

Abstract

Introduction: Social media and Geo Social application use for the sexual partner seeking is found to be an increasing trend in the world. Online sexual partner seeking is associated with higher number of risky sexual behaviors with increased risk of transmission of sexually transmitted infections including HIV. This is a developing culture and warrants in-depth studying as only a little is known about it.

Objectives : The aim of this study was to assess the usage patterns of social media and Geosocial Networking (GSN) application on sexual behavior and related factors among male Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) clinic attendees in Central STD Clinic, Colombo.

Methods : A cross sectional study was conducted among 402 newly registered STD clinic attendee males between 18 to 49 years of age at the central STD clinic, Colombo during 26th of August to 19th October 2019. Consecutive sampling method was used. An interviewer administered, pre tested, validated questionnaire was used and data was analyzed using SPSS.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used where relevant. Comparisons were made using chi-square test, Fisher's exact test, independent sample t test and Mann Whitney U test based on the data. Significance was considered at $p=0.05$ level.

Results : The response rate of the participants was 100% (N=402). Majority of study participants (N=261, 64.9%) were in the age group between 25-40 years and most of them (N=237, 59%) were unmarried. The number who have passed A/L was 146 (36.3%). The percentage of participants who have not completed O/L was 12.9% and 69 (17.2%) have had tertiary education. Majority of the study participants (N=355, 88.3%) use internet. Out of those who use internet, majority (N=221, 62.3%) use social media and/ or GSN apps to find friends/ partners. Participants who find partners through social media showed a significantly higher median number of partners ($p<0.001$) compared to participants who don't seek partners online. GSN application users showed a similar difference ($p<0.001$). The proportion involved in group sex was significantly higher among those who seek partners through social media ($p=0.001$) and GSN applications ($p<0.001$) compared to non-online

methods . A significant difference was observed , comparing the regular condom use for the partners other than marital partner, between the participants who seek and don't seek partners through social media ($p=0.045$) and who seek and don't seek partners through GSN application use($p=0.388$) . There was no significant difference between the mean age of the participants, who use and do not use social media to find partners ($p=0.165$) . Similar kind of difference observed in GSN application users ($p=0.225$). Majority of the participants ($N=222$, 55.2%) obtained the STI/HIV related health information through social media and GSN apps.

Conclusions and recommendations :Possibility of social media and GSN app use in delivering health messages to people who engage in high risk sexual behaviors must be studied.