

# EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS ON SKIN HEALTH: IMPROVING AWARENESS OF ATOPIC DERMATITIS AMONG NIGERIAN UNDERGRADUATES

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## Abstract

Atopic dermatitis (AD), a chronic inflammatory skin condition, is prevalent among Nigerian undergraduates. Limited awareness and misconceptions hinder effective management, necessitating targeted educational interventions. This research paper examines the effectiveness of two educational interventions in improving AD awareness among undergraduates. The study involved two groups of randomly selected undergraduates, one receiving a 60-minute interactive session on AD and the other a 30-minute lecture-based session. Before and after the interventions, participants completed questionnaires assessing AD knowledge, attitudes, and self-care practices. Results showed significant improvements in AD knowledge and attitudes in both groups, with the interactive session group demonstrating higher knowledge gain. Participants reported increased likelihood of seeking professional help, adhering to treatment recommendations, and adopting preventive measures. These findings highlight the importance of educational interventions in empowering undergraduates with knowledge and skills to manage AD effectively.

**Key words:** Dermatological health, Health interventions, Microbiome modulation

## Introduction

Atopic dermatitis (AD), a common chronic inflammatory skin condition, is characterized by persistent itching, redness, and dryness (Eczema Society, 2023). It affects individuals of all ages, including a significant proportion of Nigerian undergraduates (Ajayi & Ayeni, 2012).

Limited awareness about AD among the general population is a major challenge in effective management (Saunte et al., 2020). A study by Amina et al. (2018) revealed that over 70% of Nigerian undergraduates have inadequate knowledge about AD. This lack of awareness often leads to misconceptions, improper self-care practices, and poor treatment outcomes.

Educational interventions have been identified as a promising strategy to address this knowledge gap. By providing accurate information and fostering positive attitudes towards AD, educational programs can empower individuals to manage their condition effectively (Harris et al., 2020).

## Methods

This study employed a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up design. Two hundred undergraduates from a Nigerian university were randomly assigned to two intervention groups:

Group 1 (n = 100): Interactive session involving PowerPoint presentation, group discussions, and interactive role play.

Group 2 (n = 100): Lecture-based session involving PowerPoint presentation and a question-and-answer period.

The interactive session lasted 60 minutes, while the lecture-based session lasted 30 minutes. Both sessions covered topics related to AD, including its causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment options, and self-care strategies.

Before and after the interventions and at a follow-up visit one month later, participants completed self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires assessed participants' knowledge about AD, their attitudes towards the condition,

and their self-care practices.

## Results

### Knowledge

Both intervention groups demonstrated significant improvements in AD knowledge after the interventions ( $p < 0.001$ ). The interactive session group had higher mean knowledge scores ( $9.2 \pm 1.2$ ) than the lecture-based session group ( $8.5 \pm 1.0$ ) at post-test ( $p = 0.002$ ). This difference was maintained at follow-up ( $p = 0.01$ ).

### Attitudes

Both groups reported more positive attitudes towards AD after the interventions. They were more likely to believe that AD is a manageable condition ( $p < 0.001$ ), that it is not contagious ( $p < 0.001$ ), and that seeking professional help is beneficial ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### Self-Care Practices

Participants in both groups reported increased likelihood of seeking professional help for AD ( $p < 0.001$ ), adhering to treatment recommendations ( $p < 0.001$ ), and adopting preventive measures ( $p < 0.001$ ) after the interventions.

### Follow-Up

The knowledge gains and positive attitude changes observed at post-test were largely sustained at follow-up one month later. Participants continued to demonstrate high levels of AD knowledge, positive attitudes, and willingness to engage in self-care practices.

## Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that educational interventions can effectively improve awareness about AD among Nigerian undergraduates. Both the interactive and lecture-based sessions led to significant increases in knowledge, positive attitude changes, and improved self-care practices.

The interactive session was particularly effective in fostering knowledge retention, as evidenced by higher knowledge scores and sustained knowledge gain at follow-up. This suggests that interactive approaches, which involve active participation and engagement, may be more effective in promoting long-term learning (Bani-Ahmad & Cunningham, 2019).

The positive attitude changes observed in both groups indicate that educational interventions can help reduce stigma and promote acceptance of AD. This is crucial for individuals with AD, as stigma can lead to social isolation and affect their well-being (Dooley et al., 2019).

The improved self-care practices reported by participants suggest that educational interventions can empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to

manage their condition effectively. By promoting appropriate self-care strategies, educational programs can reduce disease severity, improve quality of life, and prevent complications (Greaves & Mawer, 2019).

### Limitations

This study has some limitations. It was conducted in a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the follow-up period was relatively short, and the long-term sustainability of the observed improvements cannot be determined.

## Conclusion

Educational interventions are effective in improving awareness about AD among Nigerian undergraduates. Both interactive and lecture-based sessions can lead to increased knowledge, positive attitude changes, and improved self-care practices. Interactive approaches may be particularly effective in promoting long-term learning and knowledge retention. By empowering individuals with AD with accurate information and skills, educational interventions can significantly contribute to the effective management of this common skin condition.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Educational programs on AD should be incorporated into university curricula and health education campaigns.

Interactive approaches should be prioritized in educational interventions to promote long-term learning.

Holistic interventions that address both knowledge and attitude barriers should be implemented.

Follow-up strategies should be employed to reinforce knowledge and sustain positive behavior changes.

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