

P1.2. Risk Perception of HIV/AIDS In Young People in an Urban Area in Ghana - RKO Asante, University of Ghana School of Public Health; **GK Norgbe,** University of Ghana School of Public Health; **EDK Nyanze,** University of Ghana School of Public Health
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Background/Significance: The HIV/AIDS epidemic has become a serious health, socio-economic and developmental problem in many African countries, including Ghana. Young people are at the centre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic because they are more likely to engage in high risk behaviours. In Ghana the HIV/AIDS prevalence among young people aged 10-24 years accounts for 34% of people living with HIV/AIDS in the total population.

However many young people lack information about the risk of infection and how to protect themselves from HIV infection and sexually transmitted infection.

Main Question/Hypothesis: The study was conducted to determine the risk perception of HIV/AIDS in young people in the Manhyia Sub-metro in the Kumasi Metropolitan District of Ghana to help plan relevant programmes to address the menace of HIV/AIDS among the young people in the study area. The specific objectives of the study are to determine the level of knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS; determine risk perceptions of youth in the study area, assess beliefs about existence of HIV/AIDS in young people, and assess risk reduction practices among the youth

Methodology: The study, which is descriptive in design, used quantitative survey method through interviewer administered structured questionnaire to gather data from 175 youth in the Manhyia Sub-metro area, including 80 JSS pupils, 40 SSS students, 28 apprentice dressmakers and 27 apprentice mechanics who were between 10 and 19 years of age. For purposes of triangulation, quantitative data were also collected from individuals associated with the youth in the study area using in-depth interviews.

Findings: Key Findings of the study include the following: Knowledge and awareness among the youth of the relationship between sexual intercourse and STIs including HIV/AIDS (85.5%), low level of knowledge about other sexually transmitted diseases apart from HIV/AIDS (HIV/AIDS: 91; others: 8.3%), lingering belief that can acquire HIV/AIDS through mosquitoes, through handshake and through witchcraft., considerable proportion of youth not knowing and/or believing that the youth run the risk of HIV/AIDS infection (19.6%), relatively low risk perception to HIV/AIDS among the youth (42.5%), reported belief in risk reduction practices (90.4% condom use and 91.6% abstinence

Knowledge Contribution: Local government authorities need to strengthen its partnership and collaboration with other sectors with the youth in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive health, with emphasis on HIV/AIDS/STD.

The Ghana AIDS Commission should intensify collaboration with the District Assemblies to get them more involved in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, so as to bring the problem closer to people. The youth must be made to interact more with HIV positive youth as peer educators and motivators to convince them about the need for behaviour change.

There is the need for all stakeholders to emphasize advocacy activities, to get political and financial commitments of all leading institutions (Parliament, District Assemblies, Churches and other religious institutions, Schools etc. to properly address issues associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic, especially among the youth.

The School health Programme of the Ghana Education Service should incorporate sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS into the curricula of basic schools, secondary schools and teacher training institutions as well as the curricula for all trade and artisan training for the out of schools youth.