

Sexual Risk Behaviours of High School Students in an Urban Town of Cameroon

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Abstract : Background: Since students in high schools in Cameroon fall within the age group hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, it is assumed that these students might be exposed to sexual risk behaviours. Sexual risk behaviours include engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse, early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners and coerced or forced sex, and these behaviours might predispose youth to HIV transmission. However, little has been explored on the sexual risk behaviours of high school learners in Cameroon. This study aimed at examining the sexual risk behaviours of high school students in an urban town of Cameroon. Method: A quantitative cross sectional design was adopted, using a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from a disproportional stratified simple random sample of 480 (240 male and 240 female) grade 10 to grade 12 students from two participating secondary school in Limbe in the Southwest region of Cameroon August 2014. Descriptive and Chi square statistics were calculated using statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software program at the level 0.05. Results: Majority of the respondents, 63.4% reported being sexually active, of whom only 33.2% used condoms consistently. Up to 37% of the sexually active respondents had multiple sexual partners in the past one year before the study, while 23% had multiple sexual partners during the study period. The mean age of first sex was 15.4 years. Among Christians, Pentecostals, 17 (58.6%) were more likely to have experienced sexual coercion than non-Pentecostals, 111 (42.2%) ($p = 0.000$). Christians, 41 (10.3%) were more likely to have been forced into first sex than Muslims, 0 (0.0%); while among the Christians, Pentecostals, 6 (15.0%) were more likely to have been forced into first sex than non-Pentecostals, 35 (10.9%) ($p = 0.004$). Among the Christians, Pentecostals, 16 (66.7%) were more likely to have experienced sex by age 16 years than non-Pentecostals, 125 (64.1%) ($p = 0.000$). Students who lived in rented places, 32 (22.7%) were more likely to have had multiple sexual partners than those who lived in their parents' houses, 35 (18.1%) ($p = 0.000$). Males, 36 (16.0%) were likely to have had multiple concurrent sexual partners than females, 14 (6.0%) ($p = 0.002$). Students who used condoms consistently, 25 (33.3%) were more likely to have a higher perception of risk of contracting HIV than those who did not use condoms consistently, 38 (29.9%) ($p = 0.002$). Students who lived in their parents' houses, 35 (35.4%) were more likely to use condoms consistently during sex, than those who lived in rented places, 31 (29.8%) ($p = 0.021$). Students who passed their examinations, 57 (30.9%) were more likely to have used condoms consistently than those with low academic profiles, 24 (27.9%) ($p = 0.034$). Conclusions and Recommendations: Gender, lack of parental control, religion, academic profile, poverty, place of residence and perception of risk of HIV infection were the main factors associated with sexual risk behaviours among students in urban Cameroon. The findings indicate that sexual risk behaviours exist among high school students in Limbe urban town of Cameroon. There is need for campaigns and interventions to bring about sexual behaviour change.

Keywords : Cameroon, high school students, HIV/AIDS, Limbe urban town, sexual risk behaviours

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