

Understanding HIV Risk Behaviors among Youth from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): A Scoping Review

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

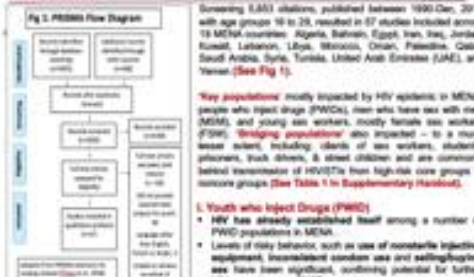
- Young people and adolescents are disproportionately impacted by the HIV epidemic globally, with 1.8 million people between 12 and 19 years of age living with HIV and 136,000 are newly infected (Global & Regional Trends, 2019).
- The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) is home to 80 million youth and its young adult population make up 10% of the world's population (Dixon et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2019).
- People living the highest HIV prevalence in the world (over 5.7%), MENA is witnessing a rise in HIV infections which have increased by 21% since 2001 – highest documented increase among all regions in the world (UNAIDS, 2014).
- No past reviews have synthesized information on risk behaviors of young people specifically.

Study Objectives: This scoping review seeks to establish epidemiological risk factors and underlying risk context for youth residing in or originating from the MENA region.

METHODS

- Scoping review is part of the Youth Sexual Health and HIV/STI Prevention in Middle Eastern and North-African Communities in Ontario (YSMENA Study).
- Guided by the scoping review methodological framework developed by Arksey & O'Malley (2005) with developed protocol adapted to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P) (Tricco et al., 2018).

RESULTS



I. Youth who Inject Drugs (PWID)
HIV has already established itself among a number of PWID populations in MENA.
Levels of risky behavior, such as use of nonsterile injecting equipment, inconsistent condom use and sniffling/legging, have been significant, continuing potential for further HIV spread among PWID.

II. Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM)
Risky Behavior: Young MSM engage in risky behaviors including condomless sex, multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships, HIV Testing: less variable across countries and samples, MSM with female partners: most MSM reported having female sexual partners through spousal and non-spousal relationships, Overlapping Risk: concurrent drug & alcohol use before and during sex, transactional sex (See Table 2).

Access to HIV Testing	Risky Behaviors Among MSM	# of reports of aggregate N=361
	Injection	
10.8% (Wagner et al 2018)	Over the past five months: 1 (Wagner et al 2018)	Ever injected 6.6%
56.1% (Bismah et al 2017)	Over the past year: 20.7 (Bismah et al 2017)	Over the past year: 3.7%
In the past year: 75% (Al-Akel et al 2018)	Over the past year: 20.7 (Wagner et al 2018)	Over the past year: 3.7%
70% (Wagner et al 2018)	Over the past year: 75% had at least one non-sterile injection or at least one partner (30% had five or more)	
27% (Mehdadi et al 2018)	and 17% had at least one syringe contaminated with another person's blood (1% had three or more)	
Ever tested: 81.7% (Mehdadi et al 2018)	Over the last six months: 10.3%	Over the last six months: 10.3%
Over the last year: 10% (Wagner et al 2018)	Over the last year: 10% (Wagner et al 2018)	
	Egypt	
Very few young people undergo HIV testing for fear of being stigmatized	The study: 15 having 44.7% of young people were among 40.8% of the total size (15) (Bismah et al 2018)	11.1% - 4 (Mehdadi, Al-Akel, & Andruszkiewicz, 2018)
45% of positive result and associated mental distress (Mehdadi, Loutfy et al 2018)		
	Libya	
In the past year: 41.6%		
(Vahedi et al 2017)		
	Jordan	
10% (Lalouch et al 2014)		
	Iran	
11.8% (Bismah et al 2018)		

RESULTS CONTINUED

- III. Young Sex Workers/ Female Sex Workers (FSW)**
- Risky Behavior:** unprotected sex with an injecting risk partner. Typically opted not to use condoms with non-drug sex partners, to differentiate sex for work versus pleasure.
- HIV Testing:** varied significantly. FSWs tested previously as part of mandatory requirement (often work permit and residence).
- Overlapping Risk:** Reporting drug use and sniffling/legging, results varied widely according to country (See Table 3).

Country	Risky Behaviors Among Sex Workers
Iran	
Injecting Drugs:	A total of 11.6% reported a history of any drug use. Of those, 63.2% were active drug (Gogolishvili et al 2013); 48% used drugs and 2.3% used drugs intravenously (Gogolishvili et al 2009)
Married:	Ever being married: 82.2% (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Currently married:	31.8% (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Ever been married:	82.2% (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Currently married:	31.8% (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Sex of Clients:	At least some drug: 1 (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Additional Issues:	6.3% (Gogolishvili et al 2013)
Egypt	
Injecting Drugs:	87% used drugs and 3% injected drugs in the 12 months preceding the survey (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Married:	Ever being married: 89% (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Currently married:	41.9% (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Iran	
Injecting Drugs:	17% used drugs (Gogolishvili 2011)
Married:	Ever being married: 84% (Gogolishvili 2014)
Currently married:	41.9% (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Sex of Clients:	At least some drug: 8.3 (Gogolishvili 2011)
Additional Issues:	10% (Gogolishvili et al 2011)
Libya	
Injecting Drugs:	87% used drugs and 3% injected drugs in the 12 months preceding the survey (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Married:	Ever being married: 89% (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Currently married:	41.9% (FELMARR Egypt 2010)
Iran	
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Additional Issues:	10% (Gogolishvili et al 2011)

IV. Students, General Population & Others
University Students:
History of high risk behavior, multi sex partners, unsafe sex, drug use, alcohol consumption.
Male students more likely to engage in risky behavior than female counterparts.
General Population and Others:
Included other bridging populations: prisoners, street children, truck drivers, tourist workers, transgender women, consorts and people of the general population.
Lack of understanding of HIV, especially around modes of transmission and high-risk behavior.
Street children who have sex, most never used a condom at all and most had multiple sex partners.

CONCLUSIONS

- PWID:** Availability, access and increasing awareness towards harm reduction services are crucial in addressing the high-risk context affecting this key population.
 - MSM:** Low condom use is very common in this key population. One of the hardest groups to reach due to homophobia and stigma. Education they are usually subjected.
 - Sex workers:** not well studied and are hard to reach due to the legal status of their profession and high levels of stigma in MENA.
 - University Students & other bridging populations:** Multi sex partners, unsafe sex, drug use, alcohol consumption and practicing risky behaviors. Low use of condoms among youth bridging populations due to peer pressure and inhibition to discuss sex.
- Limitations:** difficulty to generalize findings due to heterogeneity in risk behaviors and risk contexts. Lack of homogeneity in studies conducted in MENA, often due to limited funding resources, makes it especially hard to locate studies entirely focused on youth. Scarcity of bi-behavioral surveys conducted in the region presents a challenge to track long term trends.

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Roula Hawa

Assistant Professor, Brescia University College at Western University, Family Studies and Human Development

Roula is speaking at

416-126 FH: Understanding HIV Risk Behaviors Among Youth From the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): A Scoping Review

Orientation: Primarily research oriented | Type: Poster | Section: Families and Health

November 13, 2020

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Speaker

- Roula Hawa (Speaker) Assistant Professor, Brescia University College at Western University, Family Studies and Human Development

Description

Poster Session 5: Mental, Physical, and Sexual Health

Presenters: Roula Kteily-Hawa, Aceel Hawa, David Gogolishvili, Mohammad Al Akel, Nicole Andruszkiewicz, Haran Vijayanathan, Mona Loutfy

Summary

Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) has witnessed an alarming increase in HIV infections, the highest documented increase among all regions in the world. This scoping review fills a gap in the literature and seeks to establish epidemiological risk factors and underlying risk behaviors for youth residing in or originating from the MENA region. Preliminary results demonstrate that young men who have sex with men (MSM) engage in risky behaviors including condomless sex, multiple sexual partnerships, transactional sex and concurrent drug use. Youth who inject drugs have a significantly higher probability of having multiple HIV risks compared to their older counterparts. Sociocultural shifts in the region have reshaped risk contexts. Findings will address existing gaps and inform interventions involving MENA youth in North America.

Objectives

- To conduct a scoping review of the literature involving HIV risk behaviors of youth (ages 16-29) from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and identify gaps in current research evidence.
- To establish epidemiological risk factors and underlying risk behaviors for youth residing in or originating from the MENA region.
- To shed light on existing gaps in the literature by providing evidence to inform the development of interventions targeting MENA youth in North America.

Subject Codes: public health, biobehavioral processes, sexuality

Population Codes: substance use/abuse, emerging/young adulthood, gay

Method and Approach Codes: systematic literature review, prevention, multicultural

<https://youtu.be/2j99nAZTuys>