Background

Sexual self-efficacy (SSE), one’s perceived ability to perform a given HIV preventative behavior (e.g., unwanted sexual refusal, condom use and sexual partner communication), has been found to be an important predictor of consistent condom use. In the context of South Africa, few studies have examined gendered associations and pathways between SSE and consistent condom use, despite disproportionate HIV risk faced by young women. We examine the independent association between high-SSE and consistent condom use separately for adolescent men and women.

Methods

Study participants aged 14-19 were recruited through the Botsha Bophelo Adolescent Health Study (BBAHS) using community-level sampling to recruit from 41 identified formal and informal townships located in Soweto. As the main outcome for this analysis was consistent condom use and the main exposure being high-SSE participants were included in this analysis if they reported ever having sex and answered all SSE scale items.

Sexual self-efficacy was assessed using an adaptation of a previously validated SSE 6-item scale which was dichotomized such that “Yes” responses were coded as 1 to ensure those defined as having high-SSE were given affirmative yes responses (see items and ‘yes’ responses by gender in table 1). Study Cronbach alpha=0.75 for adolescent women and 0.65 for adolescent men, range 0-6, with score of >3 indicating high-SSE.

Consistent condom use was determined by participants answering “always” to lifetime consistent condom use when having vaginal/anal sex. Gender-stratified multivariable logistic regression models assessed independent relationship between consistent condom use and high-SSE.

Confounding factors were selected based off the literature and available data including: Socio-demographics (age, education, relationship status), Sexual behaviour (e.g. age at first sex), mental health (using the center for epidemiology studies depression scale (CES-D) cut off of ≥24, and lifetime experiences of violence).

Results

Table 1 - List of 6-Item Sexual Self-efficacy Scale

Table 2: Descriptive characteristics of sexually experienced BBAHS participants by gender (n=417)

Table 3- Univariate and adjusted analysis of variables associated with lifetime consistent condom use among adolescent men (n=200)

Table 4- Univariate and adjusted analysis of variables associated with consistent condom use among sexually experienced adolescent women (n=217)

Conclusions

We found significant gender differences in the association between high-SSE and consistent condom use. Adolescent women had significantly higher SSE compared to men, however high-SSE was not associated with consistent condom use for women, while it was positively associated with consistent condom use for adolescent men.

Moreover, despite significant differences in relationship concurrency and access to condoms, where nearly half of adolescent men reported having two or more current girlfriends as well as difficulty accessing condoms, reports of consistent condom use were not significantly different among adolescent men and women.

For men, HIV prevention efforts need scale-up to improve sexual negotiation within adolescent sexual relationships in South Africa. For women, however, individual determinants such as SSE may not be relevant for predicting the use of male-controlled HIV prevention strategies. Thus, gender-sensitive programming needs to begin early to address key socio-structural, gendered, and relational determinants which perpetuate on-going HIV transmission among youth.

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References


Note: Odds Ratios in bold are significant (<.05)
Italicized items are continuous (median, Q1, Q3)
**Note: All results were adjusted for potential confounders and p-values are based on a significance level of 0.05.**