Background

- Disparities in healthcare access among key populations, such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women (TGW), remain a global health concern.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could potentially exacerbate existing health inequities on mental health, HIV risk and access to services, including COVID-19 vaccination, among at-risk communities in resource-constrained countries.

Specific Aims & Objectives

- To assess COVID-19 vaccination status and access to health services among MSM and TGW in India.

Methods

- Cross-sectional survey (Sept. to December 2022)
  - Hybrid mode
    - Offline (in-person, interviewer administered)
    - Online (self-administered)
  - N=500 (250 MSM, 250 TGW)

Results

- Mean age: MSM - 30 (SD 6.8); TGW - 29 (SD 5.7)
- Completed a diploma/college degree: MSM 62%; TGW 47%
- Sex work: MSM 29%; TGW 90%
- COVID-19 vaccination status: 84% of MSM compared to 65% of TGW had completed at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Pandemic-related socio-economic stressors experienced by participants:
  - Job loss (96%)
  - Salary cut (81%)
  - Failure to repay loans (69%)
  - Procuring new loans (60%)

Conclusions

- COVID-19 vaccination uptake among key populations such as MSM and TGW needs to be examined against the backdrop of socio-economic stressors and service access-related barriers faced by them.
- By drawing findings from a low-middle-income country like India, this study recommends a contextual and intersectional assessment of factors influencing COVID-19 vaccine uptake, with lessons for future pandemics.

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