



YouthNet

“Be faithful” messages in the context of HIV and pregnancy prevention among youth in Tanzania



Joy Noel Baumgartner
Senior Research Associate
YouthNet/FHI



Muhimbili University College
of Health Sciences

Rationale and study objectives



- Research on “ABC” messages as they pertain to youth tended to focus on A and C; little known about how “B” is understood and practiced by youth.
- Since “B” does not prevent unintended pregnancy, need more information about how youth think (or do not think) about prevention of pregnancy within the “B” strategy for HIV prevention.
- Objectives:
 - To obtain evidence on the cultural understandings of “B” messages (faithfulness and partner reduction) including barriers to their practice for young people; and
 - To increase our understanding of the need to integrate HIV and pregnancy prevention messages for youth.

Study design



- 20 focus group discussions with 120+ adolescents stratified by:
 - Sex
 - Age (14-16 and 17-20)
 - School (currently in or out)
 - Residence (urban-Dar, rural-Iringa)
 - Marital status (17-20 only, out of school)
- Interviewers followed a pre-tested FGD guide
- Data analysis: transcription, translation, coding, matrices, synthesis

FGD topics



- Knowledge and attitudes regarding HIV prevention in general, A, B, and C, specifically, and pregnancy prevention (including sources of information)
- Context of youth relationships
- Meaning of faithfulness and partner reduction
- Exploring faithfulness and...
 - HIV prevention, VCT, concurrent and serial partnerships
 - Love and relationship expectations
 - Unequal relationships
 - Supportive factors (enabling environment)
 - Condoms
 - Pregnancy prevention

Knowledge and attitudes regarding HIV and pregnancy prevention



- Groups fairly clear on ABC messages; in general, understand the “B” message as the need to be monogamous with one (preferably tested) partner.
- Significant mistrust of condoms related to HIV prevention, less so for pregnancy prevention
- Condoms and abstinence mentioned as best methods for preventing pregnancy, followed by modern FP methods
- Media and school named as primary sources for HIV info; media, school, and parents (for girls only) named as primary sources for pregnancy info
- Most participants understand different risks for serial versus concurrent relationships
 - higher risk w/concurrent—in terms of HIV acquisition and also pregnancy—paternity

Context of youth relationships



- Love
 - Majority of groups indicated that “love” means/necessarily includes sexual intercourse
- A good romantic relationship
 - Defined by most groups as including sex; some mentioned understanding/support, and faithfulness/trust as important
- What girls look for in a boy
 - All groups mentioned gifts/money, followed by sex and love
 - Money discussed primarily in terms of *poverty* (needing food) but also wanting fancy things
- What boys look for in a girl
 - Almost all groups mentioned sex, followed by appearance
- Most groups said youth want sex before marriage

Faithfulness...



- Means only 1 partner before marriage
- Means only your spouse in monogamous marriage
- Mixed opinions about how easy or hard it is to be faithful, whether it's a premarital or marital relationship
- For women vs. men: expectations are/should be the same
- Discussing faithfulness with partners is common, but mixed opinions about whether it is easy to talk about
- Majority of groups said no way to tell if your partner is faithful

What supports faithfulness



- Love, respect and communication important
- Being married can help set the expectation
- Religion helps set some rules
 - Faithfulness, respect, do not commit adultery
 - Not mentioned spontaneously by any group
- A few mentioned sexual satisfaction, harmonious households, education/fear of diseases as reasons for being faithful
- What does not support faithfulness
 - Money (exchanged or unequal access to or between partners)
 - Coercion or force in relationships, including arranged marriages
 - Inequality in decision-making between partners



Faithfulness, condoms, and prevention of pregnancy and/or HIV

- Condoms given as the primary method for pregnancy prevention, yet faithfulness usually seen as precluding condom use and condom use considered by many as evidence of a lack of faithfulness.
- Condoms for HIV prevention within faithful relationships rarely considered as an option while almost all recognize that condoms can prevent HIV.
- Variety of opinions among youth—contradictions within and between groups—hard topic for youth to integrate in terms of their own thinking.

Summary points



- Vast majority of groups felt “B” message is important and relevant for unmarried youth to hear for HIV prevention.
- Faithful relationships seen as ideal in terms of romantic expectations and HIV prevention, yet youth recognize that the application of “B” is complex and they are not sure how to negotiate this in their relationships. “B” is particularly difficult if relationships are unequal.
- Faithfulness and condom use often seen as mutually exclusive, thereby creating conflict for introducing condoms for HIV or pregnancy prevention into faithful relationships.

Program implications



- Young people need more than slogans to teach them to be faithful. They need life skills education around establishing and maintaining healthy, respectful relationships.
- Youth need more complementary messages about condom use within faithful relationships for HIV and/or pregnancy prevention.
- Youth want and need more information about modern FP methods from their primary sources of information: media and school.
- Underlying cynicism (fatalism) among youth that despite best efforts you cannot prevent HIV suggests youth need programs that support self-efficacy in general.

Collaboration



- Family Health International
 - Dr. Joy Noel Baumgartner (PI)
 - Ms. Laura Johnson (qualitative analyst)
- MUCHS School of Nursing
 - Dr. Helen Lugina (Local PI)
 - Mr. Tumaini Nyamhanga (Study Coordinator)
- Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW)
 - Mr. Steven Joel (KK) Kyaruzi (Iringa coordinator)