



Cross-sectional study assessing HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and behavior in the Namibian truck transport sector: Readjusting HIV prevention programs in the workplace



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KEYWORDS

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Summary The objectives of this study were to assess the current status of HIV-related knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (KAB) of employees in the private transport sector in Namibia and to compare companies with established HIV workplace program (WPPs) with those that have recently initiated the implementation of such programs. The study was designed as a cross-sectional questionnaire-based

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survey. Between January and March 2011, the survey was conducted in the Namibian truck transport sector in six companies of different sizes. The participants were selected randomly from the workforce. Data collection was based on a KAB questionnaire.

The range of correct answers to the survey concerning the knowledge of HIV transmission was 67–95%. Twenty percent of the employees had never been tested for HIV. Additionally, risky sexual behaviors were quite prevalent and included having multiple concurrent partners and the use of sex for incentives. This study revealed that drivers and laborers were especially at risk for such behaviors. The employees of companies with established WPPs were tested for HIV more often than those of companies with new WPPs; however, aside from this difference, only minor differences were observed between the two groups. The findings of this study highlight the need for on-going HIV information and prevention campaigns that focus on the special needs of mobile and low-income workers. WPPs should be tailored accordingly and shift their focus to more practical approaches, such as voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), to increase their effectiveness.

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Introduction

In Namibia, the prevalence of HIV has been reported to be as high as 19%, and regional rates were reported to be as high as 36% [1]. In the context of these dramatic figures, people working in the transport sector are perceived as particularly vulnerable due to large number of mobile workers. However, no specific prevalence data are available for this population in Namibia. Multiple studies have highlighted the susceptibility of mobile workers toward risky behaviors that facilitate the spread of the disease [2,6–9], such as having casual sexual relationships and engaging in sex with sex workers [2–5]. Moreover, the transport sector is crucial for economic growth in the globalized world because it interconnects producers, suppliers and markets. This is especially true in Namibia, where large distances must be bridged on a regular basis. Therefore, the growing Namibian transport sector is considered to be one of the drivers of the HIV epidemic according to the *National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS Response in Namibia 2010/11–2015/16* (NSF) [10]. Accordingly, the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (KAB) of those employed in the transport sector are not only of crucial interest to this sector but also have potential effects on the success or failure of national HIV prevention measures.

The aims of the present study were to investigate the current status of KAB toward HIV among

the employees of truck transport companies to provide information relevant for HIV prevention and to enable appropriate adaptations of sector-specific prevention programs. Additionally, companies with established HIV prevention programs were compared to those with programs that have only recently been implemented to assess the effects of such programs. The presented data were collected in the context of a larger study that addresses employees in the public and private sectors and represent only a part of the total data set. The results for the public sector have been reported in a previous publication [11].

Methods

The present study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey of the private truck transport sector in Namibia. The study used the organizational structure of the Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG), which is a public private partnership initiative that was established in 2000 with the primary aim of linking the port of Walvis Bay to the other countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The majority of transport companies in Namibia are members of the WBCG. This group realizes the potentially substantial influence of the HIV epidemic on the transport sector and thus supports HIV prevention efforts primarily via the implementation of Workplace Programs

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