

## **SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND RISKY SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG STREET INVOLVED ADULTS IN SELECTED LOCATIONS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

**T**his study investigated the risky sexual practices among street involved adults with substance use disorder in selected locations in Nigeria and how to facilitate efficacy of psychological intervention of harm reduction among them in order to reduce the negative impact on individuals and the society. There is dearth of qualitative and observation studies among this population because prior studies focused on inpatients and outpatients' populations that are easily reachable to scholars and clinicians, consequently, this study focused on the pattern of the risky practices and possible strategy for harm reduction among street involved adults. Direct Field Observation, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interview (IDI) was used to bring about information from male and female participants aged 18-65 with over 10 years' active use of polysubstance drugs that are active in sexual practices. The use of different substances concurrently and simultaneously as sexual enhancing substance with multiple sexual partners and unsafe sexual activities increased the risk of catching, contracting and spreading Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD), particularly HIV/AIDS.

**Keywords:** substance-related disorder, Sexually Transmitted Disease, Sexual behavior, Street Involved Adults

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## Introduction

Co-occurring and multiple occurring psychological disorders have been a major concern of mental health practitioners such as the challenges associated with substance use and sexual misconduct. Polysubstance use problem has been shown to complicate the sense of judgement in the practice of safe sexual conduct among the general population, but among street involved adults there are dearth of qualitative studies that involved hard to reach population, therefore, this study investigated the pattern of risky sexual practices among street involved adults with polysubstance use disorder in selected locations in Nigeria and how to facilitate efficacy of psychological intervention of harm reduction among them in order to reduce the negative impact on individuals and the society.

Sexually risky conduct has a variety of effects on one's sexual health and risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Some relevant research has concentrated on single locations or certain chosen areas. Individual with polysubstance use disorder are more prone to different types of STDs because the impairment in judgment usually have an influence on the capacity to employ appropriate and consistent safe sexual practices. Evidence has shown that many adults are sexually active and partake in dangerous, unprotected sexual behavior (Desmennu, Titiloye & Owoaje, 2018; Starks, MacDonell, Pennar, *Dinaj-Koci, Millar, & Naar*, 2020; Cleland, Gwadz, Collins, Wilton, Sherpa, Dorsen, Leonard, Cluesman, Martinez, Ritchie, & Ayvazyan, 2021). Studies show that unsafe sexual behavior is associated significantly with

drinking and using drugs (Foundation THJKF, 2002; Staton, Dickson, Pike, Surratt, Young, 2022). It has been documented that drug abuse is linked to several sexual partners, unprotected sex, and casual sex in various parts of Africa. Additionally, a link has been found between substance abuse and unsafe sexual conduct (Campbell, 2003; (Beckham, Glick, Schneider, Allen, Shipp, White, Park, Sherman, 2022). There are significant connections between sexual risk-taking, substance abuse, and mental health (Donenberg & Pao, 2005). Through its link to sexual risk-taking, substance use increases the chance of contracting HIV; it also interferes with cognitive functions crucial to HIV prevention and decreases the likelihood of proper condom usage (Dermen et al., 1998). People in mental health treatment report higher sexual activity, more partners, more drug use, and less condom usage than their counterparts (Brown et al., 1997; Smith, 2001). The number of sexual partners and drug and alcohol use during intercourse are both reported by young people (Donenberg et al., 2002; Victoria, Votaw, McHugh, Vowles, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Roba, Gebremichael, Adem, Beyene, 2021), Donenberg et al., also found that risky sexual behavior and negative peer influence are linked to drug and alcohol use in the previous three months. 2001). Despite these associations, little research has been done on specific risk factors and mechanisms that protect street involved adults with mental health and substance use problems. A deeper comprehension of the mechanisms that put troubled individuals at risk for HIV infection will result from additional research into the role that substance abuse plays in sexual risk taking by individuals. Emphasis have been placed on

risk-taking behaviors as been influenced by dispositional factors (Jessor, 1991). While Bronfenbrenner (1986) emphasizes the influence of multiple interconnected systems (such as the individual, family, and community), he does not take mental health into account. Donenberg and Pao (2005) use ecological, health behavior (Fisher & Fisher, 1992), and developmental psychopathology theories to describe a social-personal framework for understanding HIV-risk behavior among adolescents in psychiatric care (Cicchetti, 1999). As predictors of unsafe sex among troubled adolescents, this framework emphasizes the interconnected influences of family context, mental health, substance use, peer and partner relationships, and personal attributes (Fredericksen, Whitney, Trejo, Nance, Fitzsimmons, Altice, Carrico, Cleland, Del Rio, Duerr, El-Sadr, Kahana, Kuo, Mayer, Mehta, Ouellet, Quan, Rich, Seal, Springer, Taxman, Wechsberg, Crane, Delaney, 2021).

## **Methods**

**Direct Field Observation,** Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interview (IDI) was used to elicit information from male and female participants aged 18-65 with over 10 years' active use of polysubstance drugs.

### **Study Site, Participants and Interview**

This study was conducted in selected high density areas where adults in street situation gathered in Ibadan, Oyo State. Three Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with 33 males and 2 females (aged 18 to 65) between 2018 and 2022, the willing thirty-five (35) of the participants were hustlers (engaging in any form of transactions that

could generate money). This study included thirty-five participants since those were the willing adults in street situation members and they were very careful and reluctant to participate due to law prohibits the use of those substances that they engaged in until they were convinced that this was purely research based activity. These participants certify the following conditions of inclusion they abuse multiple substance for period over ten years, they are adults between the ages of 25 and 65 years of age. This study obtained approval (IRB number UI/EC/20/0498), participants filled and signed the informed consents. Participants were anonymized with the use of code instead of names.

Participants were recruited after contacts were made with an informant who served as one of the "seeds", Respondent-Driven sampling technique (Crawford, 2016; Heckathorn, 2011; Heckathorn, 1997) was used to recruit other participants using coupons giving to the "seeds", proper briefing was done for the participants before data was collected. Using an interview guide, the recorded FGD lasted about 75 minutes, (1) What are the risk that you can associate with your heavy use of different substance over this period of use? (2) in your own view, what are the common consequences of heavy polysubstance use that you have experienced? What do you think could be done for you to reduce the frequency of use? What do you think could be done for you to reduce the quantity that you normally use? Do you think you can reduce the use of multiple substance together? In accordance with (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014) additional probing was done on some of the question asked.

### **Data Analysis**

Verbatimtranscribe was done on the recorded interviews and note. The shared themes and subthemes were outlined with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method to generate a comprehensive narrative of themes and subthemes (Smith,1999; 2011, Pietkiewicz and Smith,2014).

### **Results**

This study with the primary goal of using qualitative in exploring pattern of risky sexual practices of hard to reach street involved adults discovered that abuse of polysubstance among street involved adults' influenced some identified sexual conduct such as using some of the substances used concurrently or simultaneously sex enhancing substances / aphrodisiacs, Unprotected sexual activity, Multiple sex partners, Sexual activities with partner that abuse substance, casual sex, Risky sexual behavior. The results from this study are hereby presented below.

#### **As sex enhancing substances/aphrodisiacs**

Tramadol used as sexual enhancing substance to with the aim of having lengthened sexual intercourse as stated in the illustration below.

“I normally use tramadol for sexual performance and combine it with alcohol to get a woman drained”

Different doses of tramadol were used by different individual to attained their desired duration and to proof a point of their sexual prowess to a woman or whether the singular need to have a drawn out sex with a woman that he has being looking at over a significant

stretch and particularly on the off chance that she has play so difficult to get or on the other hand assuming they had been participated in verbal revolting sexual suggestion as well as playing with one another over a time of term. The utilization of tramadol in this present circumstance is either to deserve admiration of the woman or to rebuff her or to demonstrate the masculinity of the male that utilization the substance.

#### **Unprotected sexual activity**

Participants communicated their sexual practices which is helped with the utilization of substances. Taking report of one of the Participants as expressed underneath:

"Condom do get pulled off during extended sexual intercourse and at time it gone slit"

Under the influence of substance use, their reports show carelessness and poor judgement in the use of condom during sexual intercourse.

#### **Multiple sex partners**

Street involved adults do not have permanent partner and usually sought for sex partners based on the need to have sex

“When I want Woman, I look for them, they are plenty”

The philosophy that there are large number of women that they can approach whenever they need sexual partner was demonstrated in their lifestyle.

### **Sexual activities with partner that abuse substance**

The ladies that admire them were discovered to also use substances

“Both of us will have taken our preferred substances for the sexual act”

Ladies who participated in the studies also use substance before engaging with men that also use substances for sexual activities, this is also true of the Men too.

### **Casual sex**

They demonstrated little attachment so hence they could always seek out any available opposite sex for sexual activities when they have the urge.

“Any one available serves, since it just for me to satisfy my urge”

This attitude makes it easier for them to be ready for friend with benefit or any other form of arrangement to get a sexual partner on as the need arises.

### **Risky sexual behavior**

The longing to fulfill sexual desire are being filled mostly by seeking out commercial sex workers.

“I pay women that are in brothel to have sexual intercourse with them whenever I have the urge”

They typically sought for the services of commercial sexual workers and pay for sex whenever they have cash. The cost varies due to prevailing situation

The figure below shows some illustration of unsafe sexual activities and the use of substances such as tramadol, 'man power' Indian hemp with stout 'kenubo' with alcohol, Colorado and Indian hemp with alcohol or alcohol with tramadol were used for sexual prowess and to deal with hard to get sexual partner.

### **Discussion**

This paper adopted an exploratory qualitative study among street involved adults in different locations in Nigeria, all participants reported long term misuse of substance, they use different variants of substances. Findings of this study shows pattern of risky sexual practices of hard-to-reach street involved adults discovered that abuse of substance among street involved adults influenced some identified sexual conduct such as using some of the substances used concurrently or simultaneously sex enhancing substances/aphrodisiacs, unprotected sexual activity, multiple sex partners, Sexual activities with partner that abuse substance, casual sex, risky sexual behavior. affirmed the discoveries of a portion of the past exploration that recognized unsafe sexual activities (Campbell, 2003; Desmennu, Titiloye and Owoaje, 2018), various sex accomplices (Brown et al., 1997; Smith, 2001; Donenberg et al., 2002), unfortunate adherence of condom use and other safe sex rehearses (Dermen et al., 1998; Brown et al., 1997; Smith, 2001).

### **Conclusions**

This paper viewed that as, individuals with drug use issue in Nigeria are at risk against different sorts of sexually transmitted

diseases considering the way that the deterrent in judgment because of substance abuse, do influence the knack and ability to use good and consistent safe sexual practices. This paper is principal for strategy creators and clinicians, analyst, researcher toward making and coordinating damage decrease intervention that integrate control instruments for both substance abuse and hazardous sexual behaviour. The information on substance supported sexual activities would be useful in planning intervention and in figuring out fit policy. Integration of harm reduction would be essential in caring for both the polysubstance use and risky sexual behavior. This paper recommendation based on the nature of the street involved adults in terms of “hard to reach” and “hard to engage”, they are likely to benefit from Life Skill Training Intervention (information model and skill set building) and Blended Telepsychology intervention for accessibility and benefit of artificial intelligence in capturing ongoing real life challenges with substance use disorder and risky sexual practices(Griffin, Williams, Botvin, Sousa, and Botvin, 2022; Haug, Castro, Wenger, and Schaub, 2021), therefore mental health care professionals could explore the integration of Life Skill Training Intervention and Blended Telepsychology intervention.

### Research limitations

This presents study has some limitations. (1) it used four focus group discussions with street involved adults, but this was strengthened by the use IPA (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014), probing further to reach level of saturation and observing this group in their natural hideout, therefore, more Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interview needed to

be conducted at different locations, therefore this study serves as a forerunner to other studies to be conducted.

(2) this subgroup was difficult to reach because of a number of factors which include fear of being arrested in view of this, present study explored the opportunity of the contact to obtained the information which justified the number of participants.

### Contribution to knowledge

This exploratory research contributed to knowledge of risky sexual behavior of unprotected sexual intercourse, multiple sex partners and sexual activities under the influence of substance use.

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