

Media Programme Exposure and Adolescent Sexual Behaviour in South Africa

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Introduction

Adolescents' sexual health is a major public health problem worldwide. In response, a lot of research work has been done on adolescent sexual behaviour and interventions targeted at promoting protective behaviour among adolescents have been designed and implemented. Research has shown that adolescents tend to engage in risky sexual behaviours such as early initiation of sexual intercourse which is usually unplanned and unprotected, none/inconsistency use of condom during intercourse and having multiple sexual partners among other things which expose them to sexually transmitted infections including HIV and unplanned pregnancies (teen pregnancies) (Eaton et al., 2003, Pettifor et al., 2005, Zuma et al., 2014, Brown et al., 2006).

A large body of literature has documented various determinants of adolescents' sexual behaviour at individual, household and community level (Marston and King, 2006, Obidoa et al., 2012, Viner et al., 2012, Zuma et al., 2014). Media has also been linked to adolescent sexuality (Brown, 2002, Brown et al., 2005, Brown et al., 2006, Ashby et al., 2006, Parkes et al., 2013, O'Hara et al., 2012).

Several studies have shown that exposure to sexual content in television programmes, magazines, video games, X-rated and R-rated films and music predicts the timing and initiation of sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners and teen pregnancy among adolescents (Brown et al., 2005, Brown and L'Engle, 2009, Parkes et al., 2013, Chandra et al., 2008, Strasburger et al., 2010, O'Hara et al., 2012, Collins et al., 2004).

While detailed studies exist in developed countries on the effect of media exposure on adolescent sexual behavior little is still known about the relationship between media programme exposure and adolescent sexual behaviour in developing countries including South Africa (Moswang and Ruane, 2009). This study therefore adds to existing literature by examining the association between media programme exposure and adolescent sexual behaviour in South Africa which is still an understudied area.

Data Source

Data for this study was drawn from the Third National Communications Survey (NCS) which was conducted in 2012 in South Africa by Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa, loveLife and Soul City. The main objective of the survey was to evaluate the impact of HIV communications programmes on the main drivers of HIV epidemic in South Africa overtime. The NCS is nationally representative survey which was conducted in all the nine provinces of South Africa.

Study Population and Sample size

The population of interest for this study was adolescents aged between 16 and 24 years. The final sample size for this study was 3 399 (unweighted) adolescents (1 477 males and 1922 females). The weighted sample was 8 876 223 adolescents aged between 16 and 24 years (4 586 167 females and 4 290 056 males).

Results

Description of the study population

The weighted results of the characteristics of the study population are shown in Table 1. The average age for the selected sample was about 20 years and mean age at first sex was about 17 years for both male and female adolescents. The majority of the adolescents were blacks compared to other races about 78% for both males and females sample. A larger proportion of the selected adolescents resided in urban areas either formal or informal settlements, 41% and 30% for males and 37% and 30% for females respectively. About 70% of the male adolescents and 62% of female adolescents were single while about 22% for both sexes reported that they were in a steady sexual relationship. The results in Table 1 also shows that a larger proportion of adolescents for both males and females had educational level ranging between grade 8-11, were currently students for males and unemployed for females and had a high socioeconomic status score.

In terms of sexual behaviour about 33% of the male adolescents sample reported having intercourse with multiple sexual partners in the last 12 months and 65% reported condom use at last sex whilst about 12% of the female sample reported having multiple sexual partners and 58% reported using a condom at last intercourse. Compared to male adolescents a larger proportion of female adolescents (65.1%) reported that they had tested for HIV at one point in time and about 65.6% knew their HIV status whilst for male adolescents less than half of the study population (42.4%) had tested for HIV and about 46.6% knew their HIV status. Also a larger percentage for both males (65.3%) and females (59.5%) had lower knowledge of HIV.

With regards to media programme exposure (table 1), over 80% of the adolescents watched television and about 60% listened to the radio for both males and females. About 70% of adolescents watched public channels (SABC 1-3 & etv) whilst slightly above 30% accessed private channels either through Dstv or Toptv for both males and females. Sixty-two percent of

the male adolescents read newspaper and 30% read magazine while for females 53% read newspaper and 41% read magazine. The percentage of those who were exposed to internet was 48% for males and 40% for females and exposure to social media (Facebook/Twitter/Mixit) was about 47% and 41% respectively. For the male sample a larger percentage (41%) had a low exposure to HIV Communication Programmes while for the females about 41% of the sample exposure to HIV Communication Programmes was high.

Table 1: Description of the study population

Variables	Males Weighted =4 290 056 %	Females Weighted = 4 586 167 %
Dependent Variables		
Multiple Sexual Partners		
Yes	32.8	11.7
Condom Use		
Yes	64.8	57.7
Independent Variables		
Current Age	Mean=20.1years (std 2.37)	Mean=20.3years (std 2.43)
Place of residence		
Urban formal	41.1	37.0
Urban informal	29.8	29.7
Peri-urban	9.0	11.0
Rural	20.1	22.3
Province		
Eastern Cape	11.7	12.3
Free State	5.9	5.9
Gauteng	24.6	23.3
Kwazulu-Natal	20.1	20.9
Limpopo	9.3	10.1
Mpumalanga	7.5	7.4
North West	7.2	6.6
Northern Cape	2.2	2.2
Western Cape	11.6	11.4
Race		
Black	78.0	78.3
Coloured	9.3	9.3
Other	12.7	12.4
Age at first sex	Mean=16.5 (std 2.13)	Mean=17years (std 1.91)
Marital Status		
Single	70.3	62.1
Steady sexual relationship	22.2	22.5
Cohabiting	4.3	9.1
Married	1.1	3.4
Other	2.2	2.9
Educational level		

No/primary	5.9	3.4
Grade 8-11	48.3	45.7
Matric	37.1	42.1
Tertiary	8.7	8.8
Employment Status		
Unemployed	37.4	44.5
Employed	16.4	11.7
Student	45.1	42.5
Socioeconomic status		
High	40.7	34.5
Medium	29.0	34.2
Low	30.3	31.3
Ever tested for HIV		
Yes	42.4	65.1
HIV Knowledge		
No knowledge	2.6	3.15
Lower (know 1-3ways)	65.3	59.5
High (4-10 ways)	32.1	37.4
Know HIV status		
Yes	46.6	65.6
Media HIV Communications Programmes		
Exposure		
Low	40.9	33.1
Medium	23.9	26.1
High	35.2	40.8
Media Access		
Radio Access/Exposure		
Yes	69.1	65.0
TV Access		
Yes	80.5	81.0
Public Channels		
Yes	76.6	79.8
Private Channels		
Yes	34.8	33.4
Internet Access		
Yes	47.9	40.3
Newspaper Access		
Yes	61.9	53.5
Magazine Access		
Yes	29.6	40.9
Social Media		
Yes	46.7	41.4