

Self-efficacy and Coping as Correlates of Migrant Safe Sexual Behavior to Prevent HIV

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Along the Mexico/United States border, migrants are at increased risk of HIV. The objective of our study was to investigate the relationship between two process indicators (self-efficacy to prevent HIV and coping with sexual risk) and safe sexual behaviors in migrants. A correlational design was used. Migrants were recruited from two cities on the northern border of Mexico. Transition theory informed the measurement of self-efficacy and coping process indicators. Three generalized linear models were built for each safe sexual behavior outcome: (a) partner communication, (b) use of condoms, and (c) safe sex. Of 311 migrants, indicators of self-efficacy and coping with sexual risk were associated with all three outcome measures of safe sexual behavior ($p < .05$). Process indicators explained 22.5% to 30.6% of the variance in the data. Therefore, self-efficacy to prevent HIV and coping ability are important correlates of migrant sexual risk behavior.

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HIV is a public health problem in Latin American countries, and Mexico has the second highest prevalence in the region. An estimated 169,520 people

are living with HIV in the country, and 12,470 new cases occurred in 2015 (Global Burden of Disease Collaborators, 2016). Mexican border states are home to a disproportionate number of HIV cases in Mexico, estimated at 47,018 people currently infected (National Center for the Prevention and Control of HIV and AIDS in Mexico [CENSIDA], 2015). Migrant populations in these states are at high risk of both acquiring and transmitting HIV, relative to nonmigrant populations. Migrants often

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leave their places of origin in search of improved employment, security, health, and other opportunities (CENSIDA, 2015); migration puts them at high risk in terms of physical safety and general health, and they often experience challenging terrain, overcrowded conditions, and increased chance of attack/exploitation.

Migrant HIV risk has been associated with socioeconomic vulnerabilities, conditions of travel, lack of familial or community support systems, poor education (especially poor health and condom education), and limited access to health services. Additionally, migrants are often separated from main partners and may engage in sexual relations with other partners for various reasons, including relieving stress caused by fear and uncertainty of their irregular migratory situation (Hernández, Verdugo, Torres, López, & Cervantes, 2015). Exchanging sex for food, shelter, or money also exposes migrants to increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV (Caballero-Hoyos, Villaseñor-Sierra, Millán-Guerrero, Trujillo-Hernández, & Monárrez-Espino, 2013).

While these external and structural factors can foster high-risk environments, the internal capacity of a person to face high-risk sexual situations may also importantly influence HIV/STI risk (CENSIDA, 2015). Internal factors include self-efficacy and coping abilities, which can be considered important transition process indicators for migrant populations. Transition Theory was developed from a theoretical nursing perspective (Meleis, Sawyer, Im, Hilfinger, & Schumacher, 2000) and describes several transition process indicators, including self-efficacy and coping, which were developed to better measure health, vulnerability, and risk in persons experiencing major life changes. In this theory, process indicators can be used as correlates of sexual risk behavior, making it a potentially important framework to understand migrant populations and their increased HIV/STI vulnerability.

Self-efficacy is a cognitive mechanism based on expectations and beliefs about one's ability to perform actions to obtain a certain effect (Walker, 1994). Self-efficacy has been correlated to the potential to initiate behavior modification and has also been correlated to sexual behavior in high-risk populations. In a study of migrant female sex workers, for

instance, women with higher self-efficacy for safer sex had greater use of condoms than women with lower self-efficacy (Ye et al., 2012). Similarly, a study of heterosexual Latino migrants in the United States found an association between self-efficacy and condom use (Knipper et al., 2007), as did a study of migrant men who have sex with men that found self-efficacy for safe sex and condom use to be associated with sexual communication (Xiao et al., 2013).

Coping is the process used to achieve a state of balance between internal needs and external demands (Walker, 1997). Internal coping ability has been used to explain sexual health and risk in migrants who face challenges related to condom negotiation with occasional partners, migrant female sex workers (Organista et al., 2013), and during male–male sex (Li et al., 2004).

We grounded our study design and measures in the Transitions Theory. Given the high risk for HIV acquisition and transmission among migrants in the northern border of Mexico, it is important to understand correlates of sexual risk behaviors. The objective of our study was to investigate the relationship between two process indicators (self-efficacy to prevent HIV and coping with sexual risk) and safe sexual behavior among migrants.

Methods

Study Design

A correlational study design was used. Although correlational studies cannot prove a causal relationship, they are useful for prediction within a theoretical framework, and are appropriate for this type of nonexperimental and nonlongitudinal study.

Sampling and Participant Recruitment

The sample consisted of migrants at least 18 years of age from Matamoros and Reynosa, two border cities between Mexico and the U.S. state of Texas. Participants who had initiated sexual activity were eligible. Participants were recruited either from a temporary repatriation program or from one of three migrant shelters (with migrants in transit to and from the United States). Migrants were listed according to record number, ordered by arrival, to one of the

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