



# **Awareness, Attitude and Practices Of Breast Self-Examination Among Female Undergraduate Students In Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the awareness, attitude and practices of breast self-examination among female undergraduate students in Ignatius Ajuru University of education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The descriptive research design was adopted with a population which consisted of all the students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria. A sample size of 100 was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts who critically examined the items of the instrument with specific objectives of the study and make useful suggestions to improve the quality of the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The result showed that, 65.0% were males, 25.0% were aged 26-30 years, and 55.0% were married. More (42.0%) agreed that female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination; 32.0% agreed that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female; 30.0% agreed that there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination and 42% agreed that female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination. It was concluded that, female undergraduates in Ajuru University are aware of sensitization campaigns about breast cancer, they are exposed to breast cancer campaigns. It was recommended among others that, Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Health educators in Ajuru University should adopt and use the Breast Self-Examination enhancement strategies formed in the course of this study, to mount breast cancer and BSE intervention programmes at the different settings where female undergraduates could be reached.

**Keywords:** breast cancer, Breast Self-Examination

## **INTRODUCTION**

Breast is an important organ of the woman anatomy; which women are quite conscious of. This is because of the anatomical position and its importance to babies. Knowledge which leads to prevention of diseases related to the breast is very crucial. According to the United States Cancer Statistics Working Group (2013), breast is the site for most cancers in women, approximately 1 in 9 women develops Breast Cancer (BC) in their life time. Globally estimate by the World Health Organization (2013) revealed that, over 508,000 women died in 2011 due to BC. Although, BC is thought to be a disease of the developed world, almost 50 per cent of BC cases and 58 per cent of deaths occur in less developed countries (Ferlay et al., 2010). In Nigeria, it has been recorded as the most common cancer and a principal cause of death in women (Kene et al., 2010). However, Fletcher (2000) stated that, during the last four decades, with the

introduction of screening programmes that efficiently detect cervical cancer in early stage, breast cancer has overtaken cervical cancer in incidence and has become number one neoplasm among women.

An important method of early detection of BC is the Breast Self-Examination (BSE). BSE is often the only screening method available for women without access to professional health care services. It allows women to perform a self-breast examination independently. It is an excellent first line of defense against Breast Cancer (BC), since each woman's body is unique and she is the best person to track changes. Breast self-examination (BSE) is a screening method used in an attempt to detect early breast cancer (malignant tumor that has developed from cells of the breast). It involves the woman herself looking at and feeling each breast for possible lumps, distortions or swelling. BSE is a simple, inexpensive, non-invasive and non-hazardous practice which enables a woman get acquainted with the topography of her breast and allows her notice changes to detect breast masses or lumps. BSE has been defined as a preventive health behavior, that is, an activity undertaken by a person, who believes [herself] to be healthy, for the purpose of preventing disease or detecting disease in an asymptomatic state (Kayode et al., 2005; Phumla, 2011). The most undesirable aspect of breast cancer in Africa is that it is already advanced at presentation. This is partly because of the failure by women to appreciate the importance of early detection of the disease. The result is greater fatality rate for breast cancer in developing than in developed countries (American Cancer Society, 2012). BSE is recommended every 3 years for women aged 20 to 40 years and yearly thereafter. While monthly for those aged 20 and above (American Cancer Society, 2003; Mason & White, 2008; Kelsey, 2011).

Knowledge is a prerequisite to any health practice. Omoyemi et al. (2014) stated that, women who are knowledgeable that BC may be detected when they are at an early stage or smaller are fewer than women without knowledge. Despite the awareness that has been created on radio, television, newspapers, magazines etc on the benefits of BSE for early detection of breast cancer, late presentation of cases at advanced stage when little or no benefit can be derived from any form of therapy has remained the hallmark of breast cancer in Nigerian women. For health workers to be effective as educators they must possess the appropriate knowledge, attitude and beliefs concerning the health behavior being promoted (Bastani et al., 1994). Moreover, there is a dearth of knowledge on the attitude and practices of breast self-examination among female undergraduate students in Rivers state. This study is therefore necessary to fill this gap. Specific objectives of the study include to:

- I. assess the level of awareness of the need for breast self-examination among female undergraduates in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- II. assess the attitude of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination among in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
- III. assess the practices of female undergraduates regards breast self-examination among in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

The study following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of the need for breast self-examination among female undergraduates in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
2. What is the attitude of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination among in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
3. What are the practices of female undergraduates regards breast self-examination among in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research design was adopted with a population which consisted of all the students in Ignatius Ajuru University of education, Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria. A sample size of 134 was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts who critically examined the items of the instrument with specific objectives of the study and make useful suggestions to improve the quality of the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentage.

**RESULTS**

The results of the study are shown below:

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	65	65.0	65.0
	Female	35	35.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 1 above shows the gender distribution of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 65 respondents which represent 65.0 percent of the population are male. 35 which represent 35.0 percent of the population are female.

**Table 2: Age range of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-20years	15	15.0	15.0
	21-25years	10	10.0	25.0
	26-30years	25	25.0	50.0
	31-35years	20	20.0	70.0
	above 35years	30	30.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 2 above shows the age grade of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 15 respondents which represent 15.0 percent of the population are between 15-20 years. 10 respondents which represent 10.0 percent of the population are between 21-25 years. 25 respondents which represent 25.0 percent of the population are between 26-30 years. 20 respondents which represent 20.0 percent of the population are between 31-35 years. 30 respondents which represent 30.0 percent of the population are above 35 years.

**Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Year 1	20	20.0	20.0
	Year 2	25	25.0	45.0
	Year 3	35	35.0	80.0
	Year 4	15	15.0	95.0
	Others	5	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 3 above shows the educational background of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 20 respondents which represent 20.0 percent of the population are Year 1 students. 25 which represent 25.0 percent of the population are Year 2 students. 35 which represent

35.0percent of the population are Year 3 students. 15 which represent 15.0percent of the population are Year 4 students. 5 which represent 5.0percent of the population had other type of educational qualifications.

**Table 4: Marital Status**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	30	30.0	30.0
	Married	55	15.0	45.0
	Divorced	5	20.0	65.0
	Widowed	10	15.0	80.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 4 above shows the marital status of the respondents used for this study. 30 which represent 30.0percent of the population are single. 55 which represent 55.0percent of the population are married. 5 which represent 5.0percent of the population are divorced. 10 which represent 10.0percent of the population are widowed.

**Table 5: Female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	30	30.0	30.0
	Agree	42	42.0	72.0
	Undecided	10	10.0	82.0
	Disagree	10	10.0	92.0
	Strongly disagree	8	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 5 shows the responses of respondents if female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination. 30 respondents representing 30.0percent strongly agreed that female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination. 42 respondents representing 42.0percent agreed that female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination. 10 respondents representing 10.0 percent were undecided. 10 respondents representing 10.0percent disagreed that female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination. 8 respondents representing 8.0percent strongly disagreed that female undergraduates have good knowledge of self-breast examination.

**Table 6: Self-breast examination is becoming rampant among female undergraduates**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0
	Agree	15	15.0	25.0
	Undecided	5	5.0	30.0
	Disagree	40	40.0	70.0
	Strongly disagree	30	30.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 6 show the responses of respondents if self-breast examination is becoming rampant among female undergraduates. 10 of the respondents representing 10.0percent strongly agree that self-breast examination is becoming rampant among students. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent agree that self-breast examination is becoming rampant among students. 5 of them representing 5.0percent were undecided. 40 of the respondents representing 40.0percent disagree that self-breast examination is becoming rampant among students. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent strongly disagree that self-breast examination is becoming rampant among students.

**Table 7: Female undergraduates are the pioneers of the awareness of self-breast examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	60	60.0	60.0
	Agree	25	25.0	85.0
	Undecided	10	10.0	95.0
	Disagree	5	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 7 show the responses of respondents if female undergraduates are the pioneers of the awareness of self-breast examination. 60 of the respondents representing 60.0percent strongly agree that female undergraduates are the pioneers of the awareness of self-breast examination. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent agree that female undergraduates are the pioneers of the awareness of self-breast examination. 10 of them representing 10.0percent were undecided. 5 of the respondents representing 5.0percent disagree that female undergraduates are the pioneers of the awareness of self-breast examination.

**Table 8: There is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female nursing students so as to improve the practice of it.**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	25.0	25.0
	Agree	32	32.0	57.0
	Undecided	13	13.0	70.0
	Disagree	15	15.0	85.0
	Strongly disagree	15	15.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 8 shows the responses of respondents if there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female nursing students so as to improve the practice of it. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent strongly agree that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female nursing students so as to improve the practice of it. 32 of the respondents representing 32.0percent agree that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female nursing students so as to improve the practice of it. 13 of the respondents representing 13.0percent were undecided. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent disagree that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female students so as to improve the practice of it. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent strongly disagree that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of self-breast examination amongst female nursing students so as to improve the practice of it.

**Table 9: There are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination.**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	65	65.0	65.0
	Agree	30	30.0	95.0
	Disagree	3	3.0	98.0
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 9 show the responses of respondents if there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination. 65 of the respondents representing 65.0percent strongly agree that there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent agree that there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination. 3 respondents representing 3.0percent were undecided. 3 of the respondents representing 3.0percent disagree that there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination. 2 of the respondents representing 2.0percent strongly disagree that there are good attitudes of female undergraduates towards breast self-examination.

**Table 10: Female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	30	30.0	30.0
	Agree	42	42.0	72.0
	Undecided	10	10.0	82.0
	Disagree	10	10.0	92.0
	Strongly disagree	8	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 10 shows the responses of respondents if female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination. 30 respondents representing 30.0percent strongly agreed that female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination. 42 respondents representing 42.0percent agreed that female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination. 10 respondents representing 10.0 percent were undecided. 10 respondents representing 10.0percent disagreed that female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination. 8 respondents representing 8.0percent strongly disagreed that female undergraduate adheres to the methods of self-examination.

**Table 11: Female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0
	Agree	15	15.0	25.0
	Undecided	5	5.0	30.0
	Disagree	40	40.0	70.0
	Strongly disagree	30	30.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 11 show the responses of respondents if female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer. 10 of the respondents representing 10.0percent strongly agree that female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent agree that female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer. 5 of them representing 5.0percent were undecided. 40 of the respondents representing 40.0percent disagree that female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent strongly disagree that female undergraduates believe that breast self-examination helps in detecting breast cancer.

**Table 12: Most female students do not practice self-breast examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	60	60.0	60.0
	Agree	25	25.0	85.0
	Undecided	10	10.0	95.0
	Disagree	5	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 12 show the responses of respondents if most female students do not practice self-breast examination. 60 of the respondents representing 60.0percent strongly agree that most female students do not practice self-breast examination. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent agree that most female students do not practice self-breast examination. 10 of them representing 10.0percent were undecided. 5 of the respondents representing 5.0percent disagree that most female students do not practice self-breast examination.

**Table 13: A prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	25.0	25.0
	Agree	32	32.0	57.0
	Undecided	13	13.0	70.0
	Disagree	15	15.0	85.0
	Strongly disagree	15	15.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 13 shows the responses of respondents if a prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent strongly agree that a prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination. 32 of the respondents representing 32.0percent agree that a prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination. 13 of the respondents representing 13.0percent were undecided. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent disagree that a prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0 percent strongly disagree that a prevalent problem of self-breast examination is the inadequate knowledge on the appropriate way of self-examination.



**Table 14: The practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	65	65.0	65.0
	Agree	30	30.0	95.0
	Disagree	3	3.0	98.0
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 14 show the responses of respondents if the practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild. 65 of the respondents representing 65.0percent strongly agree that the practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent agree that the practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild. 3 respondents representing 3.0percent were undecided. 3 of the respondents representing 3.0percent disagree that the practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild. 2 of the respondents representing 2.0percent strongly disagree that the practice of BSE is generally low in Tertiary institutions as the awareness of it is currently mild.

**Table 15: Females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	65	65.0	65.0
	Agree	30	30.0	95.0
	Disagree	3	3.0	98.0
	Strongly disagree	2	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 15 show the responses of respondents if females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue. 65 of the respondents representing 65.0percent strongly agree that females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent agree that females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue. 3 respondents representing 3.0percent were undecided. 3 of the respondents representing 3.0percent disagree that females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue. 2 of the respondents representing 2.0percent strongly disagree that females from their 18's and beyond should perform breast self-examination (BSE) monthly for any physical or visual changes in breast tissue.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the female undergraduates in Ajuru University are aware of sensitization campaigns about breast cancer, they are exposed to breast cancer campaigns, and the media- print/electronic are their major sources of information. Female undergraduates in Rivers State also know that prevention and early detection are vital aims of the campaigns.

They know that breast cancer is a disease that kills; and that it can only be treated at its initial or early stage. Most of them acknowledged that before symptoms become obvious, breast cancer stage is early and should be given appropriate treatment.

The subject of genetic testing is still quite new to the female undergraduates in Ajuru University. Those who understand the relationship between genetics as a risk factor in the cause of breast cancer, agreed to genetic testing. Again, only a few of them know that mammography is a form of early breast cancer detection technique

A good number of the female undergraduates in Ajuru University attribute the cause of breast cancer to unhealthy dieting and this is what is known. So, the major causes of breast cancer as provided by medical prognosis are not known to many. However, the women' reduction of consumption of white flours due to their knowledge of diet as a causative factor of breast cancer proves that, knowledge influences attitude and positive attitude culminates into practice.

Furthermore, attitudes of overestimating or underestimating one's risks status are influenced by high or low levels of information acquired on the subject. Also, positive attitude change is based on compliance of acquired knowledge with pre-existing beliefs, connectivity of change messages with admired significant others and perception of derivable benefits.

So many still do not know that other possible factors like having a breast cancer related infection (breast fibroid, breast cyst) or actions like heating up the breast with radiation can be associated with the disease. Knowledge among female undergraduates in Ajuru University about the symptoms is limited to three common symptoms namely lumps, pains and swelling. Also, knowledge of the peak age of breast cancer presentation is not quite known. Again, only a few of them know that, 7-10days after menstruation is ideal for breast examination. They, however, know that removal of breast lump does not alter the risks of breast cancer recurrence

Practice of CBE is still on the low side, and such factors as poor attitudes towards the practice of preventive measures, and the belief that they are not susceptible to the disease seem to account for it. Practice of breast self-examination is, however, relatively high.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the present study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Health educators in Ajuru University should adopt and use the Breast Self-Examination enhancement strategies formed in the course of this study, to mount breast cancer and BSE intervention programmes at the different settings were female undergraduates could be reached.
- The aforementioned agencies should capture all female undergraduates irrespective of their age group, marital status, family history of breast cancer and religious denomination, so as to raise to very high level their knowledge of breast cancer and enhance their practice of BSE.
- Female undergraduates should read, learn and study about breast cancer and BSE and also practice BSE between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> day of their menstrual cycle.
- Ignatius Ajuru University should include breast cancer and BSE as topics in health general studies of their institutions.

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