



Risky Sexual Behaviors and Predisposing Factors among Mekelle University College of Business and Economics Students, Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia, 2013: Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The general objective of this study was to assess risky sexual behaviors and predisposing factors among Mekelle University College of Business and Economics students, Ethiopia in 2013.

Methods: This institution based cross sectional study was conducted in 258 Mekelle University College of business and Economics 3rd year students from April to June 2013. Systematic random sampling method was conducted to select study participants from the total number of students. Data was entered and cleaned using EPI Info and analysis was done using SPSS version 20. Participation was voluntarily.

Results: From the total number of participants 98(38%) of them reported as they used at least one substance. Majority of the respondents used alcohol followed by cigarette and khat (a substance in the form of leaf found in Ethiopia). More than half (57.3%) of the students ever had sexual intercourse and about 70.7% reported as they have ever used condom during sexual intercourse.

Conclusion: About 38% of the respondents use at least one of any substance and about 57.3% ever had sexual intercourse.

Keywords: Risky, Sexual behavior, Condom use, Predisposing, Substance, Partner.

INTRODUCTION

Since the recognition of Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as cause of Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

(AIDS), the pandemic has grown to be the greatest public health crisis facing the world since 13th century up to now. AIDS was the

cause of death for more than 25 million people since its first recognition in 1981¹. Globally, approximately half of all HIV infections so far have occurred in men and women younger than age 25 years². There is a global tendency towards early initiation of sexual activity among youths. Factors such as early onset of menarche, changing values due to increasing urbanization, exposure to foreign culture through rural-urban migration, tourism, mass media, internet, erosion of traditional norms and values, peer influence and lack of parental control have all been responsible for this trend^{2,3}.

The possible consequences of unprotected early sexual intercourse include sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies with its complications such as unsafe abortions, unfortunately, the adolescents and youth are the same group which are not in stable relationships, and usually engage in high risk sexual behaviors³. Many young people in developing countries are also suffering from lack of self-esteem and future hope, victims of different forms of violence and abuse, or are obliged to live with harmful habits like smoking, drug abuse and alcoholism⁴. Majority of students in higher institutions are single, young adults who easily fall prey to youthful sexual excitement⁵. Various studies have shown that colleges are considered as favorable environment for transmission of STI including HIV/AIDS. As any youths, college students are often considered as being at higher risk for HIV infection due to their tendency to engage in exploratory sexual behavior and their needs for peer social approval as well as sense of non-vulnerability to health risks. Even though they were reported to be well-informed about HIV/AIDS, college students are reluctant to change their sexual behavior unless the threat of infection is personalized⁶⁻⁸.

Risky behavior may be further worsened by the fact that university students are too many in number, live in campuses without boundaries and related security problems, far away from their guardians and free from close control of parents, peer pressure, lack of youth friendly recreational facilities, wide spread substance use and economical problems. Certain behaviors like sex with an infected person, substance use, and multiple sexual partners place people at greater risk of HIV infection. Groups of people who engage in these high-risk behaviors are considered vulnerable to HIV and other STIs. Hence this group of people needs to be watched cautiously in order to control the pandemic⁹.

Little has been known about the risky behavior in the context of higher education institutions in Ethiopia, in general and in Mekelle University setting in particular. Therefore, the aim of this study was to point out risky sexual behavior and predisposing factors in Mekelle University college of Business and Economics. So the findings research will be used as a base line data for further studies. The main objective of this study was to assess risky sexual behaviors and predisposing factors among Mekelle University college of Business and Economics students Mekelle, Tigray Ethiopia, 2013.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This institutional based cross sectional study was conducted in 258 Mekelle University College of business and Economics 3rd year students from April to June 2013. Systematic random sampling method was employed to select the study participants; the first sampling interval was selected randomly and if the student is not available next number was selected to be included in the study. Semi structured self-administered English version questionnaire which was partly adopted from EDHS, BSS

and other relevant sources was used to collect data. Data was entered and cleaned using EPI Info and analysis was done using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics was used to explain the findings, tables and graphs were used to present the findings. Study participants were selected in collaboration with key students at each department who helped in gathering and selecting the students.

The research proposal was first approved by Mekelle University College of health science, Department of Nursing Ethical review committee. Written permission was secured to college of business and economics and respondents were informed about the objectives of the study, informed consent was also obtained from the student prior to distribution of the questionnaire. Their participation was voluntarily and they can be free to decline or withdraw at any time in the course of the study, so only those willing to participate were included in the study. Confidentiality was kept by making the questionnaires anonymous and no personal identifiers were used.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic and economic characteristics

A total of 258 respondents has participated the study with response rate of 100%. Of these respondents, 152(58.9%) were males and 126(48.8%) were found in the age group 23-25. Majority 108(41.9%) the respondents were Tigrians in Ethnic background as well as most of the respondents 206(79.8%) were single in marital status. One hundred sixty seven (64.7%) of the respondents were followers of Orthodox Christian followed by Muslim 30(11.6%). Most 199(77.1%) of the students had live in dormitory (Table-1).

Risky sexual behaviour

Of the total participants 98(38%) were reported that they used at least one the substances. Majority of the respondents used alcohol 60(61.2%) followed by cigarette 30(30.6%), khat (Local leaf) 30(30.6%) and shisha 18(18.4%). Near one for every ten respondents 24(31.1%) were used the substance 2-3 days per week, 22(28.6%) were used weekly and 19(24.7%) were used 2-3 per month. From the total respondents, more than half 147(57.3%) of them ever had sexual intercourse. Respondents had also asked about major reasons to start sexual intercourse. Most of respondents 56(40%) and 35(25%) were responded as because of sexual desire and peers pressure respectively. Among students ever had sex (n=147) majority of them 114(77.6%) ever had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months and 60(52.6%) of them had sex with only one partner. From the total participants 105 (40.7%) of them reported as they have boy friend/ girl friend. Among those who ever had sex 104 (70.7%) were reported as they have ever used condom and 53 (49.5%) of them reported as they used always. For the students who didn't use condom, male partner objection 17(39.5%) and trusting partner 13(32.2%) were the main reasons.

About 43 (16.6%) of the participants had signs of STI: of which 15 (24.6%) students reported whitish discharge from penis followed by burning sensation on urination (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

This study showed that the prevalence of substance use among university students was 38%. This was higher than studies conducted in Hawassa University (30.5%), Jimma University (22.4%) and Haramaya University (24.5%)¹⁰⁻¹². This difference might be because of environmental influence and time gap of the studies. Majority of the respondents use alcohol followed by cigarette

and khat. This showed similar proportion of substance use reported from Jimma and Hwassa universities.

The prevalence sexual intercourse in this study was 57.3% which was higher than the studies among Jimma University and Haramaya University students (33.2%), (29.2%) respectively^{10,12}. This variation might be due to the time gap and media influence is increasing from time to time.

About, 47.4% of them reported having multiple partners. This is comparable with the findings of the study from Haramaya University¹².

Among respondents reported ever had sex majority 70.7% were reported as they have ever used condom. Among these majority 53 (49.5%) reported as they used always and 33(30.8%) reported as they used condom occasionally. The frequency of condom use in this study was higher than the prevalence reported from study conducted among Haramaya University students. Also the proportion of using condom always was higher than the proportion from study conducted among Haramaya University students⁽¹²⁾. This difference might be due to improved awareness of condom use and sexually transmitted infections among the students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study the following can be concluded:

- ✓ About 38% of the respondents use at least one substance, majority of them use alcohol followed by cigarette and khat.
- ✓ From the total respondents, 57.3% ever had sexual intercourse.
- ✓ Most of the students started sex because of true sexual desire followed by peer pressure and friend pressure.
- ✓ From the total number of respondents who ever had sex, majority of them had ever used condom.

- ✓ Majority of non condom users were reasoned out because of partner objection and trusting partner.
- ✓ The students who had signs of sexually transmitted infections were about 16%.

Competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests regarding publication of this paper.

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Table 1. Socio-demographic distribution respondents, Mekelle University, College of Business and Economics, 2013 (n=258)

Characteristics	Number	Percent
Sex		
Male	152	58.9
Female	106	41.1
Age group		
18-22 years	119	46.1
23-25 years	126	48.8
26-28 years	13	5.0
Ethnicity		
Amhara	58	22.5
Oromo	24	9.3
Tigray	108	41.9
Afar	9	3.5
Somali	14	5.4
Other	45	17.4
Marital status		
Single	206	79.8
Married	41	15.9
Divorced	11	4.3
Religion		
Orthodox	167	64.7
Catholic	17	6.6
Protestant	30	11.6
Muslim	30	11.6
No religion	10	3.9
Others	4	1.6
Residence		
Dormitory	199	77.1
Outside with parent	24	9.3
Outside rented	35	13.6

Table 2. Risky sexual behavior of students in Mekelle University, College of Business and Economics, 2013 (n=258)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Substance use	Yes	38
	No	62
Type of substance*	Cigarette smoking	30.6
	Alcohol	61.2
	Khat	30.6
	Shisha	18.4

Frequency of use	Daily	27	27
	2-3 times per week	30	31.2
	Weekly and above	41	41.8
Reason to start	Peer pressure	12	14.6
	Curiosity	5	6.1
	Enjoyment	53	64.6
	Decrease stress	12	14.6
Sexual intercourse	Yes	147	57.3
	No	111	42.7
With whom you had sex	Friend	87	59.6
	Teacher	25	17.1
	Couple	13	8.9
	Business sex	12	8.2
	Commercial sex worker	5	3.4
Reasons to start sexual intercourse	Having sexual desire	56	38.1
	Peer pressure	54	36.7
	Teacher pressure	04	2.7
	Others**	33	24.5
How many sexual partner do you have	Only one	60	52.6
	Only two	15	13.2
	Only three	39	34.2
Do you have Boy friend or Girl friend	Yes	105	40.7
	No	153	59.3
Condom use	No	43	29.3
	Yes	104	70.7
Frequency of condom use	Occasionally	33	30.8
	Always	53	49.5
	Consistent	21	19.6
Reason not to use condom	Male partner objection	17	39.5
	Embarrassed to buy	7	16.3
	I trust my partner	13	30.2
	I was drunk	2	4.7
	Reduce my sexual pleasure	4	9.3
Signs of STI	Yes	43	16.6
	No	215	83.4
Major Signs of STI	White discharge from penis	15	24.6
	Foul smelling from vagina	12	19.7
	Burning during Urination	11	18
	Genital ulcer	5	8.2

*more than one answer was given

**others=substance use, economic benefit, raped