



# Methodology for Evaluating a Peer-Support Intervention to Enhance Viral Load Suppression among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Dakar, 2005

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## Abstract

Men who have sex with men (MSM) in sub-Saharan Africa face barriers to consistent HIV care, including stigma, which can lead to suboptimal viral load suppression. In Dakar, Senegal, there is a need for tailored interventions to improve treatment outcomes for this key population. This methodology article describes the design for a study to determine the effectiveness of a structured peer-support group intervention on improving viral load suppression among MSM living with HIV in Dakar. The primary objective is to assess the intervention's impact on the proportion of participants achieving viral suppression. A quasi-experimental design with a comparison group was employed. Participants were recruited via community-based organisations and allocated to either an intervention arm (receiving facilitated peer-support groups addressing adherence, stigma, and health literacy) or a standard-of-care arm. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, clinical records, and viral load measurements at baseline and follow-up. Analysis used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative assessment of viral suppression rates with qualitative exploration of participant experiences. As this is a methodology article, no empirical results are presented. A subsequent publication will detail the study findings. The described methodology provides a structured framework for evaluating a culturally adapted, peer-led intervention to improve HIV treatment outcomes among MSM in a West African urban setting. It addresses implementation science questions regarding feasibility and impact. Researchers evaluating similar community-based interventions should consider quasi-experimental designs where randomisation is not feasible. Incorporating mixed methods is recommended to capture both clinical outcomes and participant experiences. Sustained engagement with MSM community stakeholders is crucial throughout the research process. HIV, men who have sex with men, peer support, viral load suppression, methodology, Senegal, sub-Saharan Africa. This article contributes a detailed methodological framework for assessing peer-support interventions aimed at improving HIV care outcomes among men who have sex with men in a stigmatised urban African context.

**Keywords:** *Men who have sex with men, Sub-Saharan Africa, Peer support intervention, Viral load suppression, Programme evaluation, Operational research*

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