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Abstract

THPE0413 - South Africa's national youth prevention program, loveLife, and sexual behavior

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Background: In order to have an impact on the epidemic, there has been a call for prevention programs to be brought to scale. There are, however challenges associated with evaluating the effect of these programs.

Methods: Using data from a nationally representative, household survey of young people age 15-24 years conducted in 2003 (n=11,904), we aim to explore the association between participation in South Africa's national youth prevention program, loveLife, and associated risk behaviors using propensity score methods to adjust for possible selection bias. We first estimated a multivariate logistic regression with 24 covariates which were combined into a balancing score for each respondent, which represents their propensity to have participated in loveLife programs. Adjusted difference-in-mean "average treatment-to-treated (ATT)" effects were computed.

Results: Among all youth, 34% reported having participated in at least one loveLife program. In adjusted analyses, young people who reported having participated in loveLife programs were significantly more likely to report always using condoms with their most recent partner, having talked with parents about HIV/AIDS, and having talked to a partner about condom use. For example, 37% of males who reported participating in 1 program and 41.4% who participated in 2+ programs reported always using condoms compared to 31.7% amongst those who did not participate. For females, 26.6% of those who reported participating in 1 program and 30.1% of those participating in 2+ programs reported always using condoms compared to 21.4% amongst those who did not report participating in programs. There was no significant association with number of sex partners in the past year. Dose response relationships were observed for all outcomes.

Conclusions: Young people who reported participating in loveLife programs were more likely than those that did not to report a number of safer sexual behaviors including condom use and communication around HIV and condom use.