Health locus of control and HIV risk behaviour of South African young adults

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Research report submitted to the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

July 2004

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the four dimensions of health locus of control and behaviours that predispose South African youth to HIV infection (HIV risk behaviours). Health locus of control (HLC) represents people's perception regarding controllability of health outcomes; whether health outcomes are controlled by internal or personal factors, powerful others like health care professionals, and chance or fate. Both powerful others health locus of control (PHLC) and chance health locus of control (CHLC) form the fourth dimension of external health locus of control (EHLC). A sample of 84 (n=84) South African young adults, 44 females and 40 males, whose ages ranged from 18 to 24 years old were selected for the study. They were requested to complete two questionnaires: Multidimensional Health Locus of Control and HIV risk behaviour assessment scale. Correlational analyses were done to establish the relationship between HLC and HIV risk behaviour. The findings of the research indicate that participants who scored higher on internal health locus of control (IHLC) tended to score insignificantly lower on HIV risk behaviour scale (r = - 0.17 with p of 0.1242). Participants who scored higher on PHLC scored insignificantly higher on HIV risk behaviour scale (r = 0.17 with p of 0.1195). While participants who scored higher on both CHLC and EHLC tended score significantly higher on HIV risk behaviour scale (CHLC r = 0.40 with p of 0.0001 and EHLC r = 0.37 with p of 0.0005). These results suggest that when both CHLC and EHLC scores go high, the risk of HIV infection also increases. Therefore, youth who have greater CHLC and EHLC tendencies are more likely to engage in behaviour that may predispose them to HIV than those who are high in IHLC. The findings of this study could provide further clarity on why many South African youth continue to engage in behaviour that predispose them to HIV infection. And therefore, to curb the spread of HIV, intervention strategies need to be informed by the understanding of the relationship between HLC and factors that predispose youth to HIV.