

Sexualized drug use among female sex workers from eight cities in China

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Background:

COVID-19 has increased marginalization and violence among female sex workers, increasing the importance of knowing about their HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) risk. We aimed to determine the factors associated with sexualized drug use among FSW.

Methods:

This cross-sectional study was conducted in eight cities from seven provinces in China in 2019. We recruited FSW through community organizations working with sex workers, and included those who were age 18 years or above; exchanged sex at least once for money or goods in the past three months. Multinomial logistic regression models were used to evaluate the factors associated with FSW reporting sexualized drug use, IDU, and no drug use. We adjusted for age, marital status, migration status, income and education in each of the models.

Results:

In total, 1287 women participated: average age was 35.1 years (SD 10.3), about half reported a monthly income over 5000 RMB (\$USD707, 52.4%), and a minority completed high school or above (17.4%). Among participants, 228 (17.8%, 95% CI:15.7-19.9) reported sexualized drug use, and 56 (4.4%, 95% CI:3.3-5.6) reported IDU in the last six months. Compared to FSW who never reported sexualized drug use or IDU, FSW who either reported sexualized drug use or IDU had greater odds of: having a manager [sexualized drug use: 1.65 (1.12-2.42); IDU: 6.86 (2.62-17.96)], reporting more than the median of 22 clients in the last month [2.80 (1.88-4.17); 6.00 (2.52-14.31)], and reporting inconsistent condom use for vaginal sex [2.66 (1.84-3.83); 2.27 (1.13-4.57)]. These odds were generally lower for FSW reporting sexualized drug use compared with IDU.

Conclusion:

We recommend routinely asking FSW about sexualized drug use as nearly one in five FSW reported sexualized drug use and these women had an elevated risk profile compared with those who reported no sexualized drug use or IDU.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

All authors declare they do not have any conflict of interest.