



## CONSUMPTION OF SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MEDIA AND CONDOM USE

Chrystiany Plácido de Brito Vieira\*  
Vanessa Soares Rocha da Silva\*\*  
Telma Maria Evangelista de Araújo\*\*\*  
Fernando José Guedes da Silva Júnior\*\*\*\*

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to analyze the use of condoms in the sexual practices of consumers of sexually explicit media, according to sociodemographic variables. **Method:** cross-sectional and online study, conducted in the Northeast of Brazil, with 349 users of social networks. Data collection from September to December 2020. Univariate analyses were performed and the chi-square test was applied to verify the association between the qualitative variables, considering the value of  $p \leq 0.05$ . **Results:** female sex predominated (51.9%), with a mean age of 25.04 ( $\pm 5.94$ ) years, in which 56.0% had the habit of seeing some kind of pornography and 58.0% did not have the habit of using condoms in sexual intercourse, and this variable was not associated with any characteristic of the sample studied. **Final thoughts:** there was a high consumption of sexually explicit media, especially by young people, mostly female, without the practice of condom use in sexual intercourse, highlighting the importance of the elaboration of public policies and prevention strategies to the practices of risk to HIV directed to the consumption of these media.

**Keywords:** Sexuality. HIV. Unprotected sex. Audiovisual Media.

### INTRODUCTION

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/Aids) has been a subject of discussion for decades worldwide, due to the wide epidemiological distribution and its impact on political, cultural, psychosocial and health aspects. Coping with HIV/Aids, from the beginning, is a challenge for society, given the various aspects involved in this epidemic, such as social confrontations, circumscribed in the references of human rights, vulnerability and health care in Brazil<sup>(1)</sup>.

Despite the scientific advances and investments for HIV control and therapy in Latin America, Brazil is the country most affected by the epidemic, with one third of cases, and the only one to have increased new infections. In the 1980s, when the epidemic was beginning, until June 2021, 1,045,355 cases of Aids were detected in the country. In Brazil, from 2007 to June 2021, 381,793 cases of HIV were reported in Sinan and, in 2020, 32,701 new cases were

diagnosed. In 2020, Aids cases reached 29,917 – reported in Sinan, declared in the SIM and recorded in Siscel/Siclom–, with a detection rate of 14.1/100,000 inhabitants, totaling 1,045,355 cases from the 1980s to June 2021<sup>(2)</sup>.

Understanding the dynamics, the trend of this infection and the behavior of the population today, including in virtual environments, is fundamental to identify the new profile in today's society. In addition, it will provide a better understanding of the scenario of determinants and factors associated with HIV/Aids and the identification of dynamics of risk behaviors in key populations<sup>(3)</sup>.

In this context, the increasing scope of Sexually Explicit Media (SEM) in society, in general, has concerned researchers and scholars regarding the possible reflexes on attitudes assumed by consumers, especially related to HIV/Aids. SEM comprise any type of material with description of genitals or explicit sexual acts of any nature, capable of stimulating or modifying the viewer's sexual feelings or thoughts<sup>(4)</sup>.

\*Nurse, PhD in Nursing, Professor of the Nursing Graduate Course at the Department of Nursing of the Federal University of Piauí and of the Professional Program in Family Health RENASF/Fiocruz/UFPi, Teresina, Piauí, Brazil. E-mail: chrystiany@ufpi.edu.br. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3429-3329.

\*\*Nursing Student at the Federal University of Piauí, Teresina, Piauí, Brazil. E-mail: preta\_vanessa007@hotmail.com. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6155-7505.

\*\*\*Nurse, PhD in Nursing, Professor of the Nursing Graduate Course and of the Nursing Post-Graduation at the Department of Nursing of the Federal University of Piauí, Teresina, Piauí, Brazil. E-mail: telmaevangelista@ufpi.com.br. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5628-9577.

\*\*\*\*Nurse, Post-doctoral degree in Nursing, Professor of the Nursing Graduate Course at the Department of Nursing of the Federal University of Piauí and of the Professional Program in Family Health RENASF/Fiocruz/UFPi, Teresina, Piauí, Brazil. E-mail: fernandoguedes@ufpi.edu.br. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5731-632X.

Added to this issue is the scenario of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which there has been an increase in pornography consumption since 2020, when the authorities determined the beginning of social isolation. The American company Netskope Security Cloud stated that only in the first half of 2020, there was an increase of 600% in access to pornography on the world wide web<sup>(5)</sup>.

Thus, this study is important for the knowledge of the profile of consumers of SEM in the Northeast region, because, increasingly, they have become popular and may be associated with risk practices for the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI). Moreover, the scientific production on the theme of SEM and HIV/Aids in Brazil is incipient, making this study relevant to subsidize the preparation of plans by managers and health professionals in coping with the problems found with this population.

Given the above, the objective was to analyze the use of condoms in the sexual practices of consumers of sexually explicit media, according to sociodemographic variables.

## METHODS

This is a cross-sectional and online study, developed according to the guidelines of the tool Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) and conducted in the Northeastern Region of Brazil. The sample consisted of 349 participants of both sexes, who met the inclusion criteria and signed the Informed Consent Form online: age from 18 years old, being a user of one or more of the social networks Facebook®, Instagram® and WhatsApp®, residing in the Northeast Region, having already consumed SEM and completing all the items in the questionnaire.

Data were collected online, from September to December 2020, using part of an instrument on the consumption of sexual media and HIV, previously validated, containing 56 closed and some mixed questions, of which 15 were used in this study, with completion lasting between 8 and 10 minutes<sup>(6)</sup>, which was sent to participants online. It presented, at the end of the questions, informative links on the theme of the research.

The invitation to participate in the study was

posted on the social networks Facebook®, Instagram® and WhatsApp®. Participants had access to the link that directed them to the study questionnaire, hosted at Google Forms.

The variables of interest of this research were sociodemographic data (age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, current occupation, personal income, schooling, religious practice, religion, co-resident and marital status), habit of viewing pornography, age of first pornography, number of SEM scenes viewed per week (considering scene, on average, 20 minutes) and condom use in all sexual relationships, whether anal, vaginal or oral, considering that the non-use of condoms is a dimension that makes up the concept of risky sexual practices adopted by the Ministry of Health<sup>(7)</sup>. The dependent variable was condom use, with yes/no outcomes. The other variables described above were considered independent.

After appropriate coding of each of the variables of interest, the data were exported from the survey monkey to the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26.0, and univariate analyses were performed using descriptive statistics. The chi-square test was used to verify, in the mentioned categories, if the frequencies of occurrence differed between the grouping classes of the data of the qualitative variables, considering, for the analyses,  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ .

The research complied with the recommendations of Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council and was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), obtaining a favorable opinion n. 3,915,991. This was followed by recommendations for research procedures with any stage in a virtual environment, dated February 24, 2021, as established by the National Commission for Research Ethics (CONEP).

## RESULTS

Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, 51.9% were female, aged between 18 and 59 years and mean age of 25.04 ( $\pm 5.94$ ) years. There was a predominance of housing with parents (58.2%), single marital status (68.8%), heterosexuals (57.0%), students (58.7%), with

higher education (47.6%), income below one minimum wage (31.2%) and with religious practice (64.2%) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Distribution of study participants, according to sociodemographic data. Brazil, 2022 (N=349)

Variables	Minimum-Maximum	Mean(SD)	n (%)
Age (years)	18-59	25.04(±5.94)	
18-27			264(75.7)
28-37			67(19.2)
38-47			13(3.7)
48-59			05(1.4)
Sex			
Female			181(51.9)
Male			168(48.1)
Current gender identity			
Cis woman			177(50.7)
Cis man			169(48.4)
Trans woman			02(0.6)
Non binary			01(0.3)
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual			199(57.0)
Homosexual			92(26.3)
Bisexual			48(13.8)
No specific term			06(1.7)
Pansexual			03(0.9)
Asexual			01(0.3)
Current occupation			
Student			205(58.7)
Formal worker			80(22.9)
Health professional			48(13.8)
Self-employed			11(3.2)
Unemployed			05(1.4)
Personal income (in MW)			
None			87(24.9)
< 1			109(31.2)
1 - 3			96(27.5)
4 - 6			36(10.3)
> 7			21(6.1)
Schooling			
High school			112(32.1)
Higher education			166(47.6)
Post-graduation			71(20.3)
Religious practice			
Yes			224(64.2)
No			125(35.8)
Religion			
Catholic			169(48.4)
Evangelical			24(6.9)
Spiritist			14(4.0)
Other			13(3.7)
Not applicable			129(37.0)
Co-resident			
Parents			203(58.1)
Colleague/friend			40(11.5)
Partner			39(11.2)
Alone			38(10.9)
Children			04(1.1)
Other			25(7.2)
Marital status			
Single			240(68.8)
Married/Stable union			52(14.9)
Non-stable union			52(14.9)
Widowed			05(1.4)

**Caption:** MW= Minimum wage 1,045.00 BRL (regarding 2020).

In the population studied, 195 (56.0%) people had the habit of seeing some kind of pornography. Of these, 45.0% watched up to two scenes, 29.0% three to four scenes, 13% five to

six scenes and 13.0% seven or more scenes per week from SEM.

Regarding the use of condoms in sexual relations, 58.0% of the participants, of both sexes, did not have the habit of using it, being the majority female, heterosexual, single, student, with income, higher education and porn

habit. When crossing the characterization variables with condom use in sexual intercourse, no variable showed a significant statistical association ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, most participants who consumed SEM (56.9%) practiced sex without a condom, which characterizes HIV risk sexual practice (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Use of condoms in the sexual practices of media consumers, according to sociodemographic variables. Brazil, 2022 (N=349)

Variables	Condom use		p-value*
	Yes n(%)	No n(%)	
Sex			0.353
Male	73(43.5)	95(56.5)	
Female	74(40.9)	107(59.1)	
Current gender identity			0.518
Man	73(43.2)	96(56.8)	
Cis woman	74(41.8)	103(58.2)	
Trans woman	-	2(100.0)	
Non binary	-	1(100.0)	
Sexual orientation			0.800
Homosexual	41(44.6)	51(55.4)	
Bisexual	23(47.9)	25(52.1)	
Heterosexual	79(39.7)	120(60.3)	
No specific term	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	
Pansexual	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	
Asexual	-	1(100.0)	
Marital status			0.507
Single	97(40.4)	143(59.6)	
Married/Stable union	21(40.4)	31(59.6)	
Non-stable union	26(50.0)	26(50.0)	
Other	3(60.0)	2(40.0)	
Current occupation			0.763
Student	90(43.9)	115(56.1)	
Health professional	16(33.3)	32(66.7)	
Self-employed	5(45.5)	6(54.5)	
Unemployed	2(40.0)	3(60.0)	
Formal Worker	34(42.5)	46(57.5)	
Personal income			0.216
No	33(37.9)	54(62.1)	
Yes	114(43.5)	148(56.5)	
Schooling			0.285
High school	54(48.2)	58(51.8)	
Higher education	65(39.2)	101(60.8)	
Post-graduation	28(39.4)	43(60.6)	
Religious practice			0.259
Yes	91(40.6)	133(59.4)	
No	56(44.8)	69(55.2)	
Co-resident			0.379
Alone	15(39.5)	23(60.5)	
Parents	88(43.3)	115(56.7)	
Colleague/friend	20(50.0)	20(50.0)	
Partner	13(33.3)	26(66.7)	
Children	3(75.0)	1(25.0)	
Other	8(32.0)	17(68.0)	
Porn habit			0.383
Yes	84(43.1)	111(56.9)	
No	63(40.9)	91(59.1)	
N. of porn scenes/week (n=195)			0.574
Up to 2	37(42.0)	51(58.0)	
3 - 4	27(48.2)	29(51.8)	
5 - 6	8(32.0)	17(68.0)	
7 or more	12(46.2)	14(53.8)	

**Caption:** \*Chi-square.

## DISCUSSION

According to the sociodemographic profile raised in this study, there was a predominance of young people aged 18 to 37 years. Young adults seem to consume more frequently more SEM, which may be related to the unlimited access to electronic devices that has enabled a new form of access and consumption of pornography in youth, affecting sexual development and gender equality in relationships, with the consequent emergence of sexual changes and social implications<sup>(8)</sup>.

Another important finding in the sample studied was the predominance of women, which reflects the greater participation of women accessing this type of material, although most the pornographic content focus on men and not women, and most producers have the optics to allocate these contents to the male audience<sup>(9)</sup>. However, although men are the biggest consumers of pornography, consumption by women has increased. According to research published in 2019, by the porn portal Pornhub, Brazil is the second country in the world with the highest proportion of women accesses to the site, behind only the Philippines, in which women accounted for 39% of accesses<sup>(10)</sup>.

Most participants had income below one minimum wage, since most were students. Low income is a factor that influences access to virtual porn, as there is need to invest in electronic devices. This finding diverges from another online study conducted in Brazil, in which the average income of participants was found to be higher than the Brazilian minimum wage, which facilitates internet connectivity, the use of mobile phones and computers, and thus the consumption of sexual media<sup>(11)</sup>. However, it is important to note that, currently, the internet permeates all social classes, that is, everyone can have access to this type of media.

Regarding marital status, there was a predominance of singles. Despite the propensity to consume pornography, due to loneliness and sexual frustration, there are women who do not consider pornography a central activity for sexual well-being, although there is a small part that declares to adhere to pornographic sites with compulsive relationship<sup>(9)</sup>. Among men, some indicate that the main reason is related to

personal satisfaction, with the purpose of a moment of pleasure, as well as reported that the accesses became more frequent when they felt alone, frustrated, needy and sexual relations decreased<sup>(12)</sup>.

In the studied sample, most of the interviewees had the habit of watching pornography, which may be related to the great technological advance that facilitates access to these contents, especially in the young population. An online survey study conducted in Brazil showed that 94.8% of the participants had ever consumed pornography in their lives and 66% reported consuming pornography currently<sup>(13)</sup>. Another aspect to be highlighted related to the consumption of SEM is the period of social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led people to feel more lonely, anxious and, in many cases, physically distant from their partners, especially homosexual people, leading them to consume more pornography content<sup>(12)</sup>.

The literature points out positive and negative influences of the habit of consuming SEM in sexual health. As positive, many adolescents and young people use it as a source of information to learn about sexual identity, understand their own desires and how sex between men<sup>(14)</sup> occurs, as well as improve the self-efficacy of condom use and the interest in safe sex<sup>(15)</sup>, since most initiate sexual life permeated with many doubts, which can contribute to unsafe sexual practices<sup>(16)</sup>. However, they can negatively influence sexual behavior in relation to the acceptability of sex without a condom as something common, favoring risks<sup>(8,17)</sup>. This controversy may be associated with recent changes in SEM related to the non-use of condoms in scenes, especially among Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)<sup>(18)</sup>.

Another impact of the negative influence of pornography consumption on healthy social and emotional development, especially when the consumption of sexually explicit content occurs in the early stages of adolescent development, includes hypersexualization, the perpetuation of gender inequality patterns in sexual and affective relationships and victimization of online and offline sexual assaults<sup>(8)</sup>.

An online study, conducted in Brazil, which raised factors associated with sex without condom use by people who consume SEM,

identified that consumption is associated with sexual practice without condom use, and preferring sex scenes without condoms increased the chance of sex without condoms in the study sample by more than four times<sup>(19)</sup>. In addition, in the present study, this risky practice can be explained by the social characteristics of the sample, such as the young age group, which is usually associated with unprotected sex<sup>(11)</sup>, and weak knowledge about STI<sup>(20)</sup>.

Social media facilitates interaction and increases the ability and frequency with which young people share content of a sexual nature, consciously or unconsciously, based on certain interests and characteristics. This practice, when not appropriate, may influence the adoption of inappropriate practices and the development of risky sexual behaviors, especially among young people<sup>(15)</sup>.

A study also conducted online in Brazil showed that the preference for films in the bareback category, an English term that means "cowboy that does not use saddle", widely used by MSM to designate the intentional sex without condom, was significantly associated with the practice of sex without condom among participants, with insertive anal sex, receptive anal sex and oral sex, increasing by 2.6 times the chances of MSM to engage in anal sex without condom<sup>(18)</sup>.

Another study conducted in Taiwan found that exposure to SEM predicted early sexual debut, unsafe sex, and multiple sexual partners ( $p < 0.05$ ) and showed a significant relationship with risky sexual behavior in early adulthood<sup>(21)</sup>.

Nevertheless, the present study did not find association between sexual orientation and the practice of sex without a condom, and most participants self-reported as heterosexual, which reinforces the importance of further studies on the influence of the consumption of this type of media on heterosexual relationships, since there

are still few studies in this area in Brazil<sup>(11)</sup>.

A limitation of the study concerns the fact that the information was self-reported, therefore, subject to memory biases, raising reservations about the accuracy of the information. However, the literature is full of studies that reinforce the feasibility of studying themes that involve taboos, stigma and prejudices, through self-reported data. Another limitation refers to the fact that the sample was not stratified by Brazilian region, being not possible to state statistically that the findings behave equally in all of them, although there was the participation of people from the five regions. Thus, future studies should consider the sample calculation to expand the possibility of generalization at regional and national levels.

## CONCLUSION

The data showed high consumption of SEM, mainly by young people, mostly female, with high level of education, students, with low personal income, without the practice of condom use in sexual intercourse, even with a fixed partner. However, there was no significant statistical association between these characteristics and HIV risk practice.

Given the above, this study brings elements to contribute to the debate and research on the subject, in order to help in the understanding of this reality, in addition to showing the relevance of the elaboration of public policies and prevention strategies to HIV risk practices and, consequently, to the non-illness from Aids, aimed at the consumption of these media, as well as guidance to the producers of this sexual content regarding the importance of preventive care. Furthermore, there were few studies on the consumption of SEM, which makes these data relevant for future studies.

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## CONSUMO DE MÍDIAS SEXUAIS EXPLÍCITAS E O USO DE PRESERVATIVO

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar o uso do preservativo nas práticas sexuais de consumidores de mídias sexuais explícitas, segundo variáveis sociodemográficas. **Método:** estudo transversal e on-line, realizado na Região Nordeste do Brasil, com 349 usuários de redes sociais. Coleta de dados de setembro a dezembro de 2020. Realizaram-se análises univariadas e aplicou-se o teste qui-quadrado para verificar associação entre as variáveis qualitativas, sendo considerado o valor de  $p \leq 0,05$ . **Resultados:** predominou o sexo feminino (51,9%), com média de idade de 25,04 ( $\pm 5,94$ ) anos, em que 56,0% possuíam o hábito de ver algum tipo de pornografia e 58,0% não possuíam o hábito de utilizar preservativo nas relações sexuais, sendo que essa variável não teve associação com nenhuma

característica da amostra estudada. **Considerações finais:** verificou-se o alto consumo de mídias sexualmente explícitas, principalmente por jovens, na maioria do sexo feminino, sem a prática do uso de preservativo nas relações sexuais, apontando a importância da elaboração de políticas públicas e estratégias de prevenção às práticas de risco ao HIV voltadas ao consumo dessas mídias.

**Palavras-chave:** Sexualidade. HIV. Sexo sem proteção. Mídia Audiovisual.

## CONSUMO DE MEDIOS AUDIOVISUALES SEXUALES Y EL USO DE PRESERVATIVOS

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar el uso del preservativo en las prácticas sexuales de consumidores de medios audiovisuales sexuales explícitos, según variables sociodemográficas. **Método:** estudio transversal y *online*, realizado en la Región Nordeste de Brasil, con 349 usuarios de redes sociales. La recolección de los datos ocurrió entre septiembre y diciembre de 2020. Se realizaron análisis univariados y se aplicó la prueba chi-cuadrado para verificar asociación entre las variables cualitativas, siendo considerado el valor de  $p \leq 0,05$ . **Resultados:** predominó el sexo femenino (51,9%), con promedio de edad de 25,04 ( $\pm 5,94$ ) años, en que 56,0% poseía el hábito de ver algún tipo de pornografía y 58,0% no poseía el hábito de utilizar preservativo en las relaciones sexuales, siendo que esa variable no obtuvo asociación con ninguna característica de la muestra estudiada. **Consideraciones finales:** se verificó el alto consumo de medios audiovisuales sexualmente explícitos, principalmente por jóvenes, en la mayoría del sexo femenino, sin la práctica del uso de preservativo en las relaciones sexuales, señalando la importancia de la elaboración de políticas públicas y estrategias de prevención a las prácticas de riesgo al VIH dirigidas al consumo de esos medios audiovisuales.

**Palabras clave:** Sexualidad. VIH. Sexo sin protección. Medios Audiovisuales.

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**Corresponding author:** Chrystiany Pl cido de Brito Vieira. Avenida Presidente Kenedy, 8801, Bairro Tabajaras, Condom nio Aldebaran, Lote 13, Quadra K, Teresina, Piaul, Brasil. 86 99459-1277, e-mailchrystiany@ufpi.edu.br

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