

ABSTRACT

The regression in the spread and prevalence of HIV and AIDS epidemic over the years, especially on young people, has been an issue of utmost importance globally. A significant amount of resources, both human and financial, have been channelled into the development of strategies on how prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS can become more effective. Within the sub-Saharan Africa region, South Africa included, HIV and AIDS among young people have also been a cause for concern. Studies have identified a number of factors that are believed to affect the effectiveness of these strategies, and these include, among others, poverty, low levels of education and culture. The reduced effectiveness of some HIV and AIDS transmission, prevention and treatment strategies are attributed to a number of cultural norms, beliefs and practices. Culture is regarded as having a negative effect on the transmission, prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. As much as there are studies that have explored culture as part of the challenges weakening the effective control of HIV and AIDS among young people, there seem to be minimal studies focusing on the perceptions of postgraduate university students regarding culture and HIV transmission, prevention and treatment. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study sought to explore the perceptions of postgraduate University students in Pretoria and Johannesburg on Culture and HIV and AIDS within the South African context. The study used a qualitative research approach, with a semi-structured interview schedule used as a research tool and one-on-one face-to-face in-depth interviews used as a data collection method. A total of 7 postgraduate university students took part in the study and were selected using purposive sampling technique. All interviews were audio recorded after gaining the formal consent from each participant. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. Findings show that culture plays a huge role in the way individuals behave and perceive certain things in life, and should be considered when dealing with issues related to HIV and AIDS transmission, treatment and prevention efforts in Gauteng. Conclusions drawn are that culture plays both a positive and a negative role in the transmission, prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. Recommendations are made in relation to programmatic interventions and future research.

Keywords: culture, HIV and AIDS, transmission, prevention and treatment, University postgraduate students, Gauteng