



**CULTURAL PRACTICES PREVENT THE SPREAD OF HIV  
and AIDS AMONGST THE BATSWANA PEOPLE IN  
BOTSWANA**

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Social science that makes a difference

# INTRODUCTION

“Our message is simple. We have to top the spread of HIV. We must reduce the rate of new infections. Prevention is our most powerful weapon....”

President of South Africa- Mr Jacob Zuma-  
World AIDS day,2009, Pretoria.

# INTRODUCTION (Cont...)

## **Is this culture, or bling-bling?**

- Jan 16, 2010 3:53 PM | By Charles Molele
- Charles Molele examines polygamy, an issue that sparks heated reactions - on both sides

# POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES



I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO: Milton Mbhele with his four new young brides – Baqinisile, Thobile, Simangele and Zanele - at their wedding in Weenen in September. He gave his wife of 12 years, Thobile, a gold watch at the ceremony . Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

# POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES



WEALTHY MAN: Mandla Gcaba and his wives Kholekile, Buyiswa and Lindiwe, who help care for his family

# POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES



**PUSHING AND SHOVING:** President Jacob Zuma poses with his wife Nompumelelo Ntuli-Zuma, his then-fiance Tobeka Madiba, and wife Sizakele Khumalo-Zuma

Picture: REUTERS

# ARGUMENTS AGAINST POLYGAMY

- But, elsewhere in South Africa, human rights groups, Christians and feminists were fuming:
  - They accused the president of promoting a centuries-old practice which they consider abusive to African women, and in the words of the Rev Theunis Botha of the Christian Democratic Party, "a giant step back into the dark ages".
- Nomboniso Gasa, a political and gender analyst, was horrified:
  - "Polygamy is an unpleasant spin-off of patriarchy," Gasa told the Sunday Times this week. "What woman in her right mind wants to share their special day with others?"

# SUPPORT FOR POLYGAMY

- Not everyone, though, is disgusted by the practice.
- The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 extends the state's recognition and regulation of marriage to both monogamous and polygamous customary unions.
- To its ardent supporters, polygamy forms part of a new cultural wave among black South Africans who want to reclaim their heritage and the traditional values eroded by apartheid and racial domination.

# TV COMMERCIAL

- NANDOS ADVERT
  - South African men have more than one wife.
  - However they can afford a Nandos meal

# GOAL OF THE PRESENTATION

- Promote discussion/dialogue amongst us regarding cultural practices such as polygamy preventing the spread of HIV.

# INTRODUCTION (Cont)

- UNAIDS reports that in 2007, 2.5 million people were newly infected with HIV throughout the world (UNAIDS, 2007).
- Sub-Saharan, 1.7 million adults and children were reported with new HIV infections in 2007.
- **In Botswana, 270 000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2006).**
- **In Sub-Saharan, Botswana still remains the most affected country (UNAIDS, 2007).**
- HIV prevention, care and treatment are for life and prevention initiatives and national programmes should not be short – term or isolated.

# GOAL OF THE STUDY

- To find out if there are any cultural practices that could protect people from the spread of HIV and AIDS in Botswana with a view to assist the government of Botswana in developing appropriate prevention strategies to reduce the spread of HIV.

# MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out if there are any cultural practices that could protect people from the spread of HIV and AIDS in Botswana.
- To provide conclusions regarding the cultural practices of the Batswana in relation to the transmission of HIV/AIDS in Botswana.
- To make recommendations for culturally appropriate behaviour - change strategies for Batswana in Botswana in an attempt to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS.

# THEMES

- *Practices in relation to marriage*
- **Sexual practices**

# CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

Ethics approval:

- University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee
- Botswana Ministry of Health Research Unit – Ms. Halabi

Permission and entry:

- Botswana Office of the President – Permission to conduct the study (Ms. J. Mosweu)
- Department of Central Statistics – Botswana- ( Ms Maletsatsi)
- BOTUSA
- Botswana Ministry of Health (AIDS/STD Unit)

# CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES (cont..)

- House of Chiefs – Botswana
- Local chiefs and relevant local leaders in the study sites

# METHODOLOGY

- Applied research – to develop solutions
- Exploratory design – gain insight
- Thematic content analysis - qualitative results
- Study Sites:
  - Francistown, Selibi-Phikwe, Gaborone -urban areas and their surrounding rural areas Sebina (Nyaya and Ndzinda), Sefophe (Sefophe and Mafoko)and Gabane (Gasiko and Nthlagodimo) respectively.
  - These study sites were selected because of the high HIV/AIDS prevalence.  
(Botswana Second Generation HIV/AIDS Surveillance,2002)

# METHODOLOGY (Cont)

- **Focus groups sampling: Purposive and availability sampling (18 years and over)**
- Thirteen focus groups – 6 adult males and 7 female groups in the six study sites (rural and urban)
- Group consisted of members ranging between 6 and 10
- **134 respondents participated in focus group discussions**
- Random sample of study sites and focus group type
- Pilot Study: One male focus group with 10 respondents (rural area - Gabane) and one female focus group with 10 respondents in Gaborone – urban.

# METHODOLOGY (Cont)

- Ethical Issues:
  - Written/Verbal Consent
  - Anonymity
  - Researchers are Batswana's from Botswana
  - Confidentiality
- Limitations:
  - Cannot be generalized to the larger population

# RESULTS

- “The participants felt that culture protected people from the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the past a woman will know which other women was her husband involved with”.
- “The woman in polygamy whether married or not, will know that she can only have sexual relationship with her partner in a polygamous relationship. People knew that it was safe”.
- “These days’ men unofficially go around with other women who no one knows who they go around with. Today the multiple partners are unknown”.
- “Culture also seen as reducing the spread of HIVAIDS since culture promotes that married partners should stick to one partner or polygamous partners only”.

# RESULTS: (Cont)

- Participants said that the present cultural practices do not predispose people to HIV infection.
- Polygamy was cited as an example.
- Participants said that the statement “a man is like a bull and should not be confined to one pasture” is in fact one of the Batswana cultural practices.

# DISCUSSION

- Polygamy was mentioned at all times by focus group participants. It was not supported in today's practices, however it was thought that it was a better arrangement as partners were known and were chosen within the family.
- In polygamous marriages, culture is respected therefore the likelihood of all the partners involved to go around with other partners outside polygamy is very limited.
- It is not easy to get infected outside marriage as it is a principle that marriage partners in polygamous marriages should only have sexual relationships with partners in that marriage relationship.
- If partners are not infected with HIV at the beginning of their relationship, they can remain safe in terms of HIV infection even if condoms are not used, as they are faithful to each other.
- Van Dyk (2001:120) says that polygamy often helps to prevent and reduce unfaithfulness, prostitution, STDs and HIV infection.

# DISCUSSION (Cont)

- Parekh (2002:288) polygamy involves sexual discipline and Moore (1997:216) states that the nature and structure of the traditional polygamous family are also determinants of patterns of sexual
- Van Dyk (2001:120) mentions that Western health care professionals mostly frown upon polygamy in African societies, but polygamy often helps to prevent and reduce unfaithfulness, prostitution, STDs and HIV.
- Mbiti (1969) as quoted by Van Dyk (2001:120) polygamy is particularly valuable in modern times when African men are often forced to seek work in the cities and towns. If a husband has several wives he can afford to take one at a time to live with him in the town, while the other wife or wives remain behind to care for the children and family property. As a result polygamy often provides a healthy alternative or solution to problems inherent in certain cultural customs.
- Adupa (1999) mentioned that in Botswana it is accepted by the society at large that men's sexual networks can be quiet extensive.

# CONCLUSION

- HIV/AIDS - worldwide pandemic
- Affects everyone irrespective of race, ethnicity, and gender and economic status.
- HIV/AIDS - complex phenomenon, which needs to be understood in the context society as it affects the society.
- Cultural practices should be incorporated in HIV/AIDS prevention strategies

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Education programmes focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention and care strategies need to make use of the cultural practices in a positive way so that communities can cooperate in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- We need to consider strengthening the practice of culture since culture prescribes a lot of respect and with respect people are able to respect themselves and others and therefore minimize the extent of infecting each other.

# CLOSING STATEMENT

“HIV interventions require incorporation of cultural beliefs and practices”- Prof D. Baronov (St. John Fischer College, USA)

**THANK YOU**

**RE A LEBOGA**

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