Condom use and risk of HIV infection among fishers in Elmina fishing community in Ghana

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Abstract

This paper is a follow-up to a cross-sectional study which employed a mix-method design for data collection and analysis to investigate the relationship between mobility and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) risks amongst 385 fishers in Elmina fishing community in Ghana. It discusses condom use among fishers and the perceived barriers in using it and concludes with a discussion on the implications for risks of HIV infection as a result of the reported low condom use among them. The reported low usage suggests the engagement in unprotected sex of the fishers and the likelihood of their exposure to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV in the study area. The paper thus recommends on-going and future HIV education programs by the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA) Municipality Assembly and civil society organisations in Elmina to explore ways of including the supply of free condoms to fishers and at the various fishing destination points along the coast of Elmina. Equally, this outreach or mobile HIV service outlets should emphasize the consistent use of condom within Elmina and the surrounding fishing communities

Keywords: Mobility, fishers, condoms use behaviour, power inequalities and condoms usage.

Introduction

Consistent use of condoms in casual sexual activity is regarded as a means of ensuring protected sex to reduce the risk of HIV transmission through sex. Despite evidence of the effectiveness of condoms in reducing risk of HIV transmission, earlier studies on HIV have documented lower condoms use amongst certain mobile population groups such as truck drivers, mine workers, commercial farm workers, construction workers, domestic workers, informal traders, commercial sex workers, military personnel and fishers (Seeley and Allison, 2005). These human population groups are described as being at high risk to HIV transmission due to the high mobility of their work, their engagement in multiple interactions with foreign and local populations, and exchange of sex with itinerant

traders and sex workers as they travel to do their work (Kissling, 2005; Seeley and Allison, 2005).

Earlier studies on fishers in several fishing communities around the world have found low and inconsistent usage of condoms among fisherfolks, thus making them a population group who often experience high rates of HIV infection (Bouanchaud, 2011; Lungu and Husken, 2010; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). In West Africa for instance, earlier reports of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) studies on fishers have also confirmed them as one of the human population groups that do not utilize condoms consistently (Bouanchaud, 2011; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). In Ghana, similar findings of low condom use among artisanal fishers have also been reported in fishing destinations (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). Notwithstanding the available knowledge of low use of condoms, there is paucity in these

discourses to explain the reasons for the low use and barriers to condom usage among fishers and fisherfolks. This paper seeks to readdress these gaps based on findings of an earlier study on mobility and HIV risk infection among fishers in Elmina fishing community in the KEEA municipality in Ghana (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). It discusses condoms use behaviour among the fishers of Elmina emphasizing on the usage in the last twelve months before the preliminary study. The paper also explores the perceived barriers to condom use among fishers and concludes with a discussion on the implications for HIV risk infection among themselves as a consequence of the low condom use.

Background

There is strong documentary evidence that suggests that individuals who use condoms consistently are 10 to 20 times less likely to be infected with HIV than non-condom users (Pinkerton & Abramson, 1997). Inconsistent use of condoms in any non-regular sexual activity is regarded as an unprotected sex which could expose an individual to unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. Earlier studies on fishers in fishing communities in some developing countries in Africa, South and South-East Asia and Central America have produced evidence that indicates high HIV infection rates among fishers and other people living in fishing communities (Kissling et al., 2004; Seeley et al., 2009). Some writers have estimated that rates of HIV prevalence in fishing communities can be five to ten times higher than those in the general population (Kissling et al., 2004; Korankye and Dwomoh, 2012; Seeley et al., 2009; Zafar et al., 2014).

Among the reasons given for the high HIV rates, is the high mobility of fishers, which contributes to changing sexual behaviours among them (Kishamawe, 2006; Duwal et al., 2015; Holvoet, 2011; Olowosegun et al., 2013; Tumwesigye et al., 2012; Zafar et al., 2014). Fishers are also noted for non-use of condom in sexual exchanges at fishing destination points and the outcome of the low use of condoms is the high

HIV rates in these fishing communities (Lungu and Husken, 2010). Studies that have been undertaken in Kenya, Zambia, and Uganda found that the non-use of condoms among fishers is borne out of ignorance and poor knowledge about HIV prevention methods (Camlin et al., 2013; Kwen et al., 2013; Lungu & Husken, 2010). According to Kyei-Gyamfi (2019), the high mobility of fishers in pursuance of their occupation makes it very difficult for many of them to participate in HIV education in the fishing destination points accounting for their poor knowledge on HIV transmission and protection (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019).

Holvoet (2011) and Lungu and Husken (2010) further describes the living conditions in most fishing communities as cramped with most fishers living in close-knit housing facilities, sharing little living space, cooking and sleeping facilities and many of these living spaces are makeshift housing facilities. The description of the living arrangements by Holvoet (2011), Lungu and Husken, (2010) depicts overcrowding conditions characterised with little sleeping places with poor ventilation and lighting. Holvoet (2011) observes further that the state of conditions in fishing communities favours promiscuous lifestyles. Lungu and Husken (2010) also argue that inadequate accommodation for mobile fishers in fishing destinations leads to sexual relations and risky sexual engagements there. Lungu and Husken (2010) elaborate that the inadequate accommodation facilities in the fishing communities facilitate fish traders cohabiting with single male fishers, which often leads to sexual relations and risky sexual engagements. They also argue that owing to the poor living and sleeping arrangements, some female fish traders are compelled to engage in unprotected sex with local male fishers to secure comfortable accommodation (Lungu and Husken, 2010). According to Kyei-Gyamfi (2019), some female fish traders travel to the fish markets with very little trading capital and often do not want to use their income for accommodation if they have to spend a night at a fishing destination outside their homes. Many of such women often out of

desperation to keep their trading capital intact, and also desired to have comfortable sleeping place may choose to offer sex in exchange for a place of sleep (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019, Lungu and Husken, 2010). Under these circumstances, sex is sometimes performed under unprotected conditions since many of these women are not able to negotiate for the use of condoms for the fear of losing the offer of the accommodation (Lungu and Husken, 2010). Again, since the travel intention is not to engage in having sex, many these women do not have in their possession condoms to offer protect during the act.

Another reason for low condoms use among fishers relates to their HIV risk denial attitude (Allison and Seeley, 2004; Lubega et al., 2015; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). Fishing is generally regarded as a high-risk occupation in terms of livelihood, insecurity and physical danger (Kher, 2008). Allison and Seeley (2004) pose that the uncertainties and dangers that characterise the work of fishers lead to risk-taking in relation to their sexual behaviour, drug abuse and alcohol consumption. Lubega et al. (2015) found in a study in Kasensero of Uganda that lack of HIV-related fear among fishers was a determining factor in the high HIV transmission in the study area. Besides, they observe that in Kasensero many fishers have had experiences of seeing their colleagues dying at sea whilst fishing, and as a result, these fishers see this activity as a life-threatening and more dangerous undertaking than the fear of HIV infection. Owing to this, the decision to use condoms hardly occurs to fishers with HIV-risk denial attitude and this works against HIV protection efforts in fishing communities (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019).

Gender inequalities that prevail in the roles assigned men and women in fishing communities are as a result of men gaining more power through the control and supply of fish. Kher (2008) explains that male fishers in control of fish often use the catch to exploit the women on the conditions of “no sex – no fish” basis. Béné and Merten (2008) found that owing to intense competition for securing fish stocks and to avoid inconvenience of non-availability of fish for long

duration, the female fish traders always find themselves complying with these unequal terms. Kwen et al. (2013) suggest further that even when the male fishers refuse to use condoms, some female fish traders still go ahead to have unprotected sex for the fear of being denied the fish. Allison and Seeley (2004) also argue that the gender inequality structures place not only female fish traders in subordinating roles but impoverish other women engaged in other fishing-related activities in fishing communities. In effect, the fear of losing the catch to another female fish trader hinders most of them in negotiating for protection during sex. Kyei-Gyamfi (2019) notes that due to income differentials, women in most fishing communities become economically dependent on men thus expose them to sexual exploitation. He further argues that the gender power imbalance extends to rights to negotiate for condom use when the female fishers engage in sex with male fishers who may have multiple unprotected sexual encounters with other women, including sex workers. Being economically dependent on male fishers makes it less likely for them to challenge sexual risk behaviour that leads to being susceptible to HIV infection.

Methods

The preliminary study was conducted in Elmina fishing community in the KEEA Municipality in the Central region of Ghana (see Figure 1) using a cross-sectional that employed convergent parallel mixed research methods for data collection and analysis. It was carried out to establish a relationship between the mobility of fishers and HIV infection risks. The study combined a survey; key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), observation, secondary data from both published and unpublished works and Internet to enhance the interpretation of the findings. The population of the main study was conducted on artisanal marine fishers aged 18 years and above and engaged in any form of fishing activity in the study area such as actual fishing, fish portage, boat (canoe) repairers, fishing gear sellers and fish traders.

Figure 1: Map of Study Area in KEEA

Source: Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

Owing to budget constraints, the time allocated to administer the questionnaires and the unknown population size of fishers in the study area for the main study, the author derived the sample size by computing the minimum sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions. He, therefore, considered a standard normal deviation at 95 per cent confidence level (1.96), percentage picking a choice or response (50 per cent = 0.5), confidence interval (0.05 = ± 5), and reaching an estimated sample size of 385 respondents for the survey.

Purposive sampling was the criterion used in the selection of 30 key subjects for the KII. Participants of the KIIs were key officials of the KEEA, and community opinion leaders such as fish queens, chief fishermen, and other individuals engaged in fishing activities in Elmina. The KIIs was done to explore their views on the fishing activity and issues related to the sexual behaviours of fishers. Two FGDs were held with female and male fishers. Each of the groups constituted 10

participants selected based on age, resident status, membership in fisher associations and capacity to provide in-depth information needed to augment the study question. Several visits were carried to physically observe the offshore activities at the landing beach. The observations allowed direct assessment of the settlement patterns, state of social infrastructure and services, the sleeping and living arrangements, the repair, moulding and making of fishing gears, and the general experience of the fishers in Elmina.

Regarding quantitative analysis, both descriptive (frequencies, percentages) and inferential (Chi-square test) statistics have been used in the analysis to draw conclusions on the quantitative data. Bivariate analysis was done by cross-tabulating the variables of interest to determine the association between independent and dependent variables.

The qualitative data were also analysed using a thematic approach. The data gathered during the interviews and FGDs were

organized and used to produce a report on the qualitative aspects. Five processes were followed to analyse the qualitative data. First, the raw data for both the KIIs and FGDs were transcribed. Second, the data were read through copiously to familiarize with the data gathered from the KIIs and focus group discussion sessions. After going through the data and familiarizing, codes were assigned to the data. The next stage was to organize the data from the KIIs and FGDs by arranging them under the codes (themes). The final stage was to write a report on the findings. Narrative descriptions have also been made to explain relationships in the data presented, with statements by subjects in the FGDs and KIIs also presented as quotes in some portions to enrich the analysis.

Since some aspects of the present study bother on the privacy of subjects, it was deemed sensitive in content and required ethical clearance. In view of this, ethical clearance was sought from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) at the University of Ghana.

Results

Socio-demographic background of fishers

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the 385 fishers were examined according to age, sex, marital status, level of education, religion; mobility status and type of fishing occupation engaged in (see Table 1). More than half (51.4 per cent) of the participants were females to 48.6 per cent being males. Table 1 also shows that participants aged 34-44 years constituted the majority (29.9 per cent), followed by those aged 25-34 years (24.2 per cent) and below 25 years (22.3 per cent). Respondents aged 65 years and above were in the minority (3.6 per cent). The data presented in Table 1 further indicate that fishers below age 35 represented 76.4 per cent of the respondents. This implies it mostly younger people who engage in the fishing activity in the study area. Table 1 also indicates that 54.3

per cent of the study participants were mobile¹ fishers while 45.7 per cent were non-mobile.

Data in Table 1 further indicate 53.8 per cent of respondents had Middle/JHS education, and almost a third of respondents had no education, whereas 12.7 per cent had secondary/vocational school and higher education. The results show a high illiteracy rate among fishers in the study area. This finding was expected because some discourses on artisanal marine fishers have generally shown there is high illiteracy among fishers (Duwal et. al., 2015). The majority of respondents were Christians (82.1 per cent), and regarding marital status, 46.8 per cent reported being married compared to 53.2 per cent who were not in any form of marital union. From Table 1, fishers engaged in post-harvest activities constituted more than one-third of the participants (38.7 per cent) followed by those who engaged in actual fishing (25.5 per cent), 21.6 per cent as fish potters and 14.3 per cent are engaged those engaged in a boat (canoe) repair and maintenance.

Condoms usage during sexual intercourse

This paper looked at condom use among the respondents who had sex in the last 12 months before the study, and the results have been presented in Table 2. From Table 2, 47.8 per cent of the respondents affirmed to using condoms during sexual intercourse. From the results, more than half of the respondents who had sex over the period did not use a condom in their sexual encounters. The results suggest low condom use among the study participants and resonate with previous studies by Smit (2005) and Zafar (2014). Table 2 further indicates 56.7 per cent of male respondents and 38.8 per cent of the females used condom in their last sexual encounters. The higher rate of condom use among males is not unique to this study but has been documented in earlier studies by Opio et al. (2011) and Bauni and Obonyo (2000), which found higher condoms use in men compared to their female counterparts.

¹Fishers reporting to have travelled from Elmina to other fishing communities to engage in any fishing activity in the last 12 months before the study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Per cent
Male	187	48.6
Female	198	51.4
Age		
<25	86	22.3
25-34	93	24.2
35-44	115	29.9
45-54	50	13.0
55-64	27	7.0
65+	14	3.6
Mobility Status		
Mobile Fisher	209	54.3
Non-Mobile Fisher	176	45.7
Education		
No Education	129	33.5
Middle/JHS education	207	53.8
Secondary/vocational and higher	49	12.7
Religion		
Islam	21	5.5
African Traditionalist	19	4.9
No religion	29	7.5
Christianity	316	82.1
Marital Status		
Never married	112	29.1
Cohabiting/Informal/Consensual	34	8.8
Married	180	46.8
Divorced/separated/widowed	59	15.3
Type of fishing occupation		
Fish Catch Group	98	25.5
Post-harvest Group	149	38.7
Maintenance and Repair Group	55	14.3
Porters and Errand Group	83	21.6

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

Table 2: Condom usage in the last 12 months by Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Respondents who have been using Condoms in the last 12 months		
	N	Per cent	P< Value
Sex			0.001
Male	101	56.7	
Female	69	38.8	
Age			0.000
<25	55	64.7	
25-34	57	61.3	
35-44	36	31.3	
45-54	17	37.0	
55-64	5	33.3	
65+	0	0.0	
Mobility Status			0.029
Mobile Fisher	104	52.8	
Non-Mobile Fisher	65	41.1	
Education			0.017
No Education	46	40.4	
Middle/JHS education	94	48.0	
Secondary/vocational and higher	30	65.2	
Religion			0.048
Islam	14	73.7	
African Traditionalist	11	61.1	
No religion	15	53.6	
Christianity	130	44.7	
Marital Status			0.000
Never married	68	63.6	
Cohabiting/Consensual	23	67.6	
Currently married	58	34.9	
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	21	48.9	
Type of fishing activity			0.000
Fish Catch Group	47	50.5	
Post-harvest Group	43	33.1	
Maintenance and Repair Group.	31	62.0	
Porters and Errand Group	49	59.0	
Total	170	47.8	

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

Table 2 also indicates a statistically significant relationship between condom use and age (P -value=0.000). The use of a condom in the last 12 months among the respondents decreases by an increase in age. From Table 2, the younger respondents have higher rates of condoms use than the older respondents. Chamrathirong and Kaiser (2012) in earlier research on condom usage have proffered several explanations for the higher condoms use among younger people than older people. They explained that younger people have better knowledge about condom use than older people and are more inclined to use condoms compared to older people.

Concerning mobility status, the percentage of respondents who reported using condoms in their sexual activity in the last 12 months is higher among mobile fishers (52.8 per cent) than those who were not mobile (41.1 per cent). Additional information gathered during the male FGD indicates that some mobile fishers travel to fishing destinations with condoms to protect themselves from contracting venereal diseases or having unwanted pregnancies because they are not accompanied by their sexual partners. This finding is consistent with results of a study by Lagarde et al. (2003) who found that mobile workers have in hand condoms to aid protection against sexually transmitted infections. The participants of the male FGD also explained that non-mobile fishers are usually resident at the home landing site with their spouses, and hardly use condoms when having sex with their partners. A migrant male fisher in a FGD noted:

Back home in the Volta Region, when I am having sex with my wife, I don't use condoms, but here in Elmina, I use condoms, so I don't get a disease or impregnate another woman. (Adu, July 2018).

Another participant reported that some fishers who are highly mobile do keep condoms if the need arises for them to use them. Asked why they kept condoms on them, one explained:

I always keep condoms on me anytime I go for long fishing expeditions. Sometimes, when you are in other communities it is difficult to find condoms to buy and so it becomes very convenient when you already have some on you. (Sammy, July 2018)

The above quote buttress studies conducted in Tanzania and Senegal which indicate that travelers are more likely to report condom use compared to non-mobile persons (Mnyika et al., 1997; Lagarde et al., 1996).

The level of educational attainment has a positive association with condoms use. As seen in Table 2, the use of condoms is much higher among the respondents with higher education ($P < 0.017$). This is consistent with earlier studies which have indicated that individuals with higher educational levels are more likely than those with lower education to use protective devices such as condoms during sexual intercourse (Mangnani et al., 2002; Sharma and Nam, 2018). The results indicate that educated individuals tend to have more knowledge about condoms and as a result use them in sexual encounters than those with little or no education.

In terms of religion, respondents who reported using condoms is higher among followers of Islam (73.7 per cent) than those who profess African Traditional Religion (61.1 per cent) or those who claimed to have no religion (53.6 per cent), but lowest among Christians (44.7 per cent). The low rate of condom use reported by Christian respondents may be attributed partly to religious influences of some Christian groups such as the Catholics and Pentecostals, who have doctrines that emphasize the use of condoms is a sinful act (Agha, Hutchinson, & Kusantahn, 2006; Mash & Mash, 2013).

About marital status, the per cent rate of condom use is higher among those who are never married, cohabiting or in consensual unions but lowest among currently married. This finding resonates with previous studies which report low condom use among married individuals (Sharma and Nam, 2018; FHI360/USAID, 2014). In the

male FGD, it was gathered that many married individuals do not use condom with their spouses because of fear of being suspected of infidelity, especially when one has just returned from a trip in another fishing community. This was illustrated by a male participant in the following statement:

Even when you want to use condoms, you are sometimes afraid to ask because your wife will think you cheated while you were away on your travels. This is one of the main reasons most of us married can't even suggest to other partners to use condoms. (Fofie, July 2018).

With regard to the use of condoms by married people, the sentiments expressed by participants indicate married individuals may not use the condom if the male partner is against its use. In the female FGD, one of the participants expressed the following:

I know that my husband has a lot of sexual partners, but I cannot ask him to use condoms because condoms are usually used for girlfriends and prostitutes. Besides, it is the men's decision to use condoms. He might even get angry and divorce me for disrespecting him to ask him to use condoms. This is the reason I find it difficult to even suggest to my husband to use condoms. (Janet, July 2018)

The statements above indicate that although some respondents desire to use condoms but, the fear of being suspected of cheating or offending their partner deter them from negotiating for the use of condoms even among married people. The issues raised reflect observations made in earlier findings of a Kenyan study which indicates that most married couples do not use condoms because of their lack of courage to negotiate condom use with their spouses. The study explains that married couple fails to do so for fear of straining or breaking their marriages even when they are aware their spouses

are having other partners (Bauni and Obonyo, 2000). Other studies have also adduced the low condom use among married people to perceived notions that condoms are only used in extra-marital sex and not in marital sex. Owing to this notion, some couple disregard condom use even when they aware that the partner is promiscuous (FHI360/USAID, 2014; Sharma and Nam, 2018). Owing to this, married people may have very limited options to negotiate safe sex with their spouses who may be engaged in risky sexual behaviour, and this may elevate the risk of HIV infection among them. This finding serves as a pointer to programme managers to intensify education on how to communicate condom use among married people.

Table 2 also shows that in terms of fishing-related occupation, the prevalence of condom use in the last 12 months during the sexual intercourse was highest among the maintenance and repair group and lowest among the post-harvest group. This was to be expected as the maintenance and repair group is dominated by males whilst the post-harvest group predominantly is made up of females and so is less likely to use condoms as indicated earlier in the section in analysis on gender and condom use.

Perceived barriers to condom use with a sexual partner

The study also reports on perceived barriers to condom use in the last sexual encounter by respondents who had sex in the last twelve months. The reasons given by participants for not using condoms have been presented in Table 3. Among those who did not use condoms with partners during the last sex act, partner objection accounts for 33.3 per cent. From the qualitative results, partner objection to condom use stems from the fact that males usually have economic power than their women, and as a result, the women are mostly in a disadvantaged position to negotiate for the use of condoms, as most tend to depend on the men for support. This is summed up in the following statement by a participant in the female FGD:

Most of the women I know in the community prefer to use condoms to have safe sex. Incidentally, most of us depend either depend on the men for financial support or supply of fish. Most of us are

afraid that if we challenge the decision of our partner objecting to use the condom, they will be angry and stop supporting us financially of granting us fish supplies. (Auntie, July 2018).

Table 3: Reasons for Non-use of Condoms in last Sexual Encounter by sex

Reason	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Partner objected	29.5	42.9	33.3
Condom not available	23.5	28.5	25
Trust partner not to have any sexual infection	23.5	28.6	25
Partner very attractive and not likely to carry any sexual infection	23.5	0.0	16.7
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	17	7	24

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

Twenty-five per cent of respondents reported not using a condom because they trusted their partners to be without sexual infection and felt safe to have sex with them. The same proportion (25 per cent) said they did not use a condom because it was not available at the time of sexual encounter. The remaining 16.7 per cent reported not using a condom because they felt did not need to use it as their sex partner was very attractive and not likely to have any sexually transmitted infection. The finding confirms similar observations in an earlier work by Eleftheriou et al. (2016). The expressions of the respondents for not using condoms suggest the low risk perception and poor knowledge of some of the respondents.

Seemingly, sex differentials exist in the reasons given by respondents for not using condoms. A higher proportion of the females cited partner objection as their reason for not using a condom in their last sexual encounter. This finding confirms an earlier work by Chamrathirong and Kaiser (2012) where men

usually object to condom use because of claims that condoms reduce the pleasure of sexual intercourse.

A higher proportion of females (28.6 per cent) than males (23.5 per cent) reported not using a condom due to claims of trust for their partners whom they assumed were disease-free. Other studies such as that of Higgins et al. (2014) have made similar observations that suggest that trust of women for their male sexual counterparts influence their decision to oblige to sex without the use of a condom.

A slightly higher proportion of females (28.5 per cent) than males (23.5 per cent) also did not use a condom because it was not readily available at the time of the sexual act. This finding is a reflection of some of the social norms associated with the motivation of condom use in Africa, where the decision to use a condom in sexual encounters largely is on the males (Bauni and Obonyo, 2000; Kandel, 2002; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). So when the male partner does not have a

condom at the moment of a sexual encounter, sex is thus had without the use of a condom.

Discussion

The results show more than half of the respondents who reported engaging in sex in the last 12 months did not use condoms. Thus, this paper has shown low condom use among respondents and is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Smit, 2005; Zafar, 2014). In the subgroups, significant variations are observed in the use of a condom by the respondents. For example, in the case of sex, condoms usage is lower in females than in males, and this was to be expected as the finding corroborates other studies which report that men are more likely than women to use a condom because they are more inclined to have sex with casual or multiple partners with whom condom use is more common (Chamrathirong and Kaiser, 2012; Opio et al., 2011). From the qualitative results, the low use of condoms also stems from women's inability to negotiate for the use of condoms. During the female FGD, it was reported that the vulnerability of female fishers is driven by the economic power wielded by male fishers in the fishing communities as a result of the control they have over the supply of fish. Since most women depend on men either for financial support or supply of fish, many of them are pushed into subservience, and as a result become less efficacious with very little or no power when it comes to issues related to sexual relations, including the decision to insist on condom use when their male counterparts propose not to use them. This finding brings to the fore that vulnerabilities and HIV risks among females in society arise from the existing socio-economic inequities that prevail in certain social settings such as fishing communities. As long as the female fishers depend on their male counterparts for financial support and the supply of fish, the inequities and disparities will always prevail, and HIV risks will constitute an ever present phenomenon in fishing destinations.

The age of the respondents is associated with the use of a condom, as higher usage of condom is observed among the younger

respondents than the older respondents. Chamrathirong and Kaiser (2012) note that younger people are more likely to have a better knowledge of condom and more likely to use it. Since younger people are more sexually active, having a high rate of condoms use among the younger fishers may serve as a huge boost for programme managers in the campaign on consistent use of condoms as a preventive measure against HIV and other STIs in the study area. With regard to mobility status, the rate of condom usage is higher among mobile fishers than in non-mobile fishers. This was explained by participants during the male focus group discussions that mobile fishers keep condoms on them when they travel, so they can use when they have sex during their travels. From the results, this is not so with non-mobile fishers, who often are stationed at the home landing site with their spouses and hardly use a condom when having sex with their partners. It is encouraging to note that mobile fishers have a higher rate of condoms use as it will grant them protection from sexually transmitted diseases when they have sex during their travels.

The use of condoms is much higher among the respondents with higher education, thus suggesting educated individuals tend to have better knowledge about the importance of condoms and have the tendency to utilize condoms in sexual encounters than those with little or no education. This finding resonates earlier works by Mangnani et al., (2002) and Sharma and Nam (2018) who argue that individuals with higher education are more likely than those with lower or no education to use condoms during sexual intercourse.

From the results, Christians are lowest in the use of condoms over the reference period. This is not surprising as some Christian groups recognize the use of condom and other birth control devices as sinful practices. The low rate of condom use reported by Christians may be due to adherence of the religious doctrines in order not to go contrary to them as reported in earlier works (Agha, Hutchinson, & Kusantahn, 2006; Mash & Mash, 2013). In terms of marital status, condom

usage is lowest among currently married, the reason being that married couple does not see the need to use condoms because of trust for one another, fear of being suspected for infidelity or offending their partner for not using a condom. This finding has earlier been documented in a Kenyan study which explains lower condom use among married couple as a result of fear of straining or breaking marriages even when the couple suspects infidelity (Bauni and Obonyo, 2000). The low use of condom among married couple is worrying, as it suggests marriage couple could be exposed to HIV risk if one or both partners ever engage in unprotected extramarital sex with a casual sex partner. Finally, about the type of fishing-related occupation, reported use of condoms was highest among the maintenance and repair group and lowest among the post-harvest group. This was to be expected because the maintenance and repair group is mainly male-dominated compared to the post-harvest groups, which are predominantly made up of females and so more likely to have low rate of condom use.

A little more than three in ten adduced their non-use of condom in their last sexual encounter to partner objection, which is also highest in males than in females. From the qualitative results, partner objection is sexual behaviour, which is reported to be a common sexual behaviour often exhibited by African males in their sexual encounters (Bauni and Obonyo, 2000; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). The respondents, who did not use a condom because they claim to trust their partners not having any sexually transmitted, accounted for a fourth of all respondents who engaged in sex in the last 12 months. The same proportion of the respondents reported not using a condom because it was not available at the moment of the sexual encounter.

Almost two in ten of the respondents did not use a condom because they found their sexual partner attractive and unlikely to carry any sexual infection. Significantly, all the respondents who gave this reason were male. This finding has been observed in earlier studies, which emphasize that compared to women, men are less likely to use a condom especially when they find their partner to

be attractive (Eleftheriou et al., 2016; Agocha and Cooper, 1999). Taking a decision not to use a condom because a sexual partner is attractive is a risky sexual behaviour because a person may be HIV and yet look very attractive. There is therefore the need to educate people in the study area to desist from the wrong assumption that attractive persons are free from STIs.

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings indicate low condom use amongst the fishers, suggesting that many fisherfolks in the study area are engaged in unprotected sex likely to expose them to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. This calls the need to engage fisherfolks on the need to improve consistent use of condoms in their sexual exchanges. The paper recommends that ongoing and future HIV education programs of the KEEA Assembly and civil society groups in Elmina should explore ways of including the supply of free condoms to fishers and at the various fishing destination points along the coast of Elmina. Services such as the distribution of condoms could also be extended to fishing destination points, using outreach or mobile HIV service outlets.

The results indicate that in terms of sex, males have higher rate of using condom during sex, whereas in terms of age, younger fishers have higher percentage of condom usage. Again, in terms of education, fishers with higher education reported higher condom usage compared to those with lower or no education. The results also indicate a higher use of condoms among mobile fishers, whilst condoms use is lowest among married individuals. In terms of religion, Christians recorded the lowest use of condoms compared to the other religious groups, and with regard to type of occupation, higher use of condoms was found among the maintenance and repair group who are male dominated, and lowest among the post-harvest group which constitutes females. The variation in the subgroups therefore indicates the use of condoms is influenced by the demographic characteristics of an individual. Based on this, educational programs must take into account the differences to inform the design

and development of Information, education and communication (IE&C) messages to the fishers and fisherfolks in the Elmina and other surrounding fishing communities in the study area. Both male and female fishers, young and old, married or unmarried, mobile and non-mobile should be encouraged to carry along condoms, and utilize them any time the need arises for them to engage in sex.

The main barriers to condoms use according to the results are sexual partner objecting to use condom, condom not being available for use at the time of sex, trust for a partner to be disease-free, and partner being very attractive and not likely to carry any sexually transmitted diseases. The barriers are indicative

of the poor knowledge about the importance of condoms, and the level of STI risk infection they are exposed to for not using condoms. It also raises a fundamental issue on condoms acceptability in the study area; whether people do not have adequate knowledge of the importance of condom as a preventive measure of STIs, or have requisite knowledge but still do not accept the use of condoms. There is the need to promote and urge people in the community to be consistent in the use condoms during their sexual engagements, assuring them that it is a highly effective method for preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

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