

Introduction:

The study sought to investigate the Factors Influencing Uptake of Safe Male Circumcision among Soldiers: a Study in Bombo and Mbuya Military Barracks. The study was guided by four (04) research questions; what is the level of uptake of SMC among soldiers in Bombo and Mbuya Military Barracks? What is the level of awareness of safe male circumcision and HIV and AIDS in Bombo and Mbuya Military Barracks? What are the attitudes of soldiers in Bombo and Mbuya military Barracks, on SMC as an HIV prevention strategy? What institutional factors affect uptake of SMC in Bombo and Mbuya Barracks?

Methodology:

The study was majorly a qualitative cross sectional design and collected data from a total of 235 respondents who included 220 male soldiers, 04 Military Officers of UPDF, Director of Health and 10 SMC staff. Data was collected using a Self Administered Questionnaire (SAQ), which contained open ended questions and closed ended questions for both qualitative and quantitative data. A Focus Group Discussion Guide/Key Informant Interview Guide was also used to collect views of Military Officers of UPDF and SMC staff. The data collected underwent content analysis in order to quantify responses in terms frequencies and percentages where applicable and to identify factors influencing uptake of SMC in UPDF. The study also surveyed the existing literature related to the theme of investigation as obtained from Library, academic research reports, News papers and other written sources. The study findings were summarized, analyzed and presented, using qualitative and quantitative methods.

Results:

The study found that majority of the respondents (78%) were not circumcised compared to only 22% respondents who agreed that they were circumcised. Almost all respondents (99%) revealed that they had ever heard about SMC, yet their uptake for SMC as an HIV and AIDS preventive strategy was low as many were hindered by others factors like deployment of soldiers for combat operations, inadequacy of SMC supplies and limited number of qualified SMC staff.

Conclusion:

The study concluded that beliefs had a very high influence on the uptake of SMC as an HIV and AIDS prevention strategy among soldiers. This was because many male soldiers perceived SMC as a traditional practice associated with particular tribal groups like the Bagisu and Bakonjo in Uganda while others saw it as religious practice associated with the Islamic faith.

Recommendations

The study recommended that in order to increase uptake of SMC among soldiers, intensive training of health personnel, logistical facilitation, mass sensitization, mobilization and extending SMC to cover

all areas, should be undertaken to positively change beliefs of the male soldiers towards SMC, given the fact that many respondents believed that Safe Male Circumcision reduces the risk of HIV acquisition in circumcised men by 60%.