

Sexual behaviors and risks of STIs/HIV transmission among China's male migrants in a context of sex imbalance

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Description and research objectives

In the last two decades, the spread of HIV and the infection cases are significantly increasing in China, where the main transmission way is risky sexual behavior. With the urbanization all over the country, migrant population become the focus group in the spread of HIV for they are more intend to have risky sexual behaviors, which play important roles in the infection of HIV. Besides, risky sexual behaviors are also the main infection way in STIs transmission. Consequently, migrant population in China become the high risk group in STIs/HIV transmission.

Since 1980s, sex ratio at birth of China is rising continuously, which results in more boys born than girls contemporarily. Nowadays, the demographic construction in China has become bias and a number of rural male adults, who are usually in disadvantage socioeconomic conditions, will not find spouse in the marriage market. These single males are named “bare branches” or “elder male bachelors”, which represent their singlehood and childless. Since Chinese culture and morality norms relate sexual behaviors to marriage strictly, these elder male bachelors usually lack of sex activities and have sex pressure in rural communities. Their sexual activities, most of which are risky sexual behaviors, are increasing significantly due to their singlehood and sex pressure during urban experiences. Elder male bachelors during migrant experience probably face huge risks of STIs/HIV transmission in the circumstance of sex imbalance. Many previous researches focused on Chinese migrant population and discussed the risks of STIs/HIV transmission, but few of them have considered the impact of sex imbalance today.

Researches about migrant population represented that risky perception and self-protective motivation correlate with personal risks of STIs/HIV transmission significantly. The current research will apply the theoretical framework of risky perception to discuss the risks of STIs/HIV transmission among migrant males in the context of sex imbalance. The comparison of risky sexual behaviors and risky perception of disease transmission between elder male bachelors and other migrant males will be carried out. This research targets to discuss the risky situation of STIs/HIV transmission from three aspects: what is the tendency to risky sex among migrant males in Chinese sex imbalance; what are the variances of risky perception and self-protective motivation when migrant males face the possibility of STIs/HIV transmission; and what are the consequences of their variances of risky perception

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and self-protective motivation when they face the possibility of participating in risky sex. Questions mentioned above will be taken as the policy reference and be helpful to make policy application for migrant males to prevent STIs/HIV transmission in the context of sex imbalance of China.

Data and research method

The data used in this study are from the “Survey on Reproductive Health and Family Life of Migrant Males in Urban Areas” conducted in Xi’an City, Shaanxi, China, from December 2009 to January 2010. Male migrants are defined as “rural male residents aged 30 years and older who have left their registered place of residence and are currently working in Xi’an city.” Xi’an locates in western province, where is a typical region of sex imbalance in China. Therefore, the context in the current research can represent most of social characteristics of sex imbalance in China. To guarantee anonymity to the respondents and allow them to feel free in their responses, the CAPI (computer assisted personal interviewing) method was used. Our sample was selected in three informal labor markets and two construction sites where male migrants are concentrated. In the absence of any sampling basis (as no official information or statistics are available on migrants in the informal labor market), random sampling cannot be used. Considering this specific context, the only applicable sampling method was convenience sampling. Finally, the total number of valid samples accomplished in the investigation is 843. Among them, 88 are elder male bachelors, 576 are married but migrant alone and 179 are cohabitating with spouses.

The measurements in the analysis include sexual variables such as the number of sex intercourse, sexual partners, commercial sex and unprotected sex. Variables relate to risks of STIs/HIV infection include risky perception, knowledge of reproductive health, health conditions, self- protection motivation and subjective norms. In addition, age, education, income and migrant duration are taken as demographic factors and put into analysis procedure.

In the circumstance of sex imbalance, risks of STIs/HIV transmission are possibly more complicated since elder male bachelors and other migrant males may have interactive relationship on intention and behaviors. The data presented in this paper will be analyzed by comparison of behaviors and perceptions between elder migrant bachelors and other migrant males with both descriptive analysis and regression statistics methods.

Expected results

Elder male bachelors emerged with the sex imbalance of China in last few years. When they become migrant population, their participation of risky sex probably become their main risky taking. Risky perceptions of STIs/HIV transmission among elder male bachelors are not optimistic. Even though they have high occurrence of risky sex, their self-protective motivation may not enough due to their lack of knowledge. Risky perception may have age difference: younger bachelors have

higher education and their risky perception may be better than elders; however, elders have high occurrence of risky sex due to their long time singlehood, but risky perception are not well.

In the situation of sex imbalance, subjective norms correlate with risks of STIs/HIV transmission have influence on the participation of risky sex significantly. Self-Efficacy relates to self-protective motivation can influence the occurrence of risky sex. Besides, self-protective motivation may be affected by subjective norms. In the participation of risky sex and the risk of disease infection, elder male bachelors and other migrant males may have interactive influence.

Married migrant males also have increasing risky tendency but their risky perceptions are better compared to elder male bachelors. The perception of STIs risk is better than the perception of HIV risk. STIs knowledge and self-protective motivation are helpful to prevent risky sex activities.

The perception of STIs and self-protective motivation indicate that the prevention system for STIs transmission operates well. But the HIV prevention system is not built effectively. Higher knowledge of reproductive health and self-protection among married males indicate that the current reproductive service system is limited in marriage family. Therefore, the platform of STIs prevention system can be developed and increases issues of HIV transmission, including education and preventive intervention. The policy department also should consider the risks of STIs/HIV transmission among elder migrant bachelors. If the migrant population can be influenced by subjective norms significantly in the context of sex imbalance, peer education and assistance can be applied to the prevention of HIV/STIs transmission.