

KNOWLEDGE AND MYTHS REGARDING HIV/AIDS IN BOTSWANA

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

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INTRODUCTION

- There were 2.1 million deaths reported globally in 2007
- 1.5 million (Sub-Saharan) in 2007 reported with new HIV infections in 2007 (UNAIDS, 2009).
- In Botswana, 270 000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2006)
- The death rates are overwhelming
- Botswana is still the most affected country in Sub-Saharan (UNAIDS, 2007)
- Lack of knowledge and myth associated with HIV/AIDS are critical in the spread of HIV
- These encourage communities to misperceive the risk associated with particular kinds of behaviour that spread HIV
- Therefore it is important to explore the knowledge and myths regarding HIV/AIDS of the Botswana people in Botswana so that appropriate public education programmes can be developed.

GOAL

To explore the opinions of the Botswana people in Botswana regarding HIV/AIDS knowledge and myths with a view to assist the government of Botswana in developing appropriate information, education and communication strategies to reduce the spread of HIV.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore knowledge about HIV and AIDS
- To explore knowledge about the modes of HIV transmission.
- To find out if there were any myths regarding HIV/AIDS.

METHODOLOGY

A combined quantitative - qualitative research approach (One of Creswell's three models) dominant-structured model - (De Vos, 2002)

- Quantitative - dominant (structured interviews)
- Qualitative - less dominant (focus groups supplemented structured interviews)

Study Sites:

- Furchstone, Selibe-Phikwe, Gaborone - urban areas and their surrounding rural areas
- Soluthu, Selenge and Gaborone respectively
- These study sites were selected because of the high HIV/AIDS prevalence. (Botswana Second Generation HIV/AIDS Surveillance, 2002)

Focus groups sampling: Purposive and availability sampling (18 years and over)

- Six focus groups - 3 adult males and 3 female groups in the six study sites (rural and urban) =6 groups
- Group consisted of members ranging between 8 and 10
- 45 respondents participated in focus group discussions
- Random sample of study sites and focus group type
- Pilot Study: Focus groups:
 - One male focus group with 6 respondents (rural area - Gaborone)
 - Pilot Study: Structured interviews:
 - Three respondents from urban (Gaborone) and two from rural (Gaborone) =5 respondents.

Ethical Issues:

- Written/Verbal Consent
- Anonymity
- Researchers are Botswana's from Botswana
- Confidentiality

RESULTS: QUALITATIVE

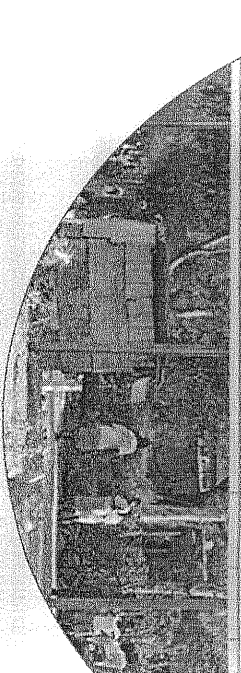
What is HIV and AIDS

- HIV is a virus and AIDS is a disease caused by the HIV virus.
- The other group members said that there is no cure for AIDS.
- AIDS is a combination of diseases in the body.
- AIDS also has opportunistic diseases.
- It was also said that when someone has AIDS, then the person is like really sick.
- With HIV, people lose weight and have swollen glands behind their ears.
- They lose their hair, have sores on their body like small pox and have diarrhoea.
- Some have open sores.
- HIV was also understood as a stage when a person is not sick yet.
- AIDS is also "Boswagadi" which means that a widow or widower had sexual intercourse during the period of mourning.

HIV/AIDS transmission:

- Through semen and vaginal fluids during sexual intercourse
- Through mother to child transmission
- Blood transfusion
- During breast feeding
- Razor blades used by infected people and not sterilized
- Blood passing through open cuts
- Not using gloves when you have open cuts and you are assisting an HIV positive person during an accident.
- Unsafe instruments like injections/needles
- Not using condoms

AVOIDING AIDS AS EASY AS...
ABSTAIN
BE FAITHFUL
CONDOMISE



Myths:

- The participants mentioned that people believe that the use of condoms cause AIDS.
- It was also mentioned that AIDS is " Boswagadi" which means that a widow or widower had sexual intercourse during the period of mourning.
- AIDS is also punishment from God.
- AIDS comes from the white people and people from other countries.
- Government had a means of infecting people so that they can reduce the population.
- White people sleep with the gorillas and got infected and they infected the black people.
- Widows, widowers and women who get miscarriages need to be treated with traditional medicines if not so they get AIDS.
- Women are also not supposed to engage in sexual relationships after birth, as they will get infected with HIV.

RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE

What is HIV-

- HIV is a disease of the youth: 5.8%
- HIV is a virus 30.3%
- HIV is a virus that causes AIDS: 30.3%
- HIV kills: 7.8%
- HIV is sexually transmitted like STI: 10%
- HIV weakens the immune system: 16%

AIDS is:

- Disease caused by HIV: 59.1%
- Sexually transmitted: 23.6%
- Combination of diseases: 15.2%
- Infection by women on contraceptives: 2.1%
- HIV/AIDS transmission:
- Sexual intercourse: 65.2%
- Unsterile instruments: 34.2%
- Blood transfusion: 6.1%
- Eating left over's from an infected person: 1.5%
- Unfaithfulness: 1.5%
- Do not know: 1.5%

Myths:

- Blocked chest is HIV: 2.8%
- Boswagadi: 7.4%
- Contraceptives cause AIDS: 3.3%
- HIV is a traditional disease and having sex after abortion causes AIDS: 3.3%
- Prostitutes get AIDS: 3.3%
- Punishment by God: 10%
- Witchcraft: 3.3%

DISCUSSION

- The respondents' knowledge about HIV/AIDS was extensive. (Confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative results)
- The respondents were familiar with the concepts of HIV and AIDS but were used interchangeably. (Confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative results)
- There was a general understanding that HIV is a virus that causes AIDS. (Confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative results)
- The respondents were also informed about the modes of transmission which the majority spread that HIV was transmitted through sexual intercourse with HIV infected people and condoms are not used. (Confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative results)
- Authors like Whiteside and Suttner (2000) also stated that HIV infection is transmitted through sexual intercourse through contact with infected blood, semen or cervical and vaginal fluids. Barrett, Grant et al. (2001) also said that HIV is a virus and HIV causes AIDS.
- Various responses were given regarding the myths. One common myth was Boswagadi, which was mentioned in all the groups. Boswagadi is a cultural concept that has been there for years even before HIV/AIDS. (Confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative results)
- Any illness that a widow or a widower gets during the period of mourning after having sexual relationship with another partner during the period is called Boswagadi. During the mourning period the widow and widower are expected to use traditional medicines and these comprise with the functioning of the body if you can get involved sexually. Now Boswagadi is also associated with HIV/AIDS.
- Another common myth was that AIDS is punishment from God. Aggleton, et al. (1989:57-63) stated that ordinary people saw HIV/AIDS as God's vengeance on those who led unnatural and promiscuous lives e.g. the homosexuals.

CONCLUSION

- There are a lot of myths mentioned by the respondents both qualitative and quantitative results, which were related to how HIV/AIDS is spread, and its origin and which identified the people, the situations and the activities that are perceived as risky. (Aggleton, et al., 1989:57-63)
- Health professionals and community care workers should be knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS to be able to clear misconceptions and myths about HIV/AIDS when they educate the community about HIV prevention.

