



ORIGINAL

Exploration of commercial sex workers' experiences of condom use in coastal and border areas: a Qualitative Study

Exploración de las experiencias de las trabajadoras sexuales comerciales sobre el uso del condón en zonas costeras y fronterizas: un estudio cualitativo

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: sexual behavior is the basis of self-identity in society, men who have sex with men (MSM) have a certain role in the spread of HIV AIDS, as a group at high risk, of course the use of condoms is very important in preventing the spread sexually transmitted diseases. Tarakan is the only city in the North Kalimantan region and is part of the coastal area bordering Malaysia, besides Tarakan is one of the industrial centers in Kalimantan with an island that has limited access to other regions. The number of industry and workers from outside have caused prostitution in Tarakan to become increasingly rampant, the existence of application facilities specifically for LSL makes it easier their space to carry out sexual transactions.

Objective: the objective of this study was to explore the experiences of male commercial sex workers regarding condom use in the area borders and coast of Tarakan City.

Method: this study uses a phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews. Participants are male sex workers who work. As Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) who have worked as CSWs for at least 12 months, in-depth interviews were conducted directly from July to August 2024, followed by transcription, coding, theme determination and analysis with 30 participants.

Results: the results of interviews with female PSK found: (1) Self-perception, (2) Support for MSM application facilities and social environment, (3) economic background, (4) condom negotiation skills, (5) self-acceptance as a risk of sex work.

Conclusion: CSWs with an MSM background make their self-perception a form of abnormality in their sexual orientation, thus making it... as a reason for working as a PSK based on sexual needs, poor economic background, work as a male commercial sex worker

Men are supported by the many MSM applications or groups available and can monitor the existence and types of sexual services offered in the application. Furthermore, in sexual activities/sexual services, the ability to negotiate the use of condoms is also influenced by economic needs, social needs, and sexual, sexual imagination that encourages challenging sex, so that condom use is not optimal.

Keywords: Commercial Sex Workers; Men Having Sex With Men; Condoms.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el comportamiento sexual es la base de la identidad personal en la sociedad. Los hombres que tienen relaciones sexuales con hombres (HSH) desempeñan un papel importante en la propagación del VIH/

SIDA, ya que constituyen un grupo de alto riesgo. Por supuesto, el uso de preservativos es muy importante para prevenir la propagación de enfermedades de transmisión sexual. Tarakan es la única ciudad de la región de Kalimantan Septentrional y forma parte de la zona costera fronteriza con Malasia. Además, Tarakan es uno de los centros industriales de Kalimantan, con una isla que tiene un acceso limitado a otras regiones. El número de industrias y trabajadores procedentes del exterior ha provocado que la prostitución en Tarakan sea cada vez más frecuente, y la existencia de aplicaciones específicas para LSL facilita su espacio para llevar a cabo transacciones sexuales.

Objetivo: el objetivo de este estudio fue explorar las experiencias de los trabajadores sexuales masculinos en relación con el uso del preservativo en la zona fronteriza y costera de la ciudad de Tarakan.

Método: este estudio utiliza un enfoque fenomenológico con entrevistas en profundidad. Los participantes son trabajadores sexuales masculinos que trabajan como trabajadores sexuales comerciales (CSW) y que han trabajado como CSW durante al menos 12 meses. Las entrevistas en profundidad se realizaron directamente entre julio y agosto de 2024, seguidas de la transcripción, codificación, determinación de temas y análisis con 30 participantes.

Resultados: los resultados de las entrevistas con las PSK revelaron: (1) autopercepción, (2) apoyo a las instalaciones de aplicación de MSM y al entorno social, (3) antecedentes económicos, (4) habilidades de negociación del uso del preservativo, (5) autoaceptación como riesgo del trabajo sexual.

Conclusión: las trabajadoras sexuales con antecedentes MSM convierten su autopercepción en una forma de anormalidad en su orientación sexual, lo que las lleva a trabajar como PSK basándose en necesidades sexuales, antecedentes económicos precarios y trabajo como trabajadores sexuales masculinos.

Los hombres cuentan con el apoyo de las numerosas aplicaciones o grupos MSM disponibles y pueden supervisar la existencia y los tipos de servicios sexuales que se ofrecen en la aplicación. Además, en las actividades sexuales/servicios sexuales, la capacidad de negociar el uso de preservativos también se ve influida por las necesidades económicas, las necesidades sociales y la imaginación sexual que fomenta el sexo arriesgado, por lo que el uso del preservativo no es óptimo.

Palabras clave: Trabajadores Sexuales; Hombres que Tienen Relaciones Sexuales con Hombres; Preservativos.

INTRODUCTION

Commercial sex workers are one of the groups that are very vulnerable to risky sexual behavior and the potential for HIV AIDS transmission. Commercial sex workers are one of the jobs that have a high risk of contracting and transmitting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV AIDS. The prevalence of populations at high risk of contracting and transmitting HIV AIDS are female sex workers and male sex workers who work as sex workers. MSM have a 22 percent risk of contracting or transmitting HIV Female PKS and MSM are the most vulnerable populations to infection due to their sexual patterns. Anal sex patterns can quickly transmit the HIV virus or other STDs. Another report reported that anal sex is ten times more contagious than vaginal sex.⁽¹⁾ The main factor in the spread of HIV virus among MSM is caused by low condom use. Condom use is the only protection that can be most effective against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, when used correctly. Condoms provide practical and effective benefits in preventing HIV transmission.⁽²⁾ Based on another study, using condoms consistently reduce HIV transmission by more than 70 % in heterosexual couples in PLWHA in the Philippines.⁽³⁾ In other statements, consistent condom use is an effective strategy in preventing HIV transmission and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).⁽⁴⁾ MSM who have had anal sex report inconsistent condom use.⁽⁵⁾ MSM PLWHA do not use condoms because they are not satisfied with sexual relations. Then another reason is that couples find it difficult to communicate, want to try new things and fear of disclosure.⁽⁶⁾ Several studies have reported several factors that are closely related to inconsistency in condom use such as stigma. In another study, efforts to control the spread of HIV in MSM depend on the development of interpersonal communication skills regarding condom negotiation and open status, health education about condom use and disclosure of HIV status, this is supported by a meta-analysis which proves that interventions If this is done consistently, it will be successful in increasing condom use and reducing unprotected anal sex.⁽⁷⁾ In starting a relationship, MSM use several ways to communicate, one of which is by using social media. With the media, MSM can be encouraged to interact freely with the community without hiding any status.⁽⁸⁾ Good communication about HIV prevention is the main key in preventing HIV, because good communication will create an attitude of reducing sexual risk, including consistent condom use at the individual level.⁽⁹⁾ Aholou et al.⁽¹⁰⁾ in their study also explained that communication between MSM before having sex will create safer sexual practices and reduce the spread of HIV.

The province of North Kalimantan, which is located in the border region with Malaysia, is an industrial region, making this region have opportunities. big in getting sex customers, the existence of localized areas supports prostitution activities to run continuously. Data from the provincial health office North Kalimantan,

the number of female PSKs was 342 people, while the MSM group was 581286 people who underwent VCT and 32 people were declared reactive. and There is no data on how many MSL work as sex workers, the geographical conditions of the coast and borders and the transit city as the only city in the province North Kalimantan makes Tarakan a strategic area in reaching other areas in the province of North Kalimantan. In response to this condition, it is necessary given education about preventing HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, so that this risk group needs to use condoms consistently.

METHOD

The research design method uses a phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews, which were conducted on 30 CSWs who had worked as CSW for at least 12 months and domiciled in Tarakan. Through this design, data was found on female PSK whose background in becoming CSW is economic conditions and problems in the family, while in MSL it is motivated by an abnormal sexual orientation and reasons that cause them to choose to become PSK and reasons for inconsistent condom use. The urgency of this research is to look at how sexual behavior in female CSWs with MSM in using condoms to prevent transmission. sexually transmitted diseases such as sexually transmitted infections, HIV AIDS and so on.

Participant

30 CSWs participants, namely 20 women and 10 MSM, using the snowball technique to become participants with the inclusion criteria: (1) having worked as a PSK for at least 12 months at the time of the interview, (2) willing to voluntarily participate in this research. (3) PSK who live in Tarakan City, North Kalimantan. Before the interview began, the researcher ensured that there was no interaction between the participant and the interviewer. The interviewer introduced himself as a nursing student who was completing his studies. If the participant was willing, he was asked to sign a letter of consent as a participant and If during the interview process a participant wants to withdraw, the researcher gives the participant the option of whether they still want to continue participating in the interview. research or not.

Data collection

Data Collection was carried out using structured interviews, interviews were conducted one by one and the interview location was agreed upon with the participants who could make participants were comfortable telling their experiences as sex workers in negotiating condom use. After the interview, the researcher used. The transcript.com application makes it easier for researchers to transcribe interview results, after which the researcher listens to them one by one and matches them with the transcript results. from the application. A pseudonym or participant code is given to disguise the PSK data.

Data analysis

Researchers reviewed the interview transcripts closely and analyzed sentence by sentence, paying attention to important phrases and critical statements that describe the experiences of CSWs in negotiating condom use. After identifying with the data transcripts using transcript.com, researchers will listen slowly and match the transcript results, then determine the key words by carefully categorizing them into meaning clusters. These clusters were further refined and consolidated into themes that encapsulated the essence of the participants' experiences. After the themes have been determined, then a descriptive description of the keywords and the themes found is written.

Ethical considerations

The research ethics committee of the Faculty of Nursing (FIK) University of Indonesia has approved this research with letter number: KET- 135 / UN2.F12.D1.21 / PPM.00.02 / 2024, the willingness of participants to be involved in this research is marked by signing an agreement to participate in this research. Research activities prioritize comfort and mutual trust between participants and researchers. Researchers give participants the freedom to continue participating or refuse to participate. The results of the interviews are stored on an external hard disk and the data is given a participant code to disguise participant data. Privacy and confidentiality are maintained, with confidentiality agreements signed by participants, referees, and interviewer after consent was given. Pseudonyms are used to anonymize the data, and the research materials will be kept confidential. secure. Interview results are immediately deleted from the recording device after being stored securely.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participants according to their age, educational level, length of service, and marital status.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants Based on Age, Education Level, Length of Service and Marital Status in Phase I Research

Characteristic	Total (n = 30)	%
Age (year)		
Late adolescence (17-25 years)	12	40
Early adulthood (26-35 years)	10	33,3
Late adulthood (36-45 years)	7	23,3
Early elderly (46-55 years)	1	3,3
Type of CSW		
Female CSW	20	66,7
CSW men sex men	10	33,3
Education		
Elementary (SD)	7	23,3
Middle (SMP)	13	43,3
High school (SMA)	10	33,3
Length of work as a PSK		
6-12 months	1	33,3
13-24 months	2	6,6
25-36 months	12	40
37-48 months	5	16,6
48 months	10	33,3
Marital status		
married	22	73,3
Not married	18	26,7

Thematic Findings

Theme 1: Lack of knowledge about HIV

Lack of knowledge about HIV was explored during the interviews, the CSWs did not have a deep understanding of HIV including the causes, prevention and handling, from the data found That the lack of understanding and ability to analyze information received through health education is linked to educational background. Low besides the interest or interest of PSK in receiving information that tends to be small with the one-way method that has been given is not well understood. “.. the way to prevent HIV is “by injecting antibiotics every month” (p1,p2,p7), and “ .. so you don’t get infected, take antibiotics every day.....” (p12,p9,p11,p15), and more only accept guests who look clean so you don’t get infected...” (p10, p12,p17,p18 p20).

Theme 2: Condom use

Perceptions about condom use are influenced by a lack of understanding of the benefits of condoms and the existence of obstacles in use. condoms are influenced by the availability and access to condoms, as well as knowledge of how to use condoms correctly: “...didn’t use condoms because they ran out of condoms...” (p10,p15), “...It’s okay for guests to be clean and not use condoms...” (p1,p17), “...if they use condoms, it’s not comfortable...”(p4,p12), and “...the guest decides whether to use condoms or not...” (p5,p20)

Theme 3: Condom Negotiations

Condom negotiation is a strategy used to persuade guests/customers to use condoms during sex, to HIV transmission, the obstacles found are that guests are the ones who determine whether to use condoms or not, besides that gender war has a big influence on condom use decision besides self-perception about the high possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV is considered as a work risk that must be faced if infected. “... afraid to offer condoms, especially if drunk, afraid of being roughed up..” (p3,p7), “.. if infected what else can you do, it’s called work like this, the risk is big..” (P5,p11,) “... customer satisfaction must be prioritized, if they refuse to use condoms, they will still be served..” (p9,p13.), “..If you ask for full service, you have to follow it, because you have to pay more...” (p5,p20) and “..if you are drunk, you don’t remember to use a condom”..(p19)

Theme 4: low economic background

Low economic background is the condition most often found in commercial sex workers, being the backbone of the family or becoming Single parents who have children to raise are the reasons given by most of the participants in this study.

“.. I need money to support my children and parents..” (p6,p25,..)

- “... every month I have to send money to my parents and children..”(p7,p8,p10,p3,p4)
 “.. it’s hard to get a job now, especially with only a junior high school diploma...” (p12,,p20)
 “..I didn’t go to school so it’s hard to get a job..” (p5,p15.)
 “.. I’ve tried many other jobs but it’s hard to get money, here I get quite a bit...” (p11,p17,..)

Theme 5: Support for condom use

Support for condom use is one of the important things in the success of CSWs in using condoms, support from fellow CSWs, support from... from pimps and the environment as well as the government are very important in supporting the use of condoms consistently.

“.. if the condoms run out, usually I ask a friend who goes to the city to buy them..” (p2,p7,..) “..the one who holds the condoms is the mother, we are not allowed to hold the condoms, so if there is a supply of condoms, we buy them ourselves..” (p9,p15.)

“.. there is no rule about the obligation to use condoms in this area, it’s all up to you..” (p5,p12,..)

“... the boss doesn’t really care if the guest uses a condom or not, as long as they pay the room rent once they play..” (10,p17,..)

Meanwhile, the themes resulting from interviews with MSM CSWs are:

- Theme 1. Self-perception of MSM: self-perception is seen when the interviewer interacts at the beginning, where the participant introduces himself as having an abnormal sexual orientation, then the perception... self is formed because of childhood trauma, where participants tend to be treated like girls when they were little. Causes of attraction to others. The types vary between informants, some feel different since childhood and their parents also feel that their child is a girl, some experience harassment, failure in relationships with women and try and try. Most give a portion of interest of 70 % for men and 30 % for women. Only a small portion who are interested in women and are closed to relationships with other men. When asked about the participants’ self-identity, some said they were women, but others said they were men who only liked men.

“..As a child, I was often treated like a girl, dressed like a girl, had my hair tied up, and sometimes had make-up done by my siblings and friends.my mother” (p2, p4, p7, p8, p9, p10)

“.. I understand that I am a man but I am more interested in men” (p5,p1,p3)

- Theme 2. Lack of knowledge about the function of condoms: knowledge about the function of condoms was seen when participants explored the function of condoms, where, participants explained that condoms had no effect.regarding disease prevention, many of our friends who usually use condoms still get infected with diseases, this is just a matter of luck and also the important thing is to maintain cleanliness before serving customers.

“ HIV is hard to predict, even if we use condoms, if it is our fate to get infected, we will get it..” (p2, p4, p7, p8, p9, p10)

“.. I understand that condoms can prevent the transmission of HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, but we are also looking for satisfaction and condoms make us feel uncomfortable..” (p5,p1,p6,)

- Theme 3. MSM group application: MSM group application support and social interaction environment The digital era makes it easier for MSM groups to interact in one place, on social media we can easily find applications that accommodate groups. MSM and also MSM who have side jobs as CSWs. In addition, the social interaction environment makes MSM have challenges in providing services sex with male customers, the circle of friends becomes something that provides an opportunity to try out sexual imagination or desires knowledge about men having sex with men that drives them to have that sex.

“It is very easy to offer yourself for MSM sex services, because there are many applications that bring us MSM together” (p1,p2,p3,p4,p5,p6,p7,p8,p9,p10)

“ Only close friends know that I am LSL (p1,p2,p3,p5,p6,p7,p8,p9,p10)

- Theme 4. Economic background: poor economic conditions mean that LSL sex workers will accept conditions or comply with the wishes of customers who are not willing to use condoms when... sexual interaction, this is due to economic needs which create fear that if MSL PSK force customers to use condoms, customers will leave and the transaction is canceled, and income will decrease. In addition, the economic conditions are the reason 7 out of 10 participants who complained about the economic conditions were willing to become LSL PSK and at the same time make it a way to satisfy their sexual desires.

“I make this job an additional source of income” (p1.p3.p4.p7)

“At first it was just for fun, but it turned out to be profitable, and I was satisfied and got money too” (p10,p2,p9,p5)

“The results of this work cover my living expenses and tuition fees” (p1,8,p6)

“Can receive 1-4 guests per day, many of the company workers like the Tarakan outer camp also book” (p1,p2,p8,p9)

- Theme 5. Condom use negotiation skills: Negotiation on condom use by 10 MSM. CSWs 6 who conducted negotiations, even though they had conducted negotiations, the customers still refused to use them condoms for various reasons, one of which makes MSM CSWs follow the wishes of customers is the need to satisfy themselves, using condoms will not make us satisfied when having sex. Sexual imagination makes MSM CSWs accept decisions from customers in addition to the inability to negotiate so that the dominant decision-making in sex services is the customer.

“ I’m afraid that customers will cancel their services if I keep offering condoms” (P2,p3,p4,p8,p10,)

“offer a condom just for the sake of offering it, if you refuse to use a condom but it’s suitable then continue” (p1,p2,p3,p4,p5,p6,p7).

“Usually we just play straight away without asking whether we want to use a condom or not” (p4,p5,p10,)

“Using condoms is uncomfortable” (p1,p2,p4,p5,p8,p9,10)

- Theme 6. Self-acceptance: self-acceptance as an occupational risk As a group at high risk of contracting and transmitting HIV AIDS, the tendency to prevent this condition does not make MSM CSWs do this. prevention efforts, but LSK sex workers believe that the risk of their work is that they can contract sexually transmitted diseases or HIV AIDS, and This is the fate they must accept as a consequence of working in sex services.

“What else can we do, the risks of working like this, changing partners, if you get sick, it’s destiny” (p3,p4,p7,p3,p9,p10)

“If it turns out I am infected, I am ready or not, I have to accept it because of the work risks” (p2,p3,p11,p5,p6)

DISCUSSION

CSWs as a group that is vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV certainly have an important role in preventing the transmission of these diseases. Of the 5 themes displayed, the theme with less knowledge about prevention will have a different view on HIV transmission, such as research. conducted by that participants who have less knowledge about HIV prevention tend to have negative thoughts and attitudes. negative towards the risk of HIV transmission, the same thing was also conveyed by Santos (2024), if knowledge is good then it will be able to change attitudes in practice healthy sexual relations or using condoms⁽¹¹⁾ the theme of *condom use* (use of condoms) economy and dependence on work are reasons for not using condoms when serving customers, in contrast to the results of the researcher’s exploration limiting is the availability of condoms and the influence of gender as a decision maker in condom use.

The theme of support for condom use condoms, stated that support from sexual partners or clients plays an important role in the consistency of condom use to prevent HIV transmission is,also supported by the results of the researcher’s exploration that there is support from pimps or the environment regarding the availability of condoms and the existence of regulations. The use of condoms is something that is needed by sex workers in carrying out their daily work, while the level of condom use among MSM is high. which is still low, in a global study reported consistent condom use of 70 %. In another study, 21 % (90 out of 422) MSM who have had anal sex report inconsistent condom use. ^(5,12) In an effort to control the spread of HIV in MSM depends on the development of interpersonal communication skills about condom negotiation and status disclosure, health education about condom use and disclosure of HIV status· this is supported by a meta-analysis which proves that interventions If carried out consistently, this will be successful in increasing condom use and reducing unprotected anal sex. ⁽⁸⁾

CONCLUSION

Sex workers in Tarakan city, revealed their reasons for choosing not to use condoms while serving customers with all the risks that must be faced, being a sex worker certainly has the risk of contracting or transmitting sexually transmitted diseases which should be prevented by using condoms every time they serve customers, the importance of knowledge about HIV, especially how to prevent it, how to use condoms correctly, how to communicate and the time that is needed. Appropriately offering condom use or negotiating condom use as well as having support for condom use, has an important role in consistency condom use. MSM as a part of self-perception, the availability of applications or groups that accommodate the MSM group opens up opportunities.

The more open and developed MSM are in exploiting themselves in this group, the more comfortable the friendship environment or social interactions are interacting with MSM makes them more able to explore their feelings as a group with different sexual orientations, apart from that from the application. This is used as a means for sexual transactions that are motivated by sexual needs and sexual orientation, as well as sexual services that produce results, as long as they serve sex customers, negotiation of condom use is also influenced by negotiation skills and low economic backgrounds that make the CSWs continue to serve customers even without using condoms. The results of this study can be used as a basis for more specific research related to condom use on CSWs. Where there is still a need for analysis of the selection of consistent condom use in sex service practices for CSWs.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors report that they have no conflicts of interest for this study.

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