

**Original Article****A PROFILE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG TEXTILE WORKERS IN CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS IN SURAT CITY****Bhautik Modi<sup>1</sup>, Jay Padodara<sup>2</sup>, Sarita Mangukiya<sup>2</sup>, Vimalkumar Tailor<sup>3</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Resident, <sup>2</sup>Intern, <sup>3</sup>Volunteer, Department of Community Medicine, SMIMER, Surat**Correspondence:** dr\_bhautikmodi@yahoo.co.in**ABSTRACT**

HIV infection and AIDS is more prevalent in India and occurs in all states.<sup>2</sup> Today, there are around 2.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in India.<sup>1</sup> Surat city in the western state of Gujarat attracts a very large migrant population. As most of them belong to sexually active age group, their exposure to sex workers or having multiple sexual partnerships is very high. The aim of this study was to explore the sexual behavior among textile factory workers in Surat and assess the knowledge and awareness about mode of transmission of HIV. This cross-sectional study of 250 textile workers reveal that 76.4% worker know that HIV can be transmitted by unsafe sexual route while 43.2% of workers does not know that HIV can be spread through reused injections. 43 worker currently had extra marital or premarital sexual relations and among them 48.8% had used condom during last such intercourse.

**Keywords:** HIV, AIDS, Awareness, Textile worker, Surat**INTRODUCTION**

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and AIDS is threatening the survival of many nations. HIV is a virus that takes over certain immune system cells to make many copies of itself. HIV causes slow but constant damage to the immune system. AIDS is 100% fatal disease, also known as 'White Disease'. It can't be cured but can be effectively prevented by changing sexual behavior among population.

In India, since the first AIDS case was detected in 1986<sup>1</sup>, HIV infection and AIDS rapidly spread to the other part of the country and now widely prevalent in many states. According to the National AIDS Control Organization HIV prevalence rate in India is 0.36%.<sup>2</sup> There are estimated 2.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in India.<sup>1</sup>

The prevalence rate of HIV in Gujarat is 0.25%.<sup>3</sup> Surat city in the western state of Gujarat attracts a very large migrant population from all over India; mainly young adults who work in the textile, dyeing printing mills, diamond and other small-scale industries. As most of them belong to sexually active age group, their exposure to sex workers or having multiple sexual partnerships is very high. This makes them a group with a sexually vulnerable high-risk behavior. Textile industry is one of the major industries which attract large number of single male migrants from across the country. Most of the migrant workers are highly mobile and often live in unhygienic conditions in urban slums. Long working hours, relative isolation from the family and geographical mobility may foster casual sexual relationships and make them highly vulnerable to STD and

HIV/AIDS. In a survey, 70 percent of commercial sex workers in India reported that their main reason for not using condoms was that their customers objected.<sup>2</sup> Inaccurate information about the transmission and prevention of HIV create irrational behavior and misperceptions of personal risks.<sup>4</sup>

The current study is conducted among textile worker to assess their knowledge and behavioural risk regarding HIV/AIDS.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The current study was conducted in various small textile industries in Surat city. In the city large numbers of such industries were there, out of that 5 industries were selected based on the compliance from the owner and travelling convenience. From each industry 50 workers were included in the study based on their availability during the lunch break hours.

An individual in depth interview was conducted to collect the desired information on knowledge and behaviour. Data was recorded in pretested semi structured questioner. Interviews were conducted during the lunch break period to minimize the work hour loss. Data collection continues over a two month period from April to May 2008. Informed verbal consent was sought from all the participants. Two worker had denied to participate which were replaced by other workers from same industry. Though agreed, fourteen workers could not be interviewed due to their inability to understand Hindi, English or Gujarati language. They were also replaced by suitable workers. The

collected data was digitized and analyzed using Epi info software.

## RESULTS

Total 250 textile worker were interviewed to assess their knowledge and behaviour.

**Table 1:** Knowledge about Mode of Transmission of HIV

Mode of Transmission	Yes	No
Unsafe Sex	191 (76.4%)	19 (7.6%)
Kissing	95 (38%)	115 (46%)
Holding Hands	32 (12.8%)	176 (70.4%)
Sharing Utensils	43 (17.2%)	165 (66%)
Blood Transfusion	152 (60.8%)	56 (22.4%)
Reused Injections	100 (40%)	108 (43.2%)

Table 1 show that 60.8% and 76.4% of the respondents were aware about the unsafe sexual relations and blood transfusion respectively as a possible mode of getting infection. However, only 40% perceived reused injections as a risk for getting HIV infection. A large group of workers (38%) also believe that it is spread by kissing. It is

reassuring to note that only a minority incorrectly stated that disease spreads through holding hands (12.8%) and sharing utensils (17.2%). And it is a serious concern that 43.2% of workers does not know that HIV can spread through reused injections.

**Table 2:** The Sexual Partner during Their First Intercourse

Sexual Behaviour	No. of Workers (%)
1 <sup>st</sup> Sexual Partner (n=250)	
Wife	154 (61.6)
CSWs	11 (4.4)
Girlfriend	44 (17.6)
Not had sex yet	41 (16.4)
Current sex partner except wife (n=209)	
CSW	16 (7.6)
Neighbour	2 (1.0)
Girlfriend	25 (12.0)
No other sex partner	166 (79.4)
Type of Sex (n=43)	
Only Vaginal	29 (67.4)
Oral & Vaginal	13 (30.2)
Anal sex & Vaginal Sex	1 (2.3)
Used Condom during last intercourse (n=43)	21 (48.8)

Table 2 reveals that the vast majority (61%) of workers have had first sexual experience with their wife. The reporting by 17.6% of the respondents of having their first sexual experience with their girl friend reflects that pre-marital sex is gaining momentum in this category of individuals.

The fact that 4.4% of them had their early sexual intercourse with a CSW has grave implications<sup>5</sup>, as it has been shown that in disadvantaged groups the condom usage could be very low due to ignorance and poor bargaining skills, unless capacity building exercises have been undertaken among the CSWs. Sex with CSWs, being in the sex industry and receptive anal sex has been reported to be strongly associated with the risk of acquiring HIV infection. Risky sexual behavior of mobile

and travelling populations has also been linked to serious concerns of acquiring of HIV infection.

Table 2 also shows that out of 209 who have had experienced sexual intercourse, 7.6% of workers had admitted that they currently go out for sex with CSWs. This is quite a serious finding. The table shows that 12% of workers admitted that they have an extra marital affair with girl friend. Although sex work is legal in some countries, associated activities including soliciting and brothel keeping are penalized. Often women get involved with sex work because of poverty or marital break-up or they are forced into it.

Only one worker was having anal sex. Workers that are staying away from their wife, go out for sex to CSWs and most of them have vaginal sex with them.

Usage of condom is most serious issue among workers having casual sexual relations. Out of 43 who currently had sexual relations apart from wife, only 48.8 % used condom during their last intercourse. This shows very serious issue for usage of condom among CSWs and need to focus for prevention of spread of HIV/AIDS

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The level of knowledge was not satisfactory regarding mode of transmission of HIV. Around 75% of workers know that HIV is spread by sexual route. 43% do not know the important mode that is reused infected syringes and needles. More than 60% of respondents know that HIV is not spread by holding hands or sharing utensils. This indicates that knowledge regarding how HIV/AIDS is not spread is also need to be focused in IEC activities. Correct knowledge regarding how HIV not spread is also helps to reduce HIV related stigma and discrimination.

A study in Chennai showed that around 67% males and 55% females were aware of unsafe sex as mode of transmission.<sup>6</sup> These results are nearly equal to our study results which shows that around 75% of study population know sexual mode of transmission of HIV. However similar study conducted among prostitutes and clients revealed that 77% know the reused injection as an important route of spread<sup>7</sup> in contrast to 40% in current study. This point toward increase efforts needed to raise knowledge of population on route of spread of HIV infection.

In the study, it was observed that 4.4% of workers had their first experience of sex is with CSWs. This indicates CSWs activity in our society is known to large group of vulnerable unmarried young people. This is the reason for recommendation of all CSWs must necessarily be covered in our health sector. Around 17% of workers had first sex with their girlfriend before marriage. This shows increase rate of premarital sex in the city. This reveals the role of condom promotion and idea of safe sex among young generation to prevent spread of HIV/AIDS among them.

The study reveals the indulgence of extramarital affairs in community. 7. 6% of workers have

regular sexual activity with CSWs and 12% have with their girlfriends. This shows importance of policies to contain sero-positivity among CSWs. Message of celibacy and faithfulness to single part should be spread in community. This can be achieved by the help of IEC materials and mass-media in society.

The study shows that, 48.8% of workers who go out for extramarital or premarital sex had not used condom during last sexual encounter. This is area of concern and need focused Intervention to be started by government in migrant groups. At least all core groups should be motivated to correct and consistent use of condom for prevention of spread of HIV and STDs.

Besides of new programmes, attention should also be given to better implementation of the current strategies to increase awareness and safe sexual behavior of population. These with the hard work of health professionals will provide an immense progress in global fight against AIDS.

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