

Association of Vulnerability and Behavioural Outcomes of FSWs Linked with TI Prevention HIV Program: An Evidence from Cross-Sectional Behavioural Study in Thane District of Maharashtra

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Abstract : Background: It is important for targeted interventions to consider vulnerabilities of female sex workers (FSWs) such as poverty, work-related mobility and literacy for effective human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention. This paper examines the association between vulnerability and behavioural outcomes among FSWs in Thane district, Maharashtra under USAID PHFI-PIPPSE project. Methods: Data were used from the Behavioural Tracking Survey, a cross-sectional behavioural study conducted in 2015 with 503 FSWs randomly selected from 12 TI-NGOs which were functioning and providing services to FSWs in Thane district prior to April 2014 in Thane district of Maharashtra. We have created the "vulnerability index", a composite index of literacy, factors of dependence (alternative livelihood options, current debt), and aspects of sex work (mobility and duration in sex work) as a dependent variable. The key independent measures used were program exposure to intervention, service uptake, self-confidence, and self-identity. Bi-variate and multivariate logistic regressions were used to examine the study objectives. Results: A higher proportion of FSWs who were in the age-group 18-25 years from brothel/street/home/lodge-based were categorized as highly vulnerable to HIV risk as compared to bar-based sex worker (74.1% versus 59.8%, P,0.002); regression analysis highlighted lower odds of vulnerability among FSWs who were aware of services and visited NGO clinic for medical check-up and counselling for STI [AOR= 0.092, 95% CI 0.018-0.460; P,0.004], However, lower odds of vulnerability on confident in supporting fellow sex worker in crisis [AOR= 0.601, 95% CI 0.476-0.758; P, 0.000] and were able to turn away clients when they refused to use a condom during sex [AOR= 0.524, 95% CI 0.342-0.802; P, 0.003]. Conclusion: The results highlight that FSWs associated with TIs and getting services are less vulnerable and highly empowered. As a result of behavioural change communication and other services provided by TIs, FSWs were able to successfully negotiate about condom use with their clients and manage solidarity in the crisis situation for fellow FSWs. Therefore, it is evident from study paper that TI prevention programs may transform the lives of masses considerably and may open a window of opportunity to infuse the information and awareness about HIV risk.

Keywords : female sex worker, HIV prevention, HIV service uptake, vulnerability

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