

The impact of HIV/AIDS awareness on the sexual risk behaviour of students in public secondary schools in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract:

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the human immune system rendering it vulnerable to attacks from other diseases, while Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an infectious disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus. The major mode of transmission of HIV I AIDS is through sexual intercourse with an infected person. Sexual risk behaviour in respect to HIV/AIDS refers to sexual behaviour that put individuals at risk to contract the disease. The aim of the study was to assess the impact of HIV/AIDS awareness on sexual risk behaviour among students in public secondary schools in Nairobi and recommend effective HIV/AIDS awareness tools. The specific objectives were: to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and establish their influence on the sexual risk behaviour patterns of the students in public secondary schools in Nairobi; to establish the sources that secondary school students use to get information on HIV/AIDS and to assess the public secondary school students' awareness/knowledge levels regarding HIV I AIDS. The study was informed by three socio-cognitive theories in HIV I AIDS prevention and behaviour change. These theories are: Health Belief Model (HBM), AIDS Risk Reduction Model (ARRM) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The study relied on both primary and secondary data. It was conducted in six public secondary schools in Nairobi and was based on a descriptive survey research design. Both equal probability and systematic sampling procedures were used. Questionnaires were used for primary data collection. The data was analysed and presented using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This study established that while there is a high level of HIV I AIDS awareness, students continue to engage in high risk sexual behaviours. Knowledge levels on HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention was found to have fairly strong correlation with various socio-demographic factors like age, religion, among others. The study recommends an intensified contemporary awareness approaches in dealing with the risk behaviour patterns. Specific recommendations include education of parents on the need for awareness and communication, the need for HIV I AIDS educational curriculum development in schools as well as re-intensification of media campaigns that bear in mind the current cultural and technological advancement. One such revolutionary tool is the social media. 'Facebook', 'twitter', 'hi-5' and others are just a part of the huge environment that should set the pace for latter-day awareness agenda.