

Stigma and HIV. Perceptions in young people from Anlaids School

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Introduction

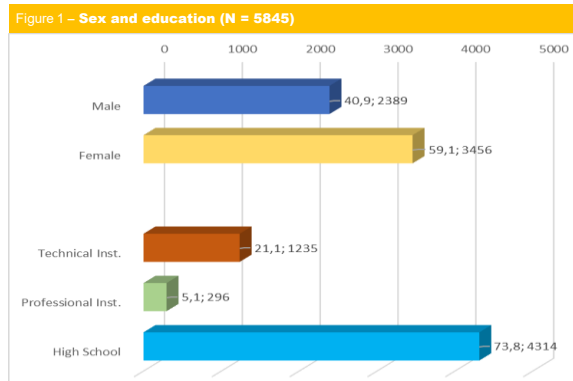
- Targeted prevention and sexuality education programs are one of the most important tools for promoting the sexual well-being of young people and a key component of the strategy to prevent not only HIV infection but all STIs and to counter prejudice and stigma. With this in mind, the School Project has developed and evolved over its 31 years of experience in the field, with and for young people. We are especially convinced that correct information, the use of respectful language, and the commitment of associations can have a fundamental impact in counteracting prejudice and stigma.



Methods

- The program is structured and developed according to various methodologies. Each has a common feature: the active participation of students and their involvement as protagonists of the educational process together with the experts belonging to the regional offices, operating in their territory. Before the interventions, a questionnaire is administered (regarding the knowledge of young people on the issues) and then a post-test (to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the interventions). Some questions are useful to detect possible stereotypes and prejudices.

Results

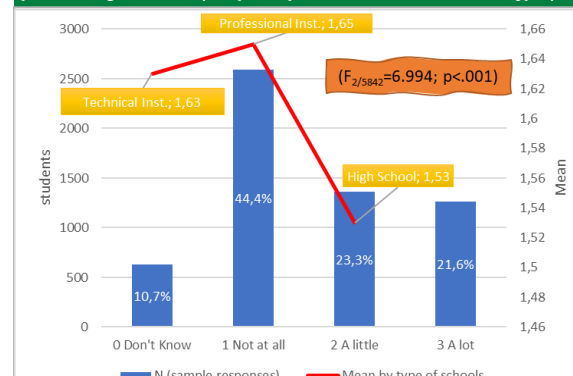


- Between 2019 and 2023, the following question was asked to 5845 students (59.1% females; 73.8% High Schools and 21.1% Technical Institutes) after classroom interventions, "Do you think it is dangerous to have social relationships with a person living with HIV?" 21.6% answered a lot; 23.3% a little, 44.4% not at all, and 10.7% don't know.

Results of 2

- There are no significant differences between males and females.
- Performing the analysis of variance (ANOVA) there are significant differences between school types: boys attending high schools ($M=1.53$) seem to have less prejudice than their colleagues from Technical Institutes ($M=1.63$) ($F_{2,5842}=6.994$; $p<.001$).

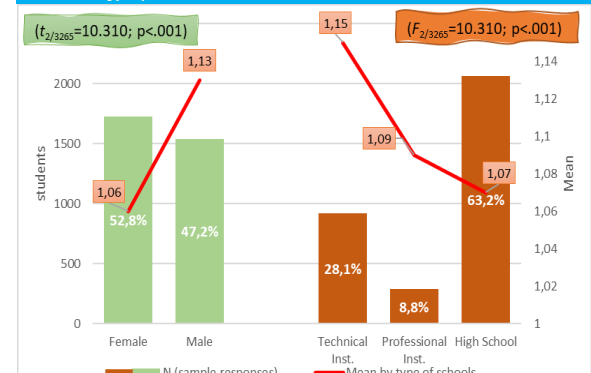
Figure 2 - "Do you think it is dangerous to have social relationships with a person living with HIV?" (Sample responses and ANOVA for school types)



Results of 3

- Since AS 2022/23, after the revision of the questionnaire, the question was also included in the **pre-intervention questionnaire** to assess the impact of interventions on countering stigma. Between **pre** (56.6%) and **post** (78.5%) intervention, students ($N=9343$) reduced stigma, thinking that it is not dangerous to have social contact with PLWH.
- Who are those who are still afraid of having social contact with PLWH? Out of 3268 post-intervention students (52.8% females; 63.2% high schools and 28.1% technical colleges), it is boys ($M=1.13$), compared to girls ($M=1.06$) ($t_{4,211} p<.001$), and technical college students ($M=1.15$), compared to their high school counterparts ($M=1.07$) ($F_{2,3265}=10,310$; $p<.001$), who report being more afraid in social contact with a PLWH.

Figure 3 "Do you think it is dangerous to have social relationships with a person living with HIV?" (Sample responses; t Student for sex and ANOVA for school types)



Conclusion

- Some socially prevalent stereotypes are present, including the idea that it is dangerous to become infected even in social relationships. Stigma undermines the success of HIV prevention and treatment programs. Hence the need to convey quality information through effective communication campaigns that can break the stigma and intercept young people through the use of innovative tools, with regard to boys and those attending technical institutes