

Statement of the problem

Long-haul truckers play a role in the spread of sexually transmitted infections globally. As a mobile occupational group, truck drivers engage in frequent travel away from home. Nigeria is a high HIV burden country in Africa and high-risk sex groups such as commercial sex workers account for new cases of HIV infection. Truck drivers are exposed to high-risk sex with female commercial sex workers who are a reservoir of HIV and other STIs. Their sexual behavior is influenced by inadequate knowledge and poor perception of the risk of potentially acquiring an infection from their sexual adventure.

Research question

What factors are associated with commercial sexual exposure among long-haul truckers?

Research design and methods

A sample of 300 long-haul truckers from a highway park was recruited in a cross-sectional study in Ahor, Benin City. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect socio-demographic and sexual risk behavior data. Data were analyzed with SPSS version 20 software. Data were presented with summary statistics as means and proportions. A chi-square test was used to find the association between factors like substance use, condom use pattern, STI history, HIV status awareness, duration of a trip, number of sexual partners, and trucker's exposure to commercial sex workers in the six months prior to the study. Odds ratio and the 95% confidence interval were calculated to determine the strength of association between factors of risky sexual behavior and exposure to commercial sex workers. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results/summary of investigations

While 42.0% of the truckers used condoms, 58.0% were non-users. Reasons for non-condom use were commitment to partner (72.0%), lack of pleasure (21.0%), and beliefs (7.0%). Fifty percent of respondents reported two or less sexual contacts while a third of them reported 12 sexual contacts in 6 months. Overall, 59.0% of respondents had a history of multiple sexual partners. Factors associated with truckers' exposure to a commercial sex worker were the use of a psychoactive substance (OR 2.5 (1.5-4.4), $p=0.00$); condom use (OR 16.3 (8.0-32.5), $p=0.00$); previous sexually transmitted infection (OR 2.5 (1.2-5.1), $p=0.01$). The odds of single-sex partner exposure to a commercial sex worker were 10% less than the odds in multiple sex partner truckers, $p=0.00$.

Interpretation/conclusion

This study shows that psychoactive substances and condoms may be fueling exposure to commercial sex among truck drivers. Intervention programs should emphasize a single partner relationship, target substance users and highlight the potential impact of previous sexually transmitted infections on the risk of acquiring an HIV infection.