

# Being and Becoming MSM: a Qualitative Study of Rajshahi City in Bangladesh

Md. Torikul Islam<sup>1</sup> and Md. Kamal Pasa<sup>2\*</sup>

**Abstract**— MSM (Male Sex with Male) is one of the most important components of demographic studies in our society. This study is an attempt to exploit various factors becoming MSM, causes of MSM, a resist voice of MSM in the Rajshahi city of Bangladesh. A survey was conducted and a few MSM were subjected for interview in the particular area. Social view, Genetic view and religion view were found to be more influencing on becoming MSM. The preference for more resistance voice was observed in the study. Basically they play all kind of role in their society but they lead a measurable life. For that they think that they are the helpless person of their society. For that all the people of their society and others always neglect them. Otherwise at that place if there was a normal man that man would always be honored by others. When a MSM notice it at that time all the MSM fell helpless. In Bangladesh it has been analytically discussed about MSM. Some anthropologist also mentioned on it in deeply. They discuss about their economic life, employment, social control mechanism, political affairs, kingship, religious beliefs and rituals. There is also discussion about food habits, dietary rules, diseases, illness and their communication.

**Index Terms**— MSM, social view, genetic view, religion view, neglect

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a small country and it has more than 1500 MSM. Not being in organized colony and society, they stay randomly at different location in our country (Wikipedia). Usually an acronym for Men Who Have Sex with Men. However, the term men can be problematic in the context of differing cultural definitions of Man, Manliness, and Manhood. In the context of this study we will be using MSM to mean Males Who Have Sex with Males.

Male prostitution is the act or practice of men providing sexual services to either men or women in return for payment. When compared to female prostitutes, male sex workers have been far less studied by researchers. Male prostitutes are known by various names and euphemisms including male escorts, gigolos (usually implies female customers), rent-boys, hustlers, models or masseurs (although

does not regard himself as gay, but who is prepared to have sex with male clients for money, is sometimes called "gay-for-pay" or "trade".(Wikipedia).

Clients, especially those who pick up prostitutes on the street or in bars, are sometimes called "johns" or "tricks". Those working in prostitution, especially street prostitutes, sometimes refer to the act of prostitution as "turning tricks" Male prostitution has been found in almost all modern and ancient cultures. MSM are get together in a particular day in especially area such as the local market, botanical garden, park, Zoo etc. The client comes to them and asks for sex. Then the MSM do sex with that male person. They have some common features that identify a MSM. Such as their voice is same as a female, they use female cosmetics though they are male; their hair is as long as like as female

Basically man thinks that they are the burden of a family and the society. They take part in social and cultural activities. More over for family decision making they play a vital role. They take part in religious activities. So they are not the burden of a family and the society.

Many cases in our society although they are found to be male but they behave like female and that's why they undergo tease

• <sup>1</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> year student, department of Anthropology, Unuversity of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh.

• <sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, department of Anthropology, Unuversity of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh.  
Corresponding author's e-mail: kamal\_pasa@yahoo.com

the last three do not always refer to prostitutes). A man who

and experience unusual behavior. They can be distinguished from the common man based on some features such as they are 2-5 cm taller than normal males and have abnormally enlarged breast. Weak facial growth and coarse voice are also observed among MSM. They get married as like normal male but it no longer exists because they are sexually sterile and can not give birth of baby. Some times MSM show abnormal behavior because after been a long time social harassment they become mentally retarded. Frequency to give birth of MSM is rare because there is only 1 in 2500-3500 new born becomes MSM. Genetically they have 45 chromosomes and this condition is called Monosomy of X chromosome in term of medical science.

Often MSM is perceived as a specific and discrete population group, and is also used as an identity term. MMS – male-to-male sexual behaviors may be more appropriate Rajshahi is a division of Bangladesh and there living a lot of MSM. They get together every day in a week at different places. Generally they are found at different recreational and busy areas such as Shaheb Bazar-Zero Point, in front of the Zoo, Padma Garden, BDR camp, Madarasa Maydan etc. They have leaders and always they are controlled by them. A MSM prefers to do sex with a male than a female because generally he has no attraction to a lady or female. Even if they get married with female, it no longer exists. They also take part in social and religion activities and play a great role in their family. But they have no value in their society, family etc. Some MSM do sex with male only for love. Some do it for money. But the amount of it is so less. But the society did not recognize them. As family people keep them at the corner of a house, MSM resist relatives. They want to keep company with them. So day by day they become aggressive. As a result day by day they involve themselves in movement and various N.G.O help them to establish their rights. They suffer from some disease and they bear some risk factor for HIV (Geibel, 2012). It is observed that they are de-

termined to establish their rights; they are not burden of a society. So various N.G.O and the government should take positive steps to establish their right. In the 1990s, MSM research was primarily limited to occasional qualitative studies or book chapters (Teunis, 1996; Roscoe and Murray, 1998). Very few men in Bangladesh lay claim to a gay or homosexual identity.

## 2 METHODS & TECHNIQUES

MSM are observed at many places in Rajshahi city such as Laxmipur, Padma Garden, and B.D.R Camp etc. Not only in Anthropology but also other social science have started research on it. I have started this research in micro level. Researchers have developed various

Study designs to conduct behavioral surveys estimating the size of MSM populations. For conducting the research the Laxmipur, B.D.R Market, Shaheb Bazar at Rajshahi is chosen. Most of the MSM social economic condition is almost same. But some MSM do sex with a male for money. For this study some area in Rajshahi city such as Laxmipur, B.D.R market are worth mentioned. A questionnaire was framed before applying to the field. A survey was conducted in interviewing a few MSM. Before starting the interview it was understudied to them the purpose and benefit of this study. This information is related to the cause of MSM, becoming MSM economic reason, social reason, religion reason, and gender reason is also related to this field. Some doubted information was verified by the particular community. Descriptive analyses, frequency correlation, cross tabs were checked by a statistician.

## 3 RESULT & DISCUSSION

Bangladesh is a patriarchal society in which male domination and women's subordination are almost universal phenomena (Aziz and Maloney 1985, Khan et al. 2002). From 2004 through 2008, a few large-scale behavioral surveys of MSM was conducted; the first being a descriptive study of MSM in Nairobi

(Ouma et al., 2005 and 2009; Geibel et al., 2010). Following the success of this initial assessment, a capture-recapture enumeration (Geibel et al., 2007) and an intervention study of male sex workers (Geibel et al., 2008; 2012) were conducted in Mombasa. Further, qualitative perspectives were analyzed from male sex worker focus group discussions (Okal et al., 2009). In my study, I find a lot of problems in our society for MSM. Some MSM are separated from their family. In my research about 60% MSM do sex with only the male and other 40% do sex with male and female. About 40% students do sex only their won interest and other 60% do sex with a male for their income and so many reason. Such as, they are separated from their family. About 40% MSM do sex everyday and others 60% do sex sometimes. Because it is not their profession. When they feel that it is needed for them, and then they do it. 40% MSM do it for supporting their family. Though they earn money but its amount is so low. Some earn money by doing sex. They spend the money to buy their cosmetics for their own use. Such as they use telecom power, snow, soap, perfume and so on .It was also found that 20% MSM have preference for making family decision. Every MSM was married but they have no interest to do sex with a woman and always they prefer a male for it. Though they married but it no longer exists. Almost all the MSM play vital role in both their family and society. Almost all the MSM participate all social and cultural activities. Such they are saying prayer. For family decision making they have no any priority but when they need they play the best role. They have a lot of hindrance about on their freedom. The other family member does not want that he plays role the other member in his family. About more than 60% MSM do sex two or three times in a day. They earn money by doing sex with a male. Some are providing the money it to his family. Some are not doing it. Most of the MSM provide the money to their family but their family does not know it what is their income source. When they do sex with a male

sometimes they affected by various disease unknowingly. They affected by Aids, Skin, TB etc. In the ago the society people teased them but now it is so less. About 40% MSM affected by Aids disease and the rest 40% MSM affected by skin and the rest is affected by TB. MSM are generally stay with his family and some are stay with the outside the family. They have a community especially they stay in this particular community. When they affected by various disease the NGO plays vital role to recur them. Not every MSM has an identity associated with their sexual preferences and behavior and therefore may remain non-self identified, posing a formidable challenge to programs that seek to target them. For example, the term "MSM" can include gay- or bisexual-identified men, transgender men who have sex with men, men who identify as completely heterosexual (Sabin et al., 2012). The task is difficult but achievable if the complexity of relationships is recognized within the local context.

#### 4 Conclusions

The present study confirmed some factors of becoming MSM. The study also found out the reasons of becoming MSM in our society where result indicated that causes of MSM, kinds of MSM, social and economic reason, general reason, and religion reason have a significant effect on MSM. If was also found that the process of MSM increasing day by day. It was observed that the reason might be social and economic and genetic values. How ever since the preference for becoming MSM is wide spread in all Bangladesh, for many years and effect on many studies reported that its effect on different part of the country with the rapid urbanism the social values of MSM is changing in this reason. So it is also recommended to reestablish a new factor in this reason in order to make them aggressive successfully.

This study revealed some factors to establish their right and reasons behind their aggressiveness. MSM is a part in our so-

ciety when they born thus are not considered as a MSM. But when they reach at age of (7-8) years, the family noticed that a MSM behavior is different to others. They are the MSM who fell interest to do sex with a male than a female. There are many reasons for it. There is one pair of sex chromosomes in a man. This chromosomes select his sexual identify and the other 22 pair of sex chromosome consist of its body when a person also gained a set at chromosome then it changed body shape. Such as he speaks as female voices which attract a male not female etc. There are two kind of homo sexuality. MSM that mean male sex to male and the other is MSM male sex worker. Who want to do sex with a male by money or gift. Though a MSM is valueless in a family but every MSM is very careful about his family. Not only in his family but also in his society. Such as they say prayers and play vital role in every social activity. They are not a burden of a family. They are the helpful for their family.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express gratitude to those MSM who help us to conduct this research by sharing valuable information and important data.

## REFERENCES

- J. Okal, Luchters S, Geibel S, et al. Social context, sexual risk perceptions, and stigma: HIV vulnerability among male sex workers in Mombasa, Kenya. *Cult Health Sex*, 11:811–826, 2009.
- L. Spencerb, J. Stephen, Fallon, R, Samuel, Friedman, R, Daniel, Thompson, J, Gary, Gates, M, Thomas, Liberti, Robert M. Malow, "Statewide Estimation of Racial/Ethnic Populations of Men Who Have Sex with Men in the U.S.," *Public Health Rep*, Jan-Feb; 126(1): 60–72, 2011.

- M.L. Sabin, J.V. Lazarus, L. Frescura, *Lancet*. Vol. 12, No. 7, p. 505-506, 2000.
- N. Teunis. "Homosexuality in Dakar: Is the bed the heart of a sexual subculture?," *J Gay Lesb Bisex Ident*;1:153–169, 1996.
- Ouma, H. Birungi, S. Geibel. "Understanding the HIV/STI risks and prevention needs of men who have sex with men in Nairobi, Kenya. Horizons Final Report," *Washington Population Council*, 2005.
- S. Geibel, E.M. van der Elst, N. King'ola N, "Are you on the market?' A capture-recapture enumeration of men who sell sex to men in and around Mombasa," *AIDS*, 21:1349–1354, 2007.
- S. Geibel, N. King'ola, M. Temmerman, "The impact of peer outreach on HIV knowledge and prevention behaviours of male sex workers in Mombasa, Kenya," *Sex Transm Infect*, 88:357–362, 2012.
- S. Geibel, S. Luchters, N. King'ola , "Factors associated with self-reported unprotected anal sex among male sex workers in Mombasa, Kenya," *Sex Transm Dis*, 35:746–752, 2008.
- S. Geibel, Same-sex sexual behavior of men in Kenya: Implications for HIV prevention, programs, and policy, *Facts Views Vis Obgyn*, 4(4): 285–294, 2012.
- S. Geibel, W. Tun, P. Tapsoba, "HIV vulnerability of men who have sex with men in developing countries: Horizons studies, 2001-2008," *Public Health Rep*, 125:316–324, 2010.
- W. Ouma, H. Birungi, S. Geibel, "Engaging men who have sex with men in operations research in Kenya," *Cult Health Sex*, 11:827–839, 2009.

W. Roscoe, S.O. Murray, "Boy-wives and female husbands:  
studies in African homosexualities," New York: PAL-  
GRAVE; 1998.

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periphery\\_countries](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periphery_countries).

IJSER