

PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS OF SECOND CYCLE INSTITUTIONS AT K. E. E. A. MUNICIPALITY ON HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT

The scourge of Human Immune deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) had been a pandemic some time ago and continues to give a lot of people great worry. It has been given a lot of sleepless nights to various homes. This virus rendered some children orphans, some mothers became widows with some men widowers. Since the first case was diagnosed many professionals including doctors and scientists have tried to find an antidote to it. The attention keeps swinging from one disease to another. Diseases such as Serious Acquired Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had come and gone but HIV and AIDS had been with mankind for long. This research sought to examine the perceptions of students of second cycle institutions towards the prevention of HIV and AIDS. The research was carried out in Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Three research questions were formulated to guide the research work. The sample for the study was three hundred (300) students from three second cycle institutions in the KEEA Municipality. The study showed that though much education had been carried out in various places to help curb the spread of HIV and AIDS the fight should still continue. The type of research design used was descriptive survey. The research findings revealed that people should be encouraged to change their behaviours and attitudes towards HIV and AIDS education. This is because no matter how HIV and AIDS education is carried out, if the citizens are adamant and continue to do things in their indifferent ways the spread would still persist. Also, adolescents should be motivated to abstain from premarital sex till they are matured for marriage. It further suggested the use of condom (both male and female) to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS pandemic. The share of the use of sharp objects such as blade should be discouraged as it is a factor to the spread of HIV and AIDS. Also, married couples should be encouraged to remain faithful to their married partners to help combat the pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Perception, Students & Aids Prevention

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The world over has been battling with many diseases from different sources. Some of these diseases are caused by virus, bacteria and other sources. Some years ago, the world was hard hit by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). This SARS disease emanated from coronavirus that infects humans, bats and other mammals. It was expected to be enveloped positive-sense single-stranded RNA virus that usually enters its host cell by binding to the angiotensin covering enzyme 2 receptor. (Zheng, Guan & Lee (2004). This disease gains much attention depending on how fast it spread from one country to another and the number of lives claimed by such an epidemic. As the disease subsided a little then Ebola also emerged.

Ebola like the SARS was also so severe and caught the attention of the World Health Organisation (WHO) the United Nation (UN) agency that caters for world health problems. Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) surveillance and response preparedness was established as a wake-up call for combatting this dreadful disease (Adokiya 2016). The researcher

continued that the surveillance of such disease should be strengthened in Ghana to prevent it from causing havoc to dear lives in Ghana. At times the effects of such diseases might have social, economic and psychological implications. SARS and Ebola have different ways of transmission on like water borne diseases and those which are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Among diseases that got much attention all over the world in 2016 was Ebola. (WHO 2016) reported that in 2016 Ebola claimed as many as eleven thousand three hundred and fifteen (11,315) lives in only West Africa. The breakdown are; Liberia Four thousand eight hundred and nine (4,809), Sierra Leone three thousand nine hundred and fifty five (3,955), Guinea two thousand five hundred and thirty six (2,536) and Nigeria fifteen (15) (WHO 2016). Like all other pandemic, Ebola is carried by Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

There are many other diseases of which the sources are not known to mankind. There are other known diseases caused by viruses, which includes sexually transmitted disease (STDs). These STDs include Molluscum Contagiosum; a benign viral skin infection characterised by numerous small rounds dimpled pearly white nodules, Infectious Mononucleosis (IMN). It is often called “the kissing disease” because the virus is usually transmitted through saliva (Aguilar and Galbes 2006). Condyloma Acuminatum; as a growth resembling a wart on the skin or a mucous membrane usually of the genital or anus. There is another Sexually Transmitted Disease (STDs) called Cytomegalovirus; a viral disease that causes enlargement of epithelial cells, usually resulting in mild infections but causing more serious disorders in AIDS patients and in new born babies (Aguilar and Galbes 2006). Genital Herpes; refers to several types of skin eruptions characterised by formation of blisters. Another disease that worth mentioning in this study is Viral Hepatitis. This is an inflammation of the liver caused by viruses, bacterial infections or continuous exposure to alcohol, drug, toxic chemicals, such as those found in aerosol sprays and paint thinners and AIDS, a type of opportunistic disease which emerges from HIV among others. Some of these diseases come simultaneously to the infected person (Crewe & Maritz 2005).

Among the earlier identified STDs, was Acquired Immunodeficiency \syndrome (AIDS) a human virus disease that ravages the immune system, then undermining the bodies’ abilities to defend themselves from infections and diseases among the identified pandemic diseases (Boler & Carroll 2003). Humans infected with HIV result in complex chronic diseases known as AIDS which may usually take ten (10) years or more to develop (MoESS 2006). This AIDS was isolated from other STDs in 1983, due to the danger it caused to mankind which was so different from other STDs. Since then it has astronomically spread wider than all the known STDs (MoESS 2006). This has had adverse effects psychologically, socially and economically on many human beings.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a disorder in which the immune system is gradually weakened and eventually disabled by the Human Immune Virus (HIV) (Weiten 2007). When the immune system is weakened then the possibility of the victim recovering from any infection becomes very difficult if not impossible. The related diseases that come with it include fever, diarrhoea and dry cough.

Since the HIV and AIDS were first diagnosed by Gottlieb an immunologist and professor at the University of Los Angeles (U. L. A.) in California, discovered what was considered as the first case of AIDS in January 1981 (Boler & Carroll 2003), several programmes, actions, campaigns, commissions, advocacy and projects have been designed and implemented to halt the spread of this pestilence. Many doctors and scientists have researched and written about its infection rate. Many researches are still on going. HIV and AIDS have received much media attention within very short period of its emergence than any other diseases. At times the attention might dwindle switching to other diseases.

To help in the HIV and AIDS awareness education and to fight against the spread of the disease Teacher

Education Division (TED) of Ghana Education Service (GES) has made it compulsory for all students from Colleges of Education in Ghana to offer a one credit hour course in HIV and AIDS Education during the second semester of the first year and another two credit hour methodology course in teaching HIV and AIDS during the first semester of the second year. Graduates from Colleges of Education after their Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) are expected to disseminate the knowledge acquired to students from the Ghanaian Basic Schools. This is meant to equip the pupils' appropriate knowledge about HIV and AIDS before they are old enough to get marriage. Also, pupils in the basic schools always fall victim to sharing sharp objects such as blade to cut their finger and toe nails when they are in school. Comenius as cited in Ampadu and Ofori (2007) commented that education should begin in the early years of a child's life to fulfil nature's obligation before their minds get corrupted. Habits once formed will be very difficult to do away with. This is meant to inculcate awareness before they find themselves in the second cycle institutions. Further, many social, Government and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) had been organising many programmes to support HIV and AIDS Education but to no avail.

Furthermore, in adopting a psycho-social approach to check the spread of the disease, the Government of the Republic of Ghana also set up the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) in the year 2000 under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Ghana to coordinate and supervise all activities relating to HIV and AIDS control in Ghana. All these are done to ensure the younger generation who are being nurtured to become the future leaders to be sound and healthy. To support this assertion, Truss (2006) quoted Eisenhower as "Leaders of tomorrow are in our classrooms today". This therefore means the students that are in the schools today will be growing up to become the future leaders to hold responsible positions. If the nation is to get good leaders then it is time to take much pain in equipping them with all the requisite skills now that they are young. These among others are the reasons why many governments devote much chunk of monies towards health and education of the citizenry.

Adolescents' physical maturation fosters sexual dimensions to their emerging identity yet sexual expression varies dramatically with time and culture. (Myers 2008). He continued that half of sexually active Canadian teen girls have mistaken ideas about which birth control methods is likely to protect them from pregnancy and STIs. Unprotected sex has led to increased rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Two-thirds of new infections occur in people under 25 years (Myers 2008). He continued that teenage girls because of their less mature biological development and lower levels of defensive antibodies seems especially susceptible to STIs. (Myers 2008). Some male adults take advantage of the vulnerabilities of the adolescent girls and either abduct or rape the adolescent girls (Myers 2008).

United Nations Population Fund in addressing reproductive health population issues, collected data through Tanzania Media Women Association (TANWA) as cited in Crewe and Maritz in 2005 shows a strong correlation between HIV and AIDS, early school exit, teenage marriage and pregnancy. They were of the view that Tanzanian law allows girls aged as young as 15 years to get married with parental consent. They continued that between 20% and 40% get married before adulthood. In Ghana, young girls of 18 years and above are eligible to marry but some girls get married at times earlier than that age. The TANWA report was based on pregnant adolescent girls attending hospital in the densely populated South-Eastern Coast and Central Morogoro provinces commented that their husbands "characteristically have had multiple partners which put such girls in polygamous homes at risk of being infected with HIV and AIDS. Such young girls are immature and financially dependent on their husbands, the adolescent bride are unlikely to be able to negotiate for safer sex. The adolescent girls are said to be too young and ignorant about the importance of knowing their HIV and AIDS

status and lack the courage to convince their partners to know their sero-status (Mwinchande as reported in Crewe and Maritz 2005). These assertions may not be different from other countries world over.

Most often adolescent girls have their first sexual intercourse with male partners who are far older than the female partner and who have had sexual intercourse before (Mwinchande, as reported in Crewe and Maritz 2005). It becomes news and topic of discussion if the female sexual partner is far older than the male partner. In Ghana, it is very normal for the male to be older than the female. For fear of catastrophic consequences of HIV and AIDS infections many have adapted to the use of condom (Boler & Carroll 2003). The use of condom has become a household name worldwide. Records from Encyclopaedia of Health and Education indicated that, in Japan 850 million condoms are sold each year while United State of America (USA) 750 million condoms was sold with France 80 million condoms annually.

Information available to UNAIDS (2007) pegged the number of people living with HIV and AIDS in Ghana as at the year 2007 was 260,000. Out of this figure, 150,000 which represent 57.7% were women while mother to child transmission of HIV and AIDS was 17,000 representing 6.5%. From this figures, female and children were said to be more vulnerable than men considering the rate of infection. The reasons were that the females when infected also transmit the virus to their children. It continued that breast-feeding account for an estimated one-third of all HIV infections among infants. These called for the introduction of antiretroviral drugs to pregnant women.

Dutta (2015) partnered Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) to conduct a research on the cost and impacts of investing in the HIV response in Ghana revealed that, at the end of 2013 an estimated 189,930 to 206,280 adults and 34,560 to 36,250 children were living with HIV in Ghana. Dutta (2015) continued that there was strong evidence to suggest a disproportionately higher prevalence among certain key population groups such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and female sex workers (FSWs). He was of the view that Ghana's epidemic continues to evolve. Dutta (2015) commented that Ghana first adopted the policy of using antiretroviral (ARVs) for preventing mother to child transmission (PMTCT) in 2006. All these are steps that are used to help fight the spread of HIV and AIDS prevention.

Statistics from National Estimates and Projections for HIV and AIDS pegs the national prevalence rate at 1.69 per cent and estimated population of 334,714, with 19,931 estimated new cases of infection, and 14,181 estimated AIDS related death (GAC 2018). The study sought to the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS education to the adolescent and its influence on early marriage.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out how students in the second cycle institution feel with the acquisition and possession of condom.
- To check if early marriage has any effects on the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- To ascertain whether gender influence the students' attitudes towards HIV and AIDS prevention.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do students in the second cycle institutions feel to acquire and possess condom?
- How does early marriage influence the spread of HIV and AIDS?
- To what extent do students in the second cycle attitudes influence their HIV and AIDS prevention?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive survey also referred to as normative survey was used to examine and described the situation at hand. The descriptive or normative survey is the methods of investigation which attempts to describe and interpret what exists at present in the form of conditions, practices, processes, trends, effects, attitudes, beliefs perceptions etc. (Sidhu 2012). The descriptive survey was chosen because the research sought to determine the attitudes and perceptions of second cycle students towards HIV and AIDS prevention. With the study of perceptions and attitudes which requires anonymity, some people might feel reluctant to furnish the researchers with accurate information to authenticate the findings when not appropriately used.

Population

The population for the study considered all the students in all the three second cycle institutions in the Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem (K. E. E. A.) Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The population for the study was one thousand six hundred and thirty (1630). This was made up of Edinaman Senior High Secondary (SHS) 650, Eguafu Senior High Secondary (SHS) 460 students and Komenda Senior High Technical School (SHTS) 520 students.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample size of 300 was selected from the total population of 1630 based on the mathematical table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). With reference from the table the population of 1630 does not require the sample size of more than 317 respondents. This was the justification for the selected sample size of 300 for the study. The researchers used proportionate sample technique to determine the specific sample size picked from each institution. The researchers used both quota and random sampling techniques in selecting the sample.

The Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire, designed by the researchers under the guidance and supervision of a lecturer at the University of Cape Coast. It was crafted in the form of both close and open ended. The close-ended questionnaire was intended to request for short responses from the students. The open-ended questionnaire on the other hand called for free and extended responses in the respondents' own words. The researchers used only questionnaire for information gathering. Castle (2010) commented that, questionnaires as designed set of questions that are disseminated to a sample of research respondents in order that the researcher gather clear responses to a given phenomenon, which seems to be straight forward and relatively pain-free information. Weiten (2007) on the other hand viewed questionnaires as a series of written questions designed to obtain information about attitudes, opinions and specific aspects of their behaviours administered to respondents for information. The questionnaire was used because it enabled more respondents to be questioned fairly, quickly and were administered at least cost. Further, since the questions were structured, there were least biases in analysing the data yielded from the students' responses.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative approach was used in analysing and interpreting the data gathered from the questionnaire. Analysis of the data was done using simple percentages. The data were grouped into frequencies and percentages and then converted into bar graphs for easy and simple understanding. The emerging relationships between the variable were described and conclusions made were based on frequencies and percentages.

Analysis of Results and discussion of Research question 1

How do students in the second cycle institutions feel to acquire and possess condom?

The rationale for this question was to check if the various advertisements in print, electronic media and sign post all over the country on HIV and AIDS education and introduction of HIV and AIDS education in the colleges of Education impact the knowledge to students. Table 1 presents the summary of the result.

Table 1: Distribution of students by how they feel about the possession of condom

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Extremely shy	60	20
Shy	75	25
Normal	142	47.3
Very normal	23	7.7
Total	300	100

Source field data 2018

Table one (1) shows that, 60 respondents representing 20% ticked extremely shy, 75 respondents representing 25% said they felt shy, 142 representing 47.3% felt normal with 23 respondents representing 7.7% were very normal with the acquisition and possession of condom.

Comments from students about how they felt about condom use

Students were asked to comment on their responses. The statistics in figure 1 shows the multiple responses that students gave.

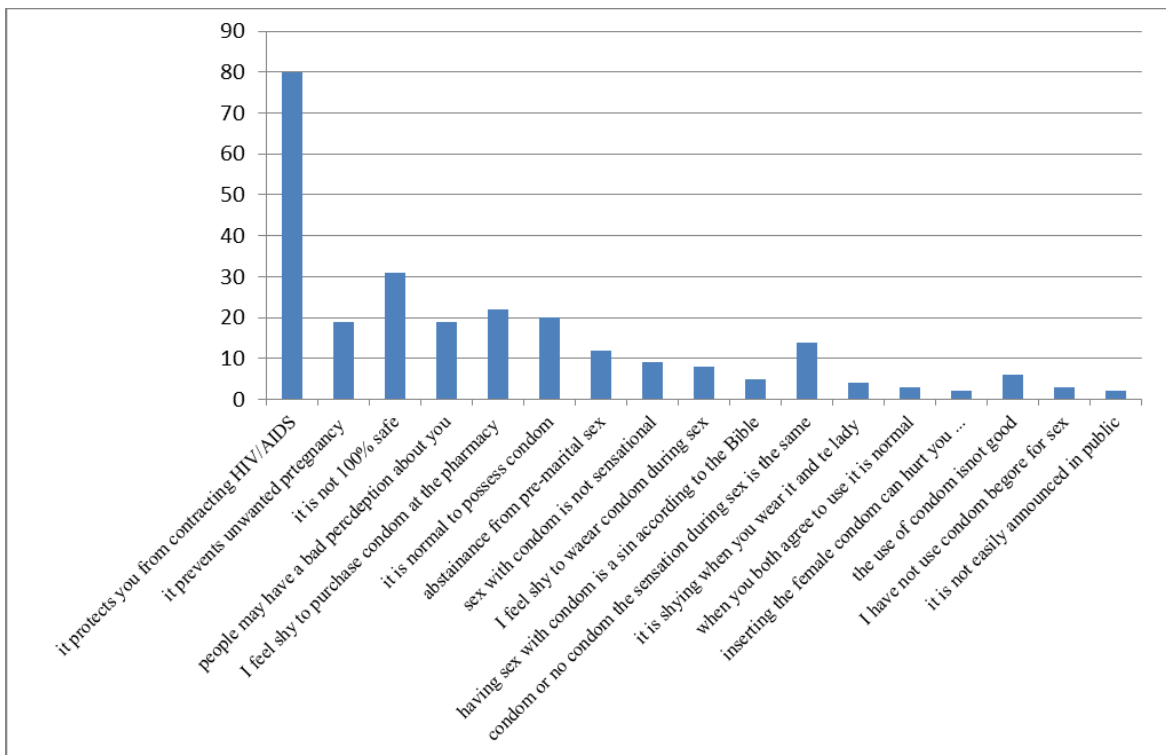


Figure 1: Showing comments respondent gave after the Research Question 1.
Source: Field data 2018

The uniqueness among the responses was that 80 respondents which represents 26.7% were of the view that condom protect one from contracting HIV and AIDS. 24 students representing 8% were of the view that it prevents unwanted pregnancy, 38 respondents which is 12.7% said condom use is not hundred per cent (100%) safe. 28 which was 9.3% felt shy to possess condom, 25 which was 8.3% felt normal when they purchase condom, 25 representing 8.3% suggested abstinence from pre-marital sexual intercourse with the rest given varied responses. This may then imply that those who felt shy to possess condoms may refuse to use condom during sexual intercourse. In such situations, the fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS may be very difficult to overcome. The researchers were of the view that education on the use of condom should be intensified. This supported the assertion made by Kirby (2002) to include discussion with students on the correct and consistent use of condom to help in HIV and AIDS education.

Research Question 2

How does early marriage influence the spread of HIV and AIDS?

The respondents were further asked to express their views whether early marriage had any effects on the spread of HIV and AIDS. The data is expressed in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Students by Early Marriage and HIV and AIDS Infections.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	123x	41
No	`Not Sure	45
`Not Sure	..42	14
Total	300	100

Source field data 2018

Information gathered from respondents as shown in table two indicates that 123 representing 41% were of the view that early marriage had effect on the spread of HIV and AIDS, 135 students representing 45% said early marriage had no effects on the spread of HIV and AIDS and 42 respondents representing 14% were not sure whether early marriage has effects on the spread of HIV and AIDS or not. Students were further asked to give reasons about why they gave that response.

Students Reasons on Early Marriage and HIV and AIDS

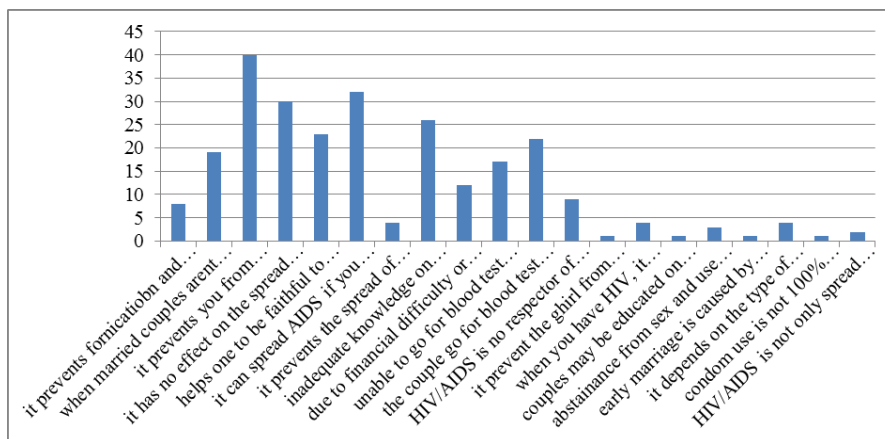


Figure 2: Students Responses to Reasons on Early Marriage and HIV and AIDS Infections

Data gathered from figure 2 shows divergent views given by respondents. The most popular views given by respondents were that early marriage prevent marriage partners from engaging in outside sexual intercourse (be faithful to partners), knowing one's partner very well, going for blood test before marriage, it prevents fornicating and others had no adequate information or the effects of early marriage and the effects on HIV and AIDS. Some also made mention that multiple partners may not influence the spread of HIV and AIDS if all of them were not infected with HIV and AIDS but all of them may be infected if any of them is infected with the virus.

Research Question 3

To what extent do students in the second cycle's attitudes influence their HIV and AIDS prevention?

The rationale behind this question was that there have been various researches supporting that females are more vulnerable in the spread of HIV and AIDS. Researchers agreed that females have much open space in their vaginas which have very thin fragile layers which may easily get wounds which the virus may easily enter to cause havoc.

Table 3

Distribution of Students by Whether Male and Female Have Similar Attitudes towards HIV and AIDS Prevention

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	192	64
No	60	20
Do not Know	48	16
Total	300	100

Source field data 2018

Table 3 shows that majority of 192 respondents representing 64% were of the view that males and females have similar attitudes towards HIV and AIDS prevention with 60 respondents representing 20% ticking that males and females do not have similar attitudes towards HIV and AIDS while 48 respondents representing 16% did not Know whether they have similar attitudes or not. Respondents were asked to give reasons of their choice. Figure 3 shows the reasons.

Students Reasons why Gender Influences HIV and AIDS Preventions

The respondents were further asked to give brief views about why they selected those responses. Summary of the findings is represented in figure 3.

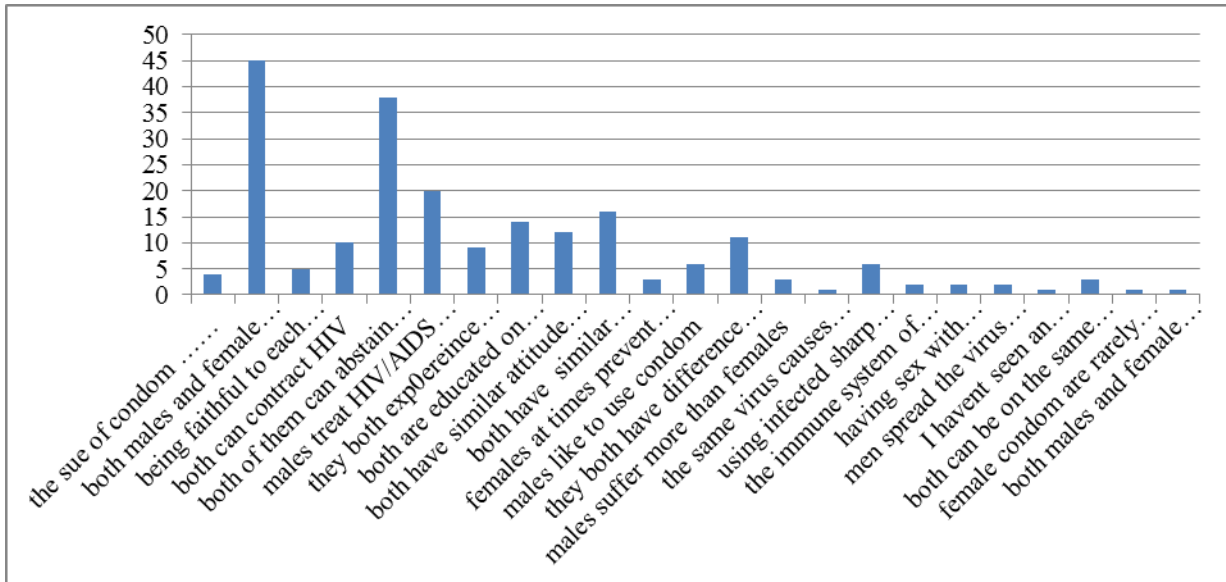


Figure 3: Reasons why gender influence HIV and AIDS and Prevention.
Source: Field data 2018

The bar chart in figure 3 shows that 48 of the respondents which forms majority of the respondents in the attempt to justify the responses in table 3 indicated that both males and females can abstain from sexual activities before marriage. Additionally, they can all equally use condom to protect themselves. This was to buttress the earlier argument made in table 3. The researchers also found it necessary to elicit responses on activities which can contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS. The idea was to investigate the level of knowledge of respondents about the kinds of students’ behaviours that can contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS figure 4 contains the summary of this findings.

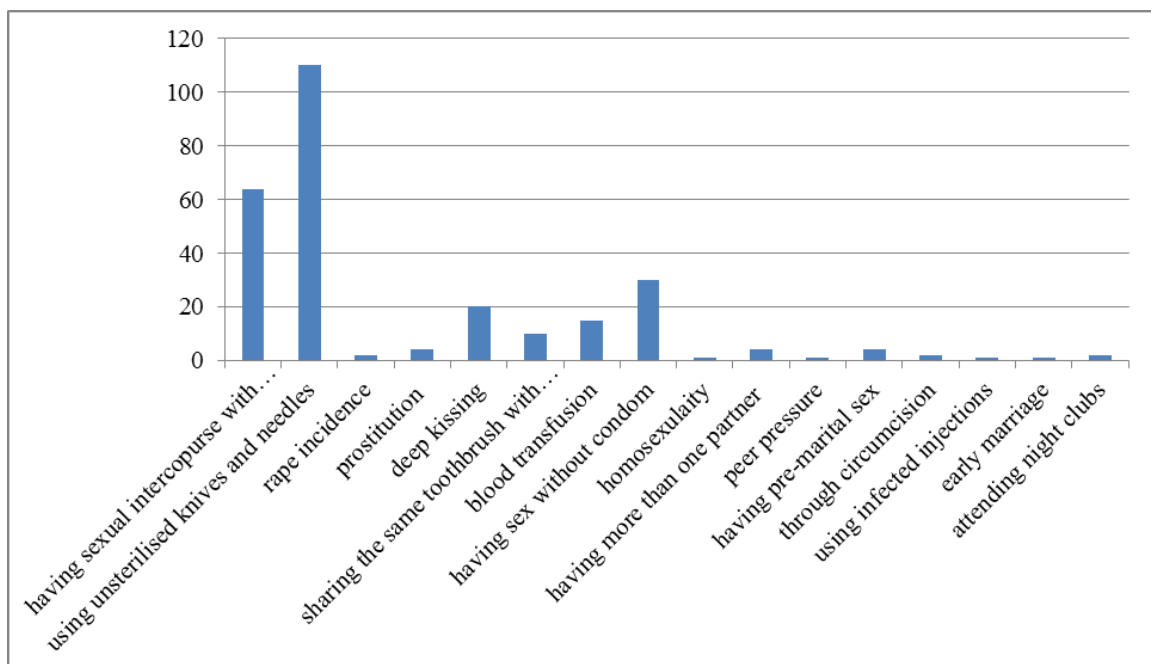


Figure 4: Activities that can lead to contraction of HIV and AIDS
Source: field data 2018

In figure 4, majority of the respondents' 60% indicated that using infected sharp objects and needles, having sexual intercourse with an infected person can lead to HIV and AIDS infections. The rest of the students went for blood transfusion, transmission of HIV and AIDS from mother to child and other diverse views as means of spreading HIV and AIDS.

Measures that Help in Fighting the Spread of HIV and AIDS

The respondents were further asked to indicate their options on the measures they think could assist in HIV and AIDS prevention. The responses from the respondents were presented in figure five.

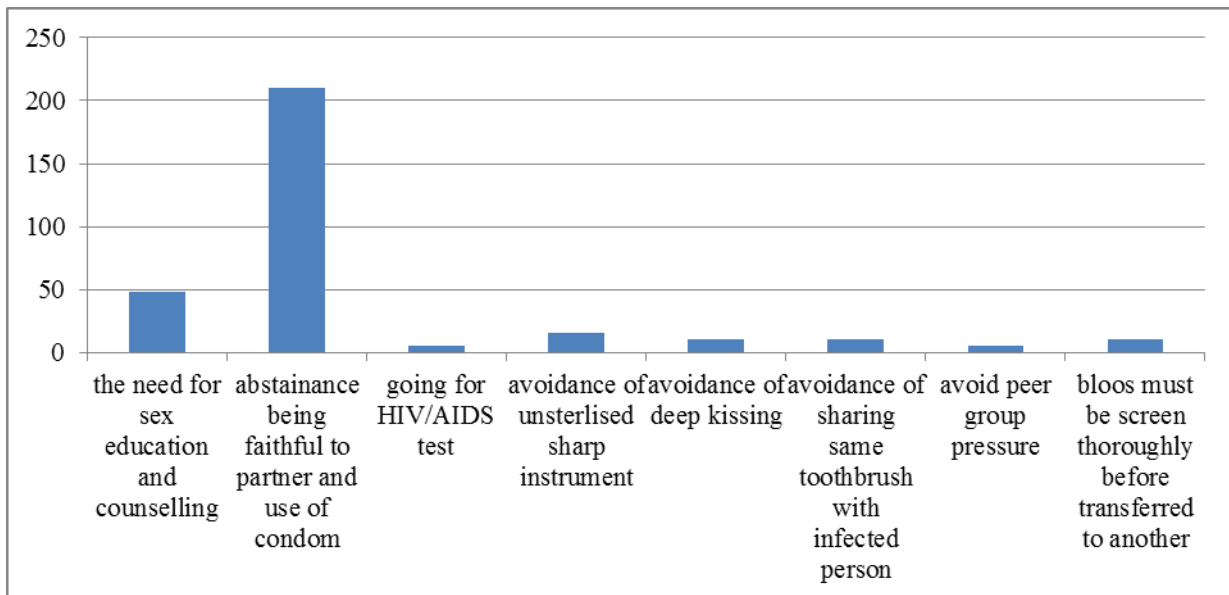


Figure 5: Measures that could help in Preventing the Spread of HIV and AIDS

In figure 5, 43 respondents representing 14.3% said that there is the need for sex education and counselling, 212 representing 70.7% with the remaining 45 representing 15% chose avoidance of the use of unsterilized sharp instrument while some few gave divergent views. These responses from the students actually indicated that most of the SHS students in KEEA Municipal Assembly have general knowledge on how to avoid contracting HIV and AIDS but not enough for them as a means of fighting the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of the study were:

- Majority of the students of public SHS in the KEEA Municipality have adequate knowledge about main causes of HIV and AIDS. The main causes of transmission of HIV and AIDS based on the responses were sexual intercourse, use of needles and syringes, deep kissing and blood transfusion. It is therefore left with their attitudes to change from their indifferent ways of doing things.
- The students also indicated that they acquired knowledge about HIV and AIDS from books, journals, from friends, from the internet and from the school.
- The students also have an idea about HIV and AIDS preventive methods such as the use of condom (both male

and female), abstinence from premarital sexual intercourse and being faithful to their partners. However, a good number of them displayed ignorance about the appropriate use of condom by indicating both male and female condoms can be worn simultaneously during sexual intercourse. This is not the appropriate way of its use. It was also identified that about 45% of the students felt shy about the acquisition and possession of condom. This means they may not possess condom freely. They need to change their attitudes and perception.

- Majority of the respondents were of the view that male and female have similar attitudes towards HIV and AIDS.
- People should be motivated intrinsically to change their attitudes. Unlike the air borne and water borne diseases HIV and AIDS has to do with attitudes and behaviours. Until the time attitudes and behaviours are changed the disease may continue to spread.
- Equal attention should be given to all diseases. The government's attention likewise the health ministry may swing to other emerging diseases at the expense of the others.

CONCLUSIONS

It is an undisputable fact that the adverse effects of HIV and AIDS on individuals and their families and nations cannot be downplayed. Examples are falling life expectancy, increasing number of orphans, social and economic effects, and community structures. HIV and AIDS would help undermine development in many countries that are badly affected by the virus. Its social and economic consequences are felt widely not only in health but in education, industries, agriculture, transport sectors, human resources and the economy in general. The most serious aspect are those who are with the HIV but are not showing any sign of AIDS related diseases. These people may continue to spread the virus. Even though the findings of the study showed that majority of the students are not oblivious about HIV and AIDS issues, it is important that HIV and AIDS education should be intensified in SHS in the country to create more awareness to prevent students endangering their future by contracting the virus since everybody is at risk of getting the virus.

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