

Influence of communication program on weekly iron supplementation in Tanzanian Adolescent School Girls

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Abstrak

ABSTRACT

An experimental community trial study was conducted to observe the influence of communication program on weekly iron supplementation in Tanzanian adolescent school girls.

A sample of 237 school-going adolescent girls aged 14 -17 years was randomly recruited from 5 schools in Darus-Salaam and placed into 3 groups. One group received 65 mg elementary iron with 0.25 mg folic acid on a weekly dose along with communication sessions. The second group received the same dose of iron tablets and no communication sessions. No intervention was made to the control group.

A VENN Diagram to assess the most closer person whom the girls would listen to was drawn prior to study. Three Focus Group Discussions at different stages with the adolescents and teachers were conducted. Anthropometrics in-dices were done once at baseline. Supplementation and communication strategies lasted for 8 weeks.

Measurements of Hemoglobin levels to obtain a general picture about the nutritional status of the participants were carried out before and after the intervention. Hemoglobin increased in school 1&2, (iron supplementation plus communication schools), ($p<0.001$); and anemia dropped significantly ($p<0.001$). School 3 (iron without communication) had zero anemia decrease; while school 4 (control); had anemia rates unchanged. To the contrary; anemia levels increased significantly in control school 5; ($p>0.05$).

Knowledge test was carried out before and after intervention; and an in-crease in test scores of school 1&2 was observed ($p<0.001$). Compliance was checked through stool examination (observed compliance) and iron pill distribution record (reported compliance). The results as indicated by two positive stool tests, were 94% and 75% in school 1 and 2 respectively; in school 3 (iron supplementation only) it was 50%. Reported compliance was 89% for school I&2 each, and 48% for school 3.

It was concluded that, carefully planned communication strategies can influence ingestion of iron supplementation; and, as anemia in adolescents in Tanzania is high, therefore a National Iron Supplementation Program was recommended.