Exploration of the high risk status of young women for HIV/AIDS and their health seeming behaviour for sexual and reproductive health problems in urban slums of Madurai, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Young people, particularly those aged 15 to 24 years, are generally at a high risk of HIV/ AIDS. HIV prevalence in urban slums has been consistently high. This report presents the results of a study using mixed method approach in five selected slums of Madurai Corporation to explore and correlate the factors that influence the young women for HIV risk status and their health seeking behaviour for sexual and reproductive health problems.

Methods: For quantitative data collection, a semi-structured interview was conducted among 650 young women (155 married and 495 unmarried) who were selected through a systematic random sampling technique. Qualitative data were collected by conducting 11 focus group discussions with 88 participants.

Results: Most of the young women (76%) were at moderate risk for HIV. More than half (60.31%) in both the groups had inadequate knowledge and had a very low risk perception. Nearly 80% portrayed a higher self efficacy over psychosocial factors. Absence of condom use (90%) and low self efficacy to insist their partner for condom use and HIV testing was contributing to HIV risk among 35% of the married women. There was a significant positive relationship between HIV risk status and health seeking behaviour for the unmarried (r=0.2 at p<0.001). It is predicted that young married women who were employed (OR=0.278, p≤0.001); had displayed a favourable attitude (OR=0.547, p<0.001) high self efficacy (OR=0.327, p<0.001); high risk perception (OR=0.482, p<0.001) and whose partner did not use drugs have lesser chance of acquiring HIV. Among the unmarried women, lower income (OR=1.528, p≤0.05), severe reproductive problems (OR=1.981, p≤0.05), low HIV risk perception (OR=0.20, p≤0.001) were significant predictors of HIV risk. Qualitative results corroborated the survey findings. Interpretation: The unmarried had a higher risk status (t=7.256,
p<0.001), experienced more reproductive problems and had inadequate health seeking behaviour (t=10.668, p<0.001) than that of the married women.

Conclusion: Strategies aimed at reducing vulnerabilities through providing culturally, gender appropriate life skill education that would increase their risk perception, self efficacy is essential along with policy support & women empowerment.

Key Words: HIV/ AIDS, health seeking behaviour, risk status, sexual and reproductive health, slums, STI, Young women.