

TRANSACTIONAL SEX AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG WOMEN IN UGANDA.

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Transactional sex is a pervasive practice in sexual relationships, including marriage and it is often portrayed as a modified form of prostitution and a degraded form of sexual expression forced on vulnerable women. Those involved in such relationships do not self identify themselves as commercial sex workers or prostitutes, and work outside the known spots for sex workers. Due to compromised power relations in a sexual relationship, making certain people who may be risky, attractive as sexual partners and the tendency of multiple sexual partnerships, this practice exposes people engaged to greater risks of contracting STIs and is one of the contributing factors for the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Transactional sex involves emotional commitment and in such situations, women are not able to decide on the timing and the conditions of sex like condom use thus making them vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Using the UDHS women data set, the researcher studied the relationship between engaging in transactional and sexually transmitted infections. Chi-square statistics whose level of significance was fixed at 0.05 were run to analyse the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of women and involvement in transactional sex. The socio-demographic characteristics studied include, age, residence, religion, education level and marital status of the woman. Also a logistic regression was run to find out the contribution of factors studied to one's infection status. The results show that there are significant differences in involvement in transactional sex by socio-demographic characteristics of the women studied. Also transactional sex had a significant impact on one's infection status since the women who engaged in transactional sex were 2 times likely to report having an STI as compared to those who did not. Women with primary education were more likely to report having an

STI as compared to those with no education and those with secondary and more education were less likely to report infection as compared to those without education. Currently and formerly married women were about 4 times more likely to report having an STI. It is therefore recommended that women are informed about the importance of condom use in sexual relations and faithfulness in sexual relations. Since transactional sex is sometimes a way of coping up with risk, alternative livelihoods for savings programs, insurance schemes and female employment can be put in place to help women reduce their dependence on transactional sex for income.