

## original article

Sexual relationships, risk perception and condom use  
at the University of Nairobi

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University students are youthful and constitute a high risk group for HIV Infection. Ministries of health officials share the opinion that university students aged (18-25) are the most vulnerable age bracket. The study aims to determine the impact that the perceived threat of HIV/AIDS has on condom use at the University of Nairobi.

**Methods**

Using the Health Belief Model, 337 Nairobi University students were tracked in the present study that lasted during the period March - May 2007. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were applied to ensure uniformity in the interpretation of concepts.

**Results**

Condoms are (93.2%) accepted by students. About (50%) of the student population believe that condoms are meant for single people while (21.1%) believe it's for those who are promiscuous. The (35.9%) of students approve condoms for casual sex while (28%) approve condoms for family planning. The participants agree that consistent and correct use of the condom (39.5%) together with abstinence (49.6%) is by far the most important way of preventing pregnancy and disease in relationship. In 60.5% of the relationships the decision for condom use is made by both male and female partners. Consistent with reports that (44.2%) of the males use condoms is a lower level of condom use of (18.4%) reported by female respondents. Female students are less likely to make decisions regarding condom use and are therefore less likely (0.863) times to report condom use even in occasions where their partner used a condom. The sex of the study students is however not significantly associated with condom use. Students in the final year of their studies are significantly less likely to use condoms. Students who believe that condoms are useful in the prevention of STIs are significantly more likely (odds 1.17) to use condoms than those who disagree with this statement. Similarly where condoms are thought to promote prostitution there is a significantly higher likelihood (1.257) of use. Students who know the condom from the mass

media are (0.61 times) unlikely to report using the condom at last intercourse. Relationships where condoms are used in our universities significantly represent marriage ties (odds 1.64) than casual infatuation, (Odds 0.78) which end up in casual sex often with persons unknown. Wherever there is a stable financial source (scholarship) students are (1.918) times significantly more likely to use condoms than where students depend on their families. Finally, students are generally 100% afraid of contracting the HIV Virus. The few students who report condom use for all sexual encounters nonetheless feel at risk of AIDS/STDs. Students believe condoms and abstinence are the only ways risk of contracting the disease can be reduced.

**Conclusion**

Students are cautious of HIV AIDS epidemic. Many know they are at risk and take precautionary measures by abstinence, faithfulness or using condoms. University students avoid circumstances that predispose them to HIV Infection such as drug abuse, alcohol, clubs and commercial sex. Efforts are needed from government officials, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the university fraternity to educate students on self risk perception and on their chance of contracting the disease.

**Keywords:**

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, condoms, students, sexually transmitted diseases, Kenya

**INTRODUCTION**

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kenya is mostly invisible and requires a more contextual understanding of the conditions under which the sexual acts occur. That is the extent to which girls and women as compared with boys and men in specific socioeconomic groups are able at particular moments and over the course of their lifetimes to control the choice of and the timing and nature of sexual intimacy, the locus of control over sexual decision making needs to be explored for particular types of relationships. The number of new AIDS cases each year resulting from these infections is estimated at about 300,000 by 2005. Deaths due to AIDS are on the increase with 2003 levels estimated to be at 700 per day. Approximately 1.5 million people in Kenya had already died

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