

# ABSTRACT

*The increasing number of young people around the world, between the ages of 15 and 49 with a high HIV/AIDS prevalence and incidence rate, has warranted attention from the research arena around the world. However, HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in Lesotho with an adult HIV prevalence rate of 23.2%. In 2005, the number of students at the National University of Lesotho was 5,197 students with 29% infection rate. This dissertation estimates the HIV/AIDS vulnerability of students using the Pressure and Release (PAR) model and Vulnerability Pathway model to determine the progression of vulnerability approach. In order to assess the vulnerability of the students, a literature study was undertaken to identify factors that contribute to HIV/AIDS vulnerability. This was later supplemented by an observation method, questionnaires and interviews to establish the factors that lead to the HIV/AIDS vulnerability of the students at the National University of Lesotho. Through this, it is clear level of students' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS before and after infection is high within NUL. It is ascribed to the deep inherent culture surrounding sexual intercourse in Lesotho, which influences students' behaviour and sexual decisions. Although, the behaviour of the students is important in determining susceptibility of students, the university and government commitments determine their coping capacity of the students and subsequently their vulnerability. The partnership of Lesotho government and the university should be established and intensify training of educators, social workers, and establish community based organisations which should address cultural aspects that leads to negative attitude towards HIV/AIDS.*

*Lesotho is ranked the third highest affected country in the world, with a population decrease from approximately 2.2 million to approximately 1.8 million people from 2003 to 2006 due to HIV/AIDS. Young people in the age cohort 18 – 24 years are most affected and therefore warranting a study at the most significant University in Lesotho.*