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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PRONENESS TO SEXUAL TRANSMITTED DISEASES AMONG FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN BUTTERWORTH, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This study explored an interplay between substance abuse and proneness to sexual related diseases among female adolescents in Butterworth, South Africa. This study applied a qualitative paradigm with an explorative design and investigated 26, female adolescents, their guardians and key-informants. Findings discovered: Substance use normalises multiple sexual partners; A Nexus between alcohol use and sexual relationship with older Men; Knot between substance use and sexual violence; Minimal opportunity by female adolescents to negotiate condom use; and Substance consumption making female adolescents to demean STD palliative services. This study recommended Non-Governmental Organizations and private entities to assist in educating adolescents about implications of substance abuse.

KEY TERMS: Female adolescents, substance abuse, Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STIs), Sexual violence, condom use, South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

This article explored an interplay between substance abuse and proneness to sexual related diseases among female adolescents in Butterworth, South Africa. The purpose is to raise awareness on introducing interventions that would bridge the gender divide and way of addressing the substance consumption behaviour among female adolescents. Therefore, provides background about substance abuse and sexual behaviours. It further illustrates weaknesses towards prevention of the problem in South Africa. This study employed qualitative approach and its procedures to collect and analyse data. Thereafter, this study provides background, methodology, data analysis, discussions, recommendations and conclusion.

BACKGROUND

Unequivocally, South Africa is overwhelmed by an avalanche of substance abuse and its detrimental effects on health (Bala, 2017). This phenomenon of illicit practices has sprung up as people embrace the changes that were ushered in by the 1994 democratic dispensation (Cupido, 2017). However, this is morally difficult to justify in association to freedom. Eclectic literature contends that this uncontrollable mayhem has doubled the observed 15% in South Africa. Peltzer and Phaswana-Mafuya (2018) validates with that drug abuse among youth more especially adolescents, has taken a rebellious toll in South Africa. Disturbingly, and ironically, female adolescents are intensely consuming substance in equal measures with their male counterparts. Today, all corners of the country are contaminated by potent drugs such as nyaope/whoonga and tik (Methamphetamine) (Makuyana, 2017). Nyaope is a South African heroine made of Anti-retro-viral drugs, painkillers, rat poison, bicarbonate of soda, pool cleaner and other acids. Furthermore, nyaope/whoonga paralyses and dead-snooze users, thereafter, make female adolescents susceptible to rape (Mokwena & Fernandes, 2014). Therefore, it is the itemised deadly ingredients that make users numb. Findings of Mahlangu and Geyer (2018) corroborate that lion's share of female adolescents consuming nyaope have had sex with different male peers they smoke with. Nevertheless, the above drug cocktail has been associated with other lethal health effects. Mokwena and Huma (2014) add that nyaope users experience intense stomach cramps, muscle cramps and swollen body. Horribly, the "Bluetooth" method called for its consumption is a bridge for HIV/AIDS. In light of the above, users inject the drug to one and share blood of the user already drugged (Bala, 2017).

Subsequently, varied literature reveals that methamphetamine (Tik) is a stimulant drug that increases libido and impulsivity among users (Watt et al., 2015). Therefore, this drug has become famous among adolescents and lead to unintended group sexual intercourse. Dada, Burnhams, Laubscher, Parry, and Myers (2018) add that in South Africa, the ubiquitous preponderance of tik has heightened an increasing culture of rape sexual immoral acts. Undeniably, the phenomenon accelerates chances of contracting sexual transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS (Peltzer & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2018). Pedersen (2016) also confirm that tik consumption has been associated with multiple and concurrent sexual partners among the adolescents

In the same breath, this cankerworm has eaten fabrics of African culture and its principles (Kang'ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). This is because this quagmire has especially wreaked havoc to children of primary and secondary schools. This is because the habit has been reported to exacerbate high incidences of sexual behaviours and health problems in schools (Conceptual Framework for the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Programme, 2008). It is this preponderance of substances among the South Africans that has made it to be dubbed the drug capital of the world (Gabriel et al., 2016).

Moreover, primary school children and the teenagers in their early years of their secondary schools are ubiquitously spotted picking up substance abusing behaviours, with concomitant health repercussions (United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report, 2016). Inarguably, this tormenting problem has made them prone to sexual risk behaviours such as molestation and rape. Nwagu (2016) corroborates that rape has been found common among female adolescents who abuse drugs and are more prone to accelerated sexual transmitted diseases.

Gabriel et al. (2016) validate that there is an increasing causal bond between substance use and sexual related diseases. This is because high inebriation makes especially female adolescents vulnerably to sexual activities (Tshitangano & Tosin, 2016). Evidence on the ground suggests that when female adolescents at school get inebriated, they easily lose out their capacity to say no to any sexual advance and their male counterparts take advantage of them for sexual gains (Weybright, et al., 2016). On the same note, older men also exploit such opportunities and make young women easier prey for sex. The environment fails to provide women an opportunity to negotiate for condom use. This is exacerbated by a growing culture of immoral trend depicted by older working men enticing young female adolescents with expensive alcohol and drugs for a sexual episode.

This quagmire has necessitated interventions such as counselling and other palliative measures geared towards addressing sexually transmitted diseases. It is to this end that National Policy Framework and strategy on Palliative care 2017-2022 corroborates that substance abuse among female adolescents has severely affected medicinal interventions of STIs and HIV/AIDS (Department of Health, 2017). Frequently, female adolescents using

substances have been found visiting clinics to fetch antibiotics for STIs and STD than others (Nwagu, 2016). Pedersen (2016) also validates that female adolescents consuming substances disregard instructions pertaining to STIs treatments. This is especially when they engage in sex with different partners while under still undergoing treatment. This is because drugs like Methamphetamine (tik) stimulate sexual desires.

Glaringly, it is critical that government health department strengthen its operatives towards female adolescent with substance abuse habits. Therefore, this paper explores an interplay between substance abuse and proneness to sexual transmitted diseases among female adolescents in Butterworth, South Africa. This paper further wishes to achieve an advocacy that can effectuate a paradigm shift of South Africa's moral compass. That can optimistically work towards rescuing the youth from the jaws of illicit substances and possibly brighten their future.

METHODS

Study's approach, design and sampling

This study assumed indigenous qualitative approach to explore the insights concerning interplay between substance abuse and proneness to sexual transmitted diseases among female adolescents in Butterworth, South Africa (Khupe & Keane, 2017). Qualitative approach is personal and inductive research which tapped the opinions, thinking, perceptions, insights of the participants on the ramifications associated with substance abuse among female adolescents (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Subsequently, exploratory design was used to discover the little that is known about the female adolescents' experiences and consequences regarding their addiction to substances. This approach observed place-based and holistic process (Chilisa, 2017). The above refers to studying the problem from experiential lenses of the community members as primary sources informed by their historical, cultural and economic background. Therefore, the case study was drawn from Butterworth, Eastern Cape in South Africa where the researchers respected Xhosa culture and language of the participants (Keikelame & Swartz, 2019). This study selected 26 participants observing their indigenous perspective and experience concerning the study (Ngulube, 2017). The study acquired the information through one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions following traditional processes (Khupe & Keane, 2017). Subsequently, the open-ended questions were asked in IsiXhosa. The informal conversations and discussions involved female adolescents using and ex-users of drugs, parental guardians, community leader, Police officers, teachers and social workers (Khupe & Keane, 2017). The data collection process of this study was cross-sectional. Therefore, the researchers collected the data once in a short period of time (Ngulube, 2020). In response to the utilised approach the analysis of this study adopted thematic. The researchers familiarised themselves with collected data through listening to tape records and reading written notes (Gentles, Charles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin, 2015). On the same account, researchers transcribed the tape records. The interest of above processes was to organise and arrange the data to form themes

Ethical consideration

The quality assurance of this study was approved by the department of Social Work/ Social Development and Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities' Higher Degrees Committee. Furthermore, the instruments of data collection and highlights of the study have been submitted ethics committee to get ethical clearance with reference number: KAN081SBAL01. Nonetheless, indigenous and traditional process were followed, and community leader, parents and Eastern Cape office of Basic Education approved to conduct this study as this was the prevalent problem. In response to human interaction during data collection, the researchers respected community values and ethics (Khupe & Keane, 2017). The researchers respected elders, ancestors and community sacred. Therefore, substance abuse is a sensitive and personal subject which requires informed consent and voluntarism for participation. In light of that, the participants were given clarified informed consent form to sign before participation.

RESULTS

Demographic profiles

The study had 26 participants which were divided in the following categories: seven (7) female adolescents using and ex-users of substances, nine (9) parental guardians and ten (10) key-informants (Police officer, Educators, Social workers, Nurses and Community leader). The age of the female adolescents selected ranged from 15 to 19 years. On the other front, the age of the parental guardians ranged from 50 to 63 years old. This is the aging segment of the society and largely affect by health challenges which limit them from monitoring the development of their adolescent children.

The age of the key informants ranged from 35 to 60 years. This the middle age and largely productive group of the society. This depict that participants had enough knowledge and experience about the phenomenon concerned. On the same account, all parental guardian and community members were females. This mirrors the possibility of most families being female headed and female parents being more concerned with their children's environment more than the males, or female guardians being more available for investigation more than their male counterparts. Educationally, three female adolescents were the school dropouts. This mirrors that substance abuse affects academic performance of the female adolescents. This definitely confirms that substance abuse deters adolescents from school and academics. All female adolescents were coming from underprivileged households and relying on old pension and children's grant. The environment of their poverty, therefore, could herald a state of feeble support and concern for their female adolescents and hence their probability to be delinquents increases.

THEMATIC FINDINGS

Substance use normalises multiple sexual partners

The findings discovered that substance abuse normalises multiple sexual partners among female adolescents. The participants attested that there is a link between drinking alcohol and having multiple sexual. Participants also indicated that it has become an accepted norm to sexually entertain whoever buys them alcohol in taverns. The above findings have been corroborated by the following verbatim:

Female adolescent 1: *"If you look good as female definitely you afford alcohol men will offer drinks, but you have to go with him after hours"*

Parental guardian 1: *"We are facing an uncontrollable behaviour here where these young girls every Friday go to drink with different men and come back on Sunday"*

Female Adolescent 3: *"There is nothing strange everybody knows if man buys you alcohol, he must win you later"*

Female Adolescents 1: *"You cannot have one man if you want to drink every weekend even our older sister tell us that"*

The above findings and sentiments insinuate death of moral compass in South Africa. This also suggest probability of exponentiation of sexual health diseases. Perhaps, this questions prevention methods towards substance abuse in South Africa. On the same note, fatherless and unwanted pregnancies are also likely to increase.

Nexus between alcohol use and sexual relationship with older Men

The findings revealed that there is a nexus between alcohol use and sexual relationship with older men among female adolescents. The participants confirmed that female adolescents consuming alcohol are likely to engage in intimacy relationship with affording men. This is bolstered by the below sentiments:

Female Adolescent 1: *"It is better to date sugar daddy than young boys who cannot buy you drinks and get sex for free"*

Parental guardian 2: *"These children have a growing bad habit of dating old men who can afford to buy them alcohol"*

Social Worker: *"They date alder men to get the expensive trips and alcohol which put them in danger of being forced for sexual intercourse"*.

Female Adolescent 3: *"The young boys do not even have cars how are they going to take us to clubs and buy expensive bottles of campaigns?"*

The above findings suggest the irresponsibility of men and the need for them to shy away from enticing adolescents with alcohol. Actually, men should also say no to female adolescents wanting them. This behaviour undermines health intervention methods.

Knot between substance use and sexual violence

Apparently, there is a knot between substance abuse vulnerability to sexual violence female adolescents. Participants substantiated that men take advantage of female adolescents when they are tipsy for sexual interests. The participants also testified that when female adolescents are dozed off by heavy drugs men take advantage and

rape them. Furthermore, when they are inebriated, they walk at night in dark alleys ignorantly. The below quotes validate the presented findings:

Police officer: *“Some of the drugs they use are heavy and they doze them off, thereafter, some boys take advantage of that and gang rape them”*

Female Adolescent 7: *“I smoke with groups of guys and other females as friends I am not aware what they do when I am high (dozed off)”*

Female Adolescent 2: *“When there is no transport, we walk with bare foot back home from taverns”*

Police officer: *“Most of them when they come back from these taverns, they get raped and robbed”*

The above findings suggest that substance abuse put female adolescents at risk of sexual violence. Nevertheless, culture and morality are losing meaning in South Africa. Actually, even men need to be educated to refrain from taking advantage of tipsy females.

Substance use associated with minimal opportunity to negotiate condom use

The findings revealed that substance consumption is associated with minimal opportunities to suggest and negotiate condoms among female adolescents. Participants verified that when female adolescents are tipsy their judgement declines. Therefore, fail to suggest the condom. On the same note, they rely on men to buy or bring condoms. The highlighted findings are validated by the below sentiments:

Female Adolescent 4: *“To be honest when we are drunk, we sometimes become careless about condoms”*

Female Adolescent 5: *“It is the man’s responsibility to bring the condom therefore I cannot be blamed”*

Nurse: *“By the look of things these little girls fear sometimes to suggest condom when they are tipsy”*

Female Adolescent 6: *“As long he is going to buy Morning after pills when he didn’t use condom”*

Definitely, the above findings connote that female adolescents are at risk of contracting sexual transmitted diseases. Perhaps, this insinuates inadequate educational interventions about HIV/AIDS risk behaviours among adolescents. Undeniably this is the threat to health dynamics and trends in South Africa.

Substance consumption make female adolescents demean STD palliative services

The findings indicated that substance consumption among female adolescents demean palliative services addressing sexual transmitted diseases. Participants specified that substance consumption make female adolescents disregard treatment instructions of STIs and STDs. Actually, they engage on sexual conduct before healing. They have also been found being re-infected frequently and visiting clinics in request of antibiotics. These findings are bolstered by the below participants’ views:

Nurse: *“Although it is their right to get free antibiotics for STIs, but they are wasting such services, because they do not follow instructions rather engage on unprotected sex immediately or few days after received treatments”*

Teacher (Principal): *“Every after few months we request nurses to come and assist same female adolescent learners for STIs whom have been assisted before and using drugs”*

Nurse: *“Female adolescents who are using substances do not even finish STI treatment as expected and same faces come more often”*

Female adolescent 5: *“When one is tipsy it is difficult to reason about unhealed STIs and engage in sexual intercourse”*.

This means that substance abuse is a grave threat on health of adolescents. Furthermore, this disregard health services provided. On the same note, adolescents using substance seems to be relying on palliative services than protecting themselves from diseases.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that substance abuse affect academic performance of the female adolescents. Tshitangano, and Tosin (2016) validates that substance abuse among adolescents affect memory and deters their academic performance. Furthermore, they become truant and skip class or even bunk schools. This is because sometimes they party even on Sunday fail to wake up for school on Monday. On the same note, substance abuse discourages them from doing homework and studying for assessments (Gabriel et al., 2016). Hence, they incline to score low marks in assessments. Wretchedly, some use substance inside school premises and that inhibit them from concentrating (Bakhshani et al., 2014). Importantly also, substance use causes deficient judgement and that make adolescent undermine school principles.

The findings indicated that all female adolescents were coming from underprivileged households and relying on old pension and children's grant. Additionally, lions 'share of the adolescents were staying with their grandparents who were single and widows. World Drug Report corroborate that adolescence from underprivileged and single parent homes are at critical risk of using substances (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 201). Lategan, du Preez and Pentz (2017) add that poverty and absence of fathers has influenced substance abuse among adolescents. Many use substances as a coping mechanism from poverty stress.

The findings discovered that substance abuse normalises multiple sexual partners among female adolescents. Parry, Carney, and Williams (2017) validates that substance abuse is primary causal factor towards promiscuity among adolescents and that exacerbated HIV/AIDS. Currently, in South Africa there is an exponentiating behaviour where female have to be won by men after drinking alcohol (Mohasoa & Mokoena, 2017). Therefore, female adolescents have become a men's targets and victim of such. Bleakley, Ellithorpe, Hennessy, Khurana, Jamieson and Weitz (2017) add that immoral sexual behaviour linked to alcohol among female adolescents have become health risk. Groenewald, Essack, and Khumalo (2018) also highlight that substance abuse has contributed to multiple sexual partners with high probability of unprotected sex leading to health challenges. On the same account, due to financial constraints to buy alcohol, female adolescents find themselves sleeping with multiple men who will provide (Ritchwood et al., 2015). Eclectic literature confirms that behavioural and affective changes connected with substances, including expanded drive and impulsivity and lessened hindrances, which may prompt unsafe sexual behaviour and increase one's vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted contaminations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 201). Weybright, Caldwell, Wegner, Smith, and Jacobs (2016) agrees that substances like methamphetamine use, increases libido and impulsivity and decreased restraint, which may prompt to multiple sexual partners and unsafe sexual conduct which build weakness to securing of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases This is supported by Meade et al. (2012) that substance abuse contribute greatly to sexual risk behavioural practices in light of both the increased sexual vitality while high, and also the routine of trading sex for the substances.

The findings revealed that there is a nexus between alcohol use and sexual relationship with older men among female adolescents. Findings of Groenewald, Essack, and Khumalo (2018) bolsters the above findings that many female adolescents engage in transactional relationships with older men or 'blessers' for alcohol. Sadly, that behaviour has implications for STIs and HIV risk. Morojele et al. (2018) corroborate that female adolescents have tendency of sleeping with financially stable or working men to get money for alcohol.

Apparently, there is a knot between substance abuse vulnerability to sexual violence female adolescents. Mokwena, and Fernandes (2014) highlight that female adolescents who consume nyaope are at higher risk of rape. This is because they regularly smoke with group of men and nyaope doze them off (Morojele et al., 2013). Undeniably, female adolescents feel coerced to have sex with the man who buys them alcohol. Nevertheless, they are at risk of being drugged with other heavy potent drugs for sexual purposes. On the same account, some men add dugs that stimulate sexual desire in their drinks for sexual engagements.

The findings revealed that substance consumption is associated with minimal opportunities to suggest and negotiate condoms among female adolescents. The is an inextricable link between substance use and unsafe sex practices among adolescents (Groenewald et al., 2018). Additionally, when female adolescents are tipsy fail to negotiate for condom. Findings of Asante, Meyer-Weitz, and Petersen (2014) share that female adolescent does not suggest condom use since that insinuates sleeping with multiple partners and jeopardising their image. Mohasoa, and Mokoena (2017) validates that men suppresses rights of female adolescents to negotiate for condom use when they are inebriated.

The findings indicated that substance consumption among female adolescents demean palliative services addressing sexual transmitted diseases. This is because they continue to consume drugs while under medication period (Nwagu, 2016). Therefore, the conflict between drugs or alcohol and medications break down medication weakens its effectiveness (World Health Organization, 2019) On the same note, some continue to engage in unprotected sex with multiple partners while taking medications and that affect healing process (Pedersen, 2016). Thereafter, that might exacerbate the disease and re-catch other diseases. Moreover, adolescents do not even finish medication as instructed for healing. In conclusion, that humiliate disbursement and efforts made by the government to maintain palliative services for sexual related diseases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends implementation of educational programs in rural settings addressing implications of substance use among adolescents. This can be possible through introducing more NGOs equally as in sub urban areas. On the same note, community members need fix moral compass and stand against drug entrance in their communities. Moreover, it is also men's responsibility to look after the female adolescents than taking advantage of them. Furthermore, government need to evaluate its prevention methods against the problem because it is getting worse. This study further, recommends collaboration between government and entertainment artists. This is because they have a huge influence on the life of the adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Substance abuse behaviour among female adolescents is gravely increasing while government has focused of male counterparts. This behaviour has hazardous implications towards their health. Nevertheless, men are taking advantage of the weakness. Corruption and reactive behaviour from South African government is exacerbating substance abuse in the country. The increase of substance abuse among female has been neglected and this spell ineffectiveness of the methods in place against substance abuse. Substance abuse continues to undermine and degrade efforts made by South Africa Health practitioners to address sexual related diseases. Lastly, this quagmire paints bleak picture in African continent and spells doom for African moral campus.

DECLARATION

This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work/ Social Development and faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities' Higher Degrees Committee. Furthermore, the instruments of data collection and highlights of the study have been submitted to ethics committee to get ethical clearance. Therefore, Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC) at University of Fort Hare has approved and granted ethical clearance certificate for data collection. Nonetheless, the researchers further obtained permission from the leaders of the communities concerned. The researchers acknowledge the participants contributed to the study.

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