



Correlates of HIV/AIDS-Related Sexual Risk Behavior of African American Emerging Adults in Georgia

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Introduction:

Georgia ranks first at the state-level in the country in rates of HIV/AIDS diagnosis. Because African Americans account for 72% of new HIV diagnosis, they bear the largest burden of this infection (GDPH, 2017). Emerging adults represent a critical group within the population of African Americans. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to and shape their sexual behaviors, such as egocentric characteristics, family characteristics, individual characteristics, and sexual risk behaviors. Understanding the effect that these characteristics have on their sexual behaviors will help in intervening in the future in terms of this epidemic.

Methodology:

Data used for this study was pulled from the dataset of a 2015 National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH)-funded pilot mixed-methods study which explored the context of sexual risk-taking of African American Emerging Adults in a mid-sized city in Middle Georgia. This data set consisted of 150 African American youth between the ages of 21 to 25 (male and female) selected through a “convenience” sampling approach. Data analyses consisted of using bivariate analysis such as chi square tests and one-way analysis of variance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 22). P-values have been calculated in order to study the statistical significance of each factor when comparing independent variables to dependent variables.

Data:

These statistical analysis tests were conducted with nearly 100 different factors and variables. The table below represents a sample of the large amount of results extracted from the test. It is important to note that the correlation between two factors are statistically significant when the p-value is approximately 0.05 or less.

Abstract

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to remain a significant public health threat in the State of Georgia. The increasing spread of disease among African Americans between the ages of 13-24 years indicates that it is necessary to focus research attention on understanding the factors that contribute to this spread of disease.

Table 1: Summary of Statistically Significant Results. The numbers in the table are p-values.

Independent Variables	Received money, gift, or favor for sex	Gave money, gift, or favor for sex	Ever participated in a threesome	Total number of sex partners to date	Had sex before age 18
Gender	0.007	0.007	0.001	0.018	0.012
Educational attainment	0.698	0.293	0.516	0.110	0.001
Number of days marijuana is used in the past 30 days	0.012	0.004	0.001	0.018	0.667
Ever enrolled in juvenile justice system	0.189	0.144	0.134	0.407	0.003
Level of neighborhood social disorder	0.139	0.031	0.887	0.073	0.895
Zip code	0.534	0.446	0.682	0.938	0.033
Experience of racism	0.008	0.039	0.013	0.751	0.919

*Significant level is determined at $p=0.05$

Results:

Statistical tests are performed on five sexually risky behaviors : (i) receiving money/gifts/favor for sex, (ii) giving money/gifts/favor for sex (iii) participating in a threesome (iv) total number of sex partners to date (v) having had sex before the age of 18. Seven factors are found strongly correlated to these risky behaviors.

These seven factors are (i) gender (ii) educational attainment (iii) number of days marijuana is used in the past 30 days (iv) ever being enrolled in the juvenile justice system (v) level of neighborhood social disorder (vi) zip code (vii) experience of racism. Among these factors, gender, number of days marijuana is used in the past thirty days and experience of racism are found to be strongly correlated with more than one sexually risky behavior. It is important to note that this study does not explore cause and effect and, thus, care should be taken in interpreting these results.

Conclusions:

From this study it is concluded that youth engagement in sexually risky behaviors can be influenced by multiple factors affecting the individual from within the closer neighborhood and community as well as from the society at large. For example, an individual’s socio-demographic characteristic such as educational attainment is strongly correlated with having sex before age 18, which is a sexually risky behavior. The individual’s psycho-social characteristic such as marijuana use is found to be correlated with multiple risky behaviors. The individual’s social network characteristic such as the Zip Code can indicate risk concentration and the Zip Code is found to be correlated with having sex at an early age. Broader neighborhood socio-structural setting is also found to be at play since the factor such as the experience of racism is strongly correlated with most of the sexually risky behavior.

Future Plans:

- More statistical tests will be conducted on the data in order to draw more specific conclusions

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References:

Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), HIV Surveillance Fact Sheet Georgia, 2017