Child-Friendly Spaces: Perceptions of healthcare workers and primary caregivers in King Cethwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

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Background

- A **child-friendly space** is a dedicated place where children learn about HIV, express themselves, build self-esteem, socialize and play.

- The concept of the child-friendly space is derived from its use during humanitarian crisis situations such as emergency and disaster (*Child Protection Working Group, 2012*).

- In the South African context, Zoë-Life has adapted the concept and it translates to the HCW using a child-friendly approach to provide HIV services by engaging the child in health education and counselling using play therapy tools such as story telling, creative activities and role plays.

- To ensure the provision of child-friendly services in health facility settings, Zoë-Life developed the KidzAlive package which consists of HCW capacity building package on the application of child-friendly approaches to HIV care and treatment; job aids including an illustrated Talk Tool, illustrated stories, disclosure support tools, templates for health promotion activities and child-friendly spaces.
Aim

➢ There is currently a lack of evidence to support the efficacy of child-friendly spaces in healthcare settings in the context of HIV.

➢ This study seeks to address the paucity of evidence by exploring the experiences of healthcare workers and primary caregivers of children accessing HIV services in facilities where these child-friendly spaces have been created in order to determine their impact on the quality of HIV services provided to children.
Data Methods

- A mixed methods study was used where two questionnaires were administered to primary caregivers of children and front-line healthcare workers providing HIV services to children at four clinics (Richards Bay Clinic, Thokozani Clinic, Buchanana Clinic and King Dinizulu Clinic) in King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal.

- Quantitative Data Analysis - Categorical data was coded, then summarised using frequencies and percentages. Graphs, tables and pie-charts were generated using the summarised statistics. The odds of occurrence of outcomes were calculated in different groups of study subjects. STATA was used to generate frequencies.

- Qualitative Data Analysis - Thematic content analysis
Key Results: Child-Friendly Spaces are Acceptable and Useful to the Target Group

1. Perceived willingness of children to come to health facilities as a result of the child-friendly space and perceived enjoyment of the child-friendly space:

73.5% of PCGs (n=36) reported that the existence of the child-friendly space had a positive effect on the child’s willingness to come to the health facility.

92.3% of HCWs (n=12) reported a positive response in their perceptions of the child’s enjoyment of the child-friendly space.

2. Perceived willingness of PCG to bring their children to health facilities and perceived usefulness of child-friendly spaces:

79.6% of PCGs (n=39) reported a positive response to the introduction of child-friendly spaces and an increased willingness to bring their children to the healthcare facilities.

100% of HCWs (n=13) reported a positive response in their perceptions on PCG’s appreciation of the usefulness of child-friendly spaces.
## Key Findings from PCG:

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| Increased willingness of children to go to healthcare facility due to presence of child-friendly space | “I think he enjoys visiting the clinic, compared to previous visits before the CFS was there, and he would sit on my lap for the duration of the visit”  
PCG, Buchanana Clinic  
“...each time we visit the facility, she quickly asks to go to the child-friendly space”  
PCG, Buchanana Clinic |
| Child-Friendly HCWs                                                   | “They talk well with the children, they are friendly to them and they make them understand as per their level”  
PCG, Richards Bay Clinic  
“The HCWs are now more polite when talking to children”  
PCG, Thokozani Clinic |
| Child-Friendly Space Promotes Child Participation in Healthcare       | “It has made me see that the clinic really cares about children. I am not worried about taking my child to the facility because she will not be bored”  
PCG, King Dinizulu Clinic  
“The HCW talked nicely to my child even before the CFS, but now with the book with the pictures it is much better. The HCW makes examples to my child explaining using something that she can see.”  
PCG, Richards Bay Clinic |
## Key Findings from HCW:

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<td>Improvement in Communicating with Children</td>
<td>“The training was an eye opener, it made approaching children easy and disclosing to children in the way that they understand and also builds foundation for full disclosure” Enrolled Nursing Assistant, Buchanana Clinic</td>
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| Child-Friendly Language and Visuals                        | “The environment is more child-friendly. The Talk Tool is easy to use because of the pictures to illustrate and support all the information given to the child” Professional Nurse, Richards Bay Clinic  
“The Talk Tool really helps because the HCW is able to communicate with the child using age-appropriate language” Enrolled Nurse, Buchanana Clinic                                                                                                  |
| Child-Friendly Environment Alleviates Tension in Children   | “Because the environment is conducive and child-friendly, there is no tension. The stress or psychological tension I experienced when I had to work with the child (before the CFS) is also alleviated, everything is done in a warm, friendly environment” Enrolled Nursing Assistant, Buchanana Clinic                                                                 |
Conclusions and Recommendations

➢ The results suggest that the concept of the child-friendly space has been well received by HCWs, PCGs and children.

➢ Prior to the training and mentorship in KidzAlive and the establishment of the CFS, HCWs lacked the knowledge and skills to provide child-friendly services. This has created a new concept of mainstreaming child-friendly healthcare service provision in Department of Health facilities, comprised of child-friendly HCWs, child-friendly tools and a child-friendly environment (child-friendly space).

➢ In instances where there is no physical space for the establishment of a child-friendly space, it is recommended that the first two elements (child-friendly HCW and child-friendly tools) be available as this will ensure that children are not deprived of the minimum components required for a child to receive a child-friendly healthcare experience.
Summary of Key Points

- Child-friendly service provision is comprised of child-friendly HCWs, child-friendly tools and a child-friendly environment (child-friendly space):
  - Child-friendly spaces increase willingness of children to go to healthcare facilities
  - Child-friendly spaces promote child participation in healthcare
  - Child-friendly spaces create an environment that alleviates tension in children