

Substance Use and Risky Sexual Behaviours: Targeting Adolescents in Nigeria



NIGERIA chapter



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Learning Outcomes



At the end of the presentation, participants should be able to:

01

Gain understanding of the concepts of “Substance Use”, “Sexual behaviours” and “Adolescents”

02

Discuss the connection between substance use and sexual behaviours

03

Highlight appropriate strategies for reduction for this cohort.



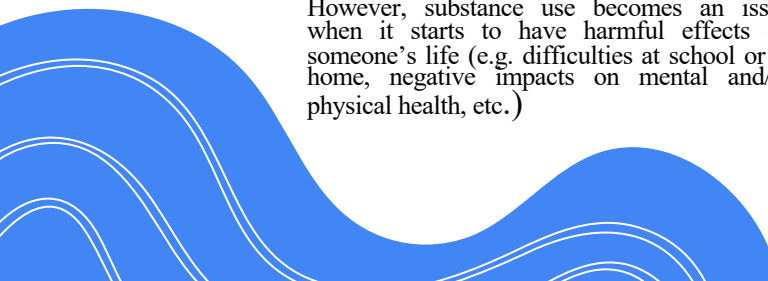
01

Substance use

Drugs/substances are chemical that can change how the body and mind work. They include prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

03

Substance use



However, substance use becomes an issue when it starts to have harmful effects on someone's life (e.g. difficulties at school or at home, negative impacts on mental and/or physical health, etc.)




02

Substance use


Many people will use substances at some point in their lives without any issue

04

Substance use



substances can change the brain functions. These changes can affect perception, mood, thinking and behaviour





Substance Misuse Disorder(SUD)

- ❖ Substance misuse is the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, over-the-counter or prescription medications in a way that they are not meant to be used. (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020).
- ❖ People can misuse substances one time, occasionally, or regularly, and they can go on to develop substance use disorder

Substance

- ❖ Substance Use Disorder occurs when the use of alcohol or drugs impairs on health or how one functions in their daily life.

Substance/Drug Addiction

- ❖ Drug addiction, also known as severe SUD, is a brain disorder that manifests as the uncontrollable use of a substance despite its consequences.
- ❖ People with drug addiction have a physical and/or psychological need to take a substance because they suffer intense or debilitating withdrawal symptoms when they go without that substance

Commonly misused substances

01 Alcohol, including beer, wine, and distilled spirits.

02 Nicotine products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco.

03 Marijuana, including synthetic cannabinoids, such as “synthetic marijuana,” “K2,” and “Spice.”

04 Opioids, such as heroin, codeine, oxycodone (Oxycontin®), morphine, hydrocodone/paracetamol

05 Benzodiazepines, including diazepam (Valium®), lorazepam (Ativan®), alprazolam (XANAX®), and clonazepam (Klonopin®).

06 Over-the-counter cold or cough medicines.

07 Other substances, including cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamine, and other stimulants.

Sexual Activity/Behaviour

❖ Sexual activity or behaviour is any activity—solitary, between two persons, or in a group—that induces sexual arousal. They are categorized into:

1. Non-penetrative sex

- Masturbation/self-pleasuring
- Mutual masturbation
- Kissing.
- Fingering
- Foreplay.
- Anal
- Oral sex.

2. Penetrative sex (also called sexual intercourse)

3. Concept of Adolescent

- ❖ “Adolescents”, “Teen”, and “Teenager” are sometimes used interchangeably. However, Adolescence period can span beyond “teens and teenagers”
- ❖ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages **10-19** (UN, 2009b).



Concept of Adolescent

01

UNICEF defines 'youth' as individuals between **15 to 24** years of age (UNICEF 2009a).

02

Adolescence is a phase of life with its own special needs. Adolescence is also a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health.

03

Adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. This affects how they feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them.

Adolescents In Nigeria

- ❖ All societies recognize that there is a difference between being a child and becoming an adult. However, adolescents are not homogenous population.
- ❖ Their needs vary with their sex, stage of development, life circumstances and the socio-economic conditions of their environment.
- ❖ Nigeria has an estimated population of 191, 835, 936 with **22%** adolescents(UNICEF,2018).
- ❖ These adolescents are distinguished by many factors such as personal, social, cultural characteristics, disabilities and other life circumstances.

Link Between Substance Use and Sexual Behaviours

- ❑ Health compromising behaviours such as substance use and risky sexual behaviours can be regarded as problem behaviours because they constitute a deviation from conventional behaviours.
- ❑ Moreover, these behaviours have been reported to co-occur
- ❑ The association between substance use and risky sexual behaviours have often been discussed from two main theoretical perspectives

Link Between Substance use and Sexual Behaviours Contd.

- ❖ Both risky sexual behaviour and substance use are examples of risk-taking behaviours and constitute deviance that share common causes. Thus, the relationship between substance use and risky sexual behaviour is spurious.
- ❖ Others hold the view that substance use precedes risky sexual behaviour, because, sometimes people tend to have risky sex when under influence of substance use or because they exchange sex for drugs.
- ❖ The latter school concludes that substance use acts as a gateway for sexual behaviour.

Link Between Substance Use and risky Sexual Behaviours Contd.

In growing up, adolescents are confronted with three defiant yet coaxing opportunities:

- the option to drink alcohol,
- to try drugs, and
- to have sexual intercourse.



Link Between Substance use and Sexual Behaviours Contd.

- ❑ In many cases, these opportunities or behaviors are often linked.
- ❑ Where alcohol is offered, often so are illicit drugs like marijuana.
- ❑ When drugs are available to adolescents, usually alcohol is also easy to get.
- ❑ At parties where drugs and/or alcohol are present, unsupervised adolescents tend to engage in risky sexual behaviours, too.
- ❑ Teens who drink or use drugs are much more likely to partake in risky sexual behaviours than their non-using peers(Ofole & Ofole, 2021)

Link Between Substance use and Sexual Behaviours Contd.

- ❑ Teens who drink or use drugs are much more likely to have sexual intercourse at younger ages than their non-using peers(Nwagu, 2016)
- ❑ Likewise, substance use were associated with the number of sexual partners such that if an adolescent smokes, the person had 8 and 16 folds the chances of having multiple sexual partners, respectively, compared to a non-smoker.
- ❑ Adolescents who use drugs or drink will have transactional sex, (exchange of sex for money, drugs, food, shelter, or others) to earn an income to finance their drug and alcohol consumption.

Link Between Substance use and Sexual Behaviours Contd

- Further, adolescents who drink alcohol and or substances are more likely to engage in unprotected sex than non drinkers/users.
- One in five girls (18%) and four percent of boys who use substances or take alcohol reported having a sexual relationship with a partner three or more years older than them (transgenerational sex) (Schott-Sheldon et al., 2016)

Burden of Substance Misuse in Nigeria

- ❖ According to UNODC 2021 World Drug Report (pandemic effects ramp up drug risks), 275 million people used drugs worldwide as at June 2021, while over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders
- ❖ In Nigeria, UNODC (2018) National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2016-2017) which is the first large-scale, nationwide survey on the extent and patterns of drug use show that the past year prevalence of any drug use in Nigeria is estimated at 14.4 per cent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years.(UNODC,2018).
- ❖ The extent of drug use in Nigeria is comparatively high when compared with the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 per cent among the adult population.

Burden of Substance Misuse in Nigeria

Contd.

- ❖ Cannabis was the most commonly used drug followed by opioids, mainly the non-medical use of prescription opioids and cough syrup.
- ❖ The average age of initiation of cannabis use was 19 years.
- ❖ More men (annual prevalence of 21.8 per cent or 10.8 million men) than women (annual prevalence of 7.0 per cent or 3.4 million women) reported past-year drug use in Nigeria

Burden of Substance Misuse Contd.

- ❖ Geographically, the highest past-year prevalence of drug use was found in the southern geopolitical zones (past year prevalence ranging between 13.8 per cent and 22.4 per cent) compared to the northern geopolitical zones (past year prevalence ranging between 10 per cent and 13.6 per cent).
- ❖ In the southwest Nigeria, Obadeji et al. (2020) using 682 students reported a lifetime and current prevalence of any substance to be 17.3%

Impact of Substance use on Adolescents

Academics: Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, and increased potential for dropping out of school are problems associated with adolescent substance abuse. Marijuana use is said to interfere with short-term memory, learning, and psychomotor skills.

Physical health: Injuries due to accidents (such as car accidents), physical disabilities and diseases, and the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related consequences of adolescent substance use.

Impact of Substance Misuse on Adolescents Contd.

Families: In addition to personal adversities, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by adolescents may result in family crises and jeopardize many aspects of family life. It can also drain a family's financial and emotional resources.

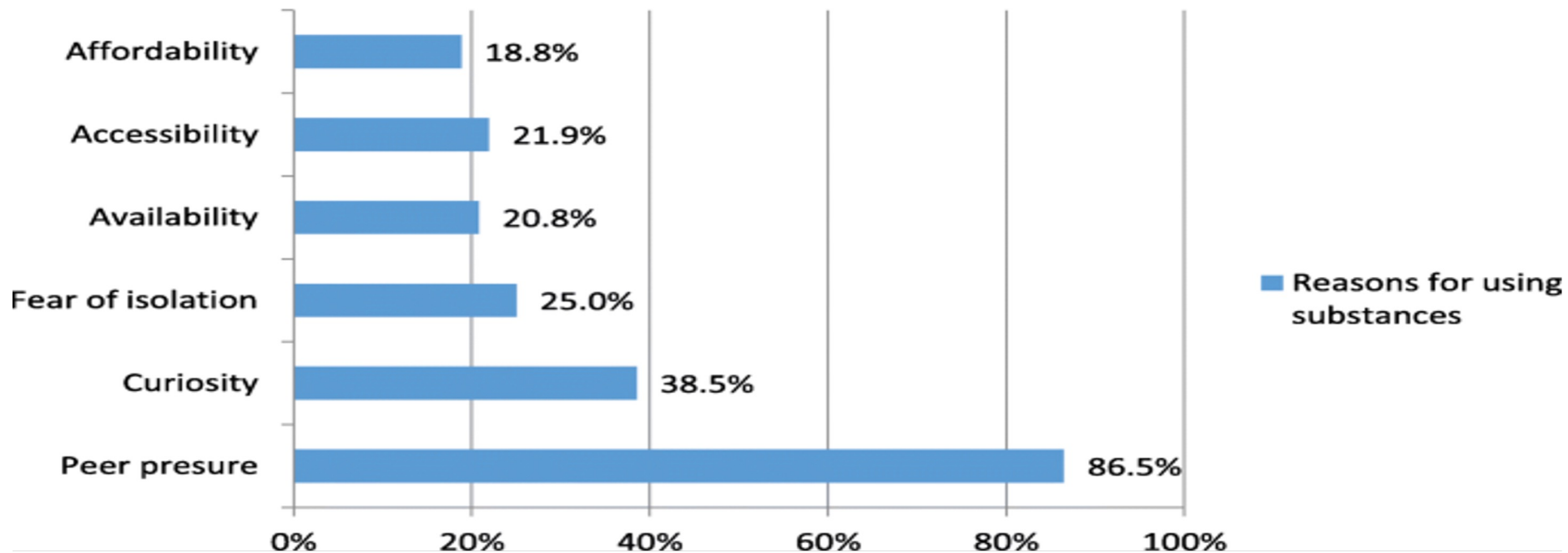
Delinquency: There is an undeniable link between substance abuse and delinquency. Arrest, adjudication, and intervention by the juvenile justice system are eventual consequences.

Mental health problems : depression, developmental lags, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, suicide, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions are linked to substance use among adolescents.

Why Adolescents Misuse Substances

- ❖ The period of adolescents is characterized by increased adventurous tendencies and risk-taking behaviour.
- ❖ Prefrontal lobes allows individual to exert control over a range of responses and help modulate sensitivity to different kinds of rewards, identify the significance of stimuli, and exert control over impulses and emotional and social responses—the bottom-up brain systems. This prefrontal lobes are not fully developed in adolescents.
- ❖ Promotional Activities on the Media
- ❖ Dark Web
- ❖ Low risk perception

Reasons for using substances



Aynew, et (2020)

Harm Reduction for Adolescents

- ❖ The reality of drug use among young people continues to be a sensitive issue for many Stakeholders.
- ❖ Predominant approaches that solely focus on drug prevention and ‘just say no’ approaches has left this vulnerable population largely silenced, neglected, stigmatised, and without their needs met.
- ❖ Harm reduction is a collection of practical strategies and ideas designed to decrease the health, social, and/ or economic consequences of drug use and serve as an alternative to abstinence-based policies and programming.
- ❖ It is also a movement for social and health justice built on a belief in, and a respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

What is Harm Reduction ?

- ❖ Harm reduction programs for young adults are focused on minimizing the negative effects of substance use on young people, their families, and peers without mandating reductions in, or abstinence from substance use to access services or receive medical treatments.
- ❖ Harm reduction approaches have been reported effective in reducing morbidity and mortality in diverse populations including young people (Khan et al. 2022).



Major challenges of Harm Reduction for Adolescents in Nigeria

- ❖ Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and it is a transit country for the passage of drugs to Western countries.
- ❖ This has among other factors, led to an increasing level of illicit drug use despite a long history of punitive measures of drug control. Nigeria boasts of very punitive laws against both drug use and drug trafficking, there are no harm reduction policies or services and very limited availability of treatment services.
- ❖ This relatively firm stand against illicit drugs is reflected in national policy, where drugs and drug-related activities are proscribed by law. Unfortunately, young people, who account for two-thirds of the national population, are disproportionately affected by these policies

Major challenges of Harm Reduction for Adolescents in Nigeria Contd.

- ❖ Lack of honest conversations about how to reduce harms related to drug use amongst adolescents are avoided, and whilst harm reduction approaches to drug use continue to be implemented and expanded in other countries.
- ❖ As a result young people have not benefited from the widely reported efficacy of harm reduction evidence based services.

Major challenges of Harm Reduction for Adolescents Contd.

- ❖ Stakeholders are not accepting that drug use/misuse are part of adolescents risky behaviours so efforts should be in both prevention and minimizing its harmful effects rather than simply ignore or condemn them.
- ❖ Parents Consents in seeking treatment: Privacy is essential to adolescents who seek health care. When adolescents perceive that health care services are not confidential, they report that they are less likely to seek care, particularly for reproductive health matters or substance abuse
- ❖ Studies show that adolescents are less likely to seek health care for sensitive issues if they believe that their parents will be informed. Clearly, delay or failure to receive care for these concerns increases the risk for complications.

Harm Reduction: What works for Young People

Harm reduction is a developmentally congruent approach to the **primary** and **secondary** prevention of risky behaviours in the adolescent population. It acknowledges adolescent's role in decision-making about his or her health.

- **Primary prevention:** This may be achieved by discouraging the behaviour and encouraging the delay of initiation of substance use .
- **Secondary Prevention:** This is for adolescent who is already using substances, drinking or smoking to reduce the behaviour

Harm Reduction: What works for Young People

Simeon et al., (2020) suggested the following 2 principles of care related to harm reduction for young adults with substance use disorders.

- ❖ The first is that harm reduction services are critical to keeping young adults alive and healthy and can offer opportunities for future engagement in treatment.
- ❖ Such services therefore should be offered at every opportunity, regardless of an individual's interest or ability to minimize use of substances
- ❖ The second is that all evidence-based harm reduction strategies available to older adults should be available to young adults and that whenever possible, harm reduction programs should be tailored to young adults and be developmentally appropriate.

Harm Reduction: What works for Young People

- ❖ Effective prevention harm reduction involves the positive engagement of children, youth and adults with their families, schools, workplace and community.
- ❖ Focus on on parenting, families, and life skills education at different levels of children's development (i.e. infancy, early and middle childhood, adolescence and adulthood)
- ❖ Close the gap between perception and reality because "Lower perception of drug use risks has been linked to higher rates of drug use, (UNODC 2018)
- ❖ Prioritize less risky drinking habits for underage college students to reduce the risk of alcohol poisoning.

Specific Strategies

Prevention Goals	Related Harm Reduction Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reduce the spread of sexually transmitted and other blood-borne infections, including HIV and viral hepatitis● Increase knowledge around safer sex and sexual health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Access to PrEP● Access to HIV and viral hepatitis testing and treatment.● Access to condoms● Comprehensive sex education

Prevention Goals Reduction Activities

- Reduce sharing of substance use equipment
- Improve physical health
- Reduce the spread of infectious diseases

Related Harm

- Sterile syringes and other injection equipment to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases
- Syringe Service Programs
- Safe smoking supplies
- Medical care including wound care.
- Use of masks, social distancing, and vaccines

Prevention Goals Reduction Activities

- Reduce stigma and increase access to health services .
- Increase referrals to support programs and health and social services (including treatment and recovery support services)

Related Harm

- ❖ Peer support specialists
- ❖ When screening and treating minors for sensitive confidentiality should be honored
- ❖ **Counseling**
 - a. Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)
 - b. Multisystemic Therapy(MST)
 - c. Parents, Patients/clients Therapist Forum(PPTF)
 - d. Motivational interviewing
 - E. Cognitive Restructuring

Conclusion

- ❖ To grow and develop in good health, adolescents need information, including age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education; opportunities to develop life skills; health services that are acceptable, equitable, appropriate and effective; and safe and supportive environments.
- ❖ They also need opportunities to meaningfully participate in the design and delivery of interventions to improve and maintain their health. Expanding such opportunities is key to responding to adolescents' specific needs and rights.
- ❖ Advocate for the introduction, further development and evaluation of evidence-based prevention and treatment programs that use a harm reduction philosophy in schools and communities.
- ❖ Become familiar with the resources in their communities that provide harm reduction programs for substance abuse, pregnancy prevention and injury prevention



Thank you for Listening

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