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## Effat Merghati Khoei

*Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran*

**Veiled truths: Iranian women and risky sexual behavior in the context of substance use**

**Introduction:** Substance use disorders and risky sexual behavior coexist for some women. Explanatory models of women's sexuality in the context of substance use are understudied. This study aimed to explore how women's sexual behavior can become risky in the context of substance use.

**Methods:** In this ethnographic inquiry, we approached 25 women with substance use disorders (SUDs) at two Drop-In-Centers (DICs) in South Tehran. Observation, semi-structured interviews and field notes were used to collect data. Qualitative content analysis was used to attain the explanatory model of women's sexual behaviours in the context of substance use.

**Results:** Three major themes emerged from the data analysis regarding their lives in the context of substance use; 1) The struggle to survive; 2) Unsafe living context; and 3) Negative

self-perception. Subthemes were identified as self-disturbed perception, loss of contact with family, social stigma, forgetfulness, worthlessness and low self-efficacy.

**Conclusion:** Findings suggest that SUDs are highly interwoven with women's sexual health, facilitating a shift towards risky behaviors. Integration of safe sexual skills building programs into substance use treatment is needed.

### Speaker Biography

Effat Merghati Khoei is an Associate Professor at Iranian National Center of Addiction Studies (INCAS) and Director of Sexual and Family Health Division in Brain and Spinal Injury Research Center (BASIR), Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS), Iran.

e: [effat\\_mer@yahoo.com](mailto:effat_mer@yahoo.com)

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