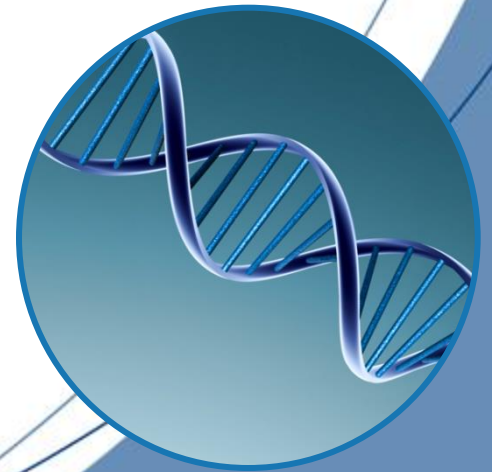


**EXPLORING RISK & PROTECTIVE
MECHANISMS ASSOCIATED WITH
HIV INFECTION AMONG
ADOLESCENTS in SOUTH
AFRICA**



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INTRODUCTION

- South Africa (SA) maintains the highest number of people living with HIV, estimated at about 5,6 million (UNAIDS, 2012)
- A ***substantial decline in HIV incidence in 15 to 49 year olds between 2000 & 2008*** has been attributed to an increase in condom use (Shisana et al, 2009; Johnson et al, 2012), media campaigns (such as those of loveLife & Soul City), peer education programmes, & voluntary counselling & testing (Simbayi et al, 2004).

INTRODUCTION cont...

- **Risk Behaviour Associated With HIV Infection**

There is a sub-group of youth who continue to engage in sexual behaviours such as: *inconsistent or non-condom use, and multiple & concurrent sexual partners* which are known to increase the risk for teenage pregnancy, HIV transmission, & sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Morojele et al, 2013)

INTRODUCTION cont...

Many studies have reported *high rates of drug & alcohol use among young people preceding sexual activity* (e.g. Palen Smith et al, 2006). Alcohol consumption before sex poses unique risks by reducing inhibitions, diminishing risk perceptions, impairing judgment, & thus increasing the likelihood of unsafe sex (Pearson et al, 2008)

Younger individuals with mental health problems also constitute a group at risk for HIV infection because they are known to *engage in more sexual risk-taking behaviour than their peers* (Brown et al, 1997; Donenberg & Pao, 2005)

INTRODUCTION cont...

Mental illness & mental health symptoms have been associated with risk for HIV infection in SA (Pengpid et al, 2013)

Youth with psychiatric disorders *lack adequate sexual communication skills* which are essential for safer sexual behaviour, are *susceptible to negative peer norms* with regards to risk taking, *report low self-efficacy for condom use*, and display *decreased assertiveness & ability to negotiate safer sex* (Flisher & Gevers, 2010)

INTRODUCTION cont...

- **Protective mechanisms associated with HIV prevention**

Families, parents in particular, occupy a pivotal role in the development of *adolescent's sexual values, attitudes, & behaviour* (Crosby & Miller, 2002; Perrino et al, 2000)

Adolescents who have family support & consistent communication cohesion, connectedness, and close relationships are likely to have fewer sexual experiences, engage in less risky sexual behaviour, use more birth control and condoms, & have delayed sexual debut than adolescents who do not have these characteristics (Gorman-Smith et al, 2000; Crosby & Miller, 2002; Gardner & Steinberg, 2005)

Goals of the Study

Present study explored the perceptions associated with risk behaviour & protective mechanism for HIV infection among adolescents accessing mental health services in Cape Town, SA. *Questions guiding the research:*

1. What are the **perceptions** of adolescents accessing mental health services regarding **individual, family and community level risk behaviours associated with HIV infection?**
2. What are the **perceptions** of adolescents accessing mental health services regarding **individual, family and community level protective mechanisms associated with HIV prevention?**

METHODS

Design: Qualitative using Focus Group Discussions

Sampling: Convenience sample from 2 mental health clinics that serve low income families

Participants:

- *28 adolescents (total number in 4 FGDs)

- *39% females & 61% males

- *mean age=14.6 years (SD+/-1.62)

- *Xhosa-speaking black Africans (N=17) & Coloured (mixed race) (N=11) participants

METHODS cont...

*most referred for depression, anxiety, substance abuse

Exclusion criteria:

Psychotic Spectrum Disorders & Cognitive Dysfunction

Procedure & Data Collection:

- *Ethics approval by HSRC/SU/Hospitals
- *Recruitment by trained clinic staff
- *Assent/Consent obtained prior to FGDs
- *8 facilitators (4 FGDs) matched for race & language

METHODS cont...

***questions for FGDs** focussed on:

social problems facing teenagers in the community;
relationship between HIV, alcohol & drug use in the community;
relationship between mental health & HIV; &
family life-space issues & protection of children from health risks associated with HIV, alcohol & drugs misuse

Data Analysis: Thematic Content Analysis used to ascertain themes & sub-themes to form a comprehensive picture of the adolescents collective responses

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- *Two* overarching *pre-determined categories* were used:
 - (1) *Youth perception of HIV risk behaviour*, and
 - (2) *Youth perception of protective mechanisms associated with HIV prevention*

Themes & Sub-themes were derived from the 2 categories (Table 1)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Table 1: Focus Group Discussions: Themes and Sub-themes MAIN CATEGORIES	
Youth perception of HIV risk behaviour	Youth perception of protective mechanisms associated with HIV infection
Theme: Alcohol and illicit drug use	Theme: HIV knowledge and appropriate risk-reduction behaviour
Sub-theme: Alcohol use as a community norm	Theme: Parental attitudes and behaviour
Theme: Risk for domestic violence	Sub-theme: Parents as role models
Theme: Non- Condom use among adolescents	Sub-theme: Parents need to trust
Theme: Prostitution and risky sexual activity with multiple partners	
Theme: Non-Disclosure of HIV status	

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Youth Perception of Risk Behaviour

Theme: *Alcohol & Illicit Drug* use included the sub-theme *Alcohol use as a community norm*

Participants perceptions that substance use (including alcohol & drug use) was a major risk factor for adolescents; and that alcohol use is a “norm” in the community are findings that is supported by previous studies conducted in SA

“They smoke Dagga.” (Coloured female), and “you are also at the stage of wanting to experience smoking.They (teenagers) are trying drugs.” (Xhosa-speaking female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

“I think it’s alcohol like... as a young teenager... I mean at this stage young people enjoy drinking alcohol. Teenagers are mostly infected with AIDS because a person goes out to have alcoholic drinks...”
(Xhosa male).

Theme: *Risk for Domestic Violence*

Exposure to alcohol use & abuse in the home environment and the consequences of harmful alcohol consumption by parents or care-givers

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Adolescents reported physical violence and verbal abuse between parents themselves and between parents and adolescents. They also recognized the role of alcohol in aggravating the abuse.

“Like where the husband is drunk and he come home and he hit the woman, or he hit the children or something.” (Coloured female)

“A mother may be drunk and come back home to abuse the child.” (Xhosa female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Theme: Non-condom use among adolescents

The theme highlights a range of factors that influence non condom use by adolescents, despite high levels of knowledge about HIV infection and the benefits of using condoms.

“Guys do not want condoms...They do not like them. And girls too... there are girls who do not like condoms. They claim that condoms cause irritation. And most girls do not want to have sex using condoms called Choice. They prefer the condoms that are bought rather, the expensive one, the Lovers Plus condoms”. (Xhosa female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Theme: Prostitution and risky sexual activity with multiple partners

Respondents reported that some adolescents engage in risky sexual activities that expose them to HIV through prostitution, having sex for money, having multiple partners, engaging in unsafe sex, and not knowing a partner's HIV status.

“Some people sell their bodies, they just want the money they do not care that ... be infected with HIV” (Xhosa male).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Theme: Non-disclosure of HIV status

Adolescents reported that in their communities, partners do not disclose their HIV positive status to their sexual partners and knowingly infect their partner as depicted by a Xhosa-speaking respondent who said:

“When you are HIV positive or you were just visiting the hospital....And then you find out that you are HIV positive. You may not tell your girlfriend or boyfriend, and then later have sex together. You then infect your partner.” (Xhosa male).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Youth Perception of Protective Mechanisms associated with HIV Infection

Theme: *HIV Knowledge and appropriate risk-reduction behaviour*

Respondents were fairly knowledgeable about the modes of HIV transmission & also aware of the steps they can take to protect themselves against becoming infected with HIV. They described the ***following behaviours*** that could ***protect*** against becoming infected: *abstaining* from sex until marriage; *using a condom* every time one has sex; *staying with one partner* for as long as possible; and *knowing your partners HIV status* and vice versa.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

A bilingual respondent aptly stated:

“Don’t have sex. And if you going to have sex, have it with one partner and know your status and his status before you get into it or not having sex at all...until marriage”. (Coloured female)

Theme: Parental attitudes and behaviour

- Respondents indicated that one way parents can protect their adolescents from engaging in behaviours that put them at risk for HIV infection following the consumption of alcohol and drugs, is for ***parents to talk*** to them about the dangers inherent in these behaviours

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

These respondents expressed a willingness to listen to their parents about these issues and they see their parents as a *trusting source of advice*:

“The parents can talk to their children about HIV explaining the risks involved when they have sex with other people ...And also tell them about the danger of drinking alcohol because they will be victims of many things when they are drunk.” (Xhosa female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

“Maybe it will help build parents and children’s relationships because maybe they don’t have a relationship where they don’t speak about stuff like that or they are not open to each other...maybe this programme or group can help them build that relationship or bond between the parent and the child become more open and speak about things that are happening.” (Coloured female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Sub-theme: Parents as role models

Referred to the behaviour of parents that positively influence adolescent behaviour:

“Or they can become a ‘mirror’ to you - tell you about the struggle they went through”

“From your parents, they are like examples to you or something.” (Coloured female).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION cont...

Sub-theme: Parents need to trust

Xhosa-speaking adolescent expressed the sentiments:

***“You may ask your mother for permission to go somewhere on a Saturday or to attend extra classes at school, she immediately thinks you want to go somewhere else with friends or maybe you are going out to drink or to be with your boyfriend or girlfriend. And that is how much the parents do not trust us.”
(Xhosa male).***

CONCLUSION

- Xhosa-speaking and Coloured respondents had very ***similar perceptions about risk and protection for HIV infection***
- There was, however, ***a difference in perception*** between the Xhosa-speaking and Coloured respondents ***regarding the disclosure of ones HIV status***. Cultural factors seem to influence the decision for non-disclosure of HIV status in the Xhosa-speaking communities

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIV PREVENTION

- Given the “world’s” promise at the UN General Assembly’s special session on HIV and AIDS in 2001 (UNICEF, 2011) to reduce the prevalence of HIV among young people around the world by 25%, ***stronger HIV prevention messages have to be conveyed to the youth/young adults in SA***
- Whilst HIV ***prevention campaigns*** targeting adolescents/ young adults, including at-risk groups such as those in need of mental health services, are important, ***community and family-based interventions are equally important***

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIV PREVENTION

- In particular, programmes and interventions need to focus increasingly on ***improving parent/care-giver and adolescent communication*** (Donenberg et al, 2006)
- HIV prevention efforts should be framed by an ***empowerment model*** which aims to transfer skills to both adolescents and their parents/care-givers on how to create a safe and enabling environment for themselves and the communities they live in

Publication

Naidoo, P., Donenberg, G., Davids, A., Jonas, K., Vermaak, R., Simbayi, L., et al. (2014). Exploring risk and protective mechanisms associated with HIV infection among adolescents in South Africa. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, (In Press).

THANK YOU