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Background

- Discourses on men and HIV prevention in India focused on changing knowledge, attitudes and risk behaviour
- Structural drivers of HIV has been increasingly recognised. One such: Effect of masculinities and gender norms on intimate partner violence (IPV) within sex work

Objectives

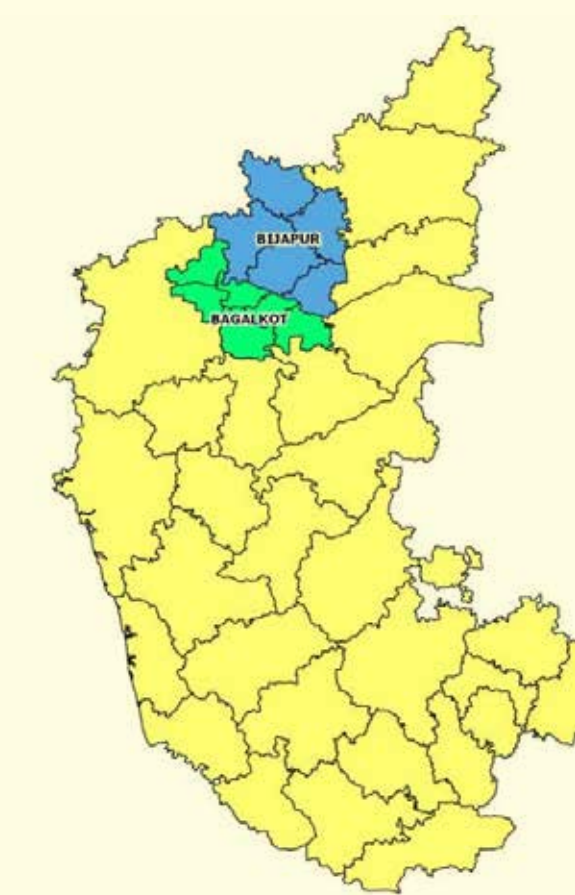
Explore relationship between IPV and ideas of masculinity among the intimate partners (IPs) of female sex workers (FSWs) specially focusing on norms.

Methods

2 FGDs with FSWs (N=17 women)

4 FGD (N=34 men) IP

IDI (N=30) with IPs



Participant observation

● Bijapur
● Bagalkot

Sites: Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti.

Findings



Work Conditions and Gender Relations

- Difficult work situations and physically demanding work defines manhood "Hard work makes a man, a man"
- Women's work is less valued
- Financial and emotional burden of caring for lover and wife and pressures at work causes stress
- Violence is seen as a way to reassert control in the private domain

Body image

- Bulging, bronzed muscles seen as ideal masculine physique
- Non-moustachioed, soft-spoken and shy men are considered as "chakka" or effeminate
- Cultural shifts in masculinity with increased preference for fair skin, modern commodities

Relationship Dynamics and Money

- Women considered subservient because of their economic dependence "She came to my house as my wife, and then she has to manage the family well, right? I will take care of her if she treats me with a good attitude"
- A man who takes money from wife is seen as a lesser man "A chakka takes money from wife!"
- Violence by men is justified except if the man is a "chakka"
- Financial support to lovers justifies violence against her "I have the right to hit her and even kill her. Why else would I bear the expense and look after her?"

Perceptions of Sex Workers

- Sex workers were characterized as "sexually voracious women" and that leads to their sexual exploitation and abuse
- Relationships with SW are born out of sexual needs
- SWs thought to only need money and hence less obligations

Media, Nationalism and Masculinity

- Nationalism rooted in working-class male culture "The strength of Indian man came from drinking local beers, eating roti and working hard on the land"
- Disdain for effeminate movie heroes and celebration of heroes in violent combat



Conclusion

- Partner violence is a norm in the study community as men believe that they are expected to use violence and they will lose their status and position if they do not
- Relationships with sex workers are guided by men's ideas of masculinity and general low value of women
- Interventions with sex workers and their intimate partners would need to address their perceptions and norms



Photos: K V Balusubrahmanya, KHPT; Sapna G Nair, KHPT.