Acting Against Sexual Violence in the University Residences

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Structure of the presentation

• Introduction
• Goals of acting against university
• Understanding the influences that support sexual violence in the residences
• The 4-steps approach to address sexual violence
• Conclusions
Introduction: Why we need to act against sexual violence in the residences

- Sexual violence – a social and public health problem
- South Africa - a rape capital
- University residences not immune
- The age of men at initiation of perpetration
- The age of women during the first sexual victimisation
- Consequences of sexual violence
Goals of action against sexual violence in the university residences

• Primary prevention
• The ultimate goal – stop sexual violence before it begins
• To reduce the incidence of sexual violence in the residences
• To reduce the impact of sexual violence on the victim
• *Is that possible?*
Acting against sexual violence in the university residences

• Understanding the factors that influence sexual violence
• Using the specific interventions at all levels
• Addressing sexual violence as a public health problem
• Determining community readiness for action
• Empowering bystanders to intervene
The Socio-ecological Model: A framework for understanding sexual violence in the university residences

Societal

Community

Interpersonal/Relationship

Individual
Individual Level Factors

- Age
- Income
- Substance abuse
Specific Prevention Strategies at Individual Level

To promote positive attitudes & beliefs

Address personal behaviours

Approaches:
Education/ awareness
Life skills training
Interpersonal/ Relationship Level Factors

- Closest social circle, peers
- Partners
- Family members
Specific Prevention Strategies at Interpersonal/Relationship Level

- Mentoring and peer programmes
- Conflict resolution, problem solving skills
- Promotion of healthy relationships, negotiation of consent
Community Level Factors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristics of social spaces</th>
<th>Traditions in the residences</th>
<th>Social norms &amp; values &amp; ethos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shared dining halls</td>
<td>• Orientation week</td>
<td>• Sisterhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lecture halls</td>
<td>• Old traditions</td>
<td>• Brotherhood</td>
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<td>• Shuttle</td>
<td>• “Phuza” nights</td>
<td>• Caring/ respect</td>
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Specific Prevention Strategies at Interpersonal/Relationship Level

**Social Spaces**
- Create social spaces

**Traditions**
- Revise & monitor traditions

**Social Norms and values**
- Marketing campaigns

Bystander interventions and residence policies
Societal Level Factors Encouraging or Inhibiting Sexual Violence

- Social and cultural norm
- Gender relations
- Social inequalities

Broader Society
Specific interventions at societal level

- Development, implementation and monitoring of University policies
- Working with national authorities that deal with violence as crime
- Working with health and social services that deal with violence
Four Steps to Address Sexual Violence as a Public Health Problem

Define the problem

Identify the risk and protective factors

Develop and test interventions

Ensure widespread adoption of interventions

Addressing sexual violence as a public health problem
Defining sexual violence as a public problem

**No reliable university statistics**
- University reputation
- Stigma associated with reporting
- Fear of being rebuked
- Self-blaming and silence around sexual violence

**So what be done?**
- Survey – random sampling
- Qualitative data on sexual violence observed
Identification of risk and protective factors

- Qualitative research
- Data collection techniques that promote freedom of speaking
- Use of transformative research methods
- Partnership with the population at risk
- Collaboration with all key stakeholders within the university
Develop and test interventions

• These should be specific to forms of sexual violence
• The “one-size fits all” methods do not work
• Cultural appropriate interventions for young and educated students of the 21st century
• Adopt and adapt other effective evidence-based approaches
• Test the interventions
Ensure widespread adoption of interventions

- Determine university community readiness for action against sexual violence
- Disseminate findings
- Spread interventions to the whole university
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with other institutions to spread the interventions to other communities
Conclusion

- University residences are the perfect environment for primary prevention of sexual violence in the residences.
- The life skills to deal with sexual violence are life-long.
- University community readiness should be determined before any intervention can be initiated to prevent resistance.