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EVALUATION OF HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS TARGETED ON CHANGING KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIORS AMONG STUDENTS AND YOUNG UNIVERSITY STAFF IN ETHIOPIA

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Background & Objective: HIV/AIDS is one of the worst population health and development crises in Africa where over 88 percent of HIV infection and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems affecting the youth is found between 15 and 25 years old, and over 60% are women. The university students and staff are not immune from the risks and impacts of the epidemic. This study sought to assess risks to HIV/SRH problems and trends of change in the level of knowledge, attitude and behaviors of students and young staff community in the selected higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

Method: A cross-sectional survey was conducted between April and July 2017. Mixed methods of combining structured survey questionnaire (conducted first), focus group discussions and key informant interviews (to draw out insights gained from the quantitative part) were conducted.

Results: Out of 1750 respondents, 1738 returned the questionnaire. The majority (79%) of respondents generally aware about the HIV related risk factors, ways of transmission (76%) and HIV prevention (72%) and related HIV/SRH problems. All respondents never perceive their specific risk for HIV. Unsafe sex and multiple concurrent sexual partnerships (MCP) were reported by 68% of female students joined the universities from rural settings, among all socio-cultural and religious groups, and 58% of young teaching staff. No significant change in the level of comprehensive knowledge on combination prevention programs and compatibility with the desired behavior change towards SRH problems and HIV. Qualitative data support this finding.

Conclusion: Positive changes in awareness and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS were identified, yet trends and levels of comprehensive knowledge and compatibility with safe behaviors are found inadequate or lacking. Based on the findings of the study a model for contextualized combination prevention intervention program is suggested for future actions of owning and sustaining feasible programs for the youth in the higher education institutions.

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