Ugandan women's autonomy key to safer sex, researchers say

August 15 2024

Ugandan women's ability to negotiate the conditions and timing of sex, such as refusing sex and asking for condom use with their partners, is key to preventing several reproductive health outcomes, say experts from...
the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

"The cultural norms that sanction unequal power dynamics in relationships; unjustly acknowledge male sexual freedom over female autonomy; restrict women's mobility; and reinforce female submission to their partners' sexual needs; exacerbate this vulnerability," wrote the authors of a correspondence in the Aug. 10 issue of the journal The Lancet.

Sub-Saharan Africa represents nearly 30% of all new HIV infections globally. Uganda stands out as one of the countries with the highest burden of young people living with HIV, with young women having the highest rates of HIV.

This disproportionate burden on young women partly stems from entrenched gender norms that are shaped by the patriarchal system in Uganda, which typically privileges men and enforces rigid gender roles and expectations, the authors wrote.

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Provided by Washington University in St. Louis
Citation: Ugandan women’s autonomy key to safer sex, researchers say (2024, August 15) retrieved 19 August 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-ugandan-women-autonomy-key-safer.html

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