

***Intergenerational Sex Relationships:
Community Views, Feelings and
Response In South Africa***

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Background

- Intergenerational Sex Relationships (ISR) is commonly known as **sugar mummy & daddy relationships**
- takes place between a **young woman and a man of 10 or more years older**
- It is **common** in the Southern African region as in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa
- And **often associated with unsafe sexual behaviour and increased HIV risk**- While is associated with unsafe sexual behaviour, most studies conducted on this topic focuses

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Much on the factors that motivates this relationships with little attention in examining as to how community view and respond to ISR.

Understanding this is important in developing intervention programmes that are tailored towards minimizing this phenomenon and ultimately a decreased HIV/AIDS prevalence.

Aims & Objectives

Aims: This study explored community views, feelings and response towards intergenerational sex relationships.

Objectives:

- Describe community views about international sex relationships
- Determine whether ISR is an acceptable practice or not amongst the communities
- Describe how communities respond to these sexual practices.





Methods

- **Qualitative Research Design**
- 19 Focus groups discussions (FGD's) were held with men and women (adults and teenagers), selected purposively from different cultural backgrounds in nine provinces of South Africa.
- **Data analysis**
- Data was analyzed using thematic content analysis. This involved categorizing data derived from the transcripts in to meaningful



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themes and determining whether and how they relate to each other

- The result of this study were drawn from Human Sciences Research Council's 2008 population based survey on HIV/AIDS, which determined community norms and values on HIV/AIDS. On this study, 52 focus groups were conducted on various topics including community acceptability on sugar mummies and daddies. However, the current study explore community views, feelings and response on intergenerational sex relationships. Of 52 focus groups, 19 were conducted on this topic.



Findings 1. Community Views about ISR

- From the FGD's, intergenerational sex relationships (ISR) is **widely practiced amongst nearly all the provinces.**
- It takes place between older men and younger women or older women and younger men.
- Of similar to other studies, as arising from the FGD's (Kwa-Zulu Natal, Northern Cape, Gauteng, Western Cape), **money, poverty relief, material gains and sexual pleasure** play an important role as a motivating factor in this relationships, especially with regard to younger women and men.

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- Despite being involved in this relationship for the benefit of money and for poverty relieve, FGD's indicate that, young women are **being loved and taken care of by older men**. As expressed by the participants,

“Older men expresses their love in a way that our children feel secured.” (Adult Women, Kwa-Zulu Natal)

“These old men know how to take care of women. The older man treats the young lady with tender care, you see!! She gets anything she needs from him.” (Adult men & Women, Eastern Cape),



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- On the other hand, **older men and women also feel that they are being loved and respected by younger generations**(Adult men & Women, Eastern Cape),). In this instance, the relationship is thus, ‘mutual’ as they are all benefiting.
- Furthermore, as stated by young females during the discussions,
“ compared to younger boys, older men are matured and also experienced in many things. And because older men are working, chances are that they might marry them.” (Eastern Cape , Western Cape, Limpopo).



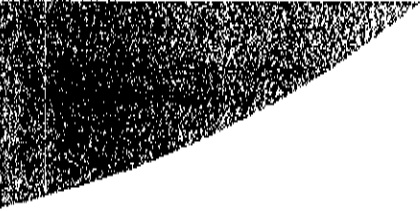
2. ISR – Is it an acceptable practice amongst the communities or not?

- According to the FGD's ISR is **commonly practiced** amongst the communities, **however, generally unacceptable**. According to the participants, **this is as a result of the changing socio-economic circumstances and human rights issues**. As mentioned by one of the participants,

“This days, the human rights issues override the values and norms of society. Children know much about their rights and tend to forget that they are still under parental control. And as a result of that, either one like it or not, they would do things the way they want. This might be-




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be unacceptable for the community but because of rights and lack of respect to parents, these might seem to be acceptable.” (Adult females, Limpopo)

- While unacceptable, **some communities, parents and friends promote and encourages it on the basis of cultural continuation.**” These relationships existed in the past with our grand mothers and fathers and they will keep on existing, there is nothing that we can do to stop them” (Gauteng)
- **Love and age limit also.** Some believe that there is no age limit in relationships. It only depend on whether one is happy or not. If one is happy then it is fine.



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- However, some parents does not know that their children are involved in this relationships.
- For those who disapprove this relationships, this was mostly as a result of **societal values and morals, for example, community believes with regard to marriage and relationships.**



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3. Disapproving ISR

- **Believes about Relationships and marriage**

It was indicated during the focus groups discussions that some parents does not approve this relationships since they believe that most of the older people are married, and possibilities are that they might not marry their children (Northern Cape, Limpopo).





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- *“relationships are for marriage, if one is involved with an older men or an older woman, chances are that she /he will not marry him/her. Parents believe that instead of being involved with an older person, younger children rather go for a person of their age, and that person must also be working so that he be able to marry their child (Northern Cape).”*



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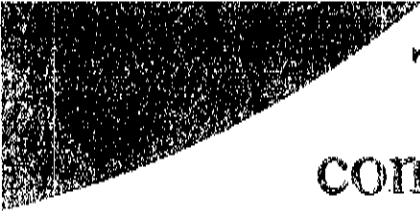
These reflect the contrasting views and beliefs between parents and younger women and men about sexual relationships and marriage, since marriage is one of the motivating factors why most of the young women are involved in this relationship.

- Immorality

“Married women and men are not supposed to go out and look for sex outside his or her house, that’s immoral.” (Kwa-Zulu Natal)

- Abnormal/ inappropriate behaviour and associating it with child sexual abuse

For some, it is not a normal behaviour, and, when it happens, in most cases, community relate it to child sexual abuse (Western Cape)



Those who disapprove ISR: How did communities respond in disapproving these relationships?

- Since ISR was not generally accepted amongst the communities, to demonstrate that they disapprove with this relationship

some people would either talk behind your back and gossip about it

or talk right away about it telling the people involved in that relationship that it is unacceptable for them to be involved in these kind of a relationship (Adult males and Females, Northern Cape, Adult females- North-West)



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For some, since they associate this relationship with child sexual abuse, they would then **report the matter to the police and parents** (Adult females and males, North-West & Limpopo)

- Some would be **treated in a way that are being alienated from the community**

Those who approve ISR : How do they Respond?

- While some people discourage this sexual practice, there are some families, parents and friends who **respond positively towards this relationship**. For example, as indicated during the FGD's; some **fathers forces their children to engage in this relationships** (Limpopo)
- **For some parents, due to the fact that they also benefit from these relationships**, if it happens that an older person **have sex with their daughters or sons without reimbursing them**, they report the matter to the police.



Conclusion

- Intergenerational sex relationships **does exist** amongst various communities in South Africa.
- Take place mostly **as a result of poverty, financial and material gain**, however, **despite that**, as arising from the FGD's it occurs as a **result of love, care and sexual pleasure** which makes the relationship to be somehow mutual.
- These relationships **are common but generally unacceptable**. And as arising from the focus groups, due to the **changing socio-economic** circumstances and **human rights issues**, they tend to look as if they are acceptable whilst not.



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being generally unacceptable, they are associated with immorality and cultural disrespect- for example; parental disrespect and community norms and believes on how these relationships should look like.



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- Since they are unacceptable, some communities, parents and friends respond negatively towards them. When they happen in most cases, communities take necessary steps against them to demonstrate that it is not an acceptable practice.
- In conclusion, since intergenerational sex relationship is associated with unsafe sexual practices and HIV/AIDS risk and also that there has been much focus on the factors that motivates these relationships, there is a need to further develop and put more effort on the community led intervention programmes that are targeted towards addressing these relationships.



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