

Gender analysis of sexual and reproductive health information access and use: a study of university student communities in Tanzania

By

P. Manda.

Abstract

This paper examines the state of access to and use of SRH information services in four universities in Tanzania in the context of gender dynamics and relations. The study was conducted among student communities at the University of Dar es Salaam, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Mzumbe University and Sokoine University of Agriculture. The overall research design integrated both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The major methods of data collection were survey, focus group discussion and key informant interview. A final sample of 194 undergraduate students was selected conveniently with 51% males and 49% females. The key finding of this study was that gender does not influence SRH information access and use. The baseline conditions of SRH information and service provision in the four universities revealed the following. First, SRH information services were available but not adequate. Second, students could access a wide range of sources of SRH information but the actual use was concentrated and limited to only three major sources which were radio, television and friends. Specialized information sources such as health workers and brochures/leaflets were rarely used. Third, awareness of the availability of SRH services in the Universities was not wide spread among students and a significantly large percentage of students think that they cannot access SRH information in the universities and have a negative attitude towards the provision of SRH information services in the universities. Major factors that influenced access to and use of SRH information and services in the universities in Tanzania were diverse in nature. Despite the challenges, the findings have revealed that the following opportunities exist: extensive SRH knowledge among students, a reasonable degree of availability of SRH services, and an increasing demand for these services from students. Finally, the paper makes detailed recommendations on SRH service provision; gender mainstreaming in SRH service provision; family planning; IEC and BCC; marketing and promoting SRH services, etc.

Keywords:

Gender; sexual and reproductive; health information access and use; university student communities; Tanzania