

THE SEXUAL PRACTICES OF MALE HOMOSEXUALS EMPLOYED IN BEAUTY PARLORS IN SELECTED DISTRICTS OF ILOILO CITY¹

SALEX ESPINOSA ALIBOGHA

The objective of this study was to determine the extent of homosexuals' knowledge about HIV/AIDS and their attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and whether their knowledge and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS are related to their sexual practices.

More specifically, this study aimed to determine the relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of male homosexuals, the relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and their attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and the relationship between homosexuals' attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and their sexual practices. This study also aimed to determine the relationship between homosexuals' knowledge about HIV/AIDS and their sexual practices, controlling for their attitudes toward HIV/AIDS.

This study was conducted on homosexuals working in selected beauty parlors in three districts of Iloilo City; namely, City Proper, Jaro and Lapaz District. Eighty male homosexual beauticians who considered themselves as engaging exclusively in homosexual activities serve as the study respondents.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The majority of the sample male homosexuals were single, middle-aged and high school-educated and belonged to large households with an average size of nine members. They were mostly Roman Catholics.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIV/AIDS, ATTITUDES TOWARD HIV/AIDS AND SEXUAL PRACTICES

All the respondents of this study have heard/read about HIV/AIDS. As a whole, they have moderate/average knowledge about HIV/AIDS concepts focused

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on meaning, transmission, prevention, high-risk groups and manifestations. On the average, they have a score of 21 on a 40-item test on knowledge. Their chief sources of information about HIV/AIDS include print, radio, television and significant persons like peers or friends.

In general, male homosexuals covered in this study have good attitude towards HIV/AIDS. This means they are worried about getting HIV/AIDS, and showed interest in and concern with knowing more about HIV/AIDS. All of the respondents are sexually attracted to and have engaged in sexual activities with a person of the same sex. They perform a variety of sexual practices both penetrative and non-penetrative. A majority of them have unsafe sexual practices. This means that in addition to non-penetrative sex, they also practice penetrative sex without using any protection like the use of condom during sex.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIABLES

Knowledge about HIV/AIDS and Attitudes toward HIV/AIDS. There is a significant relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS. This is shown by an obtained r value of + 0.2310, which is significant at .05 level. This means that the more the male homosexual's knowledge about HIV/AIDS the "better" his attitudes towards HIV/AIDS.

Knowledge About HIV/AIDS and Sexual Practice. There is a low and weak correlation between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of male homosexuals, shown by an obtained r value of + 0.21. Although weak and not significant at .05 level, this relationship should be known by health care. This means that some variations in sexual practice can be attributed to changes in knowledge. The positive relationship means that the more knowledgeable the respondents are about HIV/AIDS, the safer sexual practices they tend to adopt.

Attitudes and Sexual Practice. There is no significant relationship between attitude towards HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of male homosexuals. This is shown by an obtained r value of + 0.0561 which is not significant at .05 level. This means "good" attitude towards HIV/AIDS may not necessarily result in safe sexual practice.

When the relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of male homosexuals was tested, controlling for attitude towards HIV/AIDS, the resulting r value was +0.199 which was slightly higher than the original

r between focal variables. This means a weaker relationship exists between the two focal variables, when attitude towards HIV/AIDS as intervening variable or explanatory variable was controlled.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Male homosexuals employed in selected beauty parlors in selected districts of Iloilo City have:
 - a. moderate knowledge about HIV/AIDS
 - b. “good” attitudes toward HIV/AIDS
 - c. unsafe sexual practices
2. The more knowledge homosexuals have about HIV/AIDS, the “better” their attitudes toward HIV/AIDS.
3. Greater knowledge about HIV/AIDS is not an assurance that the male homosexuals would practice safe sex.
4. A very good attitude toward HIV/AIDS is not a guarantee that the male homosexuals would practice safe sex.
5. When attitudes toward HIV/AIDS were controlled, the relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of the male homosexuals weakened. This means that attitude towards HIV/AIDS is to a slight extent influencing the relationship between knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices of the male homosexuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The program implementation and policy-makers of HIV/AIDS prevention and control program, especially the Department of Health Field Office No. 6 and the City Health Office, should intensify their

information, education, communication and motivation campaign focusing on the inter-relationships between knowledge, attitude and sexual practices of male homosexuals. It is also recommended that both government organizations and non-government organizations use persuasive communication techniques utilizing the tri-media approach to increase homosexuals' knowledge about HIV/AIDS, improve their attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and persuade them to adopt safe sexual practices.

2. Future researchers should look more closely into psychological factors and relationship dynamics that affect sexual attitudes and sexual practices and consider other variables not included in this study.
3. A similar study should be conducted focusing on other high risk target respondents such as:
 - a. female homosexuals
 - b. bisexuals
 - c. male and female commercial sex workers
 - d. male and female commercial sex users/buyers.