

Physical Violence, Forced Sex, and Sexual Infidelity Among Youth in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

H Lary¹, J K Mbwambo², S Maman¹, M Katebalila², A McCauley³
¹Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, United States;
²Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences, Tanzania;
³Horizons/International Center for Research on Women, United States

Background

- ✦ HIV incidence is growing fastest among young people in sub-Saharan Africa.
- ✦ Unprotected sex and a lack of monogamous partnerships are fueling the rapidly expanding HIV epidemic among youth in Tanzania.
- ✦ Our previous study in 1999 found a strong and consistent association between HIV seropositivity and partner violence among young women at a VCT clinic in Dar es Salaam.
- ✦ The specific ways in which the HIV/AIDS and violence against women epidemics are related remain largely unexplored.

Methods

- ✦ Recruitment occurred in public venues frequented by youth.
- ✦ 60 semi-structured interviews with youth (40 males, 20 females), ages 16-24 years in one ward of Dar es Salaam.
- ✦ 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) 14 with males and 4 with females.
- ✦ Interviews and FGDs conducted by locally trained qualitative interviewers.
- ✦ Data were audiotaped, transcribed, translated, coded, and computerized for analysis.

Results

- ✦ Most young men interviewed describe multiple concurrent or serial sexual relationships.

"Up to now I have one (another partner) but my fiancée doesn't know her. I have a girl who is in Mbezi Beach, bearing in mind the distance from here...she doesn't understand what's going on."
 Male, 23 years, single

"Aaa- before coming here (Dar es Salaam) I didn't have another partner, but after coming here now I have another partner who knows that I am married."
 Male, 23 years, married

- ✦ Men and women describe deep mistrust of partners due to the fact that infidelity is so widespread.

"I don't trust my fellow and he doesn't trust me, so we plan that we should go for a test (HIV test). It's not easy to trust each other because the youths of these days don't settle down, one may lie to you while he has another woman apart from you."
 Female, 23 years, single

- ✦ Violence against women is largely condoned by male and some female youth.

"I think in such circumstances when a woman is lying and can't keep secrets, she is just a liar. When you tell her something she spreads it around, she does this and that, I think there's a need to correct her, even by using force."
 Male, 21 years, single

- ✦ Men and women describe infidelity, real or suspected, as the most common trigger for violence in their relationships.

"When a woman isn't faithful there's a need to use force. There's a need to use force, to slap her twice or thrice to know that she wronged and correct herself."
 Male, 23 years, married

"For example when he guesses that you have a certain boy. When he calls you then you deny while it's true. So when he finds you he must use violence a bit."
 Female, 19 years, single

- ✦ Violence is also used as a response to women confronting a male partner about his sexual infidelities.

"He had another woman while I was five months pregnant... I was passing on a road that he didn't want me to pass because he didn't want me to see him. He was with his (partner), and telling me not to pass at the road. So I insisted and passed by that road. When I passed, I said he was the father of this (showing her child). He attacked and started beating me."
 Female, 20 years, single

- ✦ Forced sex is narrowly defined as forced penetration. In the interview with this young man he indicated that he did not believe in the use of "forced sex" however, he goes on to explain a situation in which physically beating a woman to get her to have sex is justified.

"In addition, there are times when she wants to make love to you and then she refuses, so when you find that she doesn't agree you give some beating and if she agrees you make love and if she doesn't agree you leave her."
 Male, 24 years, single

Conclusions

- ✦ Sexual infidelity is the major trigger for violence in relationships. Sexual infidelity is also a salient risk factor for HIV infection among youth.
- ✦ These links between sexual infidelity, violence, and HIV infection may help explain the relationship between partner violence and HIV serostatus that we uncovered in earlier research.
- ✦ These results have formed the basis of a community-based HIV and violence prevention intervention study with young men in Dar es Salaam, combining community-based drama and peer support.