

# ABSTRACT

Factors associated with risk perception and communication in

HIV/AIDS

Tarekegn Ayalew Yehuala

HIV/AIDS is affecting the life of young people disproportionately, and university students are not exception; rather they are more at-risk of contracting the AIDS virus. This study examines factors associated with HIV risk perception and communication among Bahir Dar University students. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 390 students of the University. Data were collected using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire from November to December 2007. Out of 390 respondents, 84.5% of them reported having adequate information from different sources. The majority (82.3%) of the respondents knew PLWHA; 85.9% knew at least three correct modes of HIV transmission and 91.0% knew three correct methods of prevention from the virus. About 93.8% of the respondents believed that HIV/AIDS as serious problem to the students, and 67.0% of them believed they themselves could acquire the virus with low chances. From the total respondents 46.8% were sexually active; out of this 48.6% of them did not ever used condom and 34.6% have also performed sex with non regular partners. A significant proportion of the respondents have adequate knowledge of AIDS but low level of risk perception and practicing unsafe sex. This suggested that university students are aware of the risk associated with unprotected sexual activity but constrained by the inability to correctly assess their own risk and adopting preventive behavior. To address these gaps, it is important to design an adequate youth-friendly HIV risk communication program including suitable sex education that could enhance the students' ability to correctly assess their risk of HIV infection and increase their use of safe sex. The study also recommends an urgent need for a safer means of condom accessibility, so that students could obtain it at their convenience whenever the need arises.