

Multiple Sexual Partnerships and their Underlying Risk Influences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

G. Mutinta

*School of Management, Information Technology and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +270312608854, Fax: +270312608854, E-mail: mutinta@ukzn.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT Multiple sexual partners are defined as having more than one sexual partner over a period of time. These can be either serialised partners; one after the other, or simultaneous or concurrent; different sexual partners that overlap in time. Multiple sexual partners have been identified as a likely driver of the spread of HIV in countries with a generalised epidemic because they connect people to a sexual network in which HIV is spread more quickly and the entire community can be affected. The goal of this study was to investigate the prevalence of multiple sexual partnerships and their underlying factors among students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A study was conducted on 385 students using multistage sampling technique. The data were analysed using univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis with SPSS software package version 16.8. Findings show that 49.6% of the students were engaging in sex. About 44.2% sexually active respondents reported having multiple sexual partnerships. Male students were prone to multiple sexual partners compared to females (AOR=3.75; CI: 2.01-6.50). Students staying alone in rented apartments were two times more likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to those living with their parents (AOR=1.01; CI: 0.24-2.26). Findings also show that students who were under peer pressure were five times likely to have multiple sexual partners compared to those who did not have (AOR=4.99; CI: 2.65-8.80). Students who used alcohol were more likely to have multiple sex partners compared to those who never drank (AOR=2.19; CI: 1.01- 4.07). Findings suggest that the practice of engaging in multiple sexual partnerships is rampant on campuses and it is influenced by several underlying risk factors. Therefore, intervention programmes addressing multiple sexual partnerships and risk factors should be developed on campuses.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) cases due to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) continues to rise worldwide (Gouws 2012). More than half of the current new infections in the world happen among young people aged between 12 and 24 years (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS 2013)).

In 2013, about 35.3 million people worldwide were living with HIV, with approximately 2.3 million new infections worldwide (UNAIDS 2013). There are 75 million people infected with HIV since the start of the epidemic, and 1.6 million people in 2013 died from AIDS related causes

worldwide (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA (2013)).

Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst hit by the HIV and AIDS scourge than any other region in the world. However, a notable decline of new HIV infections has been observed in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gouws 2012; World Health Organization (WHO 2013). Nevertheless, the region is still disproportionately hit by the virus accounting for the largest burden of diseases. In 2013 about 70% of new infections and 68% of all people living with the virus were from the Sub-Saharan Africa region (Choopanya 2013).

More to the HIV and AIDS epidemics is that multiple sexual partnerships are suggested as possible explanations of why the HIV epidemic is so severe in Sub-Saharan Africa than elsewhere in the world (UNFPA 2013; Suthar 2013).

Multiple sexual partners are defined as having more than one sexual partner over a period of time. These can be either serialised partners; one after the other, or simultaneous or concurrent partners; with different sexual partners that overlap in time (Mah et al. 2013). Multiple sexual partners have been identified as a likely driver

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. G. Mutinta
School of Management, Information
Technology and Governance,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001,
Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260-8854,
Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260-8854,
E-mail: mutinta@ukzn.ac.za

of the spread of HIV in countries with a generalised epidemic. Multiple sexual relationships are connected by a “sexual network” which refers to anyone linked through a sexual relationship past or present; every partner one has ever had, and all their past and present partners (WHO UNAIDS and UNICEF 2013). Thus, within a large sexual network, HIV is spread more quickly and the entire community can be affected (Mah et al. 2013; Kanters 2013). This view is supported by theoretical models predicting that increases in prevalence of concurrent partnerships substantially increase the rate of spread of the disease (Beyrer 2012).

Currently, there is overwhelming evidence that young people engage in multiple sexual partners. Studies on young people in Africa in particular South Africa indicate that the lifestyle of having multiple sexual partners in the segments of the population is a common phenomenon (Alkema 2013; Kanters 2013).

Students are not spared from the practice of having multiple sexual partners. For instance, in South African universities substance use, gender, and poverty are associated with risky sexual practices such as having a high number of sexual partners (Mutinta et al. 2012).

In addition, students who had no religious affiliations were found to have higher number of lifetime sexual partners than those who had (Lengwe 2009). There is also evidence that males were more likely to have concurrent sexual partners than females (Lungiswa and Puoane 2010; Mutinta 2012). There is a dearth of studies conducted in South Africa on multiple sexual partners among university students especially in KwaZulu-Natal province known as the epicentre of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa (Moodley 2008). Therefore, there is no comprehensive information on the phenomenon of multiple sexual partnerships among students in universities.

A study by Mutinta (2012) suggests that students living in rented houses away from their controlling parents in addition to coming from rural backgrounds make them susceptible to risky sexual behaviour including having multiple sexual partnerships. Eleazar (2009) found that multiple sexual partnerships are influenced by different factors including lack of good parental supervision and location of residences they are renting some that may be near drinking places and night clubs. Moodley (2008) found peer

pressure to be a strong underlying factor to have multiple sexual partnerships among students aged between 19 and 25 years.

The aim of this paper is to examine the prevalence of, and the underlying influences to having multiple sexual partnerships among students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The main objective is to contribute to the understanding of the magnitude of multiple sexual partnerships and their causes among students.

This investigation may provide the basis for the design and implementation of HIV prevention and awareness programmes for students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, people who have interest in university students' sexual practices in general would benefit from the findings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to investigate risky sexual behaviours among students. The study approach is inherently cross-sectional and explorative. In the first stage, data were collected using 395 questionnaires. Since the study was examining different risky sexual behaviours, the researcher used a prevalence rate of 50%, 95% CI and a 0.05 precision and arrived at minimal sample size of 2000.

The researcher adapted survey instruments (Moodley 2008) that have been tested and used to conduct university based HIV and AIDS knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour surveys. The author selected relevant items from the following instruments: the HIV-Knowledge and Attitude Questionnaire (Mulwo 2009), the AIDS Attitude Scale (Lengwe 2009) and the Survey of AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes (Gouws 2012).

In this article, only the data relating to multiple sexual partnerships and their underlying factors are presented. Thus, the development and testing of the psychometric properties of the research questionnaire is presented elsewhere. In the second stage, a qualitative methodology was used to complement qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods were used to investigate multiple sexual partnerships and their underlying factors among students. Qualitative data were collected using in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Group dynamics were observed to ascertain individual and group thinking and to obtain the

majority view of the normative behaviour of students. The IDIs were conducted in quiet environments to provide a confidential atmosphere in which informants could share sensitive, personal information.

FGDs were conducted with each session lasting about one hour. Data were transcribed within a few hours of collection. FGDs were used for several reasons. FGDs use interactions between the researcher and participants to generate data. As suggested by Crabtree and Miller (2009), the dynamic nature of interaction enables the generation of insights which provides comprehension of how people view a situation. Higgs (2001) emphasizes the use of FGDs to understand the social construction of sensitive issues which may be characterized by taboos or silence. Denzin and Lincoln (2009) claim that FGDs afford the researcher privileged access to in-group conversations which often include everyday language and home-grown terms, uncovering variety, group dynamics, and stimulating conversations and reactions.

All standard ethical procedures were followed, with particular sensitivity to issues of confidentiality and anonymity, given the focus on risky sexual behaviour and the link with HIV. Ethical clearance was obtained through the University of KwaZulu-Natal research ethics committee. All participants were provided with information sheets detailing the aims of the research and the research process. These information sheets were provided to the participants directly. All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and were aware that they could withdraw from this research at any time without negative consequences. There were no existing power relations between the researcher and participants that could be perceived as coercive. A verbal explanation was also provided to all students. Written consent was obtained from participants before commencement of data collection. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the research reporting and by changing specific contextual details that could have revealed the identity of the participants.

DATA ANALYSES

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.8. Data were summarised using de-

scriptive and inferential statistics. Multiple sexual partnerships were associated risk factors using the Chi-square tests. The association between several independent variables in particular level of study, age, gender, and age at sexual debut in the previous 12 months and in the context of multiple sexual partnerships were ascertained using bivariate and multivariate logistic regression analysis. The same was done with dependent variables such as frequency of condom during sexual intercourse in the last 12 months, condom use during last sexual intercourse and number of sexual partners. Data were stratified by gender, level of study and sexual preference when necessary. For the logistic regression, independent variables in the bivariate analysis were entered simultaneously into a multivariate model. Odds ratios and 97% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated.

Drawing on the work of Coolican (2004), our qualitative analysis involved identifying patterns or themes across the dataset (also see Ajajawi and Higgs 2007). We were concerned with the multiplicity of multiple sexual partnerships and their causes rather than attempting to ascertain the “truth” about the actual behaviours and factors. Patterns of similarities and differences in participant responses were identified and catalogued into themes and subthemes. These themes form the starting point for the discussion.

FINDINGS

Social and Demographic Trends of the Sample

The sample size for this study was 395 students, of which 9 responses were discarded due to incompleteness. As a result, the response rate was 96.5%. From the total number of respondents, 249 (63.5%) were females. About 84.7% of the respondents were never married. The mean \pm SD age of the study population was 20.4 ± 1.43 years. About 51.8% of the respondents were living alone in rented apartments without their parents and the rest were living with their parents. Close to 155 (39.2%), 118 (39.6%), and 111 (27.8%) respondents were first, second, and third years, respectively. Table 1 presents the demographic factors of the sample.

Findings show that 35.7%, 26.1%, 32.0%, and 1.8% of respondents were visiting religious institutions frequently, once a week, occasionally

Table 1: Socio-demographic attributes

Variables	Groups	Total (%)
Sex	Male	139 (33.3)
	Female	249 (63.5)
Age	15–19	76 (18.6)
	20–24	267 (68.3)
	>24	42 (9.8)
Marital Status	Married	59 (14.2)
	Single	326 (83.6)
Living Condition	Rented	144 (49.2)
	With parents	191 (48.6)
Level of Study	Year I	105 (39.2)
	Year II	118 (29.6)
	Year III	111 (27.8)
	Year IV	106 (27.8)
Rate of Going to Religious Sites	Frequently	142 (35.7)
	Once a week	105 (26.1)
	At times	127 (32.0)
	Never visit	11 (1.8)
Talking about Sexual Issues with the Mother	Yes	108 (26)
	No	271 (69.3)
	I do not remember	6 (0.5)
Talking about Sexual Issues with the Father	Yes	71 (17.4)
	No	308 (78.8)
	I do not remember	6 (0.5)

and never visited religious institutions, respectively. The study also shows that only 108 (27.0%) and 71 (17.4%) of respondents discussed sexual issues with their parents, respectively.

Underlying Risk Influence for Sexual Partners Multiple

From 385 respondents 163 (42.4%) reported peer pressure as their underlying influence to initiate sexual intercourse and develop sexual partnerships. This is reflected in what Thabisile, a female Black undergraduate student from Westville Campus explained when she said:

I joined university as a virgin but shortly after I started feeling an inclination to start to engage in sex due to pressure from other students which I would not do if there was no form of pressure being applied. I felt engaging in sex was more of an obligation than a personal choice that I had to make solely. I wanted to fit in with the cool crowd so that I could get recognition (interview 2012).

It seems therefore that pressure to begin having sex and to have multiple sexual partners comes when students start thinking that succumbing to their friends influence will make them

“fit in” or acceptable. Thus, negative influence from close friends makes students engage in risk sexual behaviour. Table 2 presents the distributions of risk factors for risky sexual behaviour. Students reported that alcohol was the highly regularly used substance. From the sample size in this study, 97(24.0%) used alcohol 68(17.0%) used cocaine and 8(0.7%) used cigarette.

From the total number of substance users, 17 students (47.4%) males and 9(50.4%) females reported using drugs frequently while 29 students 14(48%) females and 15(50.0%) males used drugs once in a week. Msire, a male postgraduate student and drug user from Howard College explained how he uses drugs:

I am high (use drugs) twice a week. A week cannot elapse without getting stoned (feeling high). It is a way of life for some of us on campus and the stuff (drugs) is readily available (interview 2012).

This account demonstrates that the use of substances is common on campus. The study also found that 202(55.5%) females and 81 (53.2%) were exposed to sexual content in music and movies.

In addition, of the total respondents, 77(18.2%) said that they attended night clubs. This is supported by Zulu, a Black male undergraduate student from Westville Campus who explained that:

I am a clubber and I like it because nightclubs are designed for giving oneself over totally to desires. I visit nightclubs to drink alcohol and meet sexual partners (interview 2012).

This account therefore links clubbing to alcohol use and sexual behaviour. Among those who attended night clubs 28(18.3%) visited twice a week and 22(27.6%) attended at least once a week.

Students' Sexual Risk Behaviour

Out of the sample size for this study, 190(49.6%) had penetrative sex. The average age of first sexual intercourse for both males and females was 17.6 years. Majority of female students (62.3%) had sexual intercourse before the age of 17 years. Khomoso, a sexually active undergraduate female student from Howard College Campus explained her experience, representing many students' experiences:

It was on my fifteenth birthday that I started engaging in sex. Since then I have been sexual-

Table 2: Underlying factors to students' multiple sexual partners

Variables	Multiple sexual partners		OR (94% CI for OR)			
	Yes	No	Crude		Adjusted	
<i>Sex</i>						
Male	58	79	4.11	(2.57–6.32)	3.76	(2.01–6.50)
Female	31	218		1.00		1.00
<i>Age</i>						
15–19	12	64		1.00		1.00
20–24	62	206	1.60	(0.98–1.59)	0.75	(0.38–0.48)
24	15	26	1.80	(0.59–4.25)	0.65	(0.26–0.58)
<i>Living Condition</i>						
Rented	68	126	3.32	(1.95–5.34)	1.01	0.24–2. 27)
Living with parents	21	171		1.00		1.00
<i>Level of Study</i>						
First year	6	150		1.00		1.00
Second year	36	83	9.86	(4.72–19.63)	6.26	(2.52–12.97)
Third year	47	65	16.82	(8.43–32.64)	8.22	(3.51–19.82)
Fourth year	15	127	8.75	(3.61–18.40)	5.15	(2.41–12.87)
<i>Frequency of Going to Religious Sites</i>						
Regularly	14	127		1.00		1.00
Once a week	54	91	0.29	(0.74–1.25)	0.67	(0.31–0.41)
Sometimes	6	74	5.11	(2.88–8.62)	0.22	(0.64–1.32)
Never visit	12	5	9.15	(2.04–24.50)	1.08	(0.63–7.78)
<i>Having a Close Friend Who Sexually Active</i>						
Yes	73	90	9.82	(6.07–15.56)	4.98	(2.65–8.80)
No	16	207		1.00		1.00
<i>Cocaine Use</i>						
Yes	37	33	4.61	(2.78–7.32)	0.37	(0.81–2.31)
No	52	264		1.00		
<i>Alcohol Intake</i>						
Yes	53	44	7.57	(4.88–11.50)	2.19	(1.01–4.07)
No	36	253		1.00		1.00
<i>Watching Pornographic Movies</i>						
Yes	67	9	3.74	(2.24–5.93)	0.43	(0.85–1.40)
No	22	288		1.00		
<i>Rate of Watching Pornographic Movies</i>						
Never viewed	34	116		1.00		1.00
Sometimes	32	182	2.13	(1.10–3.67)	0.86	(0.41–0.81)
Once a week	23	29	3.82	(2.03–6.67)	0.07	(0.47–1.44)
<i>Went to a Night Club</i>						
Yes	34	43	2.58	(1.45–4.25)	0.89	(0.07–9.35)
No	55	254		1.00		1.00
<i>Frequency of Going to a Night Club</i>						
Never visit	54	254		1.00		1.00
Sometimes	19	22	2.92	(1.41–5.36)	0.03	(0.54–1.03)
At least once a week	10	13	2.54	(0.87 – 5.66)	0.58	(0.24–0.40)
Twice a week	6	8	2.59	(0.60–6.60)	0.65	(0.62–3.37)

ly active (smiles). I believe at one stage one has to sexually active (smiles again) (interview 2012).

The overall percentage of female students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who were sexually active has not changed greatly since 2010 when HEAIDS (2010) reported that 59.2% had sexual intercourse.

When students were asked when they had sex, 178 students 55.8% females and 42.2% males had sexual intercourse in the last 12 months. Close to 70(34%) females and 78(64.0%) males reported having had sexual intercourse with multiple partners in the past 12 months.

When responding to the question on how often they used condom, the study found that

23(10.4%) students had protected sex at their sexual debut. This is supported by what Mulauzi, a black male undergraduate student from Howard College Campus, elaborated:

I used condoms at my sexual debut. I was dead scared that I would make her pregnant because I would be in be hounded out of home by my father (interview 2012).

Findings further indicate that 111(58.0%) students who were sexually active used condom regularly. However, 43% of the sexually active students reported never using condom while 53(26.0%) acknowledged using condom sometimes. Several reasons were reported why some students were not using condom regularly. About 23(17.4%) mentioned religious reasons. Pauline, a white postgraduate student from Westville Campus, puts this finding into perspective when she said:

It is immoral for me to use condom. My Christian faith is against using condom. I would rather delay my sexual debut than use condoms that make sex unnatural. I just cannot do it because it is against my Christian conscience. Why should I compromise my Christian values? (interview 2012).

Pauline's response seems to suggest that religiosity helps students to form solid Christian consciences that enable them to desist from using condoms worst still engaging in premarital and sex multiple partners. The second group 37(27.4%) reported dread of side effects as reason for not using condom. About (43.3%) reported that condoms interrupted the natural sexual rhythm or sexual pleasure. This finding is reflected in what Siphso, a Black male undergraduate student at Westville Campus when he said:

Let us be us truthful guys. Most of us find rubbers (condoms) frustrating and alter the natural rhythm of penetrative sex so we go the live wire way (without a condom) (interview 2012).

The account above seems to suggest that students prefer to engage in sexual risk behaviour where the tempo for sex is not disturbed than engage in safer sex using a condom and not enjoy sex.

When students were asked why some were not sexually active, 58.6% said delayed sex to wait for marriage. About 30% were not engaging in sex because they were afraid of HIV and AIDS and 8.1% for religious beliefs.

Multiple Sexual Partners and Their Risk Factors

After subjecting findings of this study to multivariate analysis, results show that sexual intercourse, staying in rented houses, level of study, alcohol use and peer pressure showed statistical significance with multiple sexual partners. The bivariate analysis was conducted on religiosity, age, poverty, sexual pleasure, exposure to sexually explicit music and movies, attending clubs and the rate of attending were associated with multiple sexual partners but could not maintain the link within the multivariate analysis.

The results from multivariate further indicate that the likelihood of engaging in multiple sexual partnerships among male students was more than four times compared to females (AOR=475; CI:2.01-6.50). Results further show that students living off campus with their families were two times less at the risk of engaging in multiple sexual partnerships compared to those who lived alone in rented houses and campus residences.

This study found a positive link between student's level of study and having multiple sexual partnerships. Findings reveal that second and third year students were more prone to having a high number of multiple sexual partners compared to first year students (AOR=6.26; CI: 352-13.98) and AOR=8.22; CI: 3.51-17.82) respectively. This was attributed to a number of reasons including naivety and being new at the university therefore still interested in studies than sexual relationships.

The theme on peer pressure was reported as a strong underlying influence to students' multiple sexual partnerships. This is in agreement with what Thobeka, a Black female undergraduate student from Howard College Campus, said:

Guys on campus used to give me a hard time when I used to tell them that I have no boyfriend on campus because my one and only is in Cape Town. They would respond that they respect my decision to be faithful to my partner and then ask me if I wanted to be their sexual partner later. A lot of times I have just wanted to give in, and finally gave in last year and that is how I now have two partners simultaneously though I feel bad about it at times (interview 2012).

This finding seems to suggest that negative influence from close friends make students en-

gage in multiple sexual partnerships. Students who had no peer pressure were six times less likely to engage in multiple sexual partnerships compared to their counterparts who had (AOR=4.98; CI: 2.65-8.80). In addition, there was a statistically significant link between alcohol use and having multiple sexual partnerships. For instance, students who ever used alcohol were more than three times susceptible to having multiple sexual partnerships (AOR=2.19; CI: 1.0-4.07) compared to those who never used alcohol.

DISCUSSION

The main objectives this study set out to achieve were to ascertain the prevalence and underlying factors to students' multiple sexual partnerships that makes them vulnerable to HIV infection at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Findings show that the prevalence of sexual activity was high among students (49.6%). Males were highly sexually active than female students. This does not come as a surprise because some previous studies on South African students found that they had high interest in sexual relationships and were changing their sexual partners regularly (Mulwo 2009; Mutinta and Govender 2013). The study conducted by HEAIDS (2010) found that 50.8% of students were engaging in high risk sexual practices including multiple sexual partnerships.

This study found that the prevalence of multiple sexual partnerships was (37.3%) while unprotected sex was 44.2%. This finding is in agreement with Mulwo's (2009) finding that reported 36.4% multiple sexual partnerships and 43% unprotected sex respectively.

Findings in this study are considerably higher compared to Lengwe's (2009) results. This could be attributed to the parameters of the sample in the current study that included students living in rented apartments outside campus and away from parental supervision. Besides, most of the rented houses may be located near night clubs and drinking places making students prone to attend and use drugs.

Students living in rented apartments were twice more likely to have multiple sexual partnerships compared to those living with their parents or guardians. This could be attributed to lack of parental guidance making students easily influenced by their peers who are sexual-

ly active and with permissive sexual attitudes. This could make students prone to abuse drugs and engage in all sorts of risky sexual activities including having multiple sexual partnerships.

The study found male students to be four times likely to have multiple sexual partnerships compared to females. This is consistent with Mutinta and Govender's (2013) study that found males to be three times more likely to have multiple sexual partnerships. This finding does not come as a surprise because the place this study was conducted men are allowed to explore their sexuality while women are not. Sexual adventure by men is viewed as favourable but viewed with contempt, disapproval and distaste when practiced by women. High multiple sexual partnerships were also attributed to high alcohol use among males. The low probability of engaging in multiple sexual partnerships among female students could be attributed to the high levels of religiosity (68%). In agreement, Moodley (2008) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal found religiosity to be associated with few sexual partners in the females. Thus, religiosity seems to be a protective factor against having a high number of sexual partners among females.

Further, the study indicates that second year students were seven times more likely to have multiple sexual partnerships compared to first year students. The finding this study is advancing is that the increase in the level of study increased the risk of having multiple sexual partnerships. This could be attributed to alcohol abuse and high levels of extroversion. For example, the level of alcohol use out of the total user was 35.0% among second year students compared to 13.8% among first year students.

Peer pressure was reported to be a strong underlying factor to engaging in multiple sexual partnerships. Students who were pressured to have sex and develop sexual relationships were found to be six times inclined to having multiple sexual partnerships compared to those who did not have. This finding suggests that students do not only share knowledge on their studies with each other but also share sexual risk behaviour. In addition, some students are living in rented houses with their partners far away from parental supervision making it easy to share risky and healthy behaviour.

Thirteen per cent of the students reported poverty as a driver of multiple sexual partnerships. This finding seems to suggest that eco-

conomic reasons for sexual involvement remain an important factor in understanding students' multiple sexual relationships on campuses.

This study also found that students who used alcohol were more than three times likely to have multiple sexual partnerships compared to non-users. This is in agreement to Mulwo's (2009) finding that linked alcohol use to having multiple sexual partnerships and unprotected sex. This could be attributed to the impairing effects alcohol has on people's thinking capacity. Since risk perception ability decreases with alcohol intake suggests that students who used alcohol were more likely to get infected with HIV. These findings show that students have multiple sexual partnerships and therefore at risk HIV infection. This is a challenge to universities to address the risk of multiple sexual partnerships among students through HIV and AIDS prevention and awareness programmes.

CONCLUSION

The intention of the study was to highlight the prevalence of multiple sexual partners and their underlying influences among students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study found a large part of students' population (49%) to be engaging in multiple sexual partners. The underlying factors to these multiple sexual partners include students' level of study, alcohol abuse, sex, and extroversion. Other factors identified are peer pressure from friends who are sexually active and with sexually permissive attitudes, living in rented houses and lack of parental supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for HIV prevention and awareness programmes to educate students on the repercussions of multiple sexual partners. Both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should work with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to address the spate of engaging in multiple sexual partners.

Religiosity was reported to be a strong protective factor against multiple sexual partners. Religious leaders should be supported to focus on encouraging students to attend religious services and educate them on the consequences of having many sexual partners.

There is persuasive evidence that peers have immense influence on the behaviour of their fellow peers. The University of KwaZulu-Natal should invest in peer educators and the way of peer discussion. This may help to influence the behaviour change needed.

Substance abuse especially alcohol was associated with multiple sexual partners. The University of KwaZulu-Natal and its partners should educate students on the prevention of substance use. Besides, HIV and AIDS interventions should target specific students in high risk groups.

Students should also be encouraged to delay sexual initiation until marriage as a strategy of avoiding risky sexual practices such as multiple sexual partners. These measures may help students to understand the consequences of multiple sexual partners and their causes and adopt measures not to engage in multiple sexual partnerships.

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