

EFFECTS OF HIV/AIDS INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES ON THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTHS IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS pandemic has been witnessed in Tanzania for the last two decades. Major route of HIV infection is heterosexual intercourse contributing about 90% of the epidemic. Sexual behavior of youth is one of the catalysts for the rapid spread of the disease. HIV/AIDS causes loss of young adults in their productive years of life, which affects the overall economic output. The youth are the most affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic in Tanzania. Tanzania has developed interventions to slow down the spread of HIV. The effectiveness of these interventions is unknown. This paper examines the effectiveness of government strategies in combating HIV/AIDS transmission among the adolescents/youth in Tanzania.

The study main objective is to determine effectiveness of the government policy on and prevention strategies against HIV/AIDS on the sexual behavior of the youth. Specifically the paper examines whether there is a change in the level of awareness of HIV/AIDS, misconceptions on HIV/AIDS transmission, condom use, status of pre-marital sexual intercourse, and prevalence of multiple partners. The paper uses data from a study conducted in November 2004, using a cross-sectional survey with quantitative data from a sample of 740 youths aged between 15-24 years in rural and urban areas of Mbeya and Mwanza Regions in Tanzania. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were also employed.

The paper reveals that youth are aware of HIV/AIDS, modes of transmission and means of prevention and the awareness is more in urban areas than in rural areas. Misconceptions on HIV/AIDS transmission are prevalent in both the rural and urban areas with rural areas reporting more misconceptions than urban areas. Most youths are sexually active and pre-marital sexual intercourse is high. Median age of onset of sexual intercourse is 16 years. Prevalence of multiple partnerships is high. Non-cohabitating respondents have higher frequency of multiple partnerships than cohabitating respondents. Knowledge of Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT)

services is high in both the rural and urban areas but only a few youths had actually tested. Condom acceptability is relatively low in both the rural and urban areas despite of high awareness of condoms, sources for condoms and frequency one condom could be used.

The paper calls for more efforts to change the behavior of the adolescents/youth. It argues for a strong HIV/AIDS program for youths before onset of sexual intercourse that encourages them to delay sex. The study also proposes the intensification of programs that promote sexual education to young people who are not yet sexually active. It recommends for encouraging youths to go for VCT.

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