

Parents' and Teachers' Views on Adolescents' Sexual Health to Inform the Development of a Screening Intervention for Sexually Transmitted Infections: A Qualitative Study

George H. Wanje¹, Linnet Masese², Ethel Avuvika¹, Grace Omoni⁵, Anisa Baghazal⁶, R. Scott McClelland^{1, 2, 3, 4}



¹University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical & Infectious Diseases (UNITID), Nairobi, Kenya;

Department of ²Medicine, ³Epidemiology and ⁴Global Health, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA;

⁵School of Nursing Sciences, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya; ⁶Mombasa County Department of Health, Mombasa, Kenya

Background

- In sub-Saharan Africa, sexual health communication between parents and adolescents is often proscribed
- Lack of parental communication could prevent adolescents from seeking sexual health services such as screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- To develop effective school-based sexual health interventions like STI screening, it is imperative to understand teachers' role and involvement in adolescents' sexual health

Objective

To explore parents' and teachers' attitudes towards sexual health education and STI screening for *C. trachomatis*, *N. gonorrhoeae*, and *T. vaginalis*, for adolescent girls (15–17 years)

Methods

STUDY DESIGN

A qualitative study to explore parents' and teachers' attitudes, and enlisted their help, in designing an STI screening intervention for adolescents girls in Mombasa, Kenya



STUDY POPULATION

Parents and teachers from selected educational institutions

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Employed purposive sampling to recruit participants for in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus-group discussions (FGDs)
- Participants recruited during parents-teachers' meetings in schools
- IDIs and FGDs were audio-recorded, and field notes taken during the sessions
- Utilized both software coding using ATLAS.ti (GmbH, version 5.0, Berlin, Germany), and manual coding
- Transcripts were coded and analyzed using content analysis

Results

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of in-depth interview and focus group discussion participants

Characteristic	Median (IQR) or Number (%)			
	In-depth Interviews (n=10)		Focus Group Discussions (n=4)	
	Parents (n=5)	Teachers (n=5)	Parents (n=9)	Teachers (n=17)
Age (years)	40 (38-53)	41(40-42)	42 (39-45)	30 (27-40)
Female	4 (80)	5 (100)	6 (67)	9 (53)
Marital Status				
Single	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (11)	4 (23)
Married	4 (80)	4 (20)	7 (78)	12 (71)
Education				
Primary	3 (60)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Secondary	2 (40)	0 (0)	5 (56)	0 (0)
College	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (22)	8 (47)
Postgraduate	0 (0)	5 (0)	2 (22)	9 (53)
Religion				
Christian	2 (40)	3 (60)	6 (67)	14 (82)
Muslim	3 (60)	2 (40)	3 (33)	2 (12)
Number of Children	3 (2-3)	3 (2-3)	3 (1-4)	1 (0-2)
Income				
Unemployed	2 (40)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Employed	0 (0)	5 (100)	5 (56)	17 (0)
Self-employed	3 (60)	0 (0)	2 (22)	0 (0)

Themes

Lack of sexual health discourse

Most parents reported few or no discussions regarding STIs with their adolescent girls and were more comfortable discussing consequences of sexual activity including loss of virginity and the potential for pregnancy

To be honest, there is not a lot of talk about sexually transmitted diseases. First of all we don't want them to engage in sex
(38 year old female parent, IDI)

Parents tend to shift the responsibility for sexual health discourse to the teachers

The teachers, in turn, provide basic sexual and reproductive health education according to the educational curriculum

So they learn the normal skills in life, self-esteem, and a little of reproductive health. I don't think there is much of reproductive health content in that
(28 year old male teacher, FGD)

STI knowledge

- Most of the parents confessed that they did not know much about STIs
- Most of the teachers seemed to be knowledgeable about STIs, but felt they needed more information on sexual health

Syphilis can also be gotten through unprotected sex as well as the latrines. Maybe one of you has the disease and their urine got on the latrine seat...so when you go and sit on the toilet seat, you also get infected
(38 year old female parent, IDI)

STI screening acceptability

Both parents and teachers found the idea of screening for STIs in female adolescents to be acceptable

I think they should be tested, because they may have a boyfriend and you do not know [as a parent]
(36 year old female parent, IDI)

Disclosure of STI results

All parents felt that adolescents' screening results should be shared with their parents

If I signed for her [the consent] it means I want to know the results. If I wouldn't have signed it means I wouldn't want to know
(38 year old female parent, IDI)

Conclusion

- Parents and teachers were supportive of STI screening for adolescent girls
- Research and programs that aim to provide STI screening for adolescents throughout Africa must address the issue of disclosure versus non-disclosure of STI screening results to parents

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Contact: gwanje@uw.edu

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