Criminalization of consensual sex between men is associated with poor access to HIV-services for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men worldwide: New #GMHR Findings

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GBM, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men

BACKGROUND

Gay, bisexual men & other men who have sex with men (GBM) are disproportionately impacted by HIV worldwide.

Previous research has documented associations between sexual stigma (homophobia), health provider discrimination and poor access to health services.

Less is known about how the criminalization of sex between men impacts access to HIV services among GBM.

METHODS

DATA

10-minute online Global Men’s Health & Rights Survey open from November 2019 through March 2020

10 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, & Vietnamese

Online convenience sampling (e.g. email, listservs, networks, gay dating apps & websites)

ANALYSES

We used Chi-square test or Fisher’s exact test to test bivariate differences in structural violence, resilience, and HIV-services access, between criminalizing and non-criminalizing countries; and conducted multivariate analyses using variables that had a p<0.25 significance in bivariate analyses.

RESULTS

Criminalization of consensual sex between men is associated with poor access to HIV-services for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men worldwide:

Table 2. Key Variable Proportions by Country Criminalization Status

Table 3. Multivariate Risk Factors Associated with Criminalization

CONCLUSIONS

GBM living in criminalizing countries experienced greater financial insecurity and had worse access to HIV prevention services.

Although GBM living with HIV from criminalizing countries had lower odds of poor access to ART, they had significantly poorer access to HIV care.

Further research should explore this finding.

Addressing financial insecurity can contribute to improvements in HIV service access, especially for young GBM and GBM who are employed as sex workers.

Expanding coverage of rights-based, voluntary, and confidential HIV testing linked with comprehensive prevention programs, including PrEP, is key to improving access to health services, especially in criminalized settings.