

ALCOHOL ABUSE AND HIV INFECTION IN NAIROBI AREA

POLICY BRIEF

NO: 7/2012

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between alcohol use and self-control is widely recognized. Studies have shown that there is a link between alcohol abuse and for example, loss of cognitive/self-control. Together these studies imply that individuals who are also alcohol dependent are likely to have altered behavior in their state of intoxication including engaging in high risk sexual behavior. The relationship between alcohol and high risk sexual encounters has also been found among individuals who are HIV infected. Generally there is an increase in the likelihood and rate of unprotected sex. This implies that prevention efforts among this group is crucial.

NACADA Authority conducted a survey on alcohol abuse in Nairobi area in June 2010 to establish among other things, the perceived link between alcohol abuse and HIV infection.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional design was used and data from individual respondents was collected through a survey questionnaire.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to identify the sites from which data was gathered. The study population was obtained from three districts:Kasarani, Embakasi and Njiru in Nairobi Province. 497 respondents were interviewed distributed as follows: 201 (40.4%) from Mukuru Kwa Njenga, 101 (20.3%) from Embakasi, 85 (17.1%) from Njiru and 110 (22.12%) from Kahawa.

KEY FINDINGS

Alcohol Abuse and Sexual Behavior

- 17.2% respondents reported that they drink alcohol and had been forced or had forced someone to have sex while drunk.
- Of the above, 8 or 47.1% reported that they have had non-consensual sex once during the past three months prior to the survey, while 4 respondents (23.5%) reported that they had non-consensual sex twice during the same period

General Sexual Behavior and Condom Use

- 15.7% or less than one in six respondents reported that they did not use condoms all the time with their consensual sexual partners.
- 25.5% or about one quarter of the respondents reported that they sometimes used condoms while 56.9% reported they had used a condom all the time they had sex with their consensual sex partners.
- 54.8% of the respondents however reported the reasons for engaging in unprotected sex included inability to remember to use a condom.
- 21.4% who did not use a condom indicated they trust their sexual partner and 11.9%, indicated that condoms were not available when they needed them.
- 7.1% responded that they were drunk at the time;
- Only 4.8% responded that their partner refused to use a condom (this response was only reported by female respondents).

Alcohol Consumption

- The survey also revealed that 21.7% or one out of every five of the respondents reported that they currently consume alcohol.
- The majority of the respondents or 78% indicated they had consumed alcohol at least seven days prior to the survey.
- Of these, 83% were males while 17% were females.
- The survey also revealed that up to 78% of the respondents drinking habits were classified as heading towards harmful and hazardous while 22% were classified as social drinkers.

Availability and Affordability of Alcoholic Beverages

- When asked on ease of availability of alcoholic beverages such as first and second generation drinks and traditional liquor such as *changaa* and *busaa*, 65% indicated *changaa* is more readily available, while 52.7% indicated *busaa*.
- 26.3% and 40.8% respectively, felt that first and second generation brands were becoming more readily available in their area.
- On accessibility of *changaa* and *busaa*, 66.9% of the respondents felt *changaa* is more readily accessible in their area than *busaa* (55.6%).
- 21.8% of the respondents indicated they do not consume first generation brews because they are unaffordable and therefore out of their reach compared to 7.5% who indicated the same for second generation brews.

DISCUSSION

From the current study people's perceptions indicate that alcohol use is linked to the possibility of HIV infection. Respondents reported alcohol consumption is likely to result in loss of inhibition, involvement in unprotected sex, increased incidences of unplanned pregnancies and involvement with multiple sexual partners.

This is further reinforced by ease of availability of traditional liquor such as *changaa* and *busaa*

which they regarded as more affordable and easily accessible from the many selling points dotted across the study area.

Due to the small number of respondents who identified themselves as being HIV positive, the relationship between HIV infection and alcohol consumption was not conclusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey points to a multiplicity of factors and need for multi-sectoral collaboration in the control of alcohol and efforts to eliminate alcohol dependence and in the prevention of HIV transmission, for example:

- The need for multi-sectoral collaboration in order to ensure that there is synergy in these efforts,
- The need for establishment of support groups to provide a supportive environment for individuals who are vulnerable to alcohol and who are on ARV treatment.
- Guidance for support groups in order to give adequate care and an environment that facilitates compliance among HIV positive alcohol users.
- The need for further studies to shed more light on the link between sexual performance and alcohol abuse.