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# Teamwork and Epidemic Control Among Health Workers in Local Government Areas of Osun State, Nigeria.

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# **TEAMWORK AND EPIDEMIC CONTROL AMONG HEALTH WORKERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OSUN STATE**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Epidemic control is the process of curbing, checking, or regulating unusual occurrence of infectious disease(s) among the people within a geographical area. Epidemic is the occurrence of a number of cases of a disease, known or suspected to be infectious or of parasitic origin, that are usually large or unexpected for a given place or time. An epidemic often develops rapidly, so that a quick response is required (Federal Ministry of Health, 2011). There is threatened or potential epidemic, when the circumstances are such that the epidemic occurrence of a specific disease may reasonably be anticipated. This requires, susceptible population, the presence of impending introduction of disease agent, and the presence of a mechanism that large scale transmission is possible. (e.g. contaminated water supply, a vector population and importation of a contagious disease victim such as Ebola case). This established the fact that epidemics usually result into loss of human and economic resources, it usually pose political difficulties, if allowed to continue, can throw the town, local government area, state, country or even a continent into total disarray and complete chaos.

Epidemic control involves the knowledge of the occurrence and distribution of diseases including the strategies of curbing or preventing them. The epidemiological division of the ministries of health in the state and national levels are responsible for conducting epidemiological surveys into some diseases that are infectious in nature. This results in the quick detection of epidemic and the provision of appropriate action for timely control of disease epidemics. Hence, epidemic control in the local government areas of Osun State requires the need for cooperation and teamwork among health care professionals in order to generate useful information for epidemic control. This calls for teamwork that can gather, organize, analyze, and summarize data into reports and assist in the successful carrying out of a surveillance system that will result in effective epidemic control in local government areas of Osun State (Omole, 2015).

Epidemic control outcomes should result into curbing, checking, or regulating unusual occurrence of infectious disease(s) among the people within a geographical area, via the use of valuable information that is generated through efficient teamwork. This is why the relevance of

control measures in epidemic management cannot be underestimated, because they contribute to reduction in morbidity and mortality, reduction in incidence rate of diseases and total stoppage of a disease epidemic. Availability of timely and relevant health information is also essential in epidemic control for mobilization resources for specific health intervention. It is at this instance that the researcher investigated the influence of teamwork on epidemic control among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State.

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (2016) defines teamwork as work done by several associates with each doing a part, but all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole. Teamwork can be an important part of an effective workplace. An efficient team can be trained as a group; help each other maximize their job performance and help to make an inviting and productive atmosphere for new team members. Certain elements of teamwork in the workplace should be in place for your establishment to benefit from group organization. A team is only effective when the members understand their roles and responsibilities within the group and endeavor to execute them effectively. A task given to a group is completed more effectively when the responsibilities are distributed fairly among the group members. Each member is assigned a part of the task based on his role within the group and his level of expertise (George. 2016).

Tasks in epidemic control require teamwork. This is the reason why Fatiregun, (2006) asserts that epidemic control activity is a combination of people, equipment, data collection and processing methods, coordinated to produce information in support of planning, decision making and management of health care system. Also Olumide, (2006) opined that epidemic control strategy is a collection of data base personnel, procedures, and instruments which are organized to develop and utilize available facts to become information which will be used to facilitate decision making. The submission of Osundina, (2007) also supports the above that documentation of epidemic control activities involves the techniques, devices and human resources used for recording concise and accurate history of a patient's life and illness, including the significant characteristics of a patient and events occurring in the course of professional care for the purpose of effective epidemic control.

This paper aimed at investigating the influence of team work on epidemic control in local government areas of Osun State, Nigeria. The article started with introduction, followed by

discussion on epidemic control, teamwork and effect of teamwork on epidemic control was established and this was followed by findings and discussions, summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

An epidemic free environment enhances the health status of all citizens in the community. Poor response to epidemic control by the concerned authorities usually result from poor interaction among health workers within the health care system which use to have negative impact and grave consequences on epidemic control in the local government areas. The problem therefore is that, it is not clear the extent to which health care professionals in the local government areas pay attention to teamwork for effective epidemic control.

Therefore, it is important to find out empirically the influence teamwork on effective epidemic control. It is in the light of this that the study investigated the influence of teamwork on epidemic control in local government areas of Osun state; with a view to contributing to finding solutions to problems associated with teamwork in relation to epidemic control in local government areas of Osun State.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. examine the epidemic control activities among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State;
2. examine the existing nature of teamwork among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State;
3. determine the relationship between teamwork and epidemic control among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The research questions for the study are;

1. What are the epidemic control activities conducted by health workers in the local government areas of Osun State?
2. What is the existing nature of teamwork among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State?

## **1.4 Hypothesis**

The study was tested under the following research hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Teamwork has no significant relationship with epidemic control in local government areas of Osun State.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study investigated the influence teamwork on epidemic control among medical and health officers in the local government areas of Osun State

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this investigation would be of significance to the local government authorities in Nigeria, as it would raise awareness and provide solutions to the challenges of teamwork arising from epidemic control activities among health care professionals in the local government areas of Osun State. The study would highlight the importance of teamwork to the public, the health care professionals and local government authorities, especially the outcome of efficient teamwork towards effective epidemic control in a local government area

## **2.0 Review of Literature**

### **2.1 The Concept of Epidemic Control**

Epidemic Control is the process of curbing, checking, or regulating unusual occurrence of infectious disease(s) among the people within a geographical area. Epidemic is the occurrence of a number of cases of a disease, known or suspected to be infectious or of parasitic origin, that are usually large or unexpected for a given place or time. An epidemic often develops rapidly, so that a quick response is required (Federal Ministry of Health, 2011). Epidemic occurs when an infectious disease spreads rapidly among many people. An epidemic is a disease that spreads rapidly among many people in a community at the same time. It occurs when a disease is affecting many person at the same time and spreading from person to person in a locality where the disease is not permanently prevalent, (Random, 2016).

Epidemic control involves the process of instituting intervention programs against any epidemic disease with a view to curb its further spread. The control measures that may be put in place can be educative informative, preventive and curative, depending on the level of spread or prevalent rate, (Lucas & Gilles, 2014). Each level of epidemic control has clear responsibilities based on

its technical expertise, networks and resources. The emergency preparedness and response committee and rapid response teams are the forums to ensure collaboration between all partners on epidemic control activities in the local government areas. The two committees (Emergency preparedness and response committee and rapid response team) of the local government area will convene when an outbreak occurs.

### **2.1.1 Epidemic Preparedness and Response**

An epidemic often develops rapidly, so that a quick response is required. There is threatened or potential epidemic when the circumstances are such that the epidemic occurrence of a specific disease may reasonably be anticipated. This requires susceptible population, the presence of impending introduction of a disease agent and the presence of a mechanism that large scale transmission is possible such as contaminated water supply, a vector population and importation of a contagious disease (FMOH, 2011). This establish the fact that epidemic usually result into loss of human and economic resources, it usually pose political difficulties, if allowed to continue can throws the town, local government area, state country or even a continent into a total disarray and complete chaos.

Establishment of sentinel sites is important in disease control strategy for active case search of priority disease, and to promote active surveillance and to generate more detailed disease data disaggregated by sex, smaller age grouping and classification for specific target diseases of public health significance (FMOH, 2011). Also epidemic preparedness committee must be in place and must be well strengthened (Epidemic Preparedness Committee and Rapid Response Team). These committees shall meet on quarterly basis and when deemed necessary, with defined term of reference, plan of action and operational guidelines.

Laboratory network shall be established for integrated disease surveillance and response at states, central and reference laboratories and guideline must be developed for efficient laboratory services. Adequate mechanism should be established for communication with local government area for collection and transportation of specimens and feedback of results. Case based surveillance must be conducted when there is a suspected case of an epidemic prone disease or disease targeted for elimination, eradication and accelerated control such as polio, neonatal tetanus or measles or during outbreak of these diseases (Osundina, 2014).

## **2.2 Teamwork**

A team is a group of two or more individuals, who perform some work related task, interact with one another dynamically, have a shared past, have a foreseeable shared future and share a common fate. Teamwork is those behaviors that facilitate effective team member's interaction (Omole, 2015). Also, Osundina (2014) asserts that teamwork is the interdependent components of performance required to effectively coordinate the performance of multiple individuals. Hence, team work is nested within the broader concept of team performance which also includes individual level task work, this is why a team must be nurtured through appropriate training and sharing of uniform value system in order motivate them towards achieving the corporate goal. It is also important to recognize the skill of everybody in the team, which can only be mostly discovered through organization of meetings in the most effective way. A good leader must be ready to build an effective team and learn how to manage conflict.

Root (2013) posits that a good and efficient team contributes to the success of the organization. When you work in an environment that is team-oriented, you automatically produce better results. The fact that you are in a particular department and have a particular job to do does not negate the fact that you are united with other members of the organization to successfully accomplish objectives of the company. The opinion of George (2016) agrees with the above that team work can be important part of an effective work place. An efficient team can be trained as a group, help each other maximize their job performance, and help to make an inviting and productive atmosphere for new team members. Certain elements of teamwork in the workplace should be in place in your company to benefit from group organization. These are, collaboration, conflict resolution, roles and responsibilities and differing points of view.

### **2.2.1 Benefits of Teamwork**

Dave (2015) posits that two heads are better than one as contained in an old adage which encouraged team work. Teamwork in the work palace facilitates answer for wining sales and here are the six ways that teamwork benefits you in the work place. These are: Teamwork fosters creativity and learning, teamwork blends complementary strengths, it builds trust and confidence, it teaches conflict resolution skills, teamwork promotes a wider sense of ownership and teamwork encourages healthy risk-taking.

Also, Billie and Demand (2016) outlines the benefits of teamwork in the work place as follows: Teamwork promotes Espirit de corps, teamwork enhances job satisfaction, it promotes efficient resource utilization, it provides atmosphere for creative environment, teamwork enhances learning environment and teamwork promotes effective communication.

In health care, teamwork is a dynamic process involving two or more health care professionals with complementary background and skills, sharing common health goals and exercising concerted physical and mental effort in assessing, planning, or evaluating patient care (Olumide, 2006). Therefore teamwork needs competence. Good teamwork emerges when the team feels that all its members have the skill, knowledge and capability to handle issues or have the necessary access to all the help needed to accomplish the mission the team was created for.

### **2.3 Teamwork and Epidemic Control**

Since epidemic control strategies are to be implemented by the health care professionals in the local government area, the value of effective teamwork must be shared and identified with the health care professionals. There should be established protocols for team interaction in order to make each member's goals clear, foster the best relationships, express the value of cooperation, share team members' strengths, manage conflict effectively, and cultivate emotional awareness in your team.

Leaders should communicate clearly that collaboration and teamwork are expected and that no one really owns a process or work area all by him/herself; because teamwork as well as individual achievement promote successful implementation of epidemic control activities in order to have an epidemic free environment that enhances the health status of all citizens in the community.

### **3.0 Methodology**

Survey research method was used. This study investigated the influence of teamwork on epidemic control among medical and health officers in local government areas of Osun State. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was administered to medical and health officers in the 30 local government areas of Osun State. Administration and collection of the instrument lasted for three months. Retrieved data were analyzed and presented

with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics that is: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation and simple correlation table.

#### 4.0 Findings and Discussions

Data were collected through the questionnaire. Data generated through questionnaire were collated, coded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics that is: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation and simple correlation in analyzing the responses of the medical and health officers. The return rate of 306 copies of the questionnaire dispatched to the medical and health officers in the 30 local government areas of Osun State show that 285 copies representing 93.1% were duly completed and returned while 21 copies representing 6.9% of the questionnaire were not duly completed. Therefore the results presented in the following sections were based on the 285 copies of the questionnaire that were duly completed and returned.

#### 4.1 Answers to Research Questions

This section consists of the results from the descriptive statistics on the account of the two Research Questions posed in the study:

**Questions 1: What are the epidemic control activities conducted by health workers in the local government areas of Osun State?**

**Table 4.1: Showing Epidemic control activities conducted by health workers in the local government areas of Osun State**

S/N	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
1	L.G.A. authorities use information generated through teamwork for specific control action	3 1.1	-	156 54.7	122 42.8	3.41	.555
2	Valuable information generated through teamwork enhances effective epidemic control	6 2.1	3 1.1	134 47.0	138 48.4	3.44	.630
3	Improved case management is achieved through epidemic control activities	-	18 6.3	146 51.2	117 41.1	3.35	.598
4	Appropriate control measures facilitate reduction of incidence rate of epidemic prone diseases	-	16 5.6	140 49.1	122 42.8	3.38	.594
5	Epidemic control activities usually enhance reduction in prevalence rate of epidemic prone diseases	-	22 7.7	146 51.2	110 38.6	3.32	.613

6	Awareness campaign on epidemic control strategies by L.G.A. authorities contribute to improved health and well-being	-	9 3.2	110 38.6	162 56.8	3.54	.560
7	Reduction in mortality rate is made possible via effective epidemic control activities	3 1.1	21 7.4	118 41.4	139 48.8	3.40	.674
8	Timely epidemic control intervention limits the number of infected persons within the shortest possible time	6 2.1	15 5.3	127 44.6	133 46.7	3.38	.687
9	Epidemic control activities reduce local government authorities' expenses on health issues within their catchment areas	10 3.5	21 7.4	123 43.2	127 44.6	3.31	.760
10	A well documented epidemic control activities provide information to guide subsequent outbreak	-	9 3.2	154 54.0	115 40.4	3.38	.549
11	Epidemic control activities facilitate stoppage of disease epidemics.	6 2.1	27 9.5	133 46.7	115 40.4	3.27	.721
12	Epidemic control plans are based on available relevant information	3 1.1	11 3.9	126 44.2	141 49.5	3.44	.625
13	Epidemic control plan usually attracts the attention of donor agencies	-	44 15.4	156 54.7	78 27.4	3.12	.652
14	Well implemented epidemic control activities provided specific information about the source(s) of the outbreak.	4 1.4	9 3.2	181 63.5	87 30.5	3.25	.581
15	Effective epidemic control activities facilitate reduction in case detection rate	12 4.2	21 7.4	116 40.7	132 46.3	3.31	.788

**Source: Field Survey, 2016**

**SD = 1 = Strongly Disagree, D = 2 = Disagree, A = 3 = Agree, SA = 4 = Strongly Agree**

**X = Mean, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation**

The result in Table 4.1 reveals that (using the mean), respondents strongly agreed that awareness campaign on epidemic control strategies contribute to improved health and well-being ( $\bar{x} = 3.54$ ). It was revealed that valuable information generated through teamwork enhance epidemic control ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ), including the fact that epidemic control plans are based on available relevant information ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ). These confirmed the positive influence of teamwork on epidemic control. The respondents also agreed strongly that reduction in mortality rate is made possible via effective epidemic control activities ( $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ), timely epidemic control intervention limits the number of infected persons within the shortest possible time ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ), appropriate

control measures facilitate reduction of incidence rate of epidemic prone diseases ( $\times = 3.38$ ), a well documented epidemic control activities provide information to guide subsequent outbreak ( $\times = 3.38$ ) and epidemic control activities usually enhance reduction in incidence and prevalence rates of epidemic prone diseases ( $\times = 3.38$  &  $\times = 3.32$ ) respectively. Finally, the finding revealed that a well implemented epidemic control activities conducted in the local government areas through appropriate control measures will aid improved well-being, because they usually enhance reduction in prevalence rate of epidemic prone diseases and timely epidemic control intervention limits the number of infected persons within the shortest possible time.

**Research Questions 2: What is the existing nature of teamwork among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State?**

**Table 4.2: Showing the existing nature of teamwork among health workers in the local government areas of Osun State**

S/N	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Teamwork is nested within a broader concept of team performance in my LGA	6 2.1	20 7.0	148 51.9	111 38.9	3.29	.684
2	Training and sharing of uniform value system are enhanced via teamwork in my L.G.A.	6 2.1	46 16.1	176 61.8	53 18.6	2.97	.663
3	Recognition of the skill possessed by everybody in the team can be discovered through teamwork in my L.G.A.	9 3.2	31 10.9	140 49.1	105 36.8	3.21	.754
4	Teamwork fosters unity and contributes to the success of epidemic control in my local government Area.	3 1.1	40 14.0	144 50.5	87 30.5	3.16	.697
5	Collaboration exists among health care professionals in my L.G.A.	6 2.1	19 6.7	114 40.0	143 50.2	3.42	.711
6	Conflict resolution strategies are in place among health care professionals in my LGA	3 1.1	19 6.7	123 43.2	140 49.1	3.42	.663
7	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to enhance job specialization among health care professionals	3 1.1	24 8.4	160 56.1	98 34.4	3.24	.644
8	Different points of view are usually harnessed for effective decision making	-	6 2.1	150 52.6	129 45.3	3.43	.537
9	Teamwork fosters creativity and learning	6	9	105	165	3.51	.664

	environment	2.1	3.2	36.8	57.9		
10	Teamwork facilitates job satisfaction and efficient resource utilization	3 1.1	6 2.1	133 46.7	143 50.2	3.46	.596
11	Teamwork encourages healthy risk-taking taking among health care professionals	6 2.1	19 6.7	141 49.5	119 41.8	3.31	.689
12	Teamwork promotes wider sense of ownership among medical and health officers	6 2.1	18 6.3	144 50.5	117 41.1	3.31	.683
13	Teamwork promotes Espirit de corps among health care professionals in the LGA	3 1.1	25 8.8	120 42.1	137 48.1	3.36	.688
14	Teamwork teaches conflict resolution skills and promotes effective communication among health workers.	-	16 5.6	160 56.1	109 38.2	3.33	.577

**Source: Field Survey, 2016**

**SD = 1 = Strongly Disagree, D = 2 = Disagree, A = 3 = Agree, SA = 4 = Strongly Agree**

**X = Mean, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation**

The findings in Table 4.2 shows that (using the mean), people strongly agreed that Teamwork fosters creativity and learning environment ( $\bar{x} = 3.51$ ). It revealed that Teamwork facilitates job satisfaction and efficient resource utilization ( $\bar{x} = 3.46$ ). Teamwork promotes Espirit de corps among health care professionals ( $\bar{x} = 3.36$ ) and that Teamwork teaches conflict resolution skills and promotes effective communication among health workers ( $\bar{x} = 3.31$ ). Results also show that Different points of view are usually harnessed for effective decision making ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ) and Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to enhance job specialization among health care professionals ( $\bar{x} = 3.24$ ). Hence, it could be inferred that the efficient teamwork contributes to epidemic control, because creative and learning environment facilitate effective investigation and response action in the local government areas.

#### **4.2 Test of Research Hypothesis**

This section consists of the results from the inferential statistics on the account of the one hypothesis tested:

**H<sub>0</sub>: Teamwork has no significant relationship with Epidemic control in local government areas of Osun State.**

**Table 4.3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation summary table, showing the relationship between Teamwork and Epidemic control in the local government areas of Osun State**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	R	P	Sig
Epidemic Control Activities	285	50.356	5.404	283	.732**	.000	Sig
Teamwork	285	49.583	5.710				

**Source: Field Survey, 2016**

Table 4.3 shows positive and significant relationship between teamwork and epidemic control (Df = 283, N = 285,  $r = .732^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The p-value associated with the r statistics is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between teamwork and epidemic control activities. The table further revealed a positive significance exerted by teamwork on epidemic control activities. It implies that a unit increase in teamwork will increase the tendency for epidemic control activities in the studied area. To further understand the proportion of weight exerted by teamwork with a determinant of coefficient  $r^2 (.732)^2$  was estimated = 0.53582. This means that teamwork factor accounted for 53.6% variation for the prediction of epidemic control activities. That is a unit increase in teamwork improves epidemic control activities by 53.6%.

## 5.0 Summary of Findings

Major findings of the study are outlined below:

1. Findings established that a well implemented epidemic control activities conducted in the local government areas through appropriate control measures will aid improved well-being, because they usually enhance reduction in prevalence rate of epidemic prone diseases and timely epidemic control intervention limits the number of infected persons within the shortest possible time.
2. The findings showed that efficient teamwork contributes to epidemic control, because creative and learning environment facilitate effective investigation and response action in the local government areas.
3. The result showed that there is positive and significant relationship between teamwork and epidemic control in the local government areas of Osun State.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The inference from this study established that teamwork influences epidemic control in the local government areas. The effectiveness of epidemic control depends on efficient teamwork for generation of accurate and reliable health information for action. Effective epidemic control depends on the extent to which teamwork is taken seriously by health care professionals in the local government areas. Therefore, effective epidemic control can only be achieved through efficient teamwork that placed premium on creative and learning environment that facilitates effective investigation and response action in the local government areas.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. State government and LGAs should ensure constant implementation of various epidemic control interventions via collaboration and teamwork among health care professionals.
2. State and LGAs should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to enhance job specialization and promote *Espirit de corps* among health care professionals in the LGA
3. State government should provide a reliable system for training and sharing of uniform value system among health care professionals which enhance efficient teamwork for capacity building in relation to epidemic control in the LGA.

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