

# **Factors associated with sexual behaviour among public university students in Tanzania**

## **ABSTRACT**

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Majority of students joining universities in Tanzania are aged between 19 and 29 years. Although they form an important work force for the nation, they are at high risk of HIV/AIDS infection. HIV/AIDS in many developing countries affects population aged 15-49 years. According to the 2003-2004 Tanzania HIV/AIDS Indicator Survey (THIS), 7% of Tanzanian adults are HIV positive. The prevalence for both men and women increases with age and peaks at age group 30-34 as well as 40-44 for women and men respectively. Furthermore, education wise prevalence increases by levels of education. In view of this examining sexual behaviour of university students is important.

The general objective of this study was to determine factors associated with sexual behaviour of students in public universities in Tanzania. Specifically the study examined; level of involvement of students in risky sexual behaviour; level of awareness and attitude concerning HIV/AIDS; levels of misconception about HIV/AIDS transmission; influence of age, sex, marital status, university entrance status on sexual behaviour.

The study adopted a cross-sectional design using closed ended self-administered questionnaires to a sample of 360 students from two major public universities in Tanzania. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.5 version was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics and index scales we used to gauge awareness, attitude, risky sexual behaviour and misconceptions on means of transmission of HIV/AIDS.

The key findings indicate that most university students are involved in risky sexual undertakings. Risky sexual behaviour was influenced by as sex, age, marital status, and entrance status ( $P < 0.05$ ). Student girls were more at risk than their counterparts. Risk of sexual behaviour increased with student's age up to 35-39 age bracket. Levels of

knowledge about HIV/AIDS were found to be high. However, misconceptions on how HIV/AIDS can be transmitted were prevalent. Sexual behaviour was not associated with attitude towards HIV/AIDS and perceived barriers to sexual behavioural change.

These findings have policy implications; though students were found to have high levels of knowledge and positive attitude towards HIV/AIDS, their sexual behaviour does not reflect these values. The study recommends government and universities to develop policies, programmes and strategies to address sexual behaviours issues targeting students using peer-based interventions. In addition, mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into university curricula is recommended.

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