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## **Influencing Factors of Unsafe Sexual Practices among Dodoma University Students, Tanzania**

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**Abstract:** *Most of the university students are at the age of adolescence and young adulthood. This age group is sexually active and relatively higher HIV prevalence rate of transmission than general population. The youth including students are as they tend to have shorter relationships with many partners before marriage (THIS 2005). The main intention of the present study is to know the influencing factors of unsafe sex and condom use practices among the university students in Tanzania.*

*A purposive sampling method was applied in selecting number of respondents to represent the different faculties and courses from the university. The students from each course were selected randomly regardless of their year of study. The researcher used structured questionnaire as a tool for primary data collection.*

*Conclusions may be summed up as; Most of the students age group is below 30 years and staying in the hostels. University hostels influencing the chances of having sexual intercourse among the students. Accessibility of the partners and university environment influencing them to have sexual intercourse in the university hotels. Poverty is the one of the cause for unsafe sex among the girl students due to high costs of food and other daily expenditures, making them to choose sexual partners for money. Alcohol and peer group influencing students towards unsafe sexual practices. Nearly half of the students are not using condoms with their regular partner.*

### **1. Introduction**

HIV infection is heavily concentrated among young people of 15-24 years of age (UNAIDS, 2008). There are some factors known to influence people to have heterosexual intercourse such as socio- economic, cultural, gender inequalities, and alcohol consumption and so on. These are considered to influence risky sexual practice despite the awareness one has on protecting oneself from acquisition of HIV. The successful prevention efforts include the preventing high risk sexual behavior, distributing and promoting condoms,

diagnosing and treating sexually transmitted illnesses (Durant R, H, and Sander J, M 1998).

Most of the university students are at the age of adolescence and young adulthood. This age group is sexually active, exploring and practicing sexual freedom from parents' ties at their homes. The nature of camp-like residence and interactions with their age mates and students at different socio-economic status influence sexual accessibility and indulgence. Because of the environmental factors influencing transmission of the epidemic, it is likely that the universities and other higher learning institutions of similar nature have a relatively higher HIV prevalence rate than the general population.

The Tanzania HIV/AIDS indicator survey (THIS, 2005) observed that HIV prevalence rises with the increase of education and wealth. The youth including students are at a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as they tend to have shorter relationships with many partners before marriage. (THIS, 2005).

Hence, by 2004, onwards most of the private and public universities in Tanzania had established technical HIV/AIDS sub-committees and implementing some HIV/AIDS intervention programs (Mbilima, 2004). There have been several campaigns, seminars through different communication media to advocate the HIV/AIDS prevention in communities including universities, but the risky sexual intercourses still exist. The existence of risky sexual intercourse is reflected through emergence of pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases among students.

### ***Rationale of the Study***

Higher learning institutions producing most skilled and productive manpower to any nation but unfortunately university students are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS epidemic. Though most of the university students are aware on HIV/AIDS but there is a large gap between awareness and real sexual practices. The main intention of the present study is to know the influencing factors of unsafe sex and

condom use practices among the university students in Tanzania.

### ***Description of the Study Area***

The study was conducted in University of Dodoma which is located in Dodoma municipality. Dodoma municipality is the administrative capital of Tanzania. The Dodoma region is the central part of the country. The university was selected for the purpose of present research according to convenience based on distance and financial limitation of the researcher.

## **2. University of Dodoma**

The University of Dodoma (UDOM) is located at Chimwaga area about 8 kilometers from East of Dodoma town center. The University is within Dodoma District and covers an area of about 15,000 acres (6,000 hectares). The site has a very prominent view as it is situated in hilly area. It is designed to a comprehensive university which will train and produce human capital in the major professionals for educational development.

### ***Study Population***

The study was involved with undergraduate male and female students of the University of Dodoma and the total under graduate student population of the university consist 14,173 students.

### ***Sampling Procedure and size***

A purposive sampling method was applied in the study in selecting number of respondents to represent the different faculties and courses from the university. This purposive study enabled the researcher to use judgment to select a given number of respondents that were considered to be the best in evenly answering the research questions and objectives. The students who were willing to participate into the study were randomly selected regardless of their year of study. The selected students were given the questionnaire to administer in presence of the researcher for clarification when need arose. Two hundred students were selected from

the whole student population of the Dodoma University for the present study.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

Data collection as a process of gathering specific information aimed at providing or refuting some facts (Kombo and Tromp 2006). The researcher used structured questionnaire as a tool for primary data collection and documentary review for collecting secondary data.

### ***Questionnaire***

Questionnaire is a tool of gathering information by filling answers to printed questions by the respondents. The questionnaire is provided to the respondents who are expected to read and write. The respondents have to answer the questions on their own and multiple choices. (Kothari, 2004).

Pre -testing of the questionnaire was conducted for the purpose of checking the weakness and ambiguity of the questionnaires. Ten respondents were involved in testing the questionnaires in order to prove its validity and reliability.

## **3. Data Entry, Cleaning, Storage and Analysis**

The data was collected and analyzed through the statistical package for social sciences software (SPSS) after grouping similar categories, coding and making summaries. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
16-20	14	(7.0)
21-30	181	(90.5)
31-40	5	(2.5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The above table depicts that most (90.5%) of the respondents age group is between 21-30 but only few (7.0%) of the respondents age between 16-20 years and the remaining (2.5%) age group 31 to 40 years. This data reveals that predominant number of the respondents age below 30. This shows that university students in Tanzania rightly AIDS prevention programme target groups, especially the disease usually disproportionately affects those in between the ages 20-30 (TACAIDS, 2005).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Place of Residence

<b>Place of Residency</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
University hostel	193	(96.5)
Off campus	6	(3.0)
Missing system	1	(0.5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The table-2, illustrates the details of living or residence arrangements of the university students. Most of the

students (96.5%) staying in the hostels, while only very few (3%) of the respondents living in off campus. But one respondent did not give any response for this question.

Table3: Place of Residence correlation with having Sexual Intercourse

Residency	Having sexual intercourse		Total (%)
	YES (%)	NO (%)	
University hostel	157(97.5%)	36 (2.5%)	193(100%)
Off campus	4(66.6)	2 ( 33.3)	6(100)
<b>Total</b>	<b>161( 100)</b>	<b>38(100)</b>	<b>199(100)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

It is evident from the table 3, place of the residence influences the chances of sexual intercourse among the students. The study shows that most (97.5%) of the respondents who are staying in the university hostels having sexual intercourse but very few (2.5%) of the students who are living in the hostels don't have sex. Those students who stay off campus have less chances of having sex (66.6%) compared to university hostels.

University campuses constitute a potentially fertile breeding ground for HIV/AIDS. University campus brings many students together in close physical proximity Combined with the ready availability of alcohol together with divergent levels of economic resources these circumstances create a very high risk environment from an AIDS perspective. (Kelly and Otaala, 2002).

Table 4: Influencing factors of sexual intercourse among university hostel students

<b>Influencing factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Accessibility of partner	72	(36%)
Hostel environment	66	(33%)
Availability of alcohol	32	(16%)
Peer group influence	30	(15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The table-4 illustrates the influencing factors of sexual intercourse among the students in university campus. From the previous table, most of the students staying university hostels and hostels fueling sexual intercourse among students. This table mainly focusing influencing factors of sexual intercourse among the students. Nearly one third (36%) of the respondents reported that accessibility of the partners in the university campus increases the chances of having sexual intercourse among the students and another one third of the respondents said university environment influencing them to have sex, availability of alcohol (16%), peer influence (15%) also influencing to have sex among university campus students.

Table5: Distribution of the Respondents by Sponsorship

<b>Sponsorship</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
HESLB	168	(84.0)
Private	32	(16.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The details furnished in the table-4 reveal that most (84%) of the respondents are financed by the Loan Board for

their education and the remaining students (16%) are financed by themselves. Respondents who are not getting any loan facilities, those students facing hardships during their education. Many female students are likely to engage sex with others in exchange of money.

Table 6: Distribution of the Respondents by Employment

<b>Employment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Employed	16	(8.0)
Not employed	184	(92.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The table above shows that majority (87%) of the respondents are unemploys But very few(13%) of them employs .Hence many students are facing difficulties due to limited source of income in running their lives. Sometimes the interaction between the two groups of employed and unemployed may ignite sexual relations due to accessibility and need to complement each group in terms of financial exchange for sex.

Table7: Distribution of the Respondents by Poverty as a Cause of Unsafe Sex

<b>Poverty is the cause</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
YES	124	62.0
NO	73	36.5
Missing response	3	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>98.5</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

As shown in the table 7, majority (62.0%) of the respondents reported that poverty is the causes for unsafe sex. But more than one third (36.5%) of the respondents



disagreed with this statement. Poverty is provoking many girl students to choose instant partners in the town. Hence, Poverty significantly influences the spread of HIV/AIDS (Lugalla, J. 1995). This study did not explore as to whether the low economic status of an individual directly influences a person to practice unsafe sex.

Table -8, Distribution of the Respondents by causes of choosing partners in exchange of money

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
House hold responsibilities	8	2
Girls need expensive things for grooming	8	47
Food and daily expenditures	8	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

It is seen from the table 8 majority (51%) of the respondents reported that high costs of food and other daily expenditures making university girl students to choose sexual partners for the money. While less than half (47%) of the respondents opined that girls need expensive things to groom, but very few of the students (2%) said that girl students should perform house hold responsibilities like providing money to their parents and paying school fees to their brothers and sisters. It is clear that when girl students are economically poor they are easily influenced towards unsafe sexual affairs in terms money.

Table9: Distribution of the respondents by Alcoholism as a cause of unsafe sex among students

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unconsciousness of mind lead them to take poor decisions	12	50.0
It stimulate sex drive and increase confidence	6	25.0
Meeting place for the parties	6	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

It is found from the table 9 that a half (50%) of the respondents reported that their unconscious mind leading them to practice unsafe sex , due to alcohol consumption . one quarter of the respondents (25%) agreed that it stimulates sex drive and increases confidence after taking alcohol. Another quarter of the respondents (25%) said that alcoholic places are meeting places for the university students and as well as prostitutes. This is in line with the study alcohol use before sexual episodes increases the likelihood of engaging in unsafe sex especially due to its inhibitory effects (Plant, 1990). (Hunt, 1989).

Table10: Distribution of the Respondents by the opinion of Peer Group Influence in Behavior Change

<b>Peer group influence</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
YES	176	88.0
NO	23	11.5
Missing response	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>99.5</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The study reveals that majority (88.0%) of the respondents agreed that their behavior is changing as a result of peer group influence. But the remaining of (11.5%) them disagreed that their behavior is not changing due to the influence of the university students. Parents influence

younger adolescents, but as they get older they ultimately shifts from parent to peer (Norman & Romer, 1998). Peer influence has a more profound impact on adolescent behavior than parental influence ( Onyango, 2004).

Table11: Distribution of the Respondents by Condom Use with Regular Partner

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
YES	89	44.5
NO	109	54.5
Total	198	99.0
Missing response	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The table above depicts that more than a half (54.5%) of the respondents reported that they don't use condom with their regular partner. The remaining (44.5%) respondents said that they use condom with their regular partner. Hence, majority of the respondents are at higher risk according to present study because most of the students having multiple partners.

Table12: Distribution of the Respondents by Reasons of Not Using Condom with Regular Partner

<b>Reasons of not using condoms</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not available condoms	14	12.8
My partner refused the condom	26	23.8
Less satisfaction	21	19.2
I trust my partner	44	40.3
Other reasons	4	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2010

The table 10 furnishes the reasons of not using condoms with their regular partners as below. More than one quarter (40.3%) of the respondents not using condoms with their partner due to trust, partner refused the condoms (23.8%),

less satisfaction (19.2%), not available condoms (12.8%) and other reasons (3.6%).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The study reveals that most of the students age group below 30 years. University students in Tanzania rightly AIDS prevention programme target groups, especially the disease usually disproportionately affects those in between the ages 20-30 (TACAIDS, 2005). Most of the students are staying in the hostels. It is evident from the study, university hostels influencing the chances of sexual intercourse among the students. Those students who stay off campus have less chances of having sex compared to university hostels. Majority of the students agreed that accessibility of the partners and university environment influencing them to have sexual intercourse.

Most of the students are financed by the Loan Board for their education. Respondents who are not getting any loan facilities, those students facing hardships during their education. Majority of the students are unemployed. Sometimes the interaction between the two groups of employed and unemployed may ignite sexual relations due to accessibility and need to complement each group in terms of financial exchange for sex. Majority of the respondents accepted that poverty is the cause for unsafe sex. Poverty is provoking many girl students to choose instant partners. Majority of the respondents reported that due to high costs of food and other daily expenditures making university girl students to choose sexual partners for money. While less than half of the respondents opined that the reason behind to choose partners for money is girls need expensive things to groom. It is clear that when girl students are economically poor they are easily influenced towards unsafe sexual affairs in terms money.

Half of the respondents agreed that their unconscious mind lead to unsafe sex due to alcohol consumption and alcohol stimulating sex drive and confidence. Majority of the respondents reported that their behavior is changing as a result of peer group influence. Peer influence has a more

profound impact on adolescent behavior than parental influence (Onyango, 2004) .

A half of the respondents reported that they don't use condom with their regular partner. Hence, majority of the respondents are at higher risk according to present study because most of them having multiple partners. Main reason of not using condoms with their regular partner is due to trust, refused by their partner, less satisfaction and not availability of condoms in the university campus.

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