Trends of AIDS in South Africa

Name of Writer

Affiliations

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In the book "Love in the Time of AIDS," the writer “Mark Hunter” explored the effects of changing trends of intimacy and tried to understand the roots of AIDS. He discussed every inequality occurring in society, which has resulted in deaths. In Africa, first the division based on racial and then the poor economy, which resulted in continuous and long-lasting unemployment. These things have affected the general ideas about sex, femininity, masculinity, and have resulted in a continuous chain of HIV/AIDS. In some parts of South Africa, almost one in every three people is suffering from HIV positive. The books primarily focus on the changing trends and notions that have resulted in this virulent epidemic. In his book, Mark Hunter has tried to collect love letters, cell phone messages, and any other thing that could have been achieved. Through this expression of description abut people and their mutual differences, similarities, cultural understandings, and habits, Mark tried to understand the conventional meaning and trend of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

As the AIDS epidemic progressed in the mid-1990s, anthropological and social scientists started conducting research on finding out the association between the disease and the social and cultural behaviors. The significance of cultural systems in the transmission, progression, and prevention of disease was deeply studied. However, the focus of attention also shifted towards the structural factors that influence the vulnerability to the disease. The consequences of social inequality, political disparities, and economic instability over the prevalence of HIV and AIDS were an important subject by the 1990s. As there has been a convergence in the cultural and structural approaches, the two major tendencies were identified that possessed serious challenges. The behavioral research was driven by biomedical and epidemiological approaches, along with the psychological attitude towards sexuality (Parker, 2001).

Huge funding is allocated for research to understand the social-spatial factors of AIDS pandemic. The majority of the research is being carried out on biomedical research focusing on the treatment, vaccination, and preventive measures. However, there is a lack of public health risk measurement factors that are often assimilated with epidemiology. These include the factors to monitor the disease pattern by using sophisticated statistical methods. There is no sound explanation for the high prevalence of AIDS in Africa, which has led to the formulation of the Western psyche about the African lascivious system of sexuality.

In order to counter racist stereotypes, researchers have sought to focus on the political and economic roots of AIDS. Several researchers have tried to expose the long-standing associations among racial capitalism and sexually transmitted infections. They depicted the contrasts among AIDS and extended syphilis pandemic that emaciated in the 1940s. Sidney Kark, in his famous article 'The Social Pathology of Syphilis in Africans,' established that how migrant labors restrained the Africans from settling down in the urban areas and enforced males into protracted absences from their rural households. While they were living in overcrowded settings, some males got involved in sexual intimacies with women from urban cities. Thus, they transmitted these infections to their spouses who lived in rural areas. The broader research studies helped in understanding the social, political, and cultural scope of HIV and AIDS. The researchers have extended the perspective of cultural and interpretation by giving attention to other subjects in the study such as women, gays, lesbians other sexually oriented people. The anthropologists have shaped the sexual experiences and opened several new paradigms for highlighting the epidemic locally as well as cross-culturally.

“Markets in Women’s Sexual Labor” by Debra Satz presents an asymmetry theory, which states that the sex and reproduction market is different from the traditional labor market. They think that sex and reproductive capacities should not be treated as commodities. They think that treating prostitution at the same level as teaching or any sport professionalism is wrong (Satz, 1995). Debra Satz, in his article, asks the questions of what makes it wrong for women to sell her body parts as compared to her skills. She further raised her concerns about the attitude towards asymmetrical theory and its consequences on public policy. She used two theories which are “economist” and “essentialist” to discuss the asymmetric approach from people. “Markets in Women’s Sexual Labor” focuses on the concept and theories about the cultural background and their negative association with people in sex markets. While Mark Hunter in his book focuses on the description of all the things that are leading people towards the virulent epidemic of HIV/AIDS. The ultimate goal of both these writers is completely different; one is focusing on the effect of certain values on the future policies, while other is focusing on the changing traditions that promote in creating an environment that leads to disease propagation. The primary point of discussion for Hunter was to discuss the inequality and disproportions happening in the labor market that led to the deaths of many people.

In the article “Heterosexuality, Heteronormativity and Gender Hierarchy: Some Reflections on Recent Debates”, Stevi Jackson discusses the modern-day new interest in creating a problem out of heterosexuality, and the article also discussed the new development happening with the theory of queers and whether the status of heterosexuality is normal or not? However, the difference between queers and heterosexuality is significant as queer theories have life and direction of their own (Jackson, 2003). However, according to Stevi Jackson, the response from heterosexual feminists has been positive and there is a readiness to get involved in the debate of queers and heterosexuality as a practice. A specific area of distinction has been raised from the activism of AIDS awareness, which helped in devising political theories. This broad topic apart from all heterosexual people included gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals. However, in his book, Mark has explained the concept of heterosexuality and homosexuality in terms of its effects on the origin of AIDS. Mark explains that caution should be applied while relating any intimacy towards the social category of sexual division. Mark explains that to hide the failures and incompetence politicians nowadays are making it an excuse that it is a new problem but in reality, the meaning of homosexuality and same-sex relations remained the same throughout history (Hunter, 2010).

IH Meyer in his article “Why Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Public Health?” describes the current health issues and its solution to the LGBT community. The article focuses on social conditions based on discrimination as it helps in better understanding of the issues that are specifically related to the LGBT community. The main reason is that other huge ranges of issues are also connected with the community which includes research priorities, prevention and intervention programs, and providing standard treatment care (Meyer, 2001). There is also a lack of attention towards the LGBT community as many social and cultural stigmas are attached to them and stereotype thinking makes people ignore the matter. The health conditions of the LGBT community and the related issues can be categorized in specific areas where they are at increased risk because certain environmental experiences influence these groups differently. According to Mark Hunter, AIDS first surfaced in Africa among white gay men. He stated that many campaigns on the rights of gay men have been formed including the US civil rights movement and the gay rights movement. However, in Africa, the issue of AIDS was spreading irrespective of gender and sexual preference. More women were HIV positive than men were and the greatest number of people facing the disease were Malawian migrants. South Africa was, however, one of the first countries to give rights and protect sexual orientation in its constitution and then a few years later full citizenship rights were also awarded to the community and passed bills for gay and lesbian couples to marry (Hunter, 2010).

“Love, commitment and the pure relationship” which is part 4 of the book “Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, And Eroticism in Modern Societies”, Giddens shares the investigation of Sharon Thomson. Sharon said that he interviewed 150 American teenagers from different backgrounds and ethnicities. Despite the differences and similarities in their cultural backgrounds, the answer of all the boys was similar to each other and very different from the girls (Giddens, 2013). All the boys failed to talk about sex in a chronicle form and considered it as a periodic episode of intimacy. However, when the same question was asked by girls, they were able to talk in detail and the form of almost a fantasy novel. They were focusing even on minute details and complex stories and talked about their intimate relationships for hours. They see sex as a sparkling device that can lead to the eventual destination of a romantic relationship. While Mark in his book described the history of intimacy among young people of Sundumbili, which is one of the most advanced settlements that was built for African people. Those young people were more aware of their rights than in other parts of the country and they frequently discussed their issues and rights. However, according to Mark, this made him think about the knowledge of universal traditions and the spread of the AIDS virus. He further discussed that among young people, sex became a symbol of one’s identity. The changing traditions among young people changed the perception of sexual intimacy in South Africa as well. Ukusoma and Ukuhlobonga were introduced as a non-penetrative form of sexual intimacy.

In the article “AIDS, Africa and cultural theory”, the author Paula A. Treichler discussed the profile of seven countries and referenced Africa as a hub of different viral diseases. However, according to him, it is being exaggerated and only three of the countries are severely affected. Furthermore, percentages in different studies represented the estimated population of HIV infection and not the cases of AIDS that are being reported. Also, all studies were based on sexually active adults, engaged in intimate activities, and reside in urban areas. He accused modern researchers of paying extra attention to even very little details when it comes to Africa. He further stated that the culture and upbringing of people in Africa plays an important role in shaping their mind towards specific intimate relationships, erotic life, marriages, family life, labor patterns, childbirth and their upbringing (Treichler, 1991). This, in turn, affects the health policies, labor market, and national and international economy. The article “AIDS, Africa and cultural theory” is among one of the articles that Mark Hunter used for the research of his book "Love in the Time of AIDS". He referred to this article and stated that AIDS is racially intermixed with the culture and origins of African people. Many people across the world have a stereotypical point of view towards Africans and consider it the hub of modern-day AIDS culture in the world. People across the world blamed the origin of AIDS on the traditional practices of “dry sex” and “witchcraft” of people in Africa. They blamed the spreading of AIDS on the set of sexual practices that are being carried out in Africa.

In the article “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt discussed the concept that the hegemony of men in the research field has affected the studies on genders and has also attracted serious criticism. They trace the origins of this idea and identify how research is taken over by masculine thinking. The authors defend the ideas of hegemonic masculinity but they consider that the criticism on the models of gender and typologies very comprehensive. According to authors, through flexibility in recent psychological models of research, hegemonic masculinity can be improved (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, the difference between social reproduction and the concept of hegemonic masculinity must be recognized. There is also a need to identify that some masculine identities influence essential forms of research. The authors suggest that four major steps should be taken to improve the formulation of studies which include; highlighting the actions of women, recognizing the geographical backgrounds of masculinities, designing a new complex model for gender order, and focusing on the interaction of communication on national and international level (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, Mark Hunter discusses masculinity in terms of modern unemployment and its effects on society. Mark further discusses the concept of alcohol consumption, and relates it to the modern-day definition of freedom and accompanied stresses. According to Mark, alcohol gives rise to courage and this improvement in courage might lead a person to violence. Mark states that modern masculinities are greatly affected by the greater consumption of alcohol. However, Mark focuses on the point that many modern-day researchers relate male violence to their poverty and changing trends in the economy. The stereotypical violence of men is common across the world; however, it is not right to just blame it on the policies of apartheid and poverty (Hunter, 2010). Mark argues that the racial rule not only weakens men but also has deep psychological impacts on the ideas of manhood.

In the article “Loving in a time of hopelessness: on township women’s subjectivities in a time of HIV/AIDS” by Nthabiseng Motsemme, discusses the increasing rates of HIV/AIDS among the young and adult citizens of democratic South Africa. The writer suggests that in the last three decades, South Africa became famous throughout the world for having the highest rates of HIV/infection rates. The area which was affected the most by this thread of increasing HIV infection rates was KwaZuluNatal. Because of the severity of the conditions of poverty, lack of medical equipment and a constant threat of death looming over their heads, the interest on studying the subject increased a lot in the past few years. However, the lives of many women are continuously under threat as they are living in highly strained and contaminated conditions. On a daily basis, they have the risk to go through death experiences and extensive desire of intimacy has proved even more dangerous. Apart from changing trends of intimacy and its effects on women's lives, research also focuses on the flawed activities of many young women. Young girls, nowadays, are trying to remake their social connections under the huge threat of AIDS. The research has focused on the social and historical backgrounds of African women and analyzed sexual fantasies and practices of young girls. The writer further focused on the issues caused by these activities on relationships, choices, risks, love, community interactions, personhood, risk of exposition towards epidemics and childbearing. The author has also tried to generate ideas based on the cultural framework of African women. Mark Hunter has discussed the issues of independence, rights, and wrongs of women based on equality, geography and social divisions. The added unemployment has destabilized levels of interventions between men and women. The apartheid policy has further created differences between men and women based on male dominance. In the course of increased and generalized unemployment, marriages continued to struggle after the introduction of the policy. The tendency for men to work, earn a living out of it and make a woman happy became less important. The concept of marriages dwindled even further as it meant more responsibilities and financial pressure. The path for women to be economically independent became even more difficult due to difficult economic conditions.

In the article “Global Woman Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy” the authors Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild discuss the current issues that women are facing overseas. The authors discuss that women are migrating from poor countries to developed nations in search of work, where they work as maids to raise other people’s children, however, they leave their children behind to suffer (Ehrenreich, Hochschild, & Kay, 2003). They have a choice where they leave their country and earn a living for themselves and provide food for their children but do not get a chance to raise them. The other option these women have is to raise their children but in a very difficult situation. The author further discusses that knowingly or unknowingly, many women are pushed into prostitution so that they can earn money because of the dire situation of poverty that they are in. Mark Hunter also raised the issue of migration of poor white girls from rural areas and towns who faced the issue of meager industrial wages and were forced into prostitution (Hunter, 2010). Education and awareness was the most important step that not only promoted safe sex but there was also a massive state investment aimed at schools during the apartheid era. It is notable today that the unemployment rate among white is 4.6 percent while in Africans it is 42.5 percent While the percentage of marriages is at the same proportion in both communities.

In the section “Love as Connection; Social Network and Connection in An Ambiguous Economy” of his book, Hunter used the reference from the article “The Heart is Unknown Country”. The author LA Rebhun discusses the issue of the Caruaruensus people that migrated in the past 30 years, and their economies and style of communication were significantly better than people living in modern cities. However, the northeast cities and towns had emotional and economic conditions that were very similar to that of rural areas in the past. According to the author, people do not consider love as a singularity. Love is considered as a declaration of meaningful emotions that cover a variety of feelings on togetherness in the form of a continuous chain of stories (Rebhun, 1999). There is also a great difference between love motivated by emotions and that motivated by economic gains and pleasures, according to Christian theology. Mark Hunter described the explanation of AIDS through the influences of politics and the economy. However, he also believed that this notion also fails to explain the greater movements of women in society. This ignorance has resulted in an increase of AIDS prevalence from 1 percent to 30 percent in pregnant women.

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