

## Prediction of the Factors Influencing the Utilization of HIV Testing among Young People Aged between 17-25 Years in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract :** Background: Despite recent progress in enhancing the accessibility of HIV-related health services worldwide, opportunities to diagnose patients are often missed due to genuine barriers at different levels. The aim of the study is to explore the factors that affect the utilization of HIV testing services by young people aged 17-25 in Saudi Arabia. Methods: A non-experimental descriptive cross-sectional design was used to predict factors that influenced HIV testing among Umm- Al Qura University students aged 17-25 years. A newly developed self-completed online questionnaire was used and the study sample was drawn using a convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire consisted of 52 items divided into three scales: 12 items for HIV/AIDS-related knowledge, 3 items for risk perception, and 37 items for attitudes toward HIV testing. Five experts in the field of HIV/AIDS validated the contents of the questionnaire and agreed that the items included were related to the construct being measured. The reliability of the questionnaire was also assessed using a test/re-test strategy with 27 participants recruited from the population under study. The reliability assessment revealed that the questionnaire was consistent as Cronbach's Alpha was 0.80 for HIV/ADS knowledge, 0.88 for risk perception and 0.78 for attitudes towards HIV testing. The data were collected between 14th of July and 14th of October 2014. Results: 394 participants completed the questionnaires: 116 (29.4%) male and 278 (70%) female. 50.5% of the participants were aged 20 to 22 years, 34.8% were 17-19 years and 14.7% were aged between 23-25 years; about 93% of the participants were single. Only 20 (6%) participants had previously been tested for HIV. The main reasons for not being tested for HIV were: exposure to HIV was considered unlikely (48%), HIV test was not offered (36%) and unawareness of HIV testing centres (16%). On HIV/AIDS-related knowledge, the male participants scored higher than the females as the mean score for males was ( $M = 6.4$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ) while for females it was ( $M = 5.7$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ). In terms of risk perception, female participants appeared to have lower levels of risk perception than male participants, with the mean score for males being ( $M = 11.7$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ) and ( $M = 10.5$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ) for females. The female participants showed slightly more positive attitudes towards HIV testing than male participants: the mean score for males was ( $M = 108.14$ ,  $SD = 17.9$ ) and was ( $M = 111.32$ ,  $SD = 17.3$ ) for females. Conclusions: The data reveal that misconceptions about HIV/AIDS in Saudi Arabia are still a challenge. Although the attitudes towards HIV testing were reasonably positive, the utilization of the HIV test was low. Thus, tailoring HIV/AIDS preventive strategies in Saudi Arabia should focus on the needs of young people and other high risk groups in the country.

**Keywords :** attitude toward hiv testing, hiv testing, hiv/aids related knowledge, risk perception

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