



Building Life Skills in the Workplace: A Training Program for Migrant Youth in Shenzhen

This study evaluated the impact of a workplace-based life-planning skills (LPS) training program that was conducted with young, unmarried migrants in Shenzhen over a five-month period.

Methods

The evaluation used a quasi-experimental survey design in two factories: one factory that received project activities, which served as the intervention group, and one factory that received no project activities, which served as the control group. The sample included 1,000 people for the intervention group and 600 people for the comparison group in each survey.

Two focus groups were organized in the intervention factory during the endline survey. Both the intervention and control groups were composed primarily of rural migrant youth. There were some shortcomings in the sample: (1) the control group had a significantly lower education level than the intervention group and (2) the sample size of men in the control group of the endline survey was small. The researcher's analysis took these limitations into account.

Findings

The vast majority of respondents came from rural areas, had at least a primary school education, and had stayed and worked in Shenzhen for one to two years. They reported that they do not often frequent leisure establishments, such as karaoke or internet cafes, although they described dating as popular. They keep in close contact with their parents but hardly ever talk to them or other

confidants about sex. They prefer to get sexual information from same-sex friends.

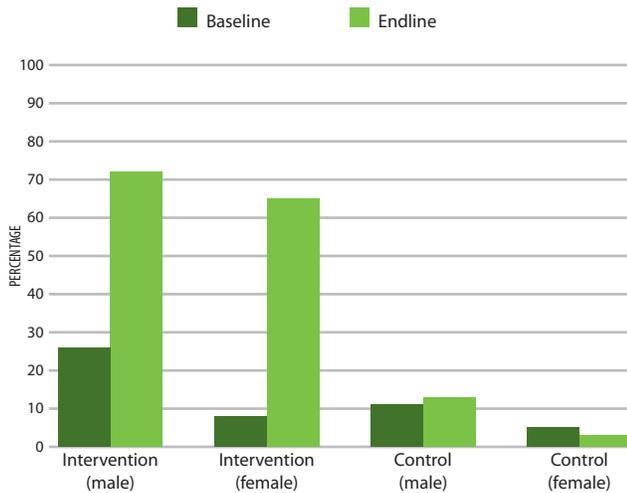
Knowledge change

Compared to the control group, young migrant workers who participated in the LPS intervention had significantly improved knowledge of adolescent development; the menstrual cycle (e.g., the times when women are most likely to become pregnant); sexually transmitted infection information; attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS; contraception (including correct condom use); and, most noticeably, emergency contraception.

The intervention group also demonstrated significantly improved knowledge of where to seek reproductive health services, although actual use of services remained low in both groups. Changes in the intervention group are still significant after controlling for gender, education attainment, age, and the length of stay in Shenzhen.



Correct answers to questions about HIV



Behavior change

Respondents' sexual experience was correlated with their age, gender, and the length of stay in Shenzhen; sexual experience was not related to participation in either the intervention or control group. A multivariate analysis showed that older males who had been in Shenzhen longer were more likely to have sexual experience. The analysis did not show a correlation to their involvement in the intervention.

Compared with the control group, participants in the intervention group were more knowledgeable about reproductive health risks, were more aware of how to protect themselves from these risks, and demonstrated more decisiveness and confidence in dealing with relationships with the opposite sex.

Contraceptive use at last intercourse increased significantly for both men and women in the intervention group. It also increased, although not at significant rates, for members of the control group. In the intervention group, the increased use among women was three times that of the men. Reported condom use among women in the intervention group increased significantly—more than 40 percent—compared with use at first intercourse.

Conclusions

Despite the challenges of having regular training in workplaces with frequent turnover and fluctuating work schedules, this study demonstrates that LPS training for young factory workers can have a positive impact on their knowledge, attitudes, and skills regarding their reproductive health and rights.

When coupled with advocacy and communication efforts, study results such as these can garner essential support from private companies and show workplace managers and factory owners that there is value in addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of their young workers. As a result of these activities, some businesses have integrated reproductive health education into their employee orientation or other training classes; some have also provided financial support, which is a key component for project sustainability.

For more information

To learn more about this study, please contact Qian Geng, senior program officer, at qgeng@path-dc.org, or Lisa Mueller, program officer, at lmuller@path-dc.org.

"Get a college diploma and a successful career, get married, and go to Beijing to see the 2008 Olympic Games."

—Life plan of a young migrant worker participating in the program, according to endline focus group discussion

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