

# ***Correlates of High Risk Sexual Behaviour Among Never Married Male Industrial Workers in Tirupur City in Tamil Nadu***

**N. Audinarayana**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This research, done during 2003-04, aimed to examine the correlates of high-risk sexual behaviour among non-migrant and migrant never-married young men in the 15-24 age group, working in hosiery factories of Tirupur, Tamil Nadu. It also aimed to explore the respondents' gender-specific attitudes about sexuality, pre-marital sex, and sexual health.

Information was collected from 995 workers from five clusters of houses in the selected municipal wards. Of these, 452 were non-migrants and 543 were migrants. Information was collected using an interview schedule, and through 20 in-depth interviews.

The young men's overall knowledge of reproduction, sexuality and sexual health (RSSH) appeared to be fairly high. Migrant workers were better informed about RSSH than their non-migrant counterparts. However, controlling for a host of background characteristics, the migrant status of the respondents did not have a significant net effect. The knowledge of RSSH of all the surveyed factory workers increased with their number of female friends, current age, frequency of exposure to the mass media and, to some extent, with their level of education. The level of knowledge was much lower among men who worked for more than 11 hours per day, and whose parents were perceived as more religious. It also decreased according to their fathers' level of supervision of the respondents' daily activities at home.

Other factors that impacted net significant effects on some dimensions of knowledge about RSSH were the number of peers who participated in activities that predisposed high-risk behaviour and the respondents' level of participation in activities that predisposed risk-related behaviour. With a few exceptions, similar findings emerged among migrant and non-migrant workers.

In terms of attitudes about sexual issues, non-migrant workers expressed more positive attitudes than their migrant counterparts. The respondents' attitudes to sexuality and related issues became significantly more liberal with their current age, level of education, and the number of peers participating in activities that predisposed higher risk. It was also observed to be much higher among workers whose parents were stated to be religious and for those who worked for 11 or more hours. The reverse pattern was noticed significantly with an increase in the number of female partners they had. More or less similar findings were noticed among non-migrant and migrant workers under consideration with a few exceptions.

The young male workers (migrants more so than non-migrants), on the whole, were observed to have high levels of gender-specific attitudes towards sexuality and premarital sexual issues. The respondents' level of gendered standards about sexuality and related issues (Index) appeared to significantly increase (liberal towards boys and conservative for girls) with their educational status, monthly income, participation in activities that predisposed risk-related behaviour, and level of father's supervision of the respondent's activities. Standards were also more gendered among those respondents whose parents were very religious and among respondents who worked for 11 hours or more per day. On the other hand, gendered double standards appeared to diminish with their exposure to the mass media, number of boy friends, and level of knowledge about reproduction and sexual health, and were also lower when they spent more time in leisure activities like watching TV/movies or playing cards. With a few exceptions similar findings emerged for migrant and non-migrant workers.

About 15 percent of the young male workers could be said to be at high-risk sexual behaviour (participating in vaginal/anal intercourse without using condoms), 19 percent at low-risk sexual behaviour (participating in deep kissing, biting of the neck and hugging, caressing of breasts, hips and thighs, homosexual or heterosexual masturbation, and vaginal sexual intercourse using condoms). The rest did not participate in any risky sexual behaviour. The corresponding percentages were comparatively higher among migrant workers than their non-migrant counterparts. However, controlling for a host of background factors, the odds of participating in high risk sexual behaviour were higher among migrant workers than non-migrants, whereas the reverse was true in the case of low risk behaviour, but both of these did not turn out to be significant.

On the whole, young men workers staying in a rented room with peers were more likely to participate in both low risk as well as high risk sexual behaviour than their counterparts; the pattern was more conspicuous among migrant workers. The tendency to participate in both low risk and high risk sexual behaviour increased significantly with an increase in the young men's participation in activities that predisposed risk-related behaviour, knowledge about RSSH, and gender-specific attitudes uniformly among migrant and non-migrant workers. Likewise, having a large number of girl friends (six or more) tended to increase the odds of the young male workers participation in high risk sexual behaviour.