HIV and sex-work related stigma and discrimination: women’s experiences from 14 sites across Zimbabwe

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What is stigma?

- “the co-occurrence of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination in a context in which power is exercised”
  - Link & Phelan

- Manifestations include internalised stigma (e.g. feeling of shame) and enacted stigma (e.g. gossip, verbal abuse, denial of health services, physical abuse)

- Discrimination is a constitutive feature of stigma
  - Individual level: unequal treatment that arises from membership in a particular social group
  - Structural level: societal conditions that constrain an individual’s opportunities, resources, and well-being

Intersecting stigma

- Different forms of stigma can overlap or layer, building on existing attitudes in society
- Sex work is stigmatised and under legal restriction in many countries
- Legal frameworks can perpetuate / condone human rights violations and re-enforce negative attitudes about sex work
- HIV stigma reduction, in multi-media and training of health workers, has emphasised that anyone can be infected

Normalising HIV?

% “No” responses to the question “Would you buy fresh vegetables from a shopkeeper or vendor if you knew that this person had the AIDS virus?” among women from 62 nationally-representative surveys in 24 countries (2001-2013)

Slow decline:
On average across all countries 90% “no” expected by 2024

Countries included: Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Aim

- To explore
  - Prevalence of stigma manifestations among female sex workers with a high burden of HIV in Zimbabwe
  - Differences in whether stigma manifestations are reported as associated with living with HIV or working as a sex worker
Methods

- Respondent driven sampling surveys of female sex workers from 14 sites [6-8 seeds, 5 waves], conducted as part of the SAPPHIRE trial in Zimbabwe
- Calculate prevalence of stigma manifestations across all sites
  - Questions asked only of those reporting a previous positive HIV test about "how you feel about your own HIV positive status"
- Manifestations
  - Internalised stigma:
    - Have you felt ashamed?
    - Have you lost respect or standing?
  - Experienced stigma
    - Have you been talked badly about?
    - Have you been denied health services?
    - Have you been verbally assaulted?

Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics (%)</th>
<th>Self-reported HIV Positive</th>
<th>Self-reported HIV negative/never tested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years) (mean)</td>
<td>34.4 (31.6-36.5)</td>
<td>28.6 (25.4-32.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest education</td>
<td>None/primary</td>
<td>44.0 (26.7-67.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>56.0 (32.9-73.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Formerly married</td>
<td>86.7 (71.9-97.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Currently married/living</td>
<td>77.9 (50.9-91.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>12.2 (2.1-28.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tested HIV positive</td>
<td>96.2 (84.7-100)</td>
<td>34.0 (18.5-50.0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age began sex work</td>
<td>26.2 (24.3-28.4)</td>
<td>23.4 (22.2-24.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. clients per week (median)</td>
<td>4.4 (3-7)</td>
<td>4.4 (3-7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean of 14 site estimates, [minimum, maximum]

Harassment, stigma and violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-reported HIV Positive</th>
<th>Self-reported HIV negative/never tested</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever physically assaulted for being HIV+</td>
<td>4.1 (0-19.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever physical partner violence</td>
<td>43.9 (14.9-70.9)</td>
<td>38.4 (14.8-62.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever physical violence from a client</td>
<td>36.8 (17.6-64.5)</td>
<td>26.2 (8.0-52.0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experienced physical violence from police last 12 months</td>
<td>10.2 (1.8-27.0)</td>
<td>9.2 (1.5-24.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experienced sexual violence from police last 12 months</td>
<td>4.3 (0-9.7)</td>
<td>4.6 (0-10.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raped in the last 12 months</td>
<td>5.2 (0.5-9.3)</td>
<td>2.8 (0-9.8)</td>
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*Mean of 14 site estimates, [minimum, maximum]

Discussion

- Female sex workers in 14 sites in Zimbabwe have a very high prevalence of HIV
- Experience high levels of both "internalised" and "experienced" stigma
- Some evidence that self-reported HIV-positive women are 2-3 times more likely to report these experiences because of their involvement in sex work than because of their HIV-infection status
- This is preliminary work – we welcome thoughts
- Are these patterns reflective of successful anti-HIV-stigma campaigns, but residual stigma in relation to sex work
- "You are wasting our drugs" quote from Mtetwa, 2014