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SOCIO-CULTURAL AND BEHAVIORAL DETERMINANTS OF CONDOM USE AMONG YOUTHS IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Public Health

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DECLARATION

I, Nomathemba Chiwoneso Chandiwana declare that this thesis is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Public Health in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Dedicated to my late father, Professor Stephen Chandiwana and mother, Mrs. Duduzile Chandiwana for their continued love, support and belief in me.

Thank you.

To my father, you were exemplary in all that you did in always inspiring me to strive for excellence. Your tireless encouragement of and confidence in me is sorely missed.

Rest in peace.

ABSTRACT

Introduction

South Africa is one of the countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS. Of particular concern, new infections among young people, especially young women and girls are on the rise. Despite widespread awareness and prevention campaigns, the prevalence of HIV and deaths caused by AIDS are still on the increase, whereas condom use particularly in rural areas remains low. Consistent condom use is central to the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, yet young men and women alike are hesitant to use condoms because of threats to their relationships, cultural roles and at times economic survival.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify socio-cultural and behavioral factors that influence condom use among youths in Limpopo province, South Africa. This adds to a growing body of knowledge on the determinants of condom use and how they might shape effective HIV prevention programs.

Objectives

1. To conduct a secondary data analysis that examines the determinants of condom use, for men and women separately in relation to the following factors:
    - *Socio-demographic characteristics*- age, education, marital status, migration and socio-economic status
    - *Sexual behavior characteristics*- partnership type (spousal, non spousal, or both), age at sexual debut, number of lifetime sexual partners, contraceptive use (females only) and HIV-status
    - *Socio-cultural characteristics* - perceived risk of HIV infection, condom self efficacy (males only), partner communication on sex, condoms, HIV and other STI's, beliefs on gender norms, attitudes towards gender violence, knowledge on HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS related stigma

2. To compare the results of this analysis to other national studies on condom use among young people.

3. To use the results of this analysis to make recommendations to improve HIV control in rural South Africa.

Methods

This study is a secondary analysis of data collected from a sample of 2236 sexually active young people aged between 14-35 years in Limpopo province, South Africa. The data used in this study is part of a wider public health intervention, the Intervention with Micro-finance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) study. STATA 8.0 was used to analyze data in bivariate and multivariate analyses to assess determinants of consistent condom use and condom use at last sex for males and females separately as the patterns of associations are likely to differ between them.

Results

Overall condom use in this population was low: less than a quarter of respondents used condoms consistently and less than one third of men and women used condoms at last sex. This is especially true of females, married couples and those who have multiple partners. In multivariate analysis, significant predictors of consistent condom use for both sexes included good communication, older age at sexual debut, low risk perception of HIV infection, progressive attitudes towards gender violence and high HIV-related stigma. High condom self-efficacy, defined as the intention to pick up or purchase condoms with the intention of use, was the most powerful predictor of both condom use indices among males. Among females only, having fewer than three lifetime sexual partners was positively associated with using condoms consistently. Lastly, females who used condoms as their main method of contraception were up to 20 times more likely to use them consistently and at last sex.

Conclusions

HIV prevention programmes in this population should focus on delaying sexual debut, increasing perceived risk of HIV infection, encouraging partner communication, making condoms more easily accessible to young men and addressing gender inequalities. Furthermore, the dual protection offered by condoms against unwanted pregnancies and against HIV and other STI's should be emphasized in this population as it plays an important role in the prevention of HIV.

Keywords**:** *determinants · condom use · youth · gender · HIV · rural · Limpopo · South Africa*

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Virus
ARV	Anti-retrovirals
DOH	Department of Health
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
IMAGE	Intervention with Micro-finance for AIDS and Gender Equity
RADAR	Rural AIDS and Development Action Research Program
RHRU	Reproductive Health Research Unit
SADHS	South Africa Demographic and Health Survey
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing