Cross-Generational Relationships: Perceived Norms and Practices in Jamaica

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BACKGROUND

- Cross-generational sex is defined as sexual behavior between two people who are at least 10 years apart in age.
- There are several known associations among cross-generational sex, higher risk behaviors, and HIV risk, including a link between cross-generational sex and increased HIV infection. In Jamaica, research on cross-generational relationships (CGRs) has been limited and has been focused primarily on its correlation with transactional sex between younger women and older men.
- The purpose of this assessment was to explore the dynamics of CGRs in Jamaica by focusing on men and women who self-identified as having participated in cross-generational sexual relationships.
- A further aim of the assessment was to inform existing programs working to decrease cross-generational sexual practices and their related risks, including gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Jamaican study locations: Kingston/St. Andrew (KSA) and the western region.
- Study participants: Men and women representing a variety of CGR dyads:
  - Older men (25+)/younger women (16–20).
  - Older men (25+)/younger men (16–20).
  - Older women (25+)/younger men (16–20).
- Data collection: 10 focus groups discussions and 69 in-depth interviews conducted
- Data analysis: A socio-ecological model (Figure 2) was used for analysis. This model views individual behavior as a product of multiple, overlapping influences: individual, social, and environmental.

RESULTS

- Most participants believed their community was accepting of, or indifferent to, CGRs and male infidelity.
  
  Provided that the person is of a statutory legal age then they’re OK with it [CGRs] as long as they’re old enough. It seems to be encouraged in some cases, especially in heterosexual relationships because of the advantages for the female being with an older male, that is, monetary gains, primarily. Ostensibly, she could gain experience and wisdom from the older partner, but practically speaking that’s not necessarily what she wants. (Older man who has sex with younger woman)
  
- Most participants reported that their friends and families were aware of their CGR and either approved of it or ignored it.
- High levels of satisfaction with CGRs were reported, especially by younger men and women who were engaged with older partners.
- Three primary drivers of CGRs were found: sexual gratification, emotional support/security, and financial gain. Varying degrees of priority were placed on each, with greater importance placed on sexual gratification for men and emotional security for women.

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings related to motivations for cross-generational sex, along with reported power, abuse, and gender imbalances linked to these types of relationships, heighten the study’s implications for HIV programming in Jamaica.

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