

30TH NOV-2ND DEC HIV/AIDS,STIS CONFERENCE
HELD IN ATLANTA GEORGEA

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TITLE

**EXPLORING MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH
HIV/AIDS WITH EXAMPLES FROM
A FEW COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD**

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Misinformation, misinterpretation, misperceptions, misconception and myths associated with HIV/AIDS continue to spell a blow to the success of the battle against HIV/AIDS in many countries of the world, South Africa notwithstanding.

These phenomena have derailed people from the paths of truth and thereby compromising their response to prevention, care and support.

It is critical, therefore that an inventory of these myths is laid bare and possible interventions to demystify them are put in place.

BACKGROUND

- Despite the advancement of information technology, modernization and globalization, many people in many parts of Africa associate HIV/AIDS with myths which lead to stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV. These myths pose are a huge barrier to testing and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

BACKGROUND

Myths have been documented to negatively stifle the response to HIV/AIDS responses in different continents, regions and countries.

The preponderance of myths largely put the campaign against HIV/AIDS in jeopardy because the phenomenon obscures reality and truth associated with the disease aetiology and epidemiology.

BACKGROUND

A myth which has lingered for far too long in the Southern African countries is the belief that people living with HIV/AIDS can get rid of the disease if they sleep with virgins (Jackson2002). This myth has been propagated by some traditional healers with the consequence of increasing young girls vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

It also poses the challenge of increasing incest, rape and other forms of sexual abuse to girls (Jackson 2002).

BACKGROUND

The belief that sleeping with an albino woman can cure HIV/AIDS (Thuku 2011) also heightens chances of albinos to be vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. This has also undermined the countries' efforts towards fulfilling Millennium Development Goal number three that envisages increasing women empowerment and equality with men (UNDP 2008).

BACKGROUND

Though not in large scale, cases of women and girls with albinism being targets of rape by men living with HIV/AIDS have been reported in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and South Africa.

BACKGROUND

The mythical belief that HIV/AIDS is associated with witchcraft makes family members to distance themselves from those infected. Some even refuse to share meals or houses with their infected relatives.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a literature review methodology

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

- People living with HIV/AIDS are largely stigmatized by communities
- Myths obscures the truth about the aetiology and transmission of HIV/AIDS and therefore give the disease an opportunity to thrive fast.
- People fail to seek interventions to surmount the disease timeously. For example making efforts to know their sero-positivity

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

- The virgin cure myths may continue to make children vulnerable to cases of rape.
- According to Hellen Jackson (2002), the staggering rise in child or infant rapes in both South Africa and Zimbabwe may be explained partly by the prevalence of this myth.

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

- Information on sexuality is surrounded and driven by Misconceptions, misperceptions, mistruths and mythical misinformation.
- For example, boys who do not engage in sex are usually laughed at by their peers, are condescended, and sometimes abused or bullied around
- The mythical belief that a man should not be innocent, naive, and should sexually engage with women as a test that he is indeed a man.

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

Sexual violence in many communities is aggravated by the mythical and cultural belief that a man must be stronger than a woman, should express sexual prowess to convince his manhood strength

Many cultural myths especially in Africa hold women to be passive in sexual decision making process. For example in Botswana, some cultures believe a woman should not deny a man sex

“Monna ga a ganelwe dikobo”

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

Some cultures mythically perceive AIDS as a woman's disease (feminization of HIV/AIDS). Women may be blamed, ostracized by their partners, families and communities for possibly infecting or spreading the disease.

This hides the actual spread of the virus. With men been documented to be perfect transmitters of virus compared to women, being 5 times more promiscuous than women, this mythical environment becomes a platform for increased viral transmission

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

Men not satisfied by one woman

Due to the mythical belief and cultural norms that men are not satiated by one man, the phenomenon has encouraged multiple and concurrent partners.

Monna poo ga agelwe lesaka (a man like a bull should not be locked in a kraal)

Monna ke selepe , oa dimanwa (a man is like an axe than can be borrowed to others).

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

- *The Mbeki Mythical Belief That HIV Does Not Cause AIDS*

The phenomenon allowed space for viral transmission unattended for a long period of time

- *“HIV is harmless . AIDS symptoms are caused by malnutrition and even by antiretroviral therapy themselves”*

THE DYNAMICS ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS AND PREVALENCE OF HIV/AIDS

- *HIV/AIDS caused by witchcraft*

Associating HIV/AIDS with witchcraft largely obscures the reality of the HIV/AIDS aetiology and epidemiology. It obscures the scientific nature of the disease and usher's in a spiritual dimension.

Condoms cause diarrhoea, has worms

STRATEGIES TO DISPEL MYTHS SURROUNDING HIV/AIDS

- *People/communities/societies to Look or Seek Scientific Evidence in the Therapies.*

Governments should strengthen community education to caution people against unwarranted and unscientific modes of treatment to tackle HIV/AIDS.

STRATEGIES TO DISPEL MYTHS SURROUNDING HIV/AIDS

- *Demystifying condom use*
- The mythical belief against the use of condoms needs to be fought fiercely with the community education.
- Perhaps a lot of education should be increased on using them correctly and consistently

STRATEGIES TO DISPEL MYTHS SURROUNDING HIV/AIDS

- *Demystifying male circumcision*
- This is important in some countries such as Zimbabwe, where there are myths that the foreskin could be used for witchcraft and affect the initiate/s
- *Censure traditional healers tasks*

The Government to regulate the work of Traditional healers through licensing and following their treatment modalities and information they give clients

CONCLUSION

- Incontrovertibly, myths and misinformation surrounding HIV/AIDS contribute to the high prevalence of new HIV infections in several countries.

Therefore, government and community leaders should play a significant role to unleash community education and awareness sessions to dispel as many myths and misinformation surrounding HIV/AIDS as much as is possible,

THE END

THE END

- THANKS A LOT- ENGLISH
- MUCHOS GRACIAS- SPANISH
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- ASANTE SANA- SWAHILI