

## **ABSTRACT**

HIV/AIDS continues to have devastating effects on people in Sub-Saharan Africa as there is no cure as yet, of the disease. This calls for research to be done in all dimensions and fields affected by the pandemic. This research looked at HIV/AIDS from a different lens; the workplace. Possibly one of the most significant aspects of the increasing workplace response to HIV/AIDS is the rise of peer education. Whilst international and local research has been done on HIV/AIDS workplace peer education that has contributed to existing literature, there is little research that has been done in South Africa that provides reliable information on how gender affects communication between HIV/AIDS workplace peer educators and their peers.

The aim of this study was to ascertain the barriers and facilitators that contribute to effective communication between the workplace peer educators and their peers with the focus being on their gender. This was done by conducting a qualitative research. Four research sites whose HIV/AIDS peer education programmes are co-funded by the Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme (SWHAP) participated in the research. Data was collected from a total of twenty research participants of which eight males and six females were peer educators, two males and two females were peer education coordinators and two females were occupational health nurses.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Thematic content analysis was used to generate themes. The main themes were categorized under a description of the four research sites, the gender composition of peer educators and their workforce, gender dynamics in the context of formal presentations and informal interactions and dynamics. From the findings peer educators interact extensively with their peers informally, in the workplace and in their communities. In addition, the age and sex of the peer educators determines their interaction with their peers including who confide and seek advice from them. The main findings in this research show evidence that

gender influences communication between HIV/AIDS workplace peer educators and their peers.