practices can be caused by the dissemination of misleading information.

Media awareness equips the public with the skills to identify and reject false information. Also, media health campaigns that incorporate media literacy are more effective in reaching diverse audiences and achieving health goals. These strategies include creating educational materials that are easy to understand, using multiple media platforms to reach different demographics, and engaging the public in critical discussions about health topics.

To combat disinformation and promote preventative measures, such as vaccination, the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of effective media campaigns that educate the public about health issues, such as HPV (**WHO, 2021**). Campaigns in the media provide factual information about health issues to help rectify misinformation. For instance, campaigns on the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) can elucidate the virus's mode of transmission, potential hazards, and immunization advantages. This aids in the replacement of false beliefs and myths with accurate information.

Campaigns can dispel myths, offer answers, and instantly respond to queries and concerns. They frequently include data from reliable sources including scientific research, health organizations, and medical experts. These initiatives increase credibility and trust by showcasing professional viewpoints and research with supporting data, which makes it simpler for the general audience to accept the information being offered. The

preservation of public health depends on preventive actions, which can be successfully promoted by media campaigns. Well-planned campaigns can inspire people to adopt proactive measures for improved health, whether such actions involve vaccination routines, health checks, or lifestyle modifications.

As one of the most prevalent STDs and the leading cause of cervical cancer, human papillomavirus (HPV) is a major global public health concern. To promote vaccination and raise awareness, effective communication strategies are essential. Radio is one of the most powerful tools for health communication, especially in areas where access to television and the internet is restricted.

Radio has long been regarded as a reliable information source because of its accessibility, affordability, and capacity to reach a wide range of listeners. It is an excellent medium for spreading health information in urban and rural areas because it overcomes literacy barriers and can be tailored to local languages and cultural contexts. Radio reaches a wide audience, including remote and underserved communities where other forms of media may not be available.

Radio programs can include interactive segments such as call-ins, interviews with health experts, and live question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions. This interactivity allows for immediate feedback and clarifications, helping to address misconceptions and provide tailored advice. Furthermore, radio hosts and programs often enjoy high levels of trust among listeners, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of health messages.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of radio campaigns in raising awareness and influencing health behaviors. For instance, a study by **Wakefield et al. (2010)** stated, "Campaigns in the mass media have the power to influence huge populations' health-related habits positively or negatively."(p. 1261). This underscores the potential of radio as a powerful tool in public health communication. Radio, with its extensive reach and trusted presence, is an effective medium for raising awareness about HPV. Its ability to deliver culturally relevant and accessible information makes it particularly valuable in public health initiatives. By leveraging the strengths of radio, public health campaigns can effectively disseminate critical information about HPV prevention and control, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes.

The visual and auditory elements of television make it a powerful tool for health communication, capable of reaching diverse audiences and conveying complex information in an accessible manner. Television can disseminate information through various formats, including public service announcements (PSAs), news reports, talk shows, documentaries, and entertainment programs. Each of these formats has unique advantages in capturing audience attention and enhancing message retention.

Television news can cover HPV-related topics, such as new research findings, vaccination campaigns, and personal stories of those affected by HPV. News reports provide credibility and timeliness to the information, encouraging viewers to take action. Also, featuring experts and survivors on talk shows allows for in-depth discussions about HPV. This format enables the audience to gain a deeper understanding of the virus and its consequences, as well as the benefits of vaccination.

Television is also a great medium for reaching a wide range of people, including those who might not have access to other health-related media. TV campaigns can address socioeconomic and cultural barriers to HPV vaccination by customizing their messaging to target specific demographics.

**This is a tabular representation of the classification of HPV by oncogenic potential**

Below is a table representing the classification of HPV types, grouped into low-risk and high-risk categories.

HPV Category	HPV Types	Associated Conditions
Low-Risk HPV	HPV 6, HPV 11, HPV 40, HPV 42, HPV 43, HPV 44, HPV 54, HPV 61, HPV 72, HPV 81, HPV 89	Genital warts, respiratory papillomatosis, mild dysplasia.
High-Risk HPV	HPV 16, HPV 18, HPV 31, HPV 33, HPV 35, HPV 39, HPV 45, HPV 51, HPV 52, HPV 56, HPV 58, HPV 59, HPV 68	Cervical cancer, anogenital cancers, oropharyngeal cancers

## Classification by Tissue Tropism

HPVs can be classified not only by their oncogenic potential and phylogenetic relationships but also based on the types of tissues they infect. They are further classified by their tissue tropism and the diseases they cause. This classification delineates HPVs into cutaneous and mucosal types, each associated with distinct clinical manifestations and disease risks.

### ❖ Cutaneous HPV Types

Cutaneous HPVs predominantly infect the skin and are typically associated with non-cancerous lesions. These types are commonly linked to various forms of warts found on the skin, such as common warts, plantar warts, and flat warts. Examples of cutaneous HPV types include:

- HPV 1: Primarily causes plantar warts, which appear on the soles of the feet.
- HPV 2 and HPV 4: Commonly associated with common warts, which are benign growths typically found on the hands and fingers.
- HPV 3 and HPV 10: Known to cause flat warts, which are smoother and smaller compared to other types of warts.

Cutaneous HPVs generally do not lead to cancer, but they can cause persistent and sometimes recurrent skin lesions. According to **Doorbar (2016)**, "The cutaneous types of HPV are usually associated with benign lesions, such as common warts, and rarely progress to malignancy." These infect the skin and are often associated with non-cancerous conditions like common warts (*verrucae vulgaris*).

### ❖ Mucosal HPV Types

Mucosal HPVs infect the mucous membranes of the anogenital region and the oropharyngeal area. These types are further categorized into low-risk and high-risk based on their malignancy association. These infect the mucous membranes and can be low-risk or high-risk. They are primarily involved in anogenital and oropharyngeal infections (**Doorbar, 2016**).

#### Low-Risk Mucosal HPVs

HPV 6 and HPV 11: These types are responsible for the majority of genital warts and respiratory papillomatosis. Genital warts are benign growths in the genital and anal areas, while respiratory papillomatosis involves the growth of benign tumors in the airways, which can cause breathing difficulties.

"HPV 6 and 11 are the most common low-risk types, leading to conditions such as genital warts and respiratory papillomatosis, which are generally not associated with cancer" (**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021**).

#### High-Risk Mucosal HPVs

HPV 16 and HPV 18: These are the most significant high-risk types, responsible for a substantial proportion of HPV-related cancers, including cervical cancer, anal cancer, and oropharyngeal cancer. HPV 16 alone accounts for approximately 50% of cervical cancer cases worldwide.

"High-risk HPVs, particularly HPV 16 and 18, are major contributors to cervical and other anogenital cancers, as well as oropharyngeal cancers" (**World Health Organization [WHO], 2022**). Other high-risk mucosal types include HPV 31, 33, 35, 39, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, and 68. These types also contribute to the development of various cancers, although they are less prevalent than HPV 16 and 18.

**Ogbolu, M. O. and Kozlovsky, M. (2024)** conducted a study on "Assessment of HPV knowledge and awareness among students and staff at IBB University, Niger State, Nigeria: Implications for health education and prevention".

The study examines the global impact of cervical cancer, with a particular emphasis on low- and middle-income countries where women are particularly affected. Cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer among women worldwide, accounting for roughly 570,000 new cases and 311,000 deaths annually. The

human papillomavirus is the main cause of it (HPV). Even while the general public is becoming more aware of HPV, many places—including Bahrain and Nigeria—still do not understand the virus, which has a negative impact on the uptake of preventive measures like HPV vaccine and cervical cancer screening.

**Ezeanochie, M., and Olasimbo, P. (2020)** in this study assessed the “**Awareness and uptake of human papillomavirus vaccines among female secondary school students in Benin City, Nigeria**”.

The objective was to assess the research population's knowledge about HPV, the frequency of HPV vaccination, and the factors that are related to it. A cross-sectional study was conducted in Benin City, Nigeria, with 215 female secondary school students utilizing questionnaires given by interviewers. Stratified sampling with multiple stages was used to choose the participants. The girls' HPV vaccinations served as the main outcome indicator.

The age range of the participants was 14–18 years old (58.6%). Nearly the majority of the participants (>97%) lacked knowledge about HPV, cervical cancer, and HPV vaccines. Furthermore, only one (0.5%) individual had got the HPV vaccine, while two (0.9%) people correctly recognized that the virus can be spread sexually. Every respondent expressed agreement that they required more information regarding HPV, HPV vaccinations, and cervical cancer. The vast majority of the females (49.3%) proposed that this may be accomplished through their parents (32.1%) or the media (49.3%).

The study population had very little information about cervical cancer, HPV vaccinations, or HPV immunization. The study advised school-based initiatives to raise awareness of HPV vaccinations and cervical cancer.

**Bufumoh, A. A., Eke, C., Apata, T., and George, N. N. (2023)** conducted a study on “**Interpersonal communication and human papillomavirus (HPV) awareness among residents of Obio-Akpor, Rivers State**”.

Locals in Rivers State, Obio/Akpor, and their understanding about HPV. The objectives of the research were to identify the sources of information on the Human Papilloma Virus, gauge the level of knowledge about the virus among Obio/Akpor, Rivers State residents, and ascertain the knowledge of the Papilloma virus among Obio/Akpor, Rivers State, locals. Descriptive survey design was employed by the researchers. The study's participants were all at least eighteen (18) years old and male or female citizens of Rivers State's Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. There were 464,789 people living in Obio/Akpor according to the 2006 National Population Census, with 346,573 people over the age of 18. This was predicted to increase during a 17-day period at a pace of 2.9.

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Information of Respondents

SN	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	225	56.3%
2	Female	175	43.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
SN	Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	18-25 years	87	21.8%
2	26-35 years	163	40.8%
3	36-45 years	80	20.0%
4	46-55 Years	58	14.5%
5	56 years & above	12	3.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
SN	Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Olevel	42	10.5%
2	OND	55	13.8%
3	HND	74	18.5%

4	Bachelor's Degree	202	50.5%
5	Master's Degree	21	5.3%
6	Ph.D	6	1.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>SN</b>	<b>Occupation Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1	Employed	156	39.0%
2	Unemployed	134	33.5%
3	Self-employed	27	6.8%
4	Student	76	19.0%
5	Retired	7	1.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Marital Status</b>		
1	Single	220	55.0%
2	Married	154	38.5%
3	Widowed	9	2.3%
4	Divorced	17	4.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Frequencies and Percentages of the Media Consumption Habit of Respondents

SN	Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	How often do you consume media (e.g. television, radio, social media, newspapers, etc.) in a typical day?	Less than an hour	36	9.0%
		1-3 hours	141	35.3%
		4-5 hours	140	35.0%
		More than 5 hours	83	20.8%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
2.	Which types of media do you consume most frequently?	Television	128	32.0%
		Radio	27	6.8%
		Newspaper	54	13.5%
		Social media	191	47.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
3.	Do you believe that the media you consume impacts your knowledge of the human papillomavirus (HPV)?	Yes	56	14.0%
		No	243	60.8%
		May be	101	25.3%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

### What is the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Frequencies, mean and standard deviation of respondents on the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria

SN	Item Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Criteria	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1	Human papillomavirus (HPV) is an infection.	0	0	29	166	205	+3.0	1.56	0.63	D
2	HPV is a commonly sexually transmitted infection	0	0	60	151	189	+3.0	1.68	0.72	D
3	HPV has different types	0	0	21	172	207	+3.0	1.54	0.60	D
4	HPV can cause different types of cancer, including cervical cancer.	0	21	55	109	215	+3.0	1.71	0.89	D
5	HPV can be prevented by Vaccination.	0	31	54	117	198	+3.0	1.79	0.95	D
6	I receive media messages on HPV often	14	31	0	236	119	+3.0	1.96	0.96	D
7	HPV Awareness Day is a well-known day.	1	18	81	222	78	+3.0	2.10	0.77	D
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>+3.0</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>D</b>

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree  $\bar{x}$  = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Dec = Decision

The findings of the study as presented in Table 3 shows frequencies, mean and standard deviation of respondents on the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria. From the findings of the study, respondents agreed that all the items in Table 3 above are not their awareness of HPV in Lagos State. This result is evident in the mean ratings which are below +3.00 set as criterion for accepting an item as the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria. The cluster mean of 1.76 with a standard deviation of 0.31 implies that there is lack of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria.

## Research Question 2:

### To what extent do respondents know about HPV in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Frequencies, mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which respondents know about HPV in Lagos State, Nigeria

SN	Item Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Criteria	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1	HPV is also known as a DNA tumor virus.	0	0	20	47	333	+3.0	1.22	0.52	D
2	Both men and women are carriers of HPV	0	0	82	160	156	+3.0	1.82	0.75	D
3	Different types of HPV leave their patients with severe health issues or complications	0	0	34	77	289	+3.0	1.36	0.63	D
4	HPV infections can be asymptomatic	0	0	35	83	282	+3.0	1.38	0.64	D
5	Untreated HPV infection leads to long-term health disorders	0	0	142	208	49	+3.0	2.24	0.65	D
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>+3.0</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>D</b>

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree  $\bar{x}$  = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Dec = Decision

The result of the study as presented in Table 4 shows frequencies, mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which they know about HPV in Lagos State, Nigeria. From the findings of the study, respondents agreed that all the items in Table 4 above are not the extent to which they know about HPV in Lagos State, Nigeria. This result is evident in the mean ratings which are below +3.00 set as criterion for accepting an item as the extent respondents know about HPV in Lagos State, Nigeria. The cluster mean of 1.60 with a standard deviation of 0.32 implies that knowledge of HPV amongst respondents is to a low extent in Lagos State, Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to find out how the media in Lagos State, Nigeria, contribute to public awareness and knowledge of the human papillomavirus (HPV). This part discusses the study's findings as they provided answers to the research questions that the investigation was guided upon. Concerning empirical investigations, the researcher also identified areas of agreement or disagreement with other findings in the literature and created common grounds for validation between the findings and other findings in the body of existing literature. The questionnaire was distributed in 400 copies in total, and all (100%) of them were returned. The respondents' attitudes toward the topics being investigated as well as their ideas and perceptions will influence the study's conclusions.

### Media Consumption Habits of Respondents

The study's findings as presented in Table 2, provide the frequencies and percentages of the respondents' media consumption habits. It was discovered that the majority of respondents consumed media between one and three hours per day. This low rate of media consumption may be partially attributed to low income, insufficient power supply to watch media devices like television, and the respondents' inability to purchase newspapers due to low income and other factors that influence the respondents' inability to consume media adequately every day. The types of media that respondents consume most frequently revealed that the majority of respondents frequently use social media.



This choice of frequently consumed media type (social media) may be explained by the fact that most respondents mostly use their smartphones, which is a major way to receive social media messages. When asked whether respondents think that the media they consume has an impact on their knowledge of HPV, most respondents believe that the media they consume has no impact on their knowledge of Human Papillomavirus (HPV).

### **What is the level of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos state, Nigeria?**

The findings of the study as presented in Table 3 shows the frequencies and percentages of respondents on the level of awareness of HPV in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study revealed that there is a lack of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria. According to the findings, respondents were unaware that Human papillomavirus (HPV) is an infection and that it is a commonly sexually transmitted infection among other things.

This finding is credible because the majority of people are unaware of HPV and most people don't have any signs of the virus. Campaigns about health-related issues such as HPV often fail to reach the populace. This could have contributed to a lack of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with **Ramavath and Olyai (2013)** who revealed that participants have low knowledge of HPV infection and vaccination, but they are very eager to learn more and receive the vaccine. According to the findings, seventy-two percent of them were unaware of HPV or cervical cancer. This is an indication of lack of awareness of HPV as revealed by the present study.

A study by **Kanmodi, Ogbeide, Fagbule, Isola, Kanmodi, Lawal, and Chidiebere (2019)** found a very low awareness rate of HPV, HPV-induced cancers, and HPV vaccines among the interviewed first-year students. Hence, in line with previous findings, the present finding provides the basis to conclude that there is a lack of awareness of HPV amongst respondents in Lagos State, Nigeria.

From the in-depth interview, it can be deduced that the interviewee(s) are in support of media awareness campaign as a tool for creating awareness and increasing knowledge of the Human papillomavirus. Majority of them specified that the media outlets plays a crucial role in spreading knowledge on the virus. Also, majority of the interviewee(s) established that the media needs to improve in their job of raising awareness of the Human Papillomavirus and its vaccine. Some of the interviewees gave recommendations that the media messages should also target remote areas and that these messages should include information that Virus affects both the female and male gender.

### **Implications**

1. **Need for Enhanced Public Health Campaigns:** The study underscores the necessity for more effective public health campaigns in Lagos State, Nigeria. Given the low awareness of HPV and its transmission, health organizations and government bodies should intensify their efforts to educate the public about HPV, its risks, and preventive measures, including vaccination.
2. **Potential Increase in HPV-Related Health Issues:** The lack of awareness about HPV among the population could lead to higher incidences of HPV-related health issues, including cancers such as cervical cancer. This lack of knowledge may also result in lower rates of screening and vaccination, exacerbating the public health burden.
3. **Opportunity for Educational Initiatives:** The study indicates a significant opportunity for educational initiatives aimed at increasing HPV awareness. As seen in similar studies, respondents show eagerness to learn more and receive vaccinations when informed. Targeted educational programs in schools, community centers, and through media can play a crucial role in bridging the knowledge gap and promoting preventive health behaviors.

### **To what extent do respondents know about HPV in Lagos state, Nigeria?**

The findings of the study in Table 4 revealed that knowledge of HPV amongst respondents is to a low extent in Lagos State, Nigeria. According to the finding, in Table 4 respondents were ignorant that HPV is also known as a DNA tumor virus, and that both men and women are carriers of HPV among other things. This finding lends support from **Ogbolu and Kozlovsky (2024)** who revealed that many people misdiagnosed HPV as a

virus and had misconceptions about how it spreads, what symptoms it causes, how to cure it, and its effects. The finding is also consistent with **Ezeanochie and Olasimbo (2020)** who revealed that nearly the majority of the participants lacked knowledge about HPV, cervical cancer, and HPV vaccines.

A study by **Perlman, Wamai, Bain, Welty, Welty, and Ogembo (2014)** also revealed that high willingness and acceptability of the HPV vaccine despite little knowledge and awareness of cervical cancer, HPV, or the vaccine. This also shows a lack of knowledge of HPV as revealed by the present study. All these findings demonstrate a low extent of knowledge of HPV among respondents. Hence, in line with previous findings, the present finding provides the basis to conclude that knowledge of HPV amongst respondents is to a low extent in Lagos State, Nigeria.

According to the in-depth interview, the four interviewee(s) specified that the Human Papillomavirus is a virus that is transmitted sexually and that they can cause different health issues such as cancers and warts. Majority of the interviewee explained that the virus is asymptomatic and that there are in both high risks and low risks types. They also established that the HPV vaccine provides protection and effectively prevent against the HPV infection. They also advised that the intake of the vaccine is recommended for preteens within the ages of 11 and 14, so as to immune their body system against the virus and because the vaccine is more effective before a male and a female become sexually active.

## Implications

1. **Increased Risk of HPV Transmission:** The low level of knowledge about HPV, including its nature as a DNA tumor virus and its transmission between both men and women, implies a higher risk of continued HPV transmission in Lagos State. Misconceptions and ignorance about the virus can lead to inadequate preventive measures and higher rates of infection.
2. **Need for Comprehensive Education Programs:** There is a clear need for comprehensive education programs to correct misconceptions and increase awareness about HPV, its symptoms, modes of transmission, and prevention methods, including vaccination. Public health authorities and educational institutions should collaborate to design and implement targeted awareness campaigns to improve HPV knowledge among the population.
3. **Potential for Misdiagnosis and Misinformation:** The study highlights the potential for misdiagnosis and misinformation regarding HPV. This can have serious health implications, including delayed diagnosis and treatment of HPV-related conditions such as cervical cancer. Health professionals must be equipped with accurate information and resources to educate their patients, and the public should be encouraged to seek reliable information from trusted sources.

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