

Men's perspectives on the impact of female-directed cash transfers on gender relations: findings from the HPTN 068 qualitative study

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INTRODUCTION

HIV is an inherently gendered disease in eastern and southern Africa, not only because more women than men are infected, but also because socially constructed gender norms work to increase women's HIV-infection risk.

The provision of cash transfers to only young women, in such a context, adds another dimension to already existing complex social relations where patriarchal values are entrenched, gender inequality is the norm, and violence against women and girls is pervasive. The offer of cash transfers raises concerns about complicating young women's relationships with their male partners or possibly even setting them up for more violence.

In our attempt to understand how cash transfers influence social relations, we used qualitative data, collected during a trial among young women in South Africa, to explore men's perceptions of the impact of cash transfers on male-female relationships. We considered the impact on both intimate and platonic relationships.



MRC/Wits Agincourt Unit HDSS study area (K. Schatz 2003)

METHODS

HPTN 068 STUDY DESIGN & PURPOSE²

- HPTN 068 was a phase III randomised controlled trial
- Purpose: To assess the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers (CCT) for HIV prevention among young South African women.
- Data was collected at baseline, and annually for 3 years from March 2011 – March 2015

INTERVENTION

- Young women (n=1225) aged 13-20 years old and their parent/guardian were paid monthly cash transfer conditional on 80% school attendance
- 2/3 of total paid to parent/guardian and 1/3 to young woman (total ZAR 300/monthly) [approx. US\$36]
- Payments made electronically into bank or post office accounts

STUDY SITE

- Agincourt Health & socio-Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS), rural Mpumalanga, South Africa
- Rural area with limited infrastructure – particularly banks and formal shopping venues
- High levels of poverty: all participating schools were 'no-fee' schools, and offered feeding programmes for learners."
- High levels of HIV infection: 5.5% for young women aged 15-19 (2010-2011 data)³

QUALITATIVE SUB-STUDY

- Purposive sampling of two groups of men
 - Intimate partners of young women who received cash transfers;
 - Male peers – enrolled at the same schools as cash transfer recipients
- Once off in-depth interviews with intimate partners (n=20);
- 12 focus groups discussions with male peers (n=72).

DATA ANALYSIS

- Interviews digitally recorded, translated and transcribed
- A thematic content analysis approach was used to analyse the data
- We extracted and analysed code reports on themes relating to the perceived impact of the cash transfer programme on the relationships of female cash recipients with their intimate partners and male peers.



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FINDINGS

MEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF CASH TRANSFERS TO YOUNG WOMEN

- Cash transfers seen as beneficial for young women – men perceived young women as having a need for cash because of their low-income family backgrounds, peer pressure and the need for enhanced social status.
- Men were aware of the role that access to cash transfers might play in reducing young women's vulnerability to risky sexual behaviours, for example, by reducing the need for multiple sexual partners, and dependence on transactional sex and dating of older men for financial benefits.

'I think they [cash transfers] have helped because some involve themselves in relationships with multiple boyfriends just to get money, and since they started getting money [from Swa Koteka], they have fewer boyfriends.' (FGD 02)

IMPACT OF CASH TRANSFERS ON INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

- Empowered women to make financial contributions in their intimate relationships; e.g. lending and sharing, buying gifts, pay for transport to visit partners.

'I remember one time I was at home, and I had not received my salary; she gave me her card and told me to buy toiletries. When I paid her back, she refused and said no I must not pay her back.' (Partner 008, 23 years, employed).

- Lessened burden of responsibility on men to care for their female partners.

'I felt great because instead of me giving her money... okay, I would give, but sometimes you find that I did not have money and she would say, 'do not worry; this month I will do this and that with the R100...'' (Partner 005, 31 years, employed).

- Although they had fears that women's access to cash might somehow change the power dynamics of intimate relationships providing women with power and control, they reported that power dynamics in their relationship with cash recipients had not changed.

'If I told her [to do] something, she would not retaliate... When a woman has money, and a man does not, life becomes difficult because a man would not be able have rules or give his woman or wife instructions because she controls everything. Nkateko did not change' (Partner 004, 26 years, employed).

- Women's access to additional resources seemingly did not free men from their gendered obligation to provide financially for their female partners.
- Balance of power maintained as partners earned more than young women.

'If she has more money and I do not, it would be a problem. She will not allow you to tell her anything if you are not providing. She will provide and want to control, and if she wants to control me, then there will be a problem.'

IMPACT OF CASH TRANSFERS ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH MALE PEERS

- Male peers saw this money as a significant source of power for women.
- Cash transfers lessened young women's dependency on men in general.
- Many of the peers felt that their power to persuade women into relationships was reduced when women had their own access to resources.

'Things have changed; before the study, it was not a problem if you can go and pick a girl and take her to your house because she knows that in the morning I will give her R20 to buy bread, but nowadays they want nothing to do with us because they are getting money, they are buying for themselves' (FGD 05).

- Feeling that girls and boys were becoming equal.

'Before this research, boys had more power than girls because boys always have money... because if someone asks one to make bricks... one would get money. But now we are all equal because we are all getting money' (FGD 05).

- Feelings of rejection and inferiority among male peers, as this participant indicated

'They dump us because they now have their money' (FGD 05).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Receipt of cash transfers generally empowered young women to make a financial contribution but this did not challenge male partners' masculine role as providers, nor did it appear to change male partner's financial power.
- Overall, gendered roles in intimate relationships remained unchanged, mainly because partners saw the CCT amount received by young women as too little. They believed that if women received the same as or more than they did (as providers), this could significantly change gender relations.
- While the status quo appeared to have been maintained in young women's intimate relationships, there was evidence that cash transfers were perceived to have altered power dynamics in their platonic relationships with male peers.
- Despite concerns about violence within intimate partners' relationships with young women, evidence of such violence did not emerge. These findings strengthen existing evidence that cash transfers are not necessarily a source of tension or violence in male-female relationships.

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