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A qualitative study of the impact of drug use on risky behaviors in Durban

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The use of Whoonga and risky sexual behaviors amongst young people represent a huge public health and economic concern in South Africa and globally. The trend of new drugs entering the drug market has increased in South Africa. Whoonga is a relatively a new addition into the drug market and is mostly used by young people. It is a mixture of antiretroviral drugs, dagga (marijuana) or heroin and several other substances, including chemicals found in detergents and even rat poison. The need for this study was prompted by the devastating effects with this new arrival drug has had on the lives of young people. The aim of the study was to explore the relationship that the use of Whoonga has with risky sexual behaviors among the youth of Durban. The study relied on qualitative data drawn from 10 individual in-depth semi structured interviews with six males and four female's participants who were active Whoonga users. The interviews were conducted at a rehabilitation centre in Durban. The results of the study highlight several factors that facilitate and inhibit the use of Whoonga and the relationship it has with risky sexual behaviors. Peer pressure and wanting to fit in with friends facilitates the use of Whoonga. Other factors that facilitate the use include the ignorance of what they were getting themselves into before they started using Whoonga. Easy accessibility of Whoonga, lack of support from family and friends, as well as the lack of substance use awareness encourages use of the drug. Despite the challenges that the participants experienced as a result of their use of Whoonga, they are still hopeful about the future and wish to quit it and rebuild their life again. More attention needs to be focused on the relationship between drug use and risky behaviors.

Biography

Bontle Segobe is SARChI Chair in Economic Development, also doing her Built Environment and Development Studies working in the University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Durban, South Africa.

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