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HOW DO RURAL ABET CENTRES ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND SUPPORT? A VIEW FROM THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Despite numerous intervention strategies, HIV/AIDS continues to spread and to pose a threat to the socio-economic transformation of South Africa. There is a need for fresh approaches to HIV/AIDS education for adults and youth in South Africa, particularly for those marginalized by society, such as rural black women. The challenge is to devise appropriate, affordable, socially acceptable and sustainable strategies to help people living with HIV/AIDS, especially in the rural communities.

The broad objective of the study was to examine ways in which rural ABET centres address the challenges of HIV/AIDS prevention and support in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. A case study approach was used to investigate the ways in which five operational ABET centres addressed the epidemic in their communities. The intentions and actions of the ABET District Co-ordinator (1), Circuit Area Managers (5), Centre Managers (5), educators (10) and learners (80) were studied. Methods used in the collection of data were in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, critical incident review, and participant observation.

The research investigated ways in which ABET centres dealt with HIV/AIDS-related issues, and the attitudes, beliefs and practices of ABET practitioners and learners with respect to HIV/AIDS prevention practices and care issues and how these impacted on the centres' ability to address HIV/AIDS.

The research results show that the human, social, structural and infrastructure constraints currently faced by the centres hinder their ability to play an effective and meaningful role in dealing with the epidemic. Access to knowledge, participation in social networks and entrenched cultural practices all play a role in defining the manner in which the communities have responded to HIV/AIDS. Through an analysis of the environment in which the ABET centres operate, and the varied success of their programmes in addressing HIV/AIDS, recommendations have been drawn up to assist ABET centres to address the pandemic more effectively.

The study concludes that ABET centers, through acknowledgment of their role and effective use of resources in collaboration with the available networks can make a meaningful contribution in curtailing the spread of HIV/AIDS and supporting the people affected by HIV/AIDS in the communities in which they operate.

KEY WORDS: HIV/AIDS; Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET); prevention and support; rural communities; South Africa