

# Investigation of Awareness as Predictor for Ebola Virus Prevention

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at investigating awareness as predictor for Ebola virus prevention. The study adopted the correlational research design and between group design method. Questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents made up of 186(48.6%) males and 197(51.4%) females, with age range of 18-37 years.

Simple regression analysis and 2-way analysis of variance were used for data analyses. Findings from the study it was found that awareness about Ebola virus disease predict attitudes towards Ebola virus prevention among respondents in that respondents who are aware of the dangers of Ebola will engage in preventive attitudes. Based on the findings, it was recommended that stake holders engage in awareness campaign that will spur the interest of respondents in preventive attitude towards Ebola virus.

**Keywords:** Ebola virus, Awareness, Prevention

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the term "awareness" has often been used synonymously with the term "consciousness", which has been called a "mongrel" concept, owing to the variety of its definitions [1]. Specifically, an event of awareness is conjectured to involve the operation of attention which is directed toward a representation of the self. Thus, it is presumed that awareness requires an attentional event that is added to the simple act of attending to an external object or event. Awareness involves the agent or actor whose cortical representation is activated when attention is directed to it. Simply attending to an object or event requires action on the part of the cortical area of control, but the representation of the responsible actor need not be activated.

The World Health Organization in [2] describes health awareness as not limited to the dissemination of health-related information but also fostering the motivation, skills and confidence (self-efficacy) necessary to take action to improve health, as well as the communication of information concerning the underlying social, economic and environmental conditions impacting on health, as well as individual risk factors and risk behaviours, and use of

the health care system. A broad purpose of health awareness therefore is not only to increase knowledge about personal health behaviour but also to develop skills that “demonstrate the political feasibility and organizational possibilities of various forms of action to address social, economic and environmental determinants of health.

It was asserted in [3] that: “We must strengthen prevention to stop the spread of the disease – this starts with clear, accessible and reliable information, provided to people in all districts and counties. Stopping Ebola requires effective action by individual women and men, at the community level, and this project will help us reach and support them.

Awareness is formed through interaction with the surroundings where individuals themselves construct their understanding of the world through experience. Its exchange is an integral part of learning as well as helping the individual to shape his or her abilities by converting theoretical and practical skills into new knowledge. Awareness is mostly acquired through communication and its processes. Awareness of Ebola virus is the key to prevention and education is the key to knowledge. However, awareness about the deadly EVD among undergraduate students in Benue State University is low. A talk with students in the university has given me the impression that majority of students have little or no awareness or understanding of the importance of their live condition for good health. This lack of awareness is not only limited to only EVD but also their overall well-being in terms of health. There are a lot of factors impeding efforts put up by established institutions like WHO and other world organizations to curb the menace of EVD globally. It is an established fact that though there has been an effective campaign concerning EVD over the past months, this campaign is still lacking in many parts of the country. Many individuals have low awareness regarding EVD due leading to fear of the disease. For this reason, this study seeks to investigate awareness as predictor for Ebola virus prevention.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study adopted a correlational research design. The study is built on correlational and between groups designs. Correlational design allows for determination of the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. Meanwhile, between-groups design is use to compare the mean scores of respondents on dependent variable.

The study has awareness about Ebola as independent variables, while attitude towards prevention of Ebola virus is the measured as the dependent variable to investigate the hypothesis: awareness will significantly predict attitudes towards prevention of Ebola virus disease among undergraduates in Benue State University.

### Area of study

The participants used in this study were drawn from among undergraduate students of Benue State University. From this population of 15,212, a representative sample was drawn to represent the total population. The Taro Yamen’s formula for sample size determination was used in determining the number of participants. Based on the formula, a total of 389 respondents were selected to partake in the study. Out of the 389 copies of questionnaire distributed to participants, 383 were returned signifying that 383 undergraduate students took part in the study. Their age ranged from 18-37 years. Participants sex indicate that males were 186 (48.6%) while females were 197 (51.4%) signifying that more female undergraduates participated in the study than male undergraduates.

### Data collection

Data for this study were collected using two standardized structured questionnaires called Ebola Virus Awareness Scale (EVAS).EVAS is a 20-item questionnaire to measure level of awareness about Ebola among the general population. It is scored on a 4-point Likert-type responses of Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. All the items are directly scored except items 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 which are scored in a reverse order. This scale has a reliability coefficient of .71. With this high reliability, it shows that the instrument is highly reliable.

### Sampling

Simple random sampling technique was used to sample participants for the study. In determining the sample size, Taro Yamen's formula was employed. The formula is stated as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n=sample size required, N=population size e=level of significance 1 and 2 are constant  
When applied to the population size we have:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{15,212}{1+15,212(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{15,212}{1+15,212(0.0025)} \\ n &= \frac{15,212}{1+38.03} \\ n &= \frac{15,212}{39.03} \\ n &= 389 \end{aligned}$$

### Sampling procedure

The sampling technique adopted for this study is a combination of multi-stage sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Multi-stage sampling is a technique by which a researcher selects groups of participants in stages before arriving at individual respondents. In this study, five faculties were selected out of the nine faculties in the university using random sampling technique. Then from each faculty, three departments were also selected using random technique. A total of 15 departments were selected and respondents were sampled from the 15 departments. In selecting the faculties and departments, the researcher wrote names of each faculty and department and put them in a container from which these ballots papers were picked at random. Only the selected faculties and departments were considered for the study. Thereafter, the selected departments were visited and after obtaining informed consent of the students, questionnaires were administered to students.

To administer questionnaire to students, the researcher with three of her assistants visited lecture halls and to ensure that the scientific method was used in administering the questionnaires, the researcher wrote "Yes and No" on pieces of paper and dropped in the basket. The researcher with her assistants took the baskets round and any student who picked a piece of paper that had the inscription "Yes" was automatically qualified for the study provided that respondents agreed to respond to the questionnaires while those that picked "No" did not participated in the study. It took the researcher two days to administer copies of the questionnaire to students.

### Data analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using multiple regressions to test the relationship between awareness and attitudes towards prevention of Ebola virus.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In testing hypothesis 1 of the study which predicted that awareness will significantly predict attitudes towards Ebola Virus prevention disease among undergraduate students was tested using regression analysis. The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Results showing Awareness as a predictor of Attitudes towards Ebola Virus Prevention**

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	B	t	P
Constant	.336	.113	46.432		9.653	.000
Awareness				.336	6.814	.000

Findings show that awareness of EVD to significantly predict attitude towards Ebola virus prevention. This shows that the hypothesis is accepted. This finding implies that the higher the awareness regarding Ebola virus, the higher the attitude towards Ebola virus prevention. It entails those undergraduate students that have high awareness of Ebola disease will adopt preventive attitudes so as not to contact the disease. It means the higher the awareness, the higher the attitudes towards prevention. Awareness also informed the public about prevention, the required acts that can serve as preventive actions. This finding tally with the work of [4] assessed the awareness, knowledge and misconceptions regarding Ebola virus prevention in Nigeria and found awareness to be high and predictive of attitudes to Ebola virus prevention. In a related development, the author in [5] assessed knowledge and attitude about Ebola among U.S. pharmacy students and found awareness to correlate significantly with attitudes towards Ebola prevention. Similarly, the author in [6] found awareness to influence attitudes towards Ebola prevention. Also, the authors in [7] found a significant relationship between awareness and attitudes towards Ebola prevention. The finding presented here also corroborate with those of [8] who assessed the public preparedness level to adopt disease preventive behavior which is premised on appropriate knowledge, perception and adequate information and found awareness to relate with attitudes towards Ebola prevention.

### CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it was found that awareness about Ebola virus disease predict attitudes towards Ebola virus prevention among respondents in that respondents who are aware of the dangers of Ebola will engage in preventive attitudes. Based on these findings, it is suggested that government, school authority, NGOs and the like should embark on massive campaign using apparatus that will captivate the interest of respondents on the need to adopt positive attitudes towards Ebola virus prevention. This could involve use of drama, dancing competition and other programs that spur interest of respondents.

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