

# **Sexual Partners and Condom Use Attitude: Qualitative Findings among Injecting Drug Users in Hai Phong, Vietnam**

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# CONTENTS

Project background

Introduction

Methods

Findings

Limitations

Conclusion

# RESEARCH BACKGROUND

## Research project

### **HIV Infection and Behavioral Risk Factors among Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) in Hai Phong, Vietnam**

- A multiphase research
- Phase 1 (Quantitative) and Phase 2 (Qualitative)

#### **Quantitative**

- HIV prevalence and Risk Factors
- Correlates of Sharing Practices
- Correlates of Condom Use

#### **Qualitative**

- Drug injecting and HIV Risk
- **Sexual Behaviours, Partners and Condom Attitude**

# INTRODUCTION

## HIV epidemic in Vietnam

- HIV testing started: 1988
- First HIV case detected (southern): 1990
- First 'epidemic boom' among IDUs (southern): 1993
- Epidemic well-established among IDUs: 1995
- Other groups affected (e.g. FSWs): 1995
- Epidemic shifted (southern to northern region): 2000
- Initially older people in southern part
- Later younger people in northern part

# Introduction (1)

## Key Features of HIV Epidemic among IDUs

- Majority male (sampled 80-90%) & unemployed,
- Single (60-70%), young age (20-29 years),
- Short transition from non-injecting to injecting (8-14 months),
- Injecting heroine currently,
- Injecting in 'public places' (rail lines, street, park),
- Involve in 'social injecting' 'resource pool' 'shared drug use'
- High rates of sharing practices
- Being injected by others (dealer, friend)
- Majority sexually active (last 6 months) with multiple partners

## Introduction (2)

### HIV epidemic in Hai Phong

- Location: East of Hanoi (102 km), close to sea  
Also close to heroine shipment route  
linking heroine producing 'Golden Triangle'
- HIV Situation: First HIV case 1994. Reached 1% (1997) to 32.8% (1998); 60-70% till 2005 and dropped to 48% in 2009.
- Young IDUs, sexual mixing with FSWs and sharing
- Early diffusion and crossover between IDU & FSW

# SIGNIFICANCE, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

## Significance

Lack of a qualitative understanding on recent sexual transmission risk among IDUs. Because

- Previous research mainly quantitative,
- Younger IDUs, PLHIV or young People,
- Focus on ART, risk behavior, MMT program,

# Significance, Aims & Objectives (1)

## Aim

To highlight the **drug injecting and sexual behaviors having transmission risk** and allow an **improved understanding** of the potential factors that contribute to the high level of HIV prevalence.

## Objective

- To focus on the **experiences and views of IDUs** relating safe-sex practices, and
- To identify **protective and non-protective** condom use attitude with different partners



# METHODS

## Design, Recruitment & Data Collection

- Qualitative (follow-up interviews) research design
- Fifteen IDUs (13 male & 2 female) participated
- Semi-structured (face-to-face) interview conducted
- Purposively selected by snowballing technique
- Convenient location used for interviews/discussion
- Each interview took 45 minutes (approximately)
- Two interviewers conducted the interviews (Vietnamese)
- One supervisor engaged in supervising & recruiting
- Topic guide with necessary probes and points used

# Methods (1)

## Data Analysis

- Scripts reviewed to remove any personal identifier
- Transcribed from paper to file (verbatim)
- Translated (double checking, randomly back translation)
- Key themes, sub-themes identified (topic guide, objectives)
- Thematic analysis conducted manually (TA framework used)

## Presentation

- Direct quotes with recurring sub-themes presented in tables
- Relational diagram drawn by 'partners types' with 'attitudes'

# RESULTS

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Profile of Respondents

Access different social networks

Mixed groups (young, old, HIV infected, FSWs)

Characteristics	Categories	Number (N=15)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	13
	Female	2
<b>Age</b> (range: 25-49 years)	Less than 30 years	4
	30-39 years	9
	40 or plus	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kinh	15
<b>Place of living</b>	Hai Phong	14
	Other province	1
<b>Duration of living in Hai Phong</b>	Permanent	14
	Temporary	1
<b>Education</b>	Primary/secondary	13
	College	2
<b>Marital status</b>	Currently married	7
	Unmarried	8
<b>Living status</b>	Co-habiting	14
	Alone	1
<b>Employment status</b>	Casual/non-regular work	12
	No work	3
<b>Income level</b> (range 2m-7m)	Less than 5 m VND	8
	5 m VND or more	4
<b>HIV status</b>	Positive	6
	Negative	9

# Results (1)

## Sexual Behaviour

- All had sexual debut in the early twenties.
- First experience majority with FSWs or girl friends
- Engage in relationship other than wives or regular partners
- Having sex with FSWs is common

## Contexts of Involving Sex with FSWs

- Marital status
- Younger or older
- Special event celebration (birthday, cultural program)
- Having extra money

## Results (2)

### CONTEXT OF INVOLVING IN SEX WITH FEMALE SEX WORKERS

Recurring sub-themes	Exploratory Quotes
Unmarried status	<i><u>I visited many female sex workers (and had sex with them) before my marriage.</u> But after (my marriage) I have got my wife and really I do not need to go to female sex workers now and do not need to spend my additional money (participant 30-39 years old).</i>
Unable to have sex with wife/partner (regular)	<i><u>I visited to female sex workers during the time of pregnancy of my wife.</u> Later, she had developed some infection due to pregnancy related complexities and surgery. (For this reason) I continued having sex with female sex workers after the birth of my child for a long time (participant 40 plus years old).</i>
Having extra money	<i>I had the last sexual intercourse with female sex worker in a hotel near the rail lines. <u>At that time I had some money with me. I had some stuff (heroin), and then I went with my friends</u> (participant less than 30 years old).</i>

## Results (3)

### Views on Condom Use

- **Young & new injectors** frequently engaged in sexual behaviours than older
- They have **interesting views** on not using condoms

### Contexts of Not-using Condoms

Not considered as important	Not considered as necessary
Negotiate with FSWs	Lack of awareness
Clients do not like	Exchange drug or extra money
Partner does not want	Wrong self-assessment

## Results (4)

### CONTEXTS OF NON-CONDOM SEX ACTS

Recurring sub-themes	Exploratory Quotes
Not considered as important	<u><i>This is not necessary for husband and wife to use condoms. It is essential for having sex with female sex workers.</i></u> Now I have sex only with my wife. (For this reason), I do not use condoms (participant 40 plus years old married).
Not considered as necessary	<u><i>I have not a wife. I did not use condoms while sex with my partner or sometimes with female sex workers.</i></u> For many times, I reconsider my behaviour, I think using condoms with female sex workers is the safest way (participant 30-39 year old unmarried).
Negotiate/ convince female sex workers	<u><i>I usually do not use it (condoms). Because, first I do not like it and second, the commercial sex workers allow me to do it like this (without condoms).</i></u> Sometimes, I use condoms, only because many of them (female sex workers) do not allow (sex) without condoms. They make me use (condoms) (participant less than 30 years old unmarried).
Lack of awareness	<u><i>There was no disease before (HIV and STI) and I had unprotected sex with commercial sex workers.</i></u> Later I heard about a number of diseases which I might get because of not using condoms during sex with female sex workers (participant 30-39 years old unmarried).

## Results (5)

Clients do not like	<i>Actually it (use of condoms during sex with clients) depends on my mood and my drug use condition (in a 'high' state or not). <u>If I have a good feeling sometimes I agree for non-condom sex and get some extra money (clients offer extra money for non-condom sex).</u> It depends on my mood. <u>Clients do not like to use condoms.</u> Because it reduces the feeling and they do not feel very comfortable (participant less than 30 years old female).</i>
Exchange drug or extra money	<i>I do not do this (non-condom sex acts) with all clients. If they are my regular clients, then I do not use and <u>when I have extreme craving for this (heroin), they give me extra money or drug and I take it</u> (participant less than 30 years old female).</i>
Partner does not want	<i><u>My partner (also an IDU and 12 years older than me) does not want to use condoms.</u> When I asked him (for using condom) he replies we did not use in the beginning we do not need to use it (condom) now (participant 25 years old female IDU).</i>



## Results (6)

### Contexts of Condom Use

**HIV infected and older IDUs** mainly engaged in safe-sex.

The contexts include:

- Suspicious about STIs
- Family consciousness
- Client negotiation (empowerment of FSWs)
- Protection against pregnancy
- Scare about HIV infection

# Results (7)

## CONTEXTS OF CONDOM SEX ACTS

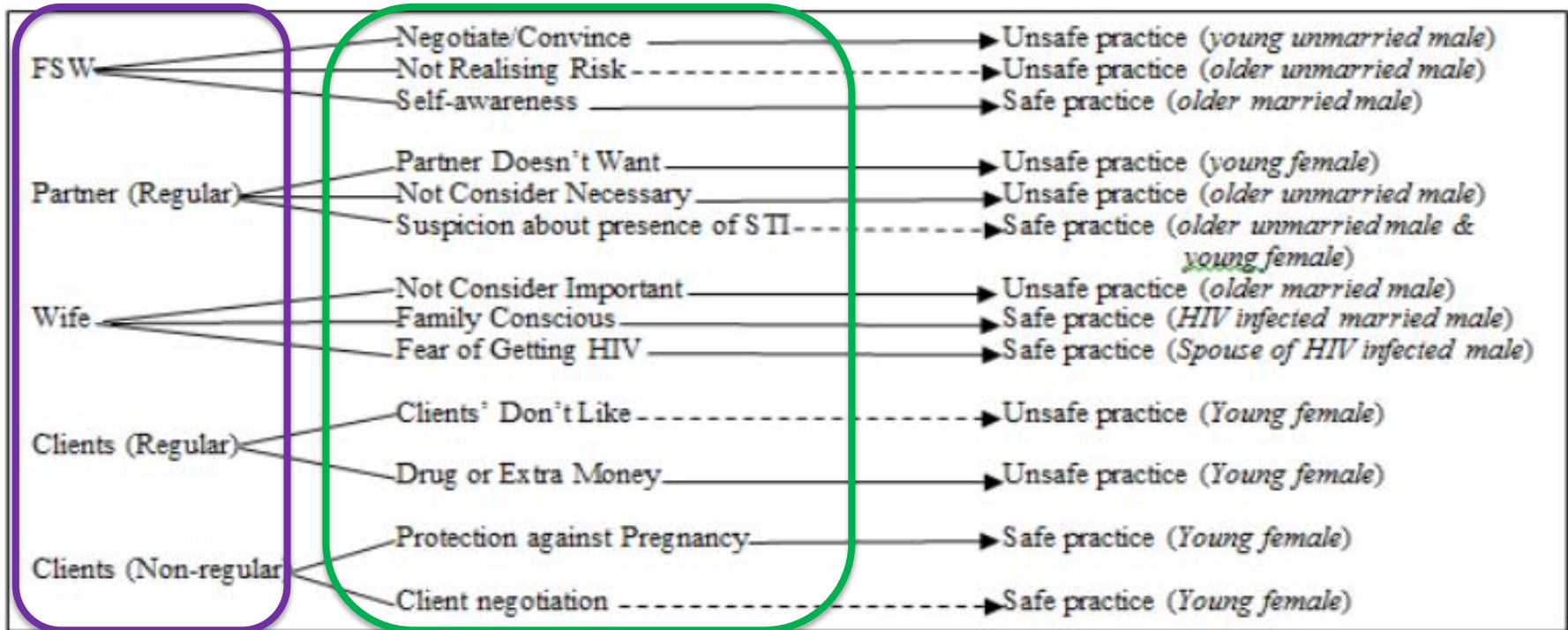
Recurring sub-themes	Exploratory Quotes
Suspicious about STI	<i><u>Sometimes I get doubt that he (my partner) got some STI disease.</u> When I doubt this type of infection I tell him to use condoms because it is good for both of us (participant 25 years old unmarried).</i>
Family consciousness	<i><u>Whatever I am, I need to keep my wife safe.</u> I need to keep my wife healthy so that she could raise my child. Whatever diseases I have, I try to protect my wife from any types of risk (36 years old HIV infected married participant).</i>
Client negotiation (empowerment of FSW)	<i>I only do not use it (condoms) when the female sex workers do not allow me to use. <u>Nowadays, they (female sex workers) are also aware about HIV and STI transmission.</u> They often not agree for sex <u>without condom.</u> For this reasons, I sometimes did use condoms with them (female sex workers) (30-39 years old unmarried HIV infected).</i>

## Results (8)

<p>Protection against pregnancy</p>	<p><i>I need to use condoms with clients for two reasons. <u>Firstly I will not get pregnant and secondly I will not be infected with diseases.</u> I use condoms with clients and I get less money (clients offer higher money for having sex without condoms). Once I get infected with diseases where do I get money? It is best to avoid it (non-condom sex). But it is very hard to say ('no' to the clients when they offer higher money) (participant &lt;30 years old female IDU).</i></p>
<p>Scare about HIV infection</p>	<p><i>My wife sometimes wants to have sex without condom. <u>But when she thinks about the diseases she becomes scared. For this reason, I use condoms.</u> We are really afraid when we think about this disease (participant 30-39 years old married HIV infected).</i></p>

# Results (9)

## Relational Diagram



*In this figure filled arrows (—→) show a strong relation and break/dotted arrows (-----→) show a casual relation towards safe and unsafe practices. There were four casual relations including two for safe and two for unsafe practices. On the other hand, there were nine strong relations including five for unsafe and four for safe sexual practices.*

- Transmission risk by partner types and condom use attitudes

# LIMITATIONS

## Limitation

- Not representative (participants from a broader research)  
However our mixed group includes multiple social network
- Focus only sexual behaviours and condom use attitudes not presented accessibility to HIV prevention services  
Getting free condoms did not appear as protective attitude
- Few participants with con-current multiple partner relationship  
However we highlighted their previous experiences

## RESEARCH IMPLICATION & CONCLUSION

- **Risk of sexual transmission** exists among IDUs  
Young male and female
- **Protective attitudes** should be encouraged to sustain safe practices  
HIV infected IDUs and older male
- **Non-protective attitudes should be addressed** to convert into safe practice  
Young male and female (unmarried)
- Safe-sex education should be strengthened with a focus on **partner relation** (types of partners)
- Knowledge on HIV transmission and prevention should be strengthened

Thank You!

