

How access to smartphones affects HIV risk among students in Tanzania: a case study of selected high schools in the Dar es Salaam region

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Description:

Studies show that smartphone adoption by teenagers in Tanzania has increased substantially, and mobile access to the Internet is pervasive. This study investigated whether the use of smartphones by high-school students in Tanzania raises their awareness of HIV or makes them more vulnerable to its acquisition. Twelve private and government high schools in Ilala and Kinondoni Municipalities, both day and boarding schools, participated in this study. Data collection entailed qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaires were administered to 240 students, ages 17–22 years, and two focus group discussions were facilitated with 28 students. In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 stakeholders, including district education officials, teachers, and education and health officials from nongovernmental organizations and parents of high schoolers. In addition, secondary data were collected through a document review. Although respondents mentioned that a smartphone could be used to improve academic performance and health, many students in fact used their smartphones for purposes other than education or health. Respondents recommended that the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, and other arms of the Government of Tanzania, educate the public on the proper use of smartphones. Those surveyed thought that parents and guardians should monitor their children's smartphone use; parents, teachers, and community members should restrict the use of smartphones among students under 18 years of age; and youth should be taught the proper use of technologies, including smartphones.

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