

CHEMSEX: IMPLICATIONS FOR PSYCHOSEXUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIAN GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

Authors:

Demant D^{1,2}, Ovideo-Trespalacios O³, Saliba B¹, Newton JDA⁴

¹School of Public Health, University of Technology Sydney, ²School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology, ³Department of Values, Technology and Innovation, Delft University of Technology, ⁴School of Psychology, The University of Queensland

Background:

Chemsex, the use of psychoactive substances to enhance sexual experiences, has been increasingly recognised as a phenomenon among gay and bisexual men (GBM). This study investigates the prevalence of chemsex within this population and examines its association with psychosexual and psychosocial health outcomes.

Methods:

A cross-sectional online survey was completed by 632 Australian GBM. Key measures included demographic information, psychological distress, attitudes towards sexuality, sexual self-esteem, LGBT community connectedness, and sexual behaviours. Statistical analyses involved descriptive statistics, ANOVAs, chi-square tests, and hierarchical segmentation analysis.

Results:

Approximately 32.3% of participants reported engaging in chemsex in the past year. Those who engaged in chemsex were typically younger and more likely to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. While those engaged in chemsex exhibited higher levels of psychological distress and higher sex negativity, they also reported higher sexual self-esteem and greater satisfaction with their sex life. However, they reported a lower degree of connectedness to the LGBT community. Significant associations were also found between chemsex engagement and adventurous sexual behaviours, including group sex and the creation of pornographic imagery.

Conclusion:

Chemsex is prevalent among GBM in Australia and is linked with negative psychosexual and psychosocial outcomes as well as positive self-perceptions regarding sexual esteem and satisfaction. These findings highlight the complexity of chemsex and the need for targeted interventions to support the well-being of individuals engaging in chemsex. Public health strategies should address both the health risks associated with chemsex and the broader psychosocial and community contexts influencing this behaviour.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No conflicts of interest to be declared.