

Title: Factors predisposing adolescents to HIV/AIDS in selected secondary schools of Kiambu district, Central province, Kenya

Author: Karuru, Patricia Wanjiru

Abstract: The current world is faced with the global pandemic of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome AIDS, which has become a serious health problem and a tragedy. In Kenya adolescent mortality and morbidity resulting from HIV /AIDS is alarming. The age group 15 to 19 years old constitutes 35 percent of all AIDS cases and that an estimated 41,000 youth had contracted AIDS by the year 2000 (UNAIDS, 2000). Such statistics underscore the urgent need to address HIV/AIDS among the adolescents in Kenya. The study set out to investigate factors that predispose adolescents in secondary schools to HIV/AIDS. This was a cross-sectional descriptive study aimed at investigating the factors that predispose adolescents into high-risk sexual behavior leading to HIV/AIDS infection. The population consisted of 600 secondary school students from the three selected Divisions in Kiambu District, Kenya. Out of the five Divisions in Kiambu District, three Divisions were randomly selected for the study. The stratification sampling technique was used to divide the schools into four categories after which from each category of school, two schools were randomly selected for the study. Kiambu District recorded high prevalence HIV/AIDS infection in the year 2001 being the highest in Central Province. This created the need for interventions and especially on adolescents since they are in their transition from childhood into adulthood. Three Divisions which were randomly sampled from five Divisions were; Kiambaa, Githunguri and Lari divisions where a total number of 8 schools were chosen randomly for the study. Four categories of schools that included Single Boys and Girls, Mixed day and Boarding were stratified. HIV/AIDS awareness questionnaire was used to gather data from randomly selected forms one to four students. Descriptive statistics, chi-square and ANOVA were utilized for the analysis of the data. This study indicated that: 1. The knowledge of the students on facts about HIV/AIDS was not reflected in their preventive measures against the diseases. Although 78% of the students knew that risk of getting HIV/AIDS is increased by engaging in unprotected sex, hardly do they use condoms. Only 12.8% of the study population reported to have used condoms on irregular basis. 2. Majority of adolescents 59% did not perceive themselves to be at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and only 41% considered themselves to be at risk. However there was no statistical significant difference between male and female students perception of getting HIV/AIDS ($\chi^2=3.069$; $p=1$ $P> 0.05$ $df= 4$). 3. The students reported having several sexual partners with girls 47% reporting high number than boys who reported 45%. Also, majority of girls 16.7% unlike boys 2% meet their sexual partners in drinking pubs and bars. The study recommends that adolescents must learn the facts before they become sexually active, and the information needs to be regularly reinforced and built on both the classroom and beyond. It is also essential to reach young people before they engage in high-risk behavior. Information on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, as well as life skills, should be integrated into primary and secondary schools throughout the year.