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Avoiding Truth in a Time of Knowledge: Male Youth Refusing to Test for HIV

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Abstract

Males in KZN come to health facilities for circumcision but refuse HIV testing as a condition. As a result, they end up not circumcising. Of the population that does not want to test, male youth comprise the majority percentage. Many studies have been conducted to outline the factors leading to this minimal HCT uptake. To add, interventions have been put in place to address these factors. HIV/AIDS information, treatment and support services are available to all people, yet most still avoid testing. This is because there is a gap between the interventions to address the socio-structural factors causing the low uptake of HCT and the intended beneficiaries. This study suggests how 'deliberate ignorance' can clarify the gap between the socio-structural explanations of HCT avoidance and thus bridge the existing gap.

This study uses the concept of deliberate ignorance to investigate the avoidance to test for HIV by young males in the Township of Naledi. The study acknowledges research on the socio-structural factors that account for avoidance to test for HIV. A qualitative approach is used to purposively select 15 male youth participants aged 18-35 years residing in Naledi.

Data is thematically analyzed and reveals that even though the young males had biomedical knowledge about HIV, they still deliberately avoided testing for varied reasons that include, the lack of cure, mischievous behavior, fear of a positive diagnosis, and not thinking about testing. Based on the findings, the report argues that deliberate ignorance clarifies the socio-structural factors responsible for low HCT uptake in the sense that it taps into the individual psychological understanding of HCT. Deliberate ignorance, then bridges the gap between general HCT socio-structural interventions and the intended individual beneficiaries on the ground.