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National AIDS Communication Programmes, HIV Prevention Behaviour, and HIV Infections Averted in South Africa, 2005

Overview:

- South Africa has a vast array of HIV prevention interventions including mass media and interpersonal programs undertaken at national, provincial and at the local level.
- Questions have been raised around the impact of HIV prevention efforts in South Africa and a number of experts are skeptical of the impact of prevention.
- This study examines if prevention works by estimating the number of HIV infections that may have been averted by means of HIV prevention practices and the extent to which exposure to national level mass media AIDS communication programs may have contributed to prevention behaviours.
- The study undertaken by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health Centre for Communication Programs (JHU-CCP) and the Centre for AIDS Development Research and Evaluation (CADRE) re-analysed the 2005 HSRC/Nelson Mandela Foundation Population household survey.
- Re-analysis was possible because the HSRC/NMF Survey collected data looking at prevalence, prevention behaviors and the degree to which people had been exposed to the national level mass media AIDS communication programmes, such as Khomanani, loveLife, Soul City, Soul Buddyz, TshaTsha, Siyayinqoba, Takalani Sesame Street.
- The data was analyzed by means of a structural equation model, treatment effects analysis (biprobit regression) and propensity score matching (PSM) to examine the relationship between HIV prevention and HIV status in 2005 and the cumulative level of exposure to HIV prevention programs.

Results

- HIV prevention behaviors are more likely to take place amongst males than amongst females, with 69% of men and 60% of women taking some action to prevent HIV.
- There has been a major generational shift in condom usage in particular amongst youth. Condom use at first sex amongst youth (49% for males & 43% for females) is double that of older population groups (20% for males and 12% for females). Consistent condom usage remains low but again there are significant differences between young population groups (Males 40% and females 26%) and older population groups (17% males and 09% females).
- When looking at being faithful with a trusted partner females and youth are less likely to report being faithful with a trusted partner. Only 31% of females report being faithful with a trusted partner compared to 42% of males. Amongst youth 31% males and 32% females respectively report being faithful to their partners.
- The analysis found a strongly correlation between various life style behaviors – namely alcohol and substance abuse and the number of concurrent partners. Those who report drinking 4 – 5 alcoholic drinks at a time are significantly less likely to practice HIV prevention behaviors, more likely to have higher numbers of concurrent partners and living with HIV.



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- 78% in the adult sample that have had sex and were tested for HIV were aware of one or more communication programme. The strongest determinant of awareness of these programmes was frequency of watching television, along with frequency of listening to the radio, reading newspapers, participation in community meetings, and any level of formal education.
- 78% in the adult sample that have had sex and were tested for HIV were aware of one or more communication programme ranging from a high of 64% for Soul City; Takalani Sesame (55%); loveLife (52%) and TshaTsha (45%) and Khomanani (38%). Exposure to AIDS communication programs indirectly impacts the likelihood of practicing one or more of the reported HIV prevention behaviours.
- Of those exposed those with no current partner or one current partner 65% are practicing some form of prevention behavior compared to 53% of those with concurrent partners. For those with no current partners 45.6% report not having sex; 48.9% of those with one current partner report being faithful or trusting of their partners and only 31.8% of those with concurrent partners report using condoms.
- Overall: 64.2% of sexually active South Africans or 16.7 million South Africans are practicing some form of HIV prevention behavior this has resulted in 701 495 infections being averted or delayed in 2005.
- Conversely an additional 701 495 people would have been HIV positive in 2005 had they not practiced some form of HIV prevention behaviour.
- The infections averted or delayed in 2005 have resulted in huge cost savings in treatment costs. The cost of treatment per infection averted or delayed in a given year would amount to \$400 per year per person the overall per year saving is USD280 600 000.

Conclusion:

- Prevention works and more investments should be made to strengthen prevention interventions – every dollar allocated to prevention is highly effective, mass media interventions have an indirect impact on prevention but need to be complemented with greater interpersonal communication.
- South Africa's prevention efforts need to address the gaps identified by this study:
 - develop a national plan focusing on the geographic areas where the number of new infections are the greatest and continuing to increase, while working to keep infections down in areas where HIV prevalence is low.
 - emphasize the risks of multiple partners and promote partner reduction
 - promote correct and consistent condom usage with all partners
 - address the linkages between alcohol, substance abuse, sex and HIV.