

**IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM ON SAFE
SEX PRACTICE AMONG BROTHEL BASED COMMERCIAL
SEX WORKERS IN BANGLADESH**

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ABSTRACT

Though HIV infection is low in Bangladesh, all the possible risk factors for a rapid spread of the virus are present in and around the country. The National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program of Bangladesh is working to prevent and control of HIV infection with high-risk groups and to limit its spread in the general population without discriminating and stigmatizing the high-risk groups.

This study identifies the factors and their effect on knowledge about HIV transmission and safe sex practice, and the impact of the HIV/AIDS Prevention Program on safe sex practice among brothel based commercial sex workers (CSWs) in Bangladesh. The study employs data from the Behavioral Surveillance Survey of Bangladesh, 2000. Nine hundred and eight cases were used in the analysis.

The majority of the sex workers were young (average age 24), poorly educated (80% never attended school) and had low income (average Tk. 1295/week). Over one fifth of the respondents participated in the HIV prevention program and a large proportion of the sex workers did not have a good sense of self-esteem or perceived future. Just over half of the sex workers perceived that they were at risk of HIV/AIDS. About one third of the sex workers did not have any knowledge about how HIV is transmitted and only one fifth of the respondents used a condom with their last client.

The multivariate analysis showed that knowledge of the CSWs were dependent on self-perceived risk, participation in the HIV/AIDS program, education, duration of profession and income of the CSWs. Impact of the HIV/AIDS program had the most powerful effect on the knowledge of the sex workers, followed by their self-perceived risk. Safe sex practice is dependent on age and income of the respondents, participation in the HIV/AIDS program and knowledge of the sex worker. The result indicated that consistent condom use was two times more likely among those who participated in the HIV program.

Since 1985, National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program has performed activities to combat HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh. The study implied that the HIV/AIDS Prevention Program for brothel CSWs remains inadequate. The program could be more effective if health education on safe sex and condom use is provided through both workplace-based and community-based health education. Provisions for regular physical examination will also strengthen the program through motivating CSWs to use condoms to prevent STD. Provisions for vocational training for CSWs will provide sense of self-esteem and hope for the future that will motivate the sex workers to use condoms. Furthermore, more political and social support is required to sustain the program.

**KEY WORDS: HIV/AIDS/ BROTHEL BASED/ SEX WORKERS/ SAFE
SEX PRACTICE/ BANGLADESH.**

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