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Cyber-Senga: Ugandan youth preferences for content in an Internet-delivered comprehensive sexuality education program
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Presentation Objectives

• To offer background information on the CyberSenga research project
• To discuss the methods utilized to develop and pilot test design elements for the CyberSenga Program
• To present initial and revised design elements of the Internet-based program for Ugandan youth
• To consider the applicability of the method for other technology based program development and adaptation for health promotion in Africa

Background information on CyberSenga

• Sub-Saharan Africa remains the world’s region most heavily affected by HIV, accounting for 67% of all young people living with HIV and for 75% of AIDS deaths
• Among 15–24-year-olds in Uganda who were testing for the first time, HIV prevalence was 3% among young men and 10% among young women in 2002
• Uganda’s HIV prevalence rates are currently estimated to be between 6-7% ; in Mbarara, 6%
Background information on CyberSenga

- HIV prevention programs have led the technology health field.
- Technology can provide a private and confidential environment, which is particularly important in places where stigma could limit service access.
- Technology has the potential to be highly cost effective.
- There is evidence that the Internet and computers may be a feasible and attractive approach for developing country and other resource-limited settings.

Background information on CyberSenga

- CyberSenga is a research project that aims to develop and test an Internet program for adolescents in Uganda.
  - “Senga” is the Luganda term for Auntie, who is the father’s sister and is expected to offer guidance to family as they mature.
- Our goal today is to describe:
  - Experiences Ugandan youth have had with sexuality education;
  - Reactions to and acceptability of the concept of an Internet based HIV prevention program;
  - Preferences for content and structure of such a program.

Methods

- Participants were recruited from one of five secondary schools partnering with us on the project.
- We used a qualitative approach, conducting three focus groups with five secondary school students in each group. (5 female, 10 male)
- Participants were peer-nominated popular opinion leaders in their respective school class.
- Focus groups were conducted in the CyberSenga project office in Mbarara, Uganda.

Methods

- Groups were facilitated by research assistants trained in focus group methodology; each group had an observer to take notes.
- Facilitator and observer debriefed after each group; their notes of the debriefings are the field notes.
- Groups lasted between 75 and 90 minutes.
- Groups were conducted primarily in English although some Ruyenkole was used to clarify or offer detail as needed.
Analysis

• Data were tape recorded and transcribed. For one group, there was a severe thunderstorm and it was difficult to hear the voices on the tape; for this group analysis relied primarily on observer notes and the field notes
• The data set included transcripts, observer notes and field notes

Analysis

• All data were coded using three iterative processes:
  – Open coding
  – Axial coding
  – Summary coding
• All coding was completed by one analyst
• All procedures have been reviewed and approved by IRB’s at MUST and Chesapeake

Results

• Experiences with sexuality education
  – Participants received sexuality education at home, from family members, and at school, from teachers.
  – Sexuality education at home was done by their mothers, although some indicated that an older sister or brother or aunt or uncle had talked to them about sex and sexuality.
  – Content of sexuality education was focused on HIV—with less emphasis on pregnancy prevention, prevention of other sexually transmitted diseases, and how to cultivate healthy sexual relationships.

Results

• Experiences with sexuality education
  – Youth need basic facts on sex and sexual health
  – Youth have received considerable information about abstinence
  – Youth are confused about how to reconcile messages about abstinence with messages that discuss sex and condoms
Results

• Experiences with sexuality education
  – Participants have misperceptions that most condoms have holes or are poorly manufactured, which is why they should not be relied upon
  – Participants did agree that they need information on condoms
  – Participants need information on self esteem and emphasizing future aspirations

Results

• Reactions to and acceptability of the concept of a CyberSenga program
  – Universal understanding of the Senga, and appreciation for the attention to the cultural norm of accessing the Senga for sexual health information
  – High acceptability of the program delivery via computer because of confidentiality and privacy

Results

• Reactions to and acceptability of the concept of a CyberSenga program
  – While youth recognize the Senga, they expressed distrust of “real life” Sengas and consider this an interesting alternative
  – Many youth are very familiar with computers and access the Internet cafes

Results

• Reactions to and acceptability of the concept of a CyberSenga program
  – Participants felt Eunice should be more grown up and feminine; Eunice and Moses should be more clearly a couple
  – Participants agreed that the background suggested they should winnowing basket
  – Participants agreed that the background suggested it should be a Senga
Eunice appears more mature and feminine. The Senga is no longer with a basket; the background is more appropriate for where you would encounter a Senga.

Moses and Eunice appear to be closer and more likely a couple.

Conclusions

- Youth in Uganda have a need for comprehensive sexuality education
- The information they receive about sexuality tends to emphasize abstinence and HIV to the exclusion of other topics
- They get inconsistent education
- Youth use and are familiar with computers and the Internet

The Senga is a well known figure, and integrating her into a program is compelling for youth.

Youth have specific suggestions for making the program credible and appealing.

The process of engaging youth in focus groups is an important step in the development of a culturally appropriate technology based sexuality education program for Ugandan youth.