

Barriers and Enablers of safe sexual practices relating to Oral transmission of STIs in Transgender women of Malaysia: a Qualitative report

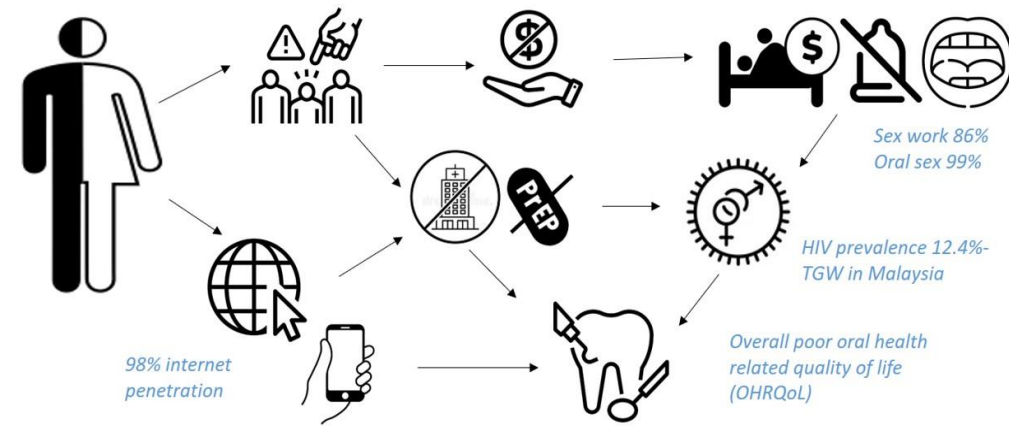
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Introduction:

Transgender women (TGW) in Malaysia experience unique social and interpersonal challenges that contribute immensely to their risk of acquiring HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). (Fig 1)

Fig 1: Challenges faced by TGW in Malaysia



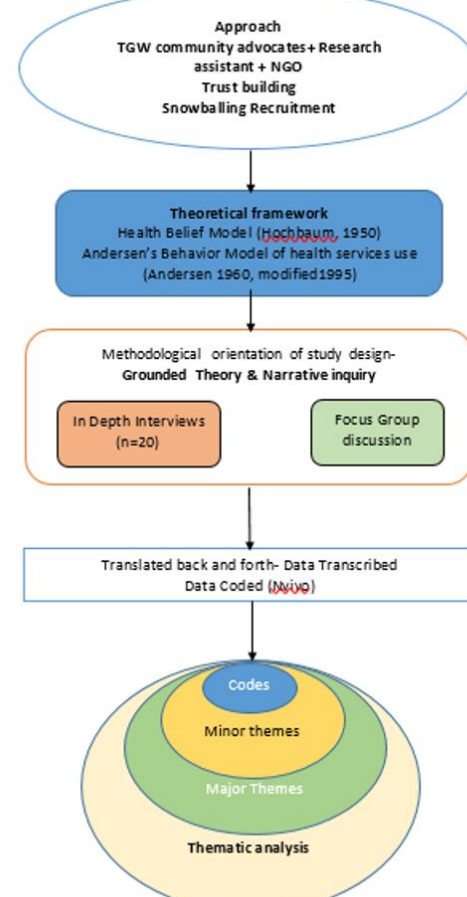
Aim of the investigation:

- To explore the barriers and enablers of safe sexual practices related to oral transmission of STIs among TGW
- To identify the oral health care needs and barriers to dental health care service utilization of transgender women.

Methods:

Participants who consented were recruited through a snowballing method and invited for Semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs). Focus group discussion (FGD) with project consultants along with IDIs provided insights into needs of the community. The coded and transcribed data was thematically analyzed to derive major themes. (Fig 2)

Fig 2: Methodology Flowchart



Results:

The results were interpreted using Thematic analysis maps for IDIs and FGD, along with a mention of the exemplary quotes (Fig 3,4,5). Table 1 Shows participant characteristics.

Fig 3: Thematic analysis map of In-depth Interviews with Major themes and Minor themes indicating Barriers and Enablers

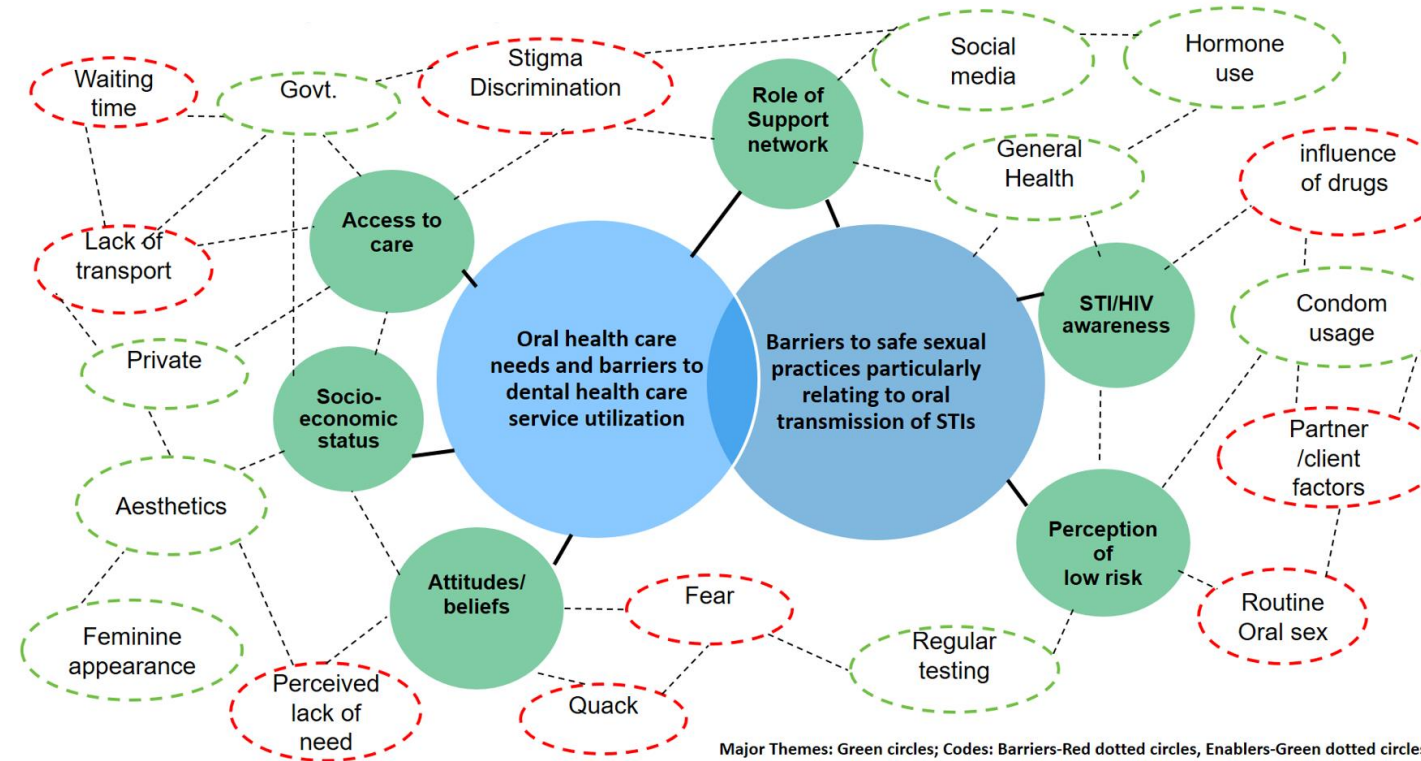


Table 1: Participant characteristics

Characteristics	%
Participants - TGW	n=20
Median age	33 (27-58 years)
Education level - secondary school	16(80%)
Engagement in sex work for a living	6(30%)
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) use	2(10%)
Routine engagement in oral sex practices	20(100%)
Having multiple partners	12(60%)
Perceived low level of risk of transmission of STIs through oral sex	16(80%)
Never used barriers or inconsistently used them during oral sexual practices	18(90%)
Did not visit a dentist in the past 12 months	16(80%)



Fig 4: Thematic analysis map of Focus Group Discussion with Domains, Themes and subthemes.

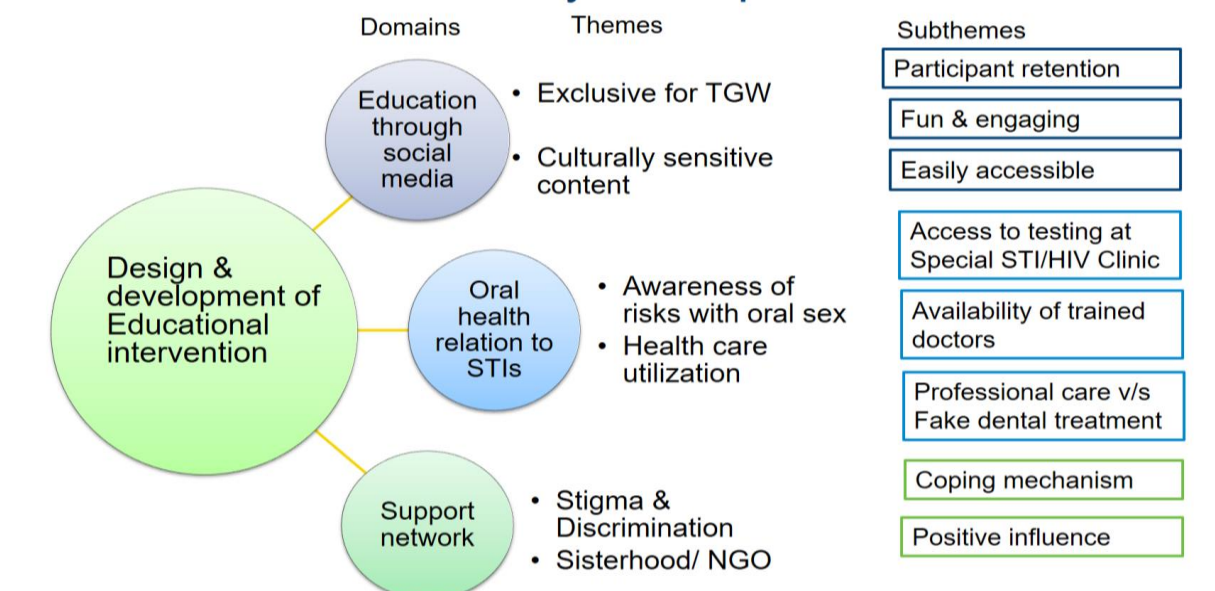


Fig 5: Exemplary quotes from some of the participants

Oral sex- Condom use
*"I know condoms are needed for a b*** job..but...if I know the guy is very clean.. I don't ask him to wear a condom.. may be one out of ten....hmm but...when you fall in love, you don't think of condoms"-007*
"Older transgender women get paid by the young boys, say 16, 17 years old, especially from the lower communities... they want to experience oral sex, they want to get trained, they come to us. We are cheaper that women sex workers. In return we get drugs.. you know "Ice" ,...(colloquial term for Methamphetamine) .. It is a "system barter"-012

Attitudes & beliefs: Quack/ Self medication
"It is very easy to buy fake braces or fake veneers on Instagram.. very cheap also"-013

Perceived low risk
*"Saliva is antiseptic".. You don't need condoms for oral sex!..(looks surprised).. My f*** buddies will not like it!..-020*

Access to care
"Oh the KKM clinic (Govt. clinic).. takes so long.. sometimes I wonder if the doctors there know what they are doing"-019
"I prefer the private dental clinic in my neighborhood. I can go in evenings.. I cannot get up early and line up .. I work at night"-030

Social media
"Social media is an alternative to traditional source of information".. "someone has to simplify the information"..... I don't understand everything I see.. ..a simple video will be good..-005

Conclusion

Social support positively influencing health promotion as well as health care and dental care utilization. The areas of concern identified will inform the design and development of a customized, culturally sensitive, peer reviewed educational intervention that will be delivered through a widely popular social media platform

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References:

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