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FAILING TO TARGET ADEQUATELY RISK BEHAVIOUR OF MALE ADOLESCENTS IN BRAZIL

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BACKGROUND: General knowledge of HIV/AIDS has been high since the late 1980's, but reported condom use remains low among adolescents, suggesting that current approaches to condom promotion have limitations. Adolescents usually find it difficult to perceive themselves at risk and this is greater when involved in a steady relationship. The objectives of this study is to provide insights into youth's conceptualization of trusted relationships as well as how trust affects HIV risk perception and condom decision-making.

METHODS: Survey data was collected ($N=1,438$) for single males aged 13 – 19 of slum areas of Recife, Brazil (2000). It was obtained different aspect such as HIV risk awareness and beliefs, partnership history, condom histories for participants'. A descriptive analysis of male adolescents' risk perceptions and sexual and condom patterns for casual and regular partners is presented. A logistic regression analysis examines the probability of condom use at last sexual intercourse, focusing on the impact of relationship-specific characteristics.

RESULTS: The analysis shows that the degree of commitment to the relationship affects the rationale and dynamics of condom decision-making. Male adolescent in steady relationships were less likely to use condoms (41% vs 48%), less likely to regard themselves at risk of HIV infection (66% vs 73%), more concerned about pregnancy prevention than HIV prevention (41% vs 19%). Many adolescents felt that they could not use condoms with their trusted partner without jeopardizing the relationship. They often used unreliable cues to assess risk and the use of condom, such as their sexual partner's appearance and reputation.

CONCLUSIONS: Many public health campaigns have overlooked that most adolescents frame their sexual lives in the search for love rather than health, and that many have

difficulties to identify their loved ones as potential sources of risk. Prevention campaigns need to counteract the symbolic association between condoms and promiscuity or infidelity.

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