

Relationship power and HIV sero-status: An analysis of their relationship among low-income urban Zimbabwean women, during the period May-September 2011.

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Background: In Zimbabwe, HIV prevalence is higher among women than men of reproductive age- 18% vs. 12%. Gender power imbalances exist in our societies and result in relationship power imbalances; which increase women's vulnerability to HIV. The aim of this study was to determine the correlation between relationship power and HIV sero-status among low-income urban Zimbabwean women attending post-natal care clinics.

Methodology: A secondary data analysis of a cross-sectional survey conducted among 2 042 women aged 15-49 years, attending six low-income urban clinics in Harare in 2011. HIV results were based on rapid HIV diagnostic tests conducted during ANC. Shona interviewer-administered structured-questionnaires were used to collect data. This secondary analysis was limited to women with a known HIV status ($n=1\,951$). Multivariable logistic regression analyses were performed.

Results: The study population mean age of the 26 years ($SD=5.8$). HIV prevalence was 14.6% ($n=299$). Having a partner who ever refused use of any family planning method was associated with the women's HIV status (aOR 1.75, 95% CI 1.10-2.78). A non-significant association was found between relationship control by the male partner and women's HIV status after adjusting for other factors.

Conclusion: Although there were patterns of high male partner control in intimate relationships, not all women were without agency. Our study provides further evidence that male dominance in intimate relationships increases women's vulnerability to HIV. HIV prevention programmes, interventions and policies should address gender issues to help curb this disproportionate pandemic among the woman sub-population.

Keywords: Gender, Relationship Power, HIV, Women, Zimbabwe