Testing the acceptability and feasibility of the Men with Conscience sexual violence prevention intervention in a pilot RCT at two universities in the Western Cape, South Africa

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STRUCTURE OF THIS PRESENTATION

1. Background
2. Problem Statement
3. Introduction to the MWC intervention
4. The research project
5. The research journey
6. Challenges
7. Lessons learned
8. The way forward
University environments, including residences, have been identified as communities at risk for sexual violence globally.

Reports of sexual assaults have been made at many South African Universities, but prevention initiatives and appropriate responses to these are still emerging at most universities.

This study emerges from a socio-political context where sexual violence against women and children, by men in South Africa, makes media headlines daily.

The consequence is mass outcry and activism, but very little appropriate responses.
Primary prevention interventions for sexual violence are needed to address this scourge among university students.

Although sexual violence prevention interventions have been implemented and found to be effective in prevention of sexual violence in other countries’ higher education institutions, no primary prevention interventions have yet been reported within South African university residences.
INTRODUCTION TO THE MEN WITH CONSCIENCE (MWC) INTERVENTION

- Adapted from the OMC intervention for use in the University setting (de Villiers, 2016)
- Gender-transformative and seeks to encourage men to engage in gender equitable relationships with women
- A six-hour programme consisting of workshops designed to address risk factors that drive sexual violence.
- Uses a participatory approach which includes role play, group discussions and critical reflection
- An important pathway of change, i.e., conscientization
1. OBSERVE
2. ANALYZE
3. DEVELOP THEMES

WORKSHOP 1: Locate sexual violence in context
WORKSHOP 2: Personal values and belief systems
WORKSHOP 3: Societal pressures for men’s behaviour
WORKSHOP 4: Defining Rape
WORKSHOP 5: Courage to act
WORKSHOP 6: Maintaining your own identity in intimate relationships
WORKSHOP 7: Post-intervention FGD
The research project

**Study aims and objectives**

The aim of this study is to test the acceptability and feasibility of the MWC intervention in a pilot RCT at two university campuses in the Western Cape (Site A and Site B).

**Objectives**

1. Development objective
2. Acceptability objective
3. Feasibility objectives
4. To conduct a process evaluation on the implementation of the Men with Conscience Intervention
The research project cont ...

Rationale and significance of the study

• Pilot testing a sexual violence intervention for use in university settings to address sexual violence before it happens, rather than respond to its effects.

• A context-specific intervention

• Few primary prevention interventions for this high-risk population are available for testing and none have been tested in this setting.

Key outcome

A South African-designed, context-specific sexual violence prevention intervention for use in SA university settings, ready to be tested in a fully powered RCT.
The research project cont ...

Overview of the research design

**Phase 1:** Planning, preparation and development of the pre-and post-intervention questionnaire

**Phase 2:** Implementation of the intervention

**Phase 3:** post-intervention (including the post-intervention assessment)
The research project cont ...

Selection criteria

- Male undergraduate students, over 18 years old, registered at the university (not all students registered at the university necessarily live in residences).
- All other students who do not meet the selection criteria will be excluded from this study.
RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

- Intervention studies in HEI settings is challenging.
- Time and commitment
- Insider collaboration is important
- Outsider collaboration more difficult
- Getting buy-in is critical

- Two sites – A & B
- 60 participants at site A recruited and committed.
- Site B pledged 100 participants
**Site A**

- Historically Black institution, disadvantaged
- Access to limited resources
- No issues of racial transformation, but gender transformation.
- Issues of GBV need to be addressed.
- Recruitment was really difficult.
- No support provided so driving this project at this site is a challenge.

**Site B**

- Historically White Afrikaans, privileged
- Access to a wealth of resources
- Received lots of media attention for racism and slow transformation.
- Having an intervention to address GBV is an area of huge interest to them.
- Seen to be making an effort to address issues of GBV.
- Very supportive in driving this project, e.g., providing counselling services, selection of appropriate venue for intervention delivery.
- Champions
The Research Journey

What was done?

1. Ethical clearance
2. Engagement with research partners, interventionists (Sonke Gender Justice), collaborators at site A and site B.
3. Development of pre-and post-intervention questionnaire
4. Recruitment
5. Phase 1 started

What was not done and why not?

1. Phase 2 & 3
2. Covid-19 pandemic
Challenges

- Gaining institutional ethical clearance was a huge challenge.
- Accessing research sites
- Not being able to deliver the intervention due to Covid-19 pandemic.
- Gaining insider collaboration (as an “outsider”)
LESSONS LEARNED

- Perseverance

- Keep going, and don’t give up

- Use disappointments as opportunities for change and improvement

- Building relationships is key
THE WAY FORWARD
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING