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HIV/AIDS-RELATED BELIEFS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO¹

*with small
corrections for
typos*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to reveal beliefs among young people in Limpopo that can be relevant to the success or failure of HIV/AIDS-education. A survey was conducted among 325 students at the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Campus. The point of departure for the development of the survey tool, which included 102 questions and statements, was an

1 This study formed part of the HACALARA project (HIV/AIDS Communication Aimed at Local and Rural Areas; see www.hacalara.org), and was supported by the South African-Dutch research organization SANPAD. The study was carried out by the first author of this article and supervised by the second author. A comprehensive overview of the results can be found in Verheij (2008); see www.hacalara.org (-> Publications and References).

adapted version of the PEN-model proposed by Airhihenbuwa (1989) and Van Dyk (2001a). Positive beliefs, which are beneficial to effective health education, were distinguished from negative beliefs, which are considered as harmful in view of the goals of health education. For the purpose of this study, a new category was added to the PEN-model: multifaceted beliefs, which could be either beneficial or detrimental to HIV/AIDS-education depending on the circumstances in which the belief is demonstrated. For all statements and questions about positive, negative and multifaceted beliefs, the percentages of respondents' confirming and disconfirming reactions were calculated. Subsequently, possible effects of gender and area of origin were investigated. The results of this study suggest that there is a wide range of positive, negative and multifaceted HIV/AIDS-related beliefs that deserve more attention from the developers of educational materials. It appears that from the threefold ABC messaging (Abstain, Be faithful, Condomise), 'Be faithful' rates highest for further consideration for extensive promotion within this target group. Furthermore, the option of including information about male circumcision into HIV/AIDS-educational materials may deserve more consideration from campaign developers.

Introduction²

There is little doubt that the country's linguistic and cultural diversity contributes to the difficulty in developing effective campaigns against HIV/AIDS in South Africa.³ It would seem, however, that for reasons of efficiency, a general approach instead of a culture-specific approach is preferred in many South African HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. Sometimes, interventions that have been successful in developed countries are imported without any changes to South Africa.⁴

A growing number of health communication specialists⁵ are becoming more cautious about copying HIV/AIDS messages that

2 We sincerely thank the anonymous reviewers and the editor for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this article.

3 See for instance Haupt, Munshi and Smallwood 2004.

4 Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin, 1989; Green and Witte 2006.

5 See, among others, Airhihenbuwa 1989; Van Dyk 2001a; Van Dyk 2001b; Marcus 2002; Mulaudzi 2005.

