

The World Health Organization (WHO) 1998 estimates that 28 million people, of which 1 million are children are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, an immune system disorder that renders its victims defenseless against infection.

To date, there remains no cure for this devastating disease. Infected individuals will constitute a serious economic and social tragedy in the lives of surviving families, friends and employers. Our hope today lies in preventing new infections and helping to prolong the lives of those already infected. HIV/AIDS being a respecter of none makes every individual a potential victim. Though not infected, most are affected in one way or another.

The focus of this study hence was to determine the knowledge and attitudes towards the role of nutrition in management of HIV/AIDS of the Island dwellers.

Malnutrition is often the cause of death in most AIDS cases, there was a need to establish adequate levels of nutrition knowledge among the populations, change their attitudes and feeding practices in nutrition management of HIV/AIDS. The objectives of this study were:

- (1) To determine the level of nutrition knowledge of the people in relation to HIV/AIDS,
- (2) To establish the level of knowledge of proper feeding practices in management of HIV/AIDS and
- (3) To find out the attitudes towards the role of nutrition in the management of HIV/AIDS among the island dwellers.
- (4) To determine the socio-economic characteristics of the Island dwellers.
- (5) To determine the relationship between household socio-economic variables and the level of knowledge and attitudes among Islanders.

A cross-section descriptive survey was used to carry out the study in Mombasa district, within the Island, which is an area with the highest incidences of HIV/AIDS in the country. The study targeted persons aged between 14 to 49 years.

Three methods of sampling were used, purposive sampling for selecting three locations out of the six in the Island, simple random sampling was used to proportionally select five estates in the three locations for inclusion in the study. Systematic random sampling was done to select the households, which formed the units of observation. HIV/AIDS sufferers were conveniently sampled through hospitals and counseling centres. Interview schedule was used to collect data from the food decision-makers in each household sampled.

Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed by coding and organizing data collected into themes, from which meaning was drawn and generalizations made compared to the non-HIV/AIDS sufferers who had a more positive attitude.

The findings showed that HIV/AIDS sufferers had low levels of knowledge regarding dietary management of HIV/AIDS status, a poor attitude towards dietary intervention was also noted. They were also socio economically disadvantaged.

The chi-square test of independence showed that knowledge and attitude levels were related to education level.

There is a need for intensive and aggressive HIV/AIDS management education programmes, Infected individuals need to be supported economically and provided with adequate medical facilities and their nutrition needs met.

Rehabilitation centres and medical plans for infected can be established to help meet these needs.