HIV prevalence among 15-24-year-olds in South Africa is among the highest in the world. HIV prevalence among young females is nearly two-times higher than among young males. Factors influencing HIV risk among adolescents in South Africa include high prevalence of reported age-disparate sex (particularly among girls), multiple partnerships (particularly among young men), harmful alcohol use, and gender-based violence.

Previous surveys have shown high prevalence of reported rape and intimate-partner violence (IPV) perpetration among adult men in South Africa, though little research has assessed such prevalence among adolescents. More control than intervention females reported ever having had sex (45.1% vs 40.9%, p=0.038), while more control than intervention males had depressive symptoms (31.5% vs 25.0%, p=0.001), reported having an age-disparate partner (5+ years difference) in the last year (15.7% vs 12.0%, p=0.006), and reported ever having perpetrated intimate-partner violence (37.6% vs 33.4%, p=0.08) and rape (29.1% vs 23.7%, p=0.029).

**METHODS**

Forty-six schools in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth were randomised to either receive sessions led by trained Grassroot Soccer Coaches or standard Life-Orientation classes led by teachers. At baseline, 4485 Grade 9 learners (median age = 15 years) completed a 146-item self-administered questionnaire using Open Data Kit (ODK) software on touchscreen mobile phones. Questionnaires were completed in classrooms, taking 20-30 minutes, and assessed demographic/socio-economic, psychosocial, lifestyle, behavioural and relationship factors. Answers were confidential, with no personal identifying information captured on the questionnaire. Participants had the option of answering questions in English or Xhosa and of using Xhosa-based audio assistance. Chi-squares were used to assess crude differences by group, followed by multivariate linear and logistic regressions adjusting for age and school-level clustering.

**RESULTS**

These differences between trial arms lost statistical significance after adjusting for sex and clustering. No differences between groups were observed for opioid, socio-economic status, HIV knowledge, self-efficacy, or number of sexual partners.

**CONCLUSION**

There was a small age imbalance between study groups, which appears to explain other observed baseline imbalances. Outcome analyses for the main trial should be adjusted for age.

In this population of Grade 9 learners from Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, we observed distinct gender differences in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Higher prevalence of harmful attitudes and behaviours were reported in males than females. Of particular concern are the high numbers of sexual partners, high prevalence of reported intimate-partner violence and rape perpetration, and high prevalence of harmful alcohol use, suggesting these are an important area for intervention. Grassroot Soccer has incorporated these survey findings into its Generation Skilz intervention, which targets Grade 9 and 10 learners.

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