

Does intensity of exposure to an edutainment programme matter for HIV prevention? Findings from an evaluation of MTV Shuga in Eastern Cape, South Africa

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Introduction

- MTV Shuga is an edutainment campaign designed to equip young people with skills and motivation to protect themselves from HIV [1].
- In 2019-2020, 10 episodes of a new series "Down South 2" (DS2) were broadcast via television and internet, alongside complementary media activities.
- To support the plausibility of a causal impact of DS2, we investigated whether intensity of DS2 exposure was linked with positive HIV prevention outcomes in a high-prevalence HIV setting [2].

Methods

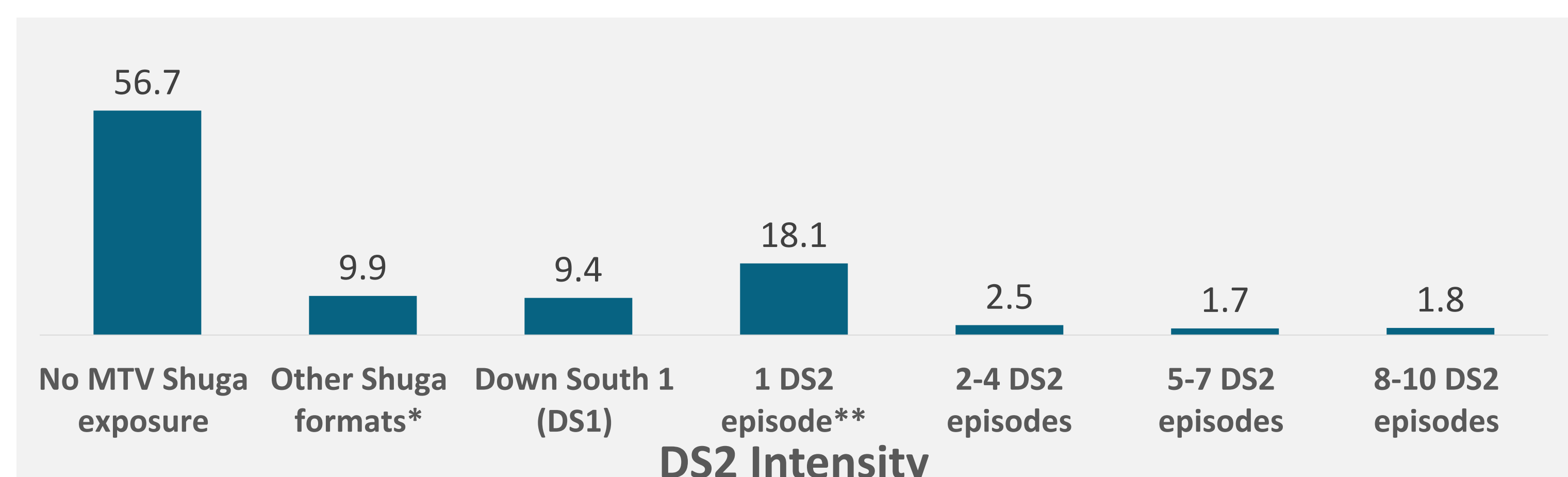
- We analysed data from a web-based survey of 15-24 year-olds in South Africa, in 2020.
- The survey was promoted via social media platforms of schools, universities and communities in Eastern Cape.
- We estimated associations between intensity of DS2 exposure (the number of Shuga DS2 episodes watched; Fig1) and outcomes including knowledge of HIV status, awareness, of HIV self-testing (HIVST) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and uptake of HIVST, adjusting for confounders with multivariable logistic regression

Results

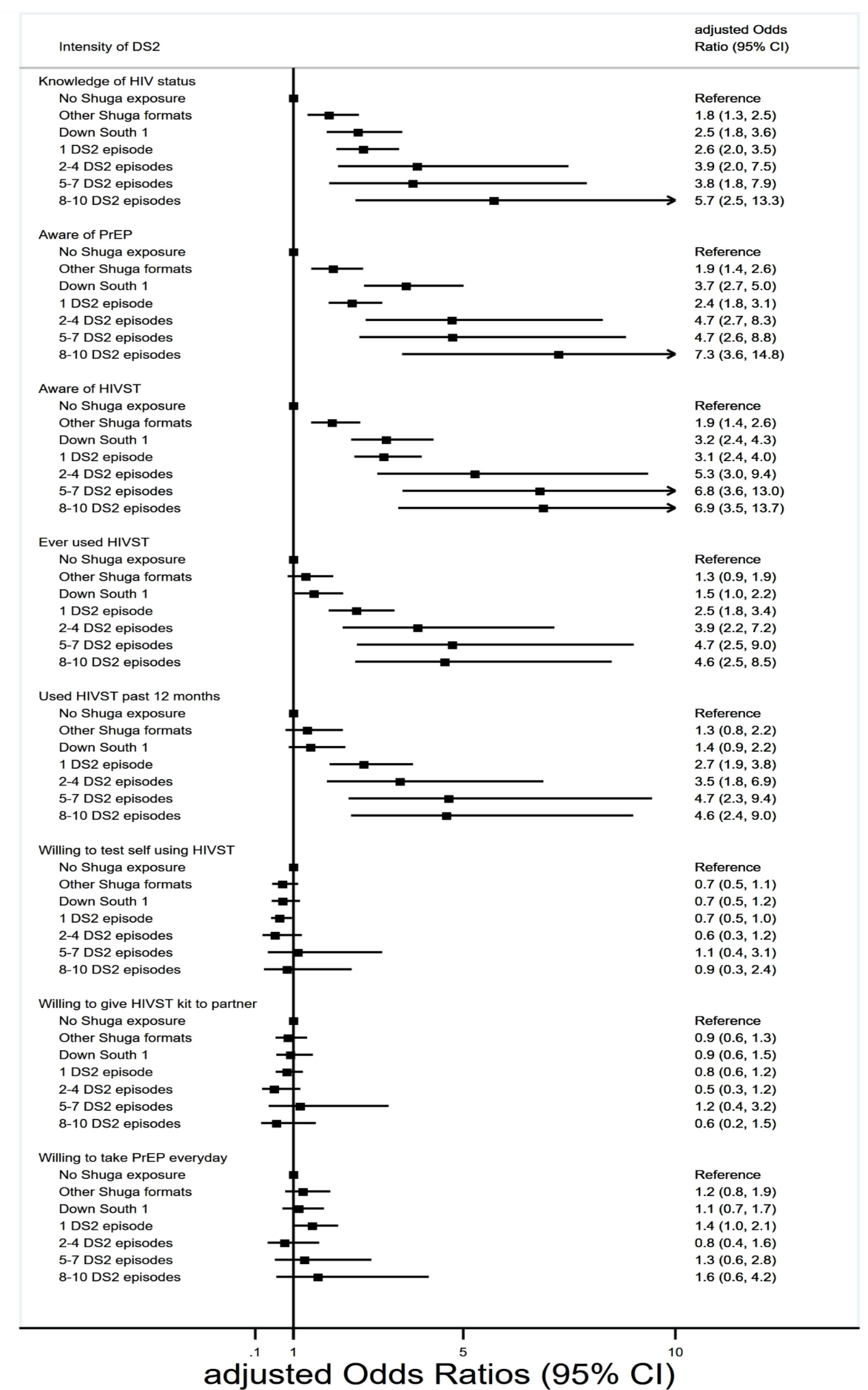
Fig2: Adjusted associations between each outcome and intensity of DS2

- 3,431 respondents included in the analysis: 18% (n=622) had watched one DS2 episode only
 - 6% (n=205) had watched at least two DS2 episodes and 1.8% (n=62) watched 8-10 episodes (Fig1)
 - Proportions who had watched ≥ 2 DS2 episodes were similar across most categories of participant characteristics
- Increasing exposure to DS2 was associated with improvements in all outcomes (except for the indicators of willingness).
- Watching multiple DS2 episodes was associated with successively higher odds of knowing one's HIV status, awareness of PrEP and HIVST, and uptake of HIVST, compared to no Shuga exposure (Fig2)
- Willingness to use HIVST or PrEP was high overall (>80%), with no differences by DS2 intensity (Fig2)

Fig1: Proportions of young people by intensity of MTV Shuga DS2 exposure



*formats other than the DS2 dramatic series e.g., Alone Together mini-series on Covid-19; ** also includes individuals who had accessed DS2 formats not offered via radio/TV/internet e.g., DS2 graphic novel



adjusted for age, gender, schooling, setting, food insecurity, media index, ever had sex, and exposure to other non-MTV resources

Conclusions

- We found evidence consistent with a dose-response relationship between MTV Shuga DS2 exposure and HIV prevention outcomes among young people in South Africa.
- Few individuals viewed most or all of the episodes, indicating potential to benefit more young people by increasing access to multiple episodes of DS2 alongside the other Shuga content.

References: [1] <https://www.mtvshuga.com/downsouth/?savechoice>; [2] Habicht JP et al Int J Epidemiol. 1999 Feb;28(1):10-8. doi: 10.1093/ije/28.1.10. PMID: 10195658