

**Migrant Populations: Socio-cultural Dynamics and the
Explanation for the Risk of HIV/AIDS Transmission in
Bangladesh**

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This thesis is dedicated to

My parents

Farid Uddin Bhuiyan and

Farida Begum

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Abstract

Several studies reported premarital and extra-marital sex in Bangladesh society, including among migrant workers. Some studies documented extra-marital sex among the wives of the migrant workers, confirmed prevalence of HIV among migrant workers' families and transmission of HIV from migrant workers to their wives and children. However, most of these studies concentrated on risky behaviors and knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The social and cultural factors that may shape the risk behaviours of migrant workers and their wives while they live away from each other have largely been ignored.

Against this backdrop, the present research aimed to understand and explain the factors associated with risky sexual behaviours of the wives of the migrants and non-migrant workers and their vulnerability to HIV infection. The research particularly focused on the socio-economic factors, and the religious-cultural context that could influence the risk behaviours of migrant and non-migrant men and wives of the migrant men in a rural area in Bangladesh. The present research consists of two components: (i) a descriptive, quantitative part that analyses a secondary data set on the wives of migrants and non-migrant workers, and (ii) an exploratory, qualitative component that probes the socio-cultural issues from in-depth interviews with migrant and non-migrant men and wives of the migrant and non-migrant men.

The quantitative component comprised a total sample size of 699 respondents. They were the wives of non-migrants, migrants returning from elsewhere in Bangladesh and migrants returning from overseas. The qualitative component was built on 12 in-depth interviews with six male and six female participants of different migration statuses.

For the quantitative component, univariate, bivariate and multiple variable analyses were applied to interpret the findings and to identify association among different variables. A model of HIV risk was developed where unadjusted and adjusted odd ratios (OR) and 95 per cent confidence interval (CI) were used to measure the associations between socio-demographic characteristics and HIV risk of respondents. For the qualitative component,

thematic analysis was conducted through manual transcription, coding development and identification of various themes.

The quantitative components revealed that some socio-demographic characteristics had clear association with HIV risks. The demographic characteristics of a particular area with lower contraceptive use and low uptake of condom use and higher temporary overseas migration may contribute to a higher risk of HIV infection. As evident from the qualitative component of the study, socio-economic and cultural factors, for example, separation, frustration from loneliness and economic hardship, peer pressure, availability of sex workers and freedom away from home appeared to be important factors that influenced sexual behaviours of migrant men in the destination country, and made them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. While the status of women in general was low, the wives of the migrant workers were identified particularly as a vulnerable group because of their financial, social and emotional dependency on other men in husbands' absence. Additionally, the vulnerability of the wives of the migrant workers increased as most of them had unsafe sex with their husband upon return from overseas.

The results will improve the current body of knowledge in the area of HIV/AIDS and migration in a given socio-economic, cultural and religious context in relation to sexual risk behaviours among migrant population. In turn, these understandings will help in formulating policies and designing effective intervention programmes on HIV/AIDS.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BMET	Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
CCAH	Centre for Child and Adolescent Health
CI	Confidence Interval
DHSS	Demographic and Health Surveillance System
ERC	Ethical Review Committee
ESP	Essential Services Package
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSID	Health Systems and Infectious Diseases Division
ICDDR,B	International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCH-FP	Maternal and Child Health-Family Planning
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MPH	Masters of Public Health
NASP	National AIDS/STD Programme
NGO	Non-government Organization
OR	Odds Ratios
ORP	Operations Research Project
PI	Principal Investigator
RRC	Research Review Committee
SAC	Surveillance (HIV) Advisory Committee
STI	Sexually Transmissible Infection
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre
WHO	World Health Organization