

Abstract:

Twenty-five years into the HIV/AIDS epidemic, condom use among married/stable couples remains low and under-researched in developing countries, even countries with high HIV prevalence. Introducing condoms into a long-standing relationship, in spite of HIV risk, is likely to be awkward. We conducted a qualitative study in Kampala, Uganda, with 39 couples reporting 100% condom use in the previous three months. The women were recruited from among women in a clinical trial who were using condoms and whose partners also agreed to participate. Twenty-two of the women and six of the men reported having taken the initiative to suggest condom use; the remaining couples disagreed who raised the subject first. Women used insistence, refusal to have sex, persuasion, and condoms for family planning or to protect children, which helped to deflect distrust and get their partner to agree. Some men resisted initially but their reactions were often more positive than expected. Men's reasons for accepting condoms were to please their partner, protect her from HIV, protect their children, protect themselves and, in some cases, continue having other partners. Although condom use is a couple behaviour, an encouraging environment and condom availability are all crucial to increasing condom use by couples in settings like Uganda.