

## **The experiences of participation in the SuperMIX study: A qualitative investigation**

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**Introduction/Issues:** There is minimal empirical evidence on the experience of participating in a longitudinal study from the participants perspective. This qualitative study explored how participants involved in the SuperMIX longitudinal cohort study (N=1,300), active since 2008, reflect on their experience of participation, including how they feel about particular survey questions their relationships with researchers and challenges or benefits of being involved.

**Method/Approach:** SuperMIX cohort participants were recruited to take part in an in-depth semi-structured interview which focussed on their experiences of the annual structured survey. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using an inductive approach.

**Key Findings:** Fifteen participants were interviewed. Some participants found sections of the survey uncomfortable and potentially irrelevant, including those focussed on risks associated with shared drug use, sexual histories and risk taking. This was especially the case before participants felt they had developed a relationship with the study and rapport with the researchers. On the other hand, some participants explained how they felt the survey created a therapeutic-like experience, especially when responding to the well-being and mental health screening tools.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Findings highlight how participation in the longitudinal SuperMIX study provides an opportunity for on-going engagement with participants that affords them not only a chance to share their experiences, but also to contribute to knowledge production. Rapport was important and crucial for ongoing involvement in the study, and to ensure participants felt comfortable discussing potentially difficult and personal questions. Most participants felt involvement in SuperMIX positively impacted their life.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** This data will provide empirical evidence to support alterations to the current annual SuperMIX survey, ensuring the participant's wellbeing is at the forefront of these changes.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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