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## The silence of reason: Ethnography of the management of secrecy among young people living with HIV in Kinshasa



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**Adolescents living with HIV in Kinshasa navigate stigma, secrecy, and selective disclosure in environments where HIV remains morally charged.**

Youth clubs supported by *Jeunesse Espoir* offer psychosocial support, yet fieldwork reveals that secrecy persists as a crucial strategy for protection, belonging, and managing visibility within and beyond these spaces.

The study used an anthropological approach combining ethnographic methods and participatory Photovoice technique. Anthropology aims to understand how people and patients experience illness and care in their social reality.

These insights help shape medical and humanitarian interventions that are more relevant, respectful, and effective.





**A**dolescents disclose freely inside youth clubs, creating solidarity, but maintain strict control outside, sharing status only with trusted individuals.



**P**hotovoice enabled them to represent their daily experiences via images. "In my family, I don't get the same treatment as the others. I wash my own dishes". - (Photovoice individual interview/F., 19) years.



**G**ender shapes how young people manage secrecy, with young women facing greater risks. Indeed, they face a double stigma: that of HIV and that of sexual morality.



## Key takeaways

Youth programmes should recognise secrecy as a protective moral practice and support adolescents in navigating disclosure without imposing uniform expectations.

Integrating visual participatory tools like Photovoice can strengthen dialogue, reveal hidden experiences, and inform more responsive adolescent-centred HIV support strategies.

Original study: Emilia Brazy-Nancy, Elysée Manziasi Sumbi et al. "The silence of reason: Ethnography of the management of secrecy among young people living with HIV in Kinshasa" ScienceDirect.com

Pictures: Emilia Brazy-Nancy/MSF



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