Studies have examined the association between violence and condom use, and subsequently between violence and poor mental health status. Limited attempts have been made to understand the relationship between poor mental health and elevated risk for HIV.

This study examined the relationship between forms of violence and the likelihood of condom use, as a measure of HIV risk, among female sex workers in an intimate relationship. It used data from Samvedana Plus, an intervention to reduce violence and increase condom use in the intimate relationships of female sex workers.

**INTRODUCTION**

Samvedana Plus, an intervention to reduce violence and increase female sex workers in an intimate relationship. It used data from Samvedana Plus, an intervention to reduce violence and increase condom use in the intimate relationships of female sex workers.

**METHODS**

A cross-sectional quantitative study, it was conducted in June 2014 in Jhamkhandi and Mudhol taluks of Bagalkot district in northern Karnataka, India. Data was collected from 620 FSWs, aged 18 years and above, who reported a relationship with an IP.

The analysis measured poor mental health as “ever thought of ending their life.” Chi-square test determined the association between the experience of intimate partner violence (IPV) and mental health, and subsequently between mental health and condom use with a partner.

**RESULTS**

The mean age of the respondents was 35 years. Majority of the respondents were non-literate (90%), devadasis (96%) and had children (86%). Seventy seven per cent of study participants solicited clients at home, followed by a public place (15%) and through phone/others (8%). On an average, sex workers had three clients in a week.

Poor mental health was found to be significantly associated with low condom use among the sex workers.

- **a) Experience of intimate partner violence and mental health condition**
  - About 24% of the FSWs experienced severe physical and/or sexual violence
  - Another 9% experienced moderate physical violence from their IPs in the past six months before the survey

- **b) Association between intimate partner violence and mental health condition**
  - FSWs experiencing violence from their IPs in the past six months reported poor mental health condition (20%) as compared to those who reported moderate (9%) or no violence (5%)

- **c) Association between mental health and condom use**
  - FSWs with poor mental health were less likely to use a condom at last sex (36% vs 57%; p<0.001) and consistently in every sexual activity (24% vs. 45%; p<0.001) with their IPs compared to FSWs with a good mental health condition.

**CONCLUSION**

The study found that intimate partner violence adversely impacts mental health and condom use behaviour among female sex workers. Intervention approaches to reduce violence among sex workers must also include components to address the consequences of violence on their mental health.

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