



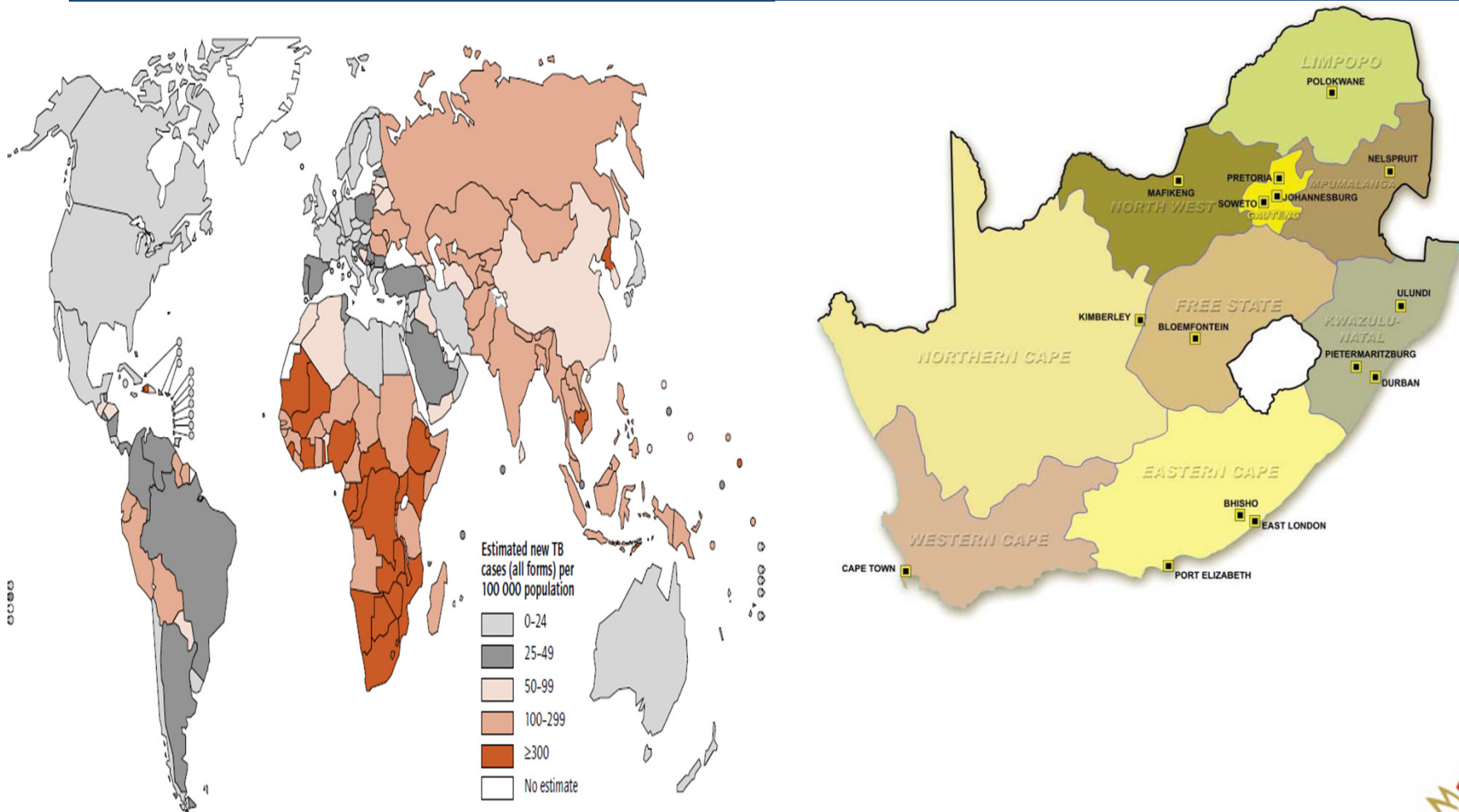
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Parents' perceptions regarding sex education of their adolescent children: Perspectives from a community in Mopani District, South Africa.

**Phiri CM, Lebese RT & MS Maputle
University of Venda: South Africa
PhD, RN, RM**



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INTRODUCTION

- Parenting styles play a major role in sexual socialization and education of adolescents (South African Government Policy Guidelines for youth and adolescents Health, 2001).
- However, in most African culture it is taboo for parents to discuss sexual issues with their own children (Zwane, 2008).
- In such settings, adolescents tend to engage in sexual activities without accurate information and guidance regarding permissible and responsible sexual behaviours.

- Maluleke (2007) concurred that sex education cannot be talked about in public, it was said that this is a topic that can be easily discussed with peers.
- However, this could be harmful as most of the peers do not have accurate and sufficient information.

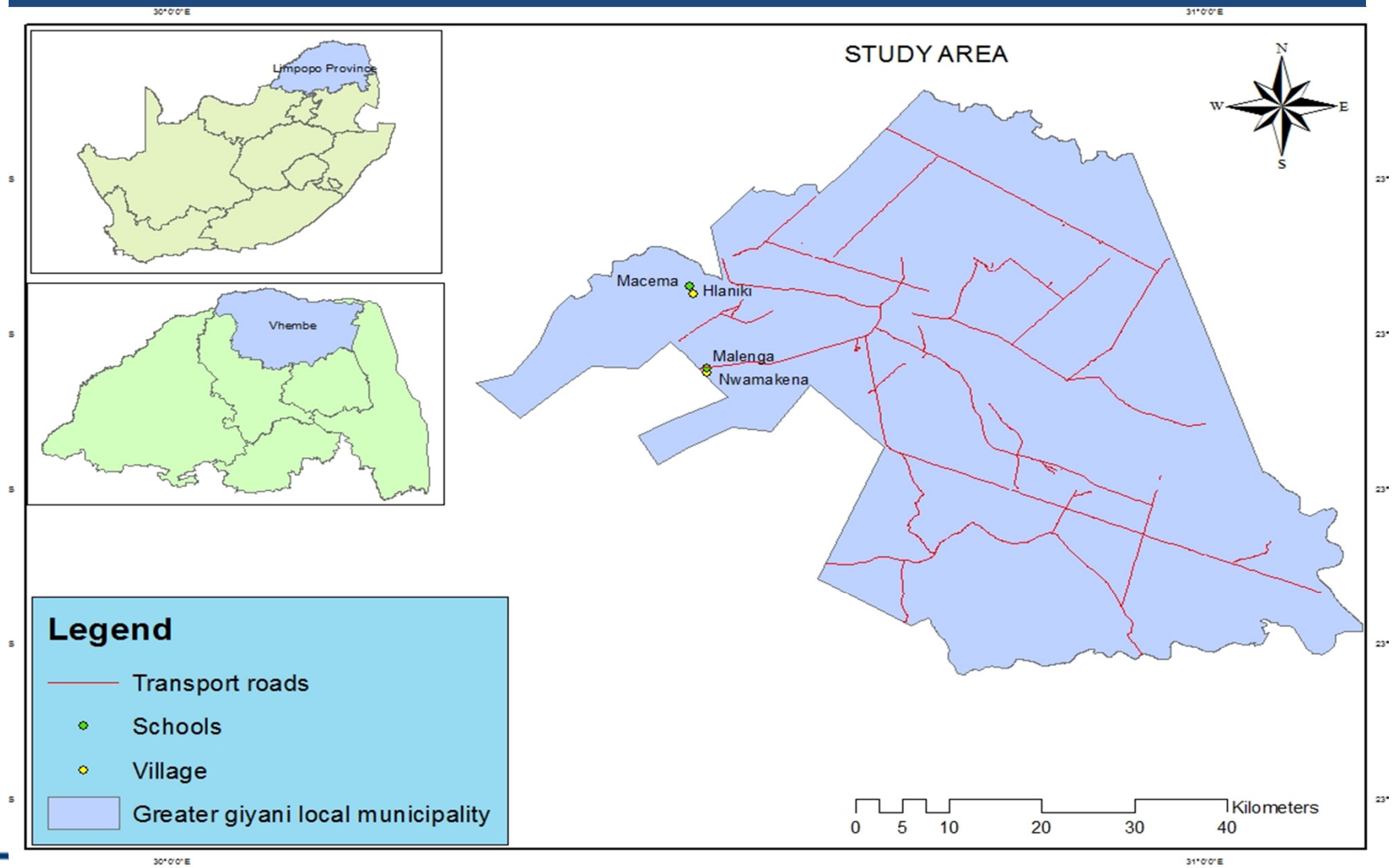
- In studies by Lebesse et al (2010); Kempner (2003) revealed that parents were uncomfortable to talk about sex and sexuality with their children.
- Parents make indirect speech when they talk about sex with their children and this usually leads to misinterpretations and distortions of the essence of their sex education messages.



- Teachers too (Kempner, 2003), as parents were reported to experience discomfort in discussing direct issues on sex in the classroom as sexuality is viewed as encouraging sexual behaviour and experimentation among adolescents.
- During this stage adolescents want to learn and experiment more with their bodies, choosing to experiment with sex and this lead to high prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, STIs including HIV contracting.



Setting



- There was high adolescents pregnancy rate....
- For example in two secondary schools in Mavalani there were 50 pupils in 2010 and 57 in 2011 and also in Macema Secondary School 27 pupils were pregnant in 2011 (SABC News,2011:online).

- Further in Mavalani Secondary School, six learners were charged with engaging in consensual sexual penetration while under the age of sixteen and among the six one girl was pregnant, (City Press news 2011: online)



- This has increased the number of behind door abortion which leads to increased death of teenagers, an increase in the number of teenagers who are infected with HIV/AIDS and an increase in the number of school dropouts.

Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of parents regarding sex education of their own adolescent children.

Methodology

- A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design was used.
- Ethical aspects (approval, permission and informed consent from relevant parties) were obtained
- Population consisted of parents of pregnant adolescents or those who have delivered within a year residing in the selected village of Mopani District of Limpopo Province, SA.
- Non-probability, convenient sampling method was used to select 10 participants.

Data collection

- Data was collected through unstructured in-depth interview and one central question was posed (in local language XiTsonga) as follows:
- *“How is it feel like to provide sex education to your adolescent child at home? “*
- Probing was used to elicit more data until saturation reached (Grove, Burns & Gray 2013).

Data analysis

- Data were transcribed verbatim from audiotapes and field notes and analysed qualitatively using Tesch's open coding method (Cresswell, 2009).
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- A list of similar topics was compiled.
- Data were grouped according to one theme and sub-themes and field notes were also coded and categorized.

Trustworthiness

- Lincoln and Guba (1985) four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness namely;
 - credibility,
 - transferability,
 - dependability and
 - conformability were used.



Results

- **Cultural belief system cited as a barrier to sex education.**
- **Sex-related communication used as a strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS and adolescent pregnancy.**

Cultural belief system cited as a barrier to sex education.

- According to Eleanor, Lynch and Marci (2002) culture is “the framework that guides and bounds life practices”.
- The findings highlighted the influence that culture has on the perceptions of parents concerning sex-education to their adolescents.



- There was a belief that adolescents receive sex education as part of the initiation schools programme at the schools.
 - *Even myself I learned about sex at the initiation school called ‘vukhomba’”*
- Sex education is provided but not accurate facts are given.
- Mulaudzi (2007) also affirms how Vhavenda initiates are warned about engaging in sex at an early stage during initiation school but at the same time young girls are taught how to engage in sexual intercourse which can be confusing and might influence them to experiment.

- Culturally, talking to young (your child) about sex was regarded as taboo hence parents find it difficult to educate to own children.
- Hence, there will be a person who is delegated to teach adolescents in their families about issues related to sex.
- This person was said to be an elder aunt in the family.




Quotes

- *“I delegate my relative to educate my adolescent about sex, “*
- *“I am afraid that if I can discuss about sex with them whenever I am with their father they will say am doing what I was telling them”.*



- This was supported by Lebese, Davhana-Maselesele and Obi (2010) identified that parents are uncomfortable to talk or discuss about sex and sexuality with their children.
- Parents make indirect speeches when they talk about sex with their children and this usually leads to misinterpretations and distortions of the essence of their messages



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- An aunt from the paternal side was the one responsible for teaching adolescents about sex.
 - But this seemed not functional as families live in different places far from each other.
 - This was also noted with concern as continuous education cannot be maintained if the involved people are not staying together to can share more information

- **Sex-related communication used as a strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS and adolescent pregnancy.**



- Parents who educate their adolescents about sex indicated that they start as early as of 12 years or after the onset of menstruation.
- The focus is on STIs prevention, pregnancy and contracting HIV
- Church doctrines and different religious affiliations were reported to make provision for group counselling sessions for adolescents who are affiliated to their respective denominations.



- *I educate my child about the dangers of engaging on sexual activities without protection, possibilities of contracting STIs including HIV/AIDS*
- *I encourage my adolescents to attend church because religion emphasizes sexual abstinence, and adolescents are grouped and counselled about sex”.*



“You must carry condoms so that you can use during sexual intercourse”

Contrary.....

- *Don't play with boys you will become pregnant at early age”.*

Conclusion

- Cultural beliefs and attitudes dominate the way of life in the rural areas, influencing how adolescents relate to parents and elders in the community.
- Barriers that affect sex education to adolescents may include cultural factors, lack of knowledge and awareness, as well as ethnicity-related factors

Implications for practice

- Facilitate the parent education session - parents and all relevant stakeholders to collaborate for provision of age specific adolescent sex education
- Develop the contextual content for the facilitators of initiation schools on sex education
- Strengthening of implementation of culture sensitive youth friendly services



