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Lovelife counselors' perceptions of the impact of HIV and AIDS on the sexual conduct of adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the perceptions of loveLife counselors on how HIV and AIDS has impacted on adolescent sexuality. The study further examined whether loveLife counselors thought that HIV and AIDS had changed how adolescents expressed their sexuality. The counselors' perceptions regarding adolescents' use of condoms during penetrative sex, being faithful to one sexual partner or abstaining from sexual relationships were also explored.

In-depth interviews were conducted with loveLife counselors to understand how they think HIV and AIDS has affected adolescents' sexual behaviour. The sampling method utilized was the non-probability, purposive sampling. The participants consisted of five loveLife counselors, who work with adolescents. Data was analyzed by means of thematic content analysis.

The loveLife counselors' believe that adolescents have changed their attitudes about how they express sexuality as a result of HIV and AIDS. According to the counselors, HIV and AIDS infection among adolescents have decreased. HIV and AIDS have a positive impact on how adolescents sexually conduct themselves. The counselors think that adolescents are taking serious the warnings against the dangers of HIV and AIDS. This is due to the fact that they are afraid of contracting the virus and consequently suffering from the stigma that people have attached to those who are infected with the virus. As a result of that fear, the perceptions of the counselors are that the majority of adolescents are using condoms during penetrative sex, while others are being faithful to only one sexual partner. According to the counselors in most cases female adolescents initiate condom use as a way of preventing pregnancy rather than as a protective method against

contracting HIV and AIDS. Adolescents are, however, finding it very difficult to abstain from sexual relationships.