

Original Research Article

Secondary School Teachers, their Views and Roles in Grassroots Soccer as an Intervention Anti-HIV/AIDS Propagation Tool

Abstract:

Introduction:

The GRSZ projects were aimed at bridging the gap between adolescents' unwanted social behaviours and societal norms and values fashioned by the breakdown of family and society cultural practices, as a measure to militate against the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst adolescents, adolescent unwanted pregnancy and gender-based violence using soccer as a medium of learning. The program deliberately circumvented involvement of Secondary School Teacher during planning and implementation hoping to have a clean intervention strategy without the encumbrances and confounders possibly introduced by the societal authority figure. However, for continuity and adaptation of the program into the school curriculum as a behaviour change catalyst, the Secondary School Teacher is pivotal. The evaluation sought to delineate the views and roles of this cadre as determinants and guidelines towards the successful translating of GRSZ experimental work into real life school environment.

Methods:

In-depth interviews were conducted by trained and qualified interviewers who formed the team of evaluators at various selected school during the teacher's working hours. A pre-prepared interview guide constructed and reviewed by the panel of evaluators as well as the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe was used to conduct the guided interview. The researchers brought the interview guides to selected schools where appointments had been made prior by the Key Researcher. The interviews were held on the same day other surveys at the school. A total of 11 (five females and six males) Secondary Schools Teachers with more had in depth interviews carried out after which saturation was reached.

Results:

The majority of adolescents (62.2%) reported the teacher as their source of information on HIV and reproductive health and the mother followed a close second at 57.7% reflecting possibly contact hours as the factor. Teachers corroborated this information showing high eagerness to be involved in the GRSZ at the earliest given opportunity. Both males and females did agree that they were the closest role models and gave varied reasons as to why their influences was not adequate in shaping life skills of adolescents under their watch. It was clear that teacher embraced and endorsed the GRSZ program expansion and their involvement in future cohorts.

Conclusion and recommendations:

Teachers had a high anticipation of involvement and showed dismay at not having been involved in the initial phases of the program where their contributions were most likely to have had a high impact

through their possible engagement with the community to cement the gains of the program. They recommended that lifelong learning on HIV/AIDS prevention, unwanted pregnancies and gender-based violence needs to be incorporated into all areas of learning at school and beyond. Expanding of the program to other schools in Zimbabwe beyond Bulawayo was seen as an overdue process.

Key words: Adolescents, HIV/AIDS, Grassroots soccer programs, SKILLZ Holiday, Generation SKILLZ, SKILLZ Street, Gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies.

1.0 Introduction:

Grassroot Soccer is a juvenile wellbeing organization that leverages the influence of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize at-risk youth in developing countries to overwhelm their greatest health encounters, live healthier, be more productive, and be mediators for change in their communities [1]. Two founders member of Grassroot Soccer, Dr. Tommy Clark and Methembe Ndlovu, have been instrumental in hosting various partners, donor institutions, and like-minded individuals to bolster the foot print on the non-profit organization, worldwide [2]. The Grassroots Soccer has been implemented in a substantial number of countries worldwide to include Zimbabwe, United Kingdom, South Africa and Zambia over the past 17 years (from 2002 to 2019), starting with a pilot project in January 2003, as a project meant to reduce the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) amongst adolescents (ages 12-19 years). The projects started in schools that have been previously either shown to be hot-spots for the spread of the disease or have a different geographical situate (high population density as contrasted to the low population density).

Grassroot Soccer Zimbabwe is registered as a private voluntary organization (PVO22/11) and has a local board in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe [3]. Three major flagship projects, which have come to be known as the Grassroots Soccer Zimbabwe (GRSZ), pioneered works in preventative efforts and combating of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence and prevention of unwanted adolescents' pregnancies. These projects were meant to alter cultural mindsets of adolescents and gender equitability through creating simple but powerful connection between soccer and life [4]. These programs provided young people with pertinent and significant discussions about life, about taking small steps to achieve goals, about remaining resolute when faced with life challenges, how to protect oneself and others from contracting HIV/AIDS [5]. The projects include the Generation SKILLSZ Zimbabwe project, SKILLZ Holidays and SKILLS Street which were commenced in 2011, 2012 and 2014, respectively.

Success of the projects has been observed in certain schools. However, the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the overall GRSZ program had not yet been assessed hitherto the commencement of the projects despite the resources that had been used in implementation. Moreover, the value of the SKILLZ curriculum-led model for youths in terms of the structure, process, outputs, outcomes and impact had remained a grey area without knowledge of how to and how far the program needed to be scaled up.

The level of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of the adolescents subsequent to the implementation of the GRSZ SKILLZ curriculum - led model remained known in part needing an overall picture to be enunciated. Also, relatively unknown to the projects directors and funders was the impact of the three programs, combined, on gender and self-efficacy in relation to sexual behaviour. And, the overall impact of the three GRSZ SKILLZ programs to enable decision making in a holistic manner and extension of the project to a wider adolescent participation in Zimbabwe. This is despite the success of such initiatives in the Botswana (Youth Health Organization

(YOHO) / Seboza Life Skills), Brazil (Instituto Promundo / Project F), Central African Republic (CAR) [Mercy Corps / Sports pour La Paix et La Vie], Côte d'Ivoire [Johns Hopkins Health and Communication Partnership (JHUCCP)/ Sports for Life], Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) [Lake Tanganyika Floating Health Clinic (LTFHC) / Katanga Kicks], Dominican Republic (The DREAM Project / Deportes para la Vida), Equatorial Guinea (Birielat / Birielat SKILLZ), Ethiopia [Academy for Educational Development (AED) / Sports for Life], Guatemala [Mercy Corps / Deportes para la Vida (DPV)] , India (Dream a Dream / Dream Sports), Haiti (Mercy Corps / Football pou Lavi), Kenya [Vijana Amani Pamoja (VAP) / SKILLZ Kenya], Lesotho [Kick4Life (K4L) / Kick4Life], Malawi [Baylor Clinic Malawi – Children's Foundation Malawi (BCM-CFM) / SKILLZ Malawi; Concern Worldwide / SKILLZ Malawi & SKILLZ Girl and others], Namibia (NawaLife Trust / NawaSport), Nigeria (Youth Empowerment Development Initiative (YEDI) / SKILLZ Naija and others), South Africa [Isiqalo Foundation / Waves 4 Change (W4C); Hoops 4 Hope / Soccer 4 Hope; Grassroots Edge and others] and Worldwide (Peace Corps / Peace Corps SKILLZ) [6].

To this end, an evaluation process was undertaken to determine as well as find answers to the broad expectations, optimism, pessimism, fears and doubts the different sectors seeking answers to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, stakeholders as well as adolescents had.

School teachers hold a very strong stake in the development of school-going children and mainly adolescents as they spend a much bigger time of the day with them [7, 8]. Therefore, they tend to have a compounded influence on the life decisions adolescents may take if they become privy to such decision-making situations [9-11]. Skills in making life decisions are crucial in the era of HIV/AIDS as they tend to hold strong impacts on the future of adolescents and require strategic choices to be made where such pronouncements tend to have been wrong ones [12]. As such the teachers influence require to be considered seriously and comprehensively in the evaluation of programs like GRSZ seeing that teachers and the system they work is as much affected by HIV/AIDS as the adolescent they work daily and closely to [13].

The role of the secondary school teachers was limited to providing conducting schedules for the adolescents to attend the GRSZ sessions with the trained coaches. The GRSZ was deliberately designed as a learning outside the school environment and its authoritarian atmosphere but still within the school premises hoping to have an independent approach to learning methods and techniques not normally included in the routine school curriculum. The ultimate envisaged outcome was to have a system that allowed students to have a semi-autonomous environment, similar to what they have when with peers, out the classroom and outside the home and either in the street or other recreational space.

By removing the teacher from participating actively in the GRSZ programs was hoped will enable controlled freedom that released the teenagers to express themselves without the barriers of parents and parent-like-figures which was hoped that true and unhindered behaviours were going to be portrayed and acted out naturally allowing for real-time interventions. In these settings, corrective measures and advice could be given to untoward behaviours during such sessions or good behaviours cemented. These teaching moments are not usually available in homes or schools as certain disciplinary positions and postures are normally taken by parents (guardians) and teachers, respectively that kill spontaneity. This

has also become very true in cultures where sex and sexuality are not a common place discussion as has been experienced in the breakdown of moral-teachers-structures that epitomized African Ubuntu ways of life [14]. In the former sex and sexuality, cultural norms and deviations, taboos and the does and don'ts were subsumed by specialized people or relations with assigned positions of authority or lack of it to introduce these in a less formidable and more acceptable manner [15].

The aunties and uncles had a moral standing to "break in" adolescents into adult life and these roles have since been eroded by cultures revolutions and the demise of the extended family practices [15]. A social coercion gap is created which enable the street and out of class environments to build improper peer education and pressures [16]. The direct tendency is to create a none sound learning space is bound to increase unwanted and unwarranted social behaviours [17]. These drive HIV/AIDS incidences, teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and alcohol abuse which reinforces the vicious cycle of vices. A cycle of secrecy and privacy amongst adolescents, now buttressed by children rights and age of consent, shields adolescents from the prying us of parents, guardians and teachers [17].

By hoping to clog the social misfit breach that has evolved between adolescents and society authority, GRSZ deliberately short-circuited the teacher involvement and introduced peer life coaches in an experiential space. The aim was to gradually manoeuvre and guide adolescents and society authority figures into a calescence and re-engagement of sorts.

Calculated withdrawal of the GSRZ experiential space and replacing it with real life situation, where the adolescent adopts the same phenomenon and brings it into the home and the school authority fulcrum, was hoped that the acquired new behaviours would anneal into a permanent and reproducible social fabric [18]. Empowering the adolescents by way of the rules and knowledge of soccer, outside the home and the school, however, does not translate into hoped for similar adaptations by the parent and the teacher in the home and school, respectively. Therefore, the evaluation of the GRSZ by the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Faculty of Medicine Academics sought the views of Secondary School Teachers and their roles in the program implementation and find ways of handing over the adolescents without disrupting gained ground and cultures. The overall aim was to format methods and modalities that will eventually assist a smooth and informed transition of the program from GRSZ peer life coaches to the school with the Secondary School Teacher as the main architecture of both the curriculum and its execution.

2.0 Materials and Methods:

2.1 Materials:

2.1.1 Study setting

This study was an evaluation of the perceptions of secondary school teachers who were involved as enablers of GRSZ programs. The GRSZ projects were rolled out as interventions to the HIV/AIDS incidences, GBV's occurrences, unwanted pregnancies, drug abuses and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents of school going and out of school age

groups. The teachers were generally employed by the schools whose adolescents were enrolled in the GRSZ programs. The teachers had roles periphery to the whole GRSZ projects being concerned mostly with setting up of classes and venues for the GRSZ sessions within or outside the schools. As such their views were sought as to how they viewed the whole GRSZ projects with regard to their efficacy, chances of success and possibilities of the program escalations to regions outside Bulawayo City, Zimbabwe. The teachers' roles fitted well with being independent key informants of the GRSZ programs. Both male and female teachers were equally represented in the study.

2.1.2 Study populations

The populations under study included Secondary School Teachers in the Eastern and Western Region of Bulawayo City School Districts whose schools were involved in the GRSZ projects from the period 2011 to 2018. Teachers from eleven schools, randomly selected from a total of 20 GRSZ participating schools, were involved in the evaluation process.

2.1.3 Sample size estimation

The sample size estimation for this evaluation study was based on expert guidelines providing numerical guidance on the necessary qualitative sample size to reach data saturation [19]. On the basis of the researchers' previous experience and the literature, we estimated that recruitment of at least two teachers per school giving a total of 18 -24 would achieve data saturation. The size of the sample was largely determined by the scope of the investigation, characteristics of the target audience, expertise of researchers, resources to complete the evaluation exercise and research audience.

2.1.3 Study Sample:

Eleven (11) schools were randomly selected from GRSZ project participating schools and at least two teachers were purposively selected per school. The selected teachers were either teachers who were involved in teaching Moral and Religious Education Subjects or Physical Education Subjects at the schools. Also, the teachers were involved in the assigning, selection, recruitment, time-tabling of adolescents who were identified by the school in for GRSZ training sessions with the peer coaches. At each school one male and female teacher was recruited for the evaluation process.

2.1.4 Study tools:

In depth Interview Guides were prepared by the Evaluation Team with pertinent lead questions aimed obtaining instructive data on the teachers' perspectives on processes and procedures of the GRSZ implementation and expected outcomes. The Interview Guide comprised of nine (9) questions with each question having a minimum of three follow up or sub-questions.

2.2 Methods:

2.2.1 In depth Interviews:

Comprehensive but non-intrusive questions were asked about the teachers' involvement in the HIV/AIDS prevention teaching and learning, involvement in the GRSZ Projects. Teachers were asked to give their opinion's, their feeling and perspectives about the success of soccer as an intervention tool against HIV/AIDS amongst adolescents, gender-based violence and other adolescent challenges. Appointments were scheduled with the Schools Heads and the respective teachers by the GRSZ administration team. The Evaluators were given the interview times and schedules with contacts to ensure interviewees availability at agreed times or rescheduling to convenient times when the Interviewees or the Evaluator were absent or unable to meet the appointment. One to one and face to face interviews were carried out for each teacher participant. Written notes were collected during the interview. The Evaluators made sure that the exercise did not disturb the routine work of teachers.

2.2.2 Ethics and approvals

Ethical approval was obtained from the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (Ref. A/2226). Additional approvals were obtained from the schools' teachers who were interviewed. Written informed consent was obtained from teachers before the interviews.

2.2.3 Data management and analysis

A six-phase guide which is a very useful framework for conducting qualitative data analysis was adopted for this study (Braun & Clarke (2006)). The first step in any qualitative analysis is reading and re-reading the transcripts. The researchers started the analysis by familiarizing with the entire body of data or data corpus (all the interviews). At this stage all the researchers made notes and jot down early impressions.

In this phase 2, we started to organise our data in a meaningful and systematic way. Data coding were performed, and this reduced lots of data into small chunks of meaning. We were concerned mainly with addressing specific evaluation research questions and analysed the data with this in mind – so this was a theoretical thematic analysis rather than an inductive one. Given this, we coded each segment of data that was relevant to or captured something interesting about our research question. We did not code every piece of text. We used open coding; that means we did not have pre-set codes but developed and modified the codes as we worked through the coding process. We had initial ideas about codes when we finished Phase 1.

We discussed these and developed some preliminary ideas about codes. Then each of us set about coding a transcript separately. We worked through each transcript coding every segment of text that seemed to be relevant to or specifically address our research question. When we finished, we compared our codes, discussed them and modified them before moving on to the rest of the transcripts. As we worked through them, we generated new codes and sometimes modified existing ones. We did this by hand, working through hardcopies of the transcripts with pens and highlighters.

In this Phase 3 we examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. At the end of this phase, the codes had been organised into broader themes that seemed to say something specific about this evaluation research question from teacher's perspective. Our themes were predominately descriptive, i.e. they described patterns in the data.

During this phase 4 we review, modify and develop the preliminary themes that we identified in Phase 3. Do they make sense? At this point we gathered together all the data that is relevant to each theme. We read the data associated with each theme and considered whether the data really did support it and we had to think about whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set within a single interview or across all the interviews. The final Phase 5 involved refinement of the themes and the aim was to 'identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about. What is the theme saying? If there are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other? In this analysis, we included the narrative for the feelings and perspectives on GRSZ activities with an interpretative assessment of the GRSZ programs' effectiveness.

3.0 Results from Teachers Interviews:

An equal number of females to male teachers were interviewed. The interviews with teachers from different schools of Bulawayo solicited their views, feelings and perspectives on GRSZ activities with an interpretative assessment of the GRSZ programs' effectiveness. The views, opinions and perceptions by teachers were expressed into thematic content as shown here.

3.1 Teachers' role in the GRSZ SKILLS Programs

When asked about their roles, teachers indicated that the teacher was an indispensable link between the school community and the GRSZ coaches who represented the whole GRSZ project, however, their sentiments were:

.... In general, GRSZ staff lacks proper and judicious communication with the school staff which prevents smoother mobilization of pupils for activities....

...Teachers are not informed in time about the training to permit for reinforcement of what the adolescent pupils learn during previous sessions.....

.... Improvements should be made on increasing teachers' awareness on the program, probably through further training of the coaches....

3.2 GRSZ SKILLS Programs benefits on adolescents and the community

The teachers' opinions when asked about the benefits of GRSZ SKILLZ programs to the adolescents were:

...There has been noticeable removal of ignorance from adolescents and salvaging them from dilemmas. Adolescents are now open to deliberate among themselves and even with adults on sex education especially on stoppage of unplanned pregnancies....

...Behavior change is quite noticeable for example, reduction of alcohol and substance abuse as well as lessening of unplanned pregnancies. However, the decline in unplanned

pregnancies may not be due to GRSZs program alone but there could be other contributory programs like DREAMS, Guidance and Counselling, YES games, Trinity and other platforms which are in the school curriculum...

One finding was that, “Awareness of community service centers had definitely increased, although there was still some “fear” to access services or reach out to be serviced. On this one teacher commented;

...Booklets were given for learners to know where to go for further advice and this information included services that can be obtained at these community centers...

One female interviewee commented affectively that long term effects and benefits of GRSZ needed time to be determined as the program’s implementation were short to medium term:

...It is too early to know. Currently it is not possible to measure the actual benefits as the knowledge gained and understandings may be temporary. The impact will be seen when the children graduate into the world, taking into account the community which is prone to HIV, and hopefully they will be able to apply the knowledge before they are affected...

3.3 Proper screening and retention of coaches

The teachers expressed some sentiments with regards to peer life coaching:

...The challenges are that some of the coaches/facilitators are from the local community and are known for bad behaviour; as a result, some parents have said they do not want their children to be part of the program for fear that coaches may communicate bad traits onto their children...

....as an example, a facilitator with gay attributes for example will not be a good role model for the children and results in parents having reservations on allowing their children to attend...

3.4 GRSZ success stories as told by the teachers

When asked about their knowledge of program products’ success stories, the teachers narrated that:

...there was obvious increased open and knowledgeable communication on sexual and other sensitive issues by the adolescents...

...adolescents have had expanded and adequate HIV counselling and testing seeking behaviours from GRSZ programs.... they readily seek for testing and counselling.

...adolescents that have gone through the training tend to be more toned down compared to those who are not trained.....

...They are able to correct and be each other's keepers. The wayward ones are those who usually dodge the programs or who do not attend the full course....

...willingness of children to undergo HIV testing and the successful completion of school without incidences of STI's and unplanned pregnancies seem to be on the increase...

... GRSZ has a great awareness and behavior change impact which has become noticeable in other school programs like Guidance and Counselling, debates and other discussions and activities.

...testimonies like from a young lady, who has become a strong HIV/AIDS activist, identified herself for the first time during a GRSZ workshop at Evelyn High School. She contracted HIV at a young age through sexual assault by a relative. GRSZ provided a platform for her to come forward and encourage many adolescents to get screened for HIV

3.5 Teachers' views on continuation of GRSZ programs

Teachers comment on being asked about whether the GRSZ should continue or not that:

...The number of children reporting sexual abusers has increased since the GRSZ programs, which is evidence that they have been empowered to speak out which is reason enough to allow GRSZ to receive support for its continuation...

However, going forward, structures should be put in place so that GRSZ programs do not run parallel to school activities but rather function hand in glove. An example was given;

... a child reported a rape case to GRSZ facilitators and they took the matter up to involve external agencies without first advising the school...this creates problems for the school...

3.4.6 Teachers' views on using soccer as a tool for HIV prevention

Teachers said with regard to their views on using soccer as a tool for HIV prevention:

...play and outdoor relaxation is stimulating, and learning is usually easier unlike in a classroom setup. Soccer is a crowd puller generally in the country and also in schools...

...interactive assistance with life issues through soccer training made children to gain knowledge which they can then apply when they meet friends out in the communities...

...the SKILLS Holiday program provides vacation camps which give the students time to learn in a relaxed environment...

...the programs have increased awareness to communities e.g. through inviting soccer celebrities and other community members who have helped spread awareness, counseling and testing...

...participants have learnt a lot while enjoying the training to such an extent that more adolescents will look forward to the next GRSZ meetings showing motivation for the program to be high amongst them.... got enlightened on risky behaviors, dispel myths on HIV and AIDS while playing...

...however, other sports can be used to catch the variety of sporting interests among pupils... some students view sports at school as punishment so once soccer is mentioned they find ways not to be part of the program. Some students at the school are interested in activities such as debate, public speaking, so it will be good to involve them and not concentrate on soccer only...

3.4.7 Teachers' perceptions on adequacy of the program

Teachers expressed some sentiments on asked about their perceptions on the adequacy of the program:

...there is need to expand beyond Bulawayo schools to reach out to the rural schools then nationally...

...the GRSZ programs are educative, but there should be more talk about the programs on mass media like on TV and radio...

...there are challenges that have been encountered with parents in terms of home HIV testing and visits which could be threats to the implementation of the program if not attended to...

...there is need to regularize the gaps in knowledge between the Guidance and Counselling taught in school and GRSZ programs which can only be possible if the teachers are fully aware of the input given by the GRSZ program and vice-versa...

4.0 Discussion of Teachers' Interviews

The purpose of interviews with teachers from different schools of Bulawayo was to solicit their views on GRSZ activities with a view of assessing the programs' effectiveness. Varied questions to explore this characteristic through seeking the teachers' views were used. Here we report the teacher's qualitative view on the effectiveness of the GRSZ programs which were gleaned through in-depth interviews.

4.1 Teachers' role in the GRSZ SKILLS Programs

The teachers indicated they were the links between the school and GRSZ, who facilitate the organization of training fixtures for the adolescents with GRSZ coaches while scheduling and preparing the classes that will be receiving training on the particular day through mobilizing pupils for GRSZ programs. This makes teachers, thus, key informants who have knowledge about how GRSZ works in schools if they were involved in the actual training or will be used as such in the future post experimental stages. Such improvements could place teachers in a position to give credible information about the efficacy of GRSZ with some accurate and reliable degree of certainty which is only possible if they were empowered adequately. The current settings of the program relegated them to mere "runners" and passive facilitators.

The teachers indicated that the GRSZ program execution was rather inadequate in terms of appropriate and timely communication when they said, "*In general, GRSZ staff lacks appropriate and timely communication with the school staff which prevents smoother mobilization of pupils for activities*". This lack of "appropriate and timely" communication could result from a number of issues most of which could be inadequate resources by the GRSZ on the ground for mobility and planning execution. The coaches' remuneration is low and at most they are regarded as volunteers who will be in-between jobs and will tend to leave as soon as they get "greener pasture else" as indicated elsewhere. This caused high attrition rates and need for retraining and diversion of resource utilization. In situations where there are inadequate resources, it would be prudent to ensure that those on the ground as implementers of the project receive their dues on time to allow them to execute their activities on time. Where they use public transport to the places of training, reaching on time may be difficult. If they use their personal communication devices, then it may also cause

delays in communication. The schools also may face the same problems as lack of resources may delay the relaying of information centrally received by the head of school, when GRSZ would have communicated earlier or on time. Teachers did not receive communication directly from GRSZ or GRSZ coaches for scheduling but this was done through the School Heads which created obtrudes into the running of the program and creating bottlenecks at times.

Therefore, both teachers and GRSZ trainers need to have direct communication and not communicate through a proxy as the evaluators witnessed. This was also experienced by the evaluation teams. At certain schools, evaluators waited for communication from the head of school to proceed to the respective teachers that handled the GRSZ programs. Generally, an observation was made that reorientation of the program implementation was needed of the parties involved in the GRSZ program at schools. The roles each member of the team was needed. Training was done during normal working hours and did require that teachers be paid extra for coordinating. Having teachers volunteer to participate in the linking exercise outside their duties was felt may affect their commitment and input into the GRSZ activities. This system synchronized well with the futuristic approach of the GRSZ being handed over to schools and communities when fully matured. However, currently, resources and incentives may be required for teachers to maintain their morale towards and adherence to the GRSZ programs. These need not be necessarily monetary, but tokens of appreciation at each graduation of the participants may go a long way in growing the relationship between GRSZ, coaches and the school teachers and allow for future handover takeover. Ultimately, GRSZ may need to be blended into the school routine curriculum than remain a satellite occupation pitched in research.

4.2 Teachers' Perceptions on GRSZ SKILLS Programs benefits on adolescents and the community

To show that the teachers were key informers of the success and influence of the GRSZ, they indicated that the girl child who participates in GRSZ programs is equipped with knowledge on HIV and AIDS, thereby preventing infection and avoiding irresponsible sexual activity. Pupils get empowered with knowledge away from authority figures like parents and school administration who they find difficult to open up to. The observation that the use of GRSZ coaches, as young people and peers, allows participants to express themselves freely and yields more benefits compared to when they are taught by teachers in programs such as

Guidance and Counselling by the teachers is tacit proof that the teacher appreciated the role GRSZ played.

The expression that *“there has been noticeable removal of ignorance from adolescents and salvaging them from dilemmas”* shows a deeper understanding of what is at stake that GRSZ programs did on the adolescent and also of the teachers’ commitment to the accomplishments of the program based on what result observed. Teachers as adults, may also play a critical role as adolescents advocate in the communities seeing their high level of comprehension of how GRSZ worked. They can also be the link not only in schools, but also in communities although this may mean more incentives and tokens of appreciation to keep the inspiration high. In other words, retraining of teachers to involve parents and communities, together with the GRSZ coaches may be pivotal in penetrating the barriers between parents and adolescents.

While the teachers were able to observe *“Behavior change...for example, reduction of alcohol and substance abuse as well as reduction in unplanned pregnancies”* they were quick to point that... *“decline in unplanned pregnancies may not be due to GRSZ program alone but there could be other contributory programs like DREAMS, Guidance and Counselling, YES games, Trinity and other platforms”*. This shows an critical awareness by the teachers of what is happening on the ground and may signpost how closely GRSZ may need to work with the teachers for the future success of the program. This awareness is also accompanied by the appreciation the teachers have towards the GRSZ when they say that *“the program does not only benefit in equipping life skills to adolescents, but schools have also benefitted through receiving footballs, soccer kits and other soccer equipment. GRSZ provides employment creation for the youthful coaches and their trainers which is a good development”*. This global view of GRSZ in the school teachers require to be nurtured in a wholesome custom, if resources permit, as it will cultivate the much-needed influencing grounds for future GRSZ programs in schools.

4.3 Teachers’ views on proper screening and retention of coaches

The teachers advocated *“thorough screening of coaches to weed out those who may influence the adolescents negatively. Targeting those who have gone through the training to be future coaches may provide a stable coach who may be trusted to deliver good training.”* This arose from their observation that there was an acute attrition rate of instructors and they viewed that a *“frequent change of coaches disrupts the learning curve momentum as handover-take-over*

of training is often associated with knowledge acquisition deficits and disruptions” The screening of coaches was also necessitated by the teachers’ observation that uptake of the GRSZ programs may be affected in communities due to how the coaches are perceived by society. The teachers said, *“the challenges are that some of the coaches/facilitators are from the local community and are known for bad behaviour; as a result some parents have said they do not want their children to be part of the program for fear that coaches may impart bad traits onto their children”* which sentiments may need to be looked into carefully to weed out the bad apples. Such observations by teachers, as gate keepers and community liaisons officer, need not be taken with the seriousness they deserve for a non-tumultuous future of the GRSZ as it seeks market penetration and permanent stay in the schools and community.

4.5 Teachers’ views on continuation of GRSZ programs

Most teacher unanimously support the continuance of GRSZ programs as they authorize adolescents to resist antisocial behaviours, promiscuity and drug and substance abuse which is rampant in communities. The said that the *“number of children reporting sexual abusers has increased since the GRSZ programs.... which is reason enough to allow GRSZ to receive support for its continuation”*. In essence, the GRSZ programs ease out on the teaching and learning capacity, as it is run by independent non-school based coaches. This releases the teachers who would normally be involved in other programs like DREAMS to do other duties. However, going forward, structures should be put in place so that GRSZ programs do not run parallel to school activities but rather function hand in glove. An example was given that, *“a child reported a rape case to GRSZ facilitators and they took the matter up to involve external agencies without first advising the school...this creates problems for the school”*. Tacit and verbal approval of the continuation of the GRSZ by teachers, gives explicit hope of the future of the program.

4.6 Teachers’ opinions on using soccer as a tool for HIV prevention

The teacher reported that soccer is a “crowd puller” and therefore fascinates large populations of children and is not gender sensitive. This allows large numbers of marginalized girl children to participate actively. GRSZ has popularized female soccer which has contributed to the incorporation of female soccer into the school curricula, making HIV awareness creation faster and easier. The teachers pointed out the benefits that GRSZ soccer provided *“interactive assistance with life issues throughchildren gaining knowledge which they can then apply when they meet friends out in the communities...and that ...the SKILLS*

Holiday program provides vacation camps which give the students time to learn in a relaxed environment” The teachers’ views were that the participation of soccer legends in GRSZ programs also advances itself amenable to society in spreading “*awareness to other community memberscounseling and testing*” and the adolescent “*got enlightened on risky behaviours, dispel myths on HIV and AIDS while playing*”.

However, the teachers also gave their judgement on the broader spectrum of sports GRSZ could be in involved in to also reach out to other students who preferred other sporting activities like chess where those students who regarded themselves as more intelligent that soccer players are engaged in. There is some view by adolescents that soccer is a form of punishment or for the more physically endowed and less intelligent which GRSZ may need to allay and demystify. The teachers said, “other sports can be used to catch the variety of sporting interests among pupils” and that “some students view sports at school as punishment so once soccer is mentioned they find ways not to be part of the program. Some students at the school are interested in activities such as debate, public speaking, so it will be good to involve them and not concentrate on soccer only”. However, there is a brand to support which could be difficult to set aside.

4.7 Teachers’ perceptions on adequacy of the program

The observation that GRSZ programs were not as frequent as need be made by the teacher shows a need to increase the contact times and periods. As trained education inductors, teacher may provide lacking linkages and advice on what could drive the GRSZ to me expected outcomes. They argued that the training could carried out throughout the term to increase chances of learning. More female teachers needed also to be involved so that they support the girl child. Schools with “hot-sitting” timetables face challenges of reduced participation as the adolescents will be hungry at the time when training starts after school lessons. It becomes very difficult to keep the student on the school grounds once they have finished their regular lessons. There inadequacy of teaching and learning space is a key issue to the attractiveness of the programs as not all module of the GRSZ training need necessarily be carried out on the pitch. There is need to link how the children learn in class and how the learn during the GRSZ or else they may miss the importance of the programs through a mislinkage with formal learning,

The teachers also noted that there was a need to improve the way home visits for HIV testing and seeking of parental consent is done as some parents will not be having adequate information and are skeptical of the programs. More adolescents are volunteering to test after the games and involvement of boys in the DREAMS program might also have had a contribution to behavior change other than the GRSZ alone.

The teachers also intone a general weak nationwide awareness of GRSZ programs in the country which is an indication of the need to expand the GRSZ programs to other parts of the country as they said that, “there is need to expand beyond Bulawayo schools to reach out to the rural schools then nationally”, and also that “the GRSZ programs are educative, but there should be more talk about the programs on mass media like on TV and radio”. This shows a need for increased presence of the GRSZ programs training on social media as an interactive platform that will also capture that adolescent who will not be directly involved in soccer although selectivity of who should watch may be difficult.

5.0 Conclusion

There exists a general consensus on the effectiveness of the GRSZ amongst the secondary school teachers whose views and perceptions were reviewed and evaluated during the exercise. There were no discordant voices to this aspect GRSZ effecting behavior changes amongst the adolescent population that had gone through the courses.

However, the teachers expressed their fears of threats to the GRSZ as there are information gaps that exist between the GRSZ and other programs like Guidance and Counselling. Schools are left with a choice of where to fix their attention and where to direct the adolescent if programs are not well coordinated and synergized. Duplication and redundancies need to ironed out amongst the behavior changed-directed programs. According to the teachers, this calls for curricula revision and synergies formulation with other programs with the same objectives and focus. The gaps in implementation between GRSZ and other programs like DREAMS and Guidance and Counselling need to be identified and rectified into a seamless junction teasing out areas of duplication and overlaps that will foster good time management to avoid or ease learner fatigue.

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Authors Dube, Primrose and Moyo, Bhekimpilo were workers of the GRSZ during the write up and development of the MS with no financial or material gain from the MS or its inception steps. The findings and evaluation of the projects were carried out independently to the GRSZ. Other authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions:

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author A, (**Dr Greanious Alfred Mavondo**) Author B (**Mzingwnane, Mayibongwe Louise**), Author C (**Chaibva, Cynthia Nompumelelo**), Author D (Mantula, Fennie) designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors E (**Mapfumo, Cladinos**) and C (**Gwatinga, Coletta**) managed the analyses of the study.. All authors read and approved the final manuscript

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