Rationality in Sexual Decision Making

Evidence from the Kenya Adolescents Sex Education (KASE) study

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Success of HIV/AIDS education programs in sub-Saharan African Youth

![Success of HIV/AIDS education programs in sub-Saharan African Youth](image-url)
Theory of Planned Behaviour

Demographic variables
Age, sex, occupation, Socioeconomic status, religion, education

Personality traits
Extraversion Agreeableness Conscientious Neuroticism Openness

Attitude Towards Behaviour

Subjective Norm

Intention

Perceived Behavioural Control

Behaviour

e.g. Ajzen (1985). From intentions to actions. The theory of planned behaviour
Rationality

• Rational thinking leads to the answer that is most likely to be correct, given the knowledge one has.

• A rational action is one that, given the person’s knowledge, is most likely to meet the person’s goal.

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Background

Boys’ comments on self-control

• “If our private parts were destroyed then we would have control.”
  – School 9 Class 7 Boys

• “God created me and gave me a penis and it is expected to do some work.”
  – School 9 Class 7 Boys

• “If I do not find a girl, after some time I will have to jump on a goat.”
  – School 1 Class 7 Boys
Background

Payment for sex

• “If … your step mother mistreats you and … [hasn’t] cooked, now you will get a boyfriend who will give you money to buy the food you are going to eat.”

- School 1 Class 5 Girls
Background

HIV Causality

• “AIDS is …sometimes like a devil…. this devil will disturb you every day it will come a time when you will go to that hole and then you will commit that sin and you will get AIDS.”

- School1 Class7 Boys
Target Psychological Factors

- *Causal Understanding* of HIV infection
- Belief in control you have over your behaviour (*locus of control*)
- The *life skills* you have to exercise this control
- HIV-relevant *attitudes* to authority, gender, cultural practices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have had sex</td>
<td>50 (36%)</td>
<td>45 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sex before marriage</td>
<td>51 (37%)</td>
<td>62 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sex at school</td>
<td>16 (12%)</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sex now but later</td>
<td>22 (16%)</td>
<td>16 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always use condom</td>
<td>23 (46%)</td>
<td>14 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will never get HIV</td>
<td>73 (53%)</td>
<td>67 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would pay / be paid for sex</td>
<td>42 (31%)</td>
<td>53 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual activity by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Boys (N=50)</th>
<th>Girls (N=57)</th>
<th>Boys (N=22)</th>
<th>Girls (N=16)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;17</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
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</table>
Predictors of abstinence

![Graph showing current sexual behavior and skill score for boys and girls.]

- **Sex no condom** (M-27; F-31)
- **Sex with condom** (M-23; F-14)
- **No sex** (M-87; F-93)
Where do cognitions come from?

Girls

- Understanding disease causality
- Skills
- Locus of Control
- Attitudes

Boys

- Understanding disease causality
- Skills
- Locus of Control
- Attitudes

Variance Explained

- School class
- Church
- Village
- Household
Results Summary

• Cognitions predict girls’ behaviour better than boys’ behaviour
• The most significant predictor of abstinence for girls is having good skills
• Schools and communities make a difference to cognitions – more so for girls than boys.
Wilson & Daly, 2004 *Do pretty women inspire men to discount the future?* PRSL Series B- Biological Sciences
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Implications

If girls are more rational than boys in their sexual decision making …

• Girls are easier targets for HIV prevention education

• Improving the rationality of boys’ decision making may be crucial
Locus of control and perceived HIV susceptibility

HIV infection prognosis

I will probably get HIV (M-15; F-22)
I will get HIV only if I am unlucky (M-49; F-49)
I will never get HIV (M-73; F-73)
Where do cognitions come from?

• Locus of Control –
  – Parental Attitudes; teacher age

• Attitudes
  – Teacher knowledge

• Knowledge
  – Teacher knowledge

• Skills
  – Teacher knowledge
Predictors of abstinence intentions

Will you have sex before you marry?

- Possibly / Certainly (M-52; F-52)
- No (M-85; F-86)

General Locus of Control

Boys
Girls
## Correlations amongst scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Spiritual control</th>
<th>General control</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>0.40***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual control</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General control</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam score</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Controlling for age, sex, standard