

RESEARCH TOPIC

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONDOM USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KENYA: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

A Research Project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Sociology, University of Nairobi.

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ABSTRACT

Two decades of experience and research provide new insights into the role of condoms for AIDS prevention in the developing world. Condoms are about 90 percent effective for preventing HIV transmission, and their use has grown rapidly in many countries. Condoms have produced substantial benefit in countries like Kenya, where both transmission and the burden of disease are concentrated among the general population. Yet, the factors that influence condom use in a setting with widespread heterosexual transmission, such as ours however, remain unestablished.

Condoms offer dual protection against unwanted pregnancy and some sexually transmitted infections, and are one of the most effective means of preventing the transmission of HIV. Sexually transmitted infections have been shown to facilitate HIV infection, and therefore interventions to promote condom use are essential in efforts to slow the spread of HIV. To protect young people against infection, it is of significance to understand adolescent sexual behavior and the factors that influence their use of condoms.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, as in much of the rest of the world, a high proportion of people become sexually active during adolescence. Kenya is no exception. The mean age of sexual debut among 15–24-year-olds is at 15 years, (KDHS, 2003) estimates. There is no doubt therefore that sexual behavior of adolescents and youth will play a major role in the fight against the AIDS epidemic, for young people make up a large and growing proportion of the population in Kenya and sexual behavior formed during adolescence is likely to manifest into adulthood.

It is against this background that this study sought to find out factors that influence condom use at the University of Nairobi, given that the University is a miniature of the Kenyan society comprising students who fall within the vulnerable 15-24 year's age bracket. More so, the perception is that university students are knowledgeable in matters regarding HIV/AIDS consequently they are likely to take necessary measures to protect themselves against the risk of infection.

The study therefore explored the determinants of condom use among university of Nairobi students. It focused on establishing the relationship between perceived threat of AIDS and condom acceptability and use, finding out the attitudes and perceptions regarding condom use. It further sought to establish if there are socio-economic and environmental differences between condom users and non-condom users. It has been argued in some quarters that socio economic factors may affect condom use.

To achieve the stated objectives a descriptive cross sectional survey combining quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted. The study population consisted 89 non randomly selected respondents. These were resident University of Nairobi students who were purposively selected using convenience sampling method. To obtain additional information three focus group discussions were conducted.

The findings of this study revealed that respondents' understanding of HIV/AIDS was ample. Majority of the students (90%) believed that HIV/AIDS exists, 80% were conversant with the causes of AIDS, as they were of the view that AIDS is caused by a certain virus-human immunodeficiency syndrome. Ninety-two per cent of the students were of the opinion that AIDS could be contracted through unprotected sexual intercourse, unscreened blood transfusion and contaminated sharp objects, and 61% believed it could be contracted through transplacenta. On the cure of AIDS, 60% believed it could not be cured, 10.5% believed it could be cured while 15.5% were not quite sure.

Consistent with numerous other studies, this study found high awareness levels of condom. Of the 89 respondents interviewed 94% indicated they have heard about the condom. While 65% reported they have used the condom. According to the study findings, consistent condom use is low with no more than 35% reporting to have used the condom consistently in the past month of interview.

Finally, it emerged from the study that the impact of condoms may be limited by inconsistent use, low use among those at highest risk, and negative perceptions that may impede use. Recommendations therefore include increased condom promotion for groups at high risk such as cohabiting partners, more rigorous education on consistent and correct

use of the condom, and more research on how best to integrate condom promotion with other prevention strategies is proposed.