

Understanding Barriers and Uptake of HIV PrEP among Men who Have Sex with Men with Social Ecological Model

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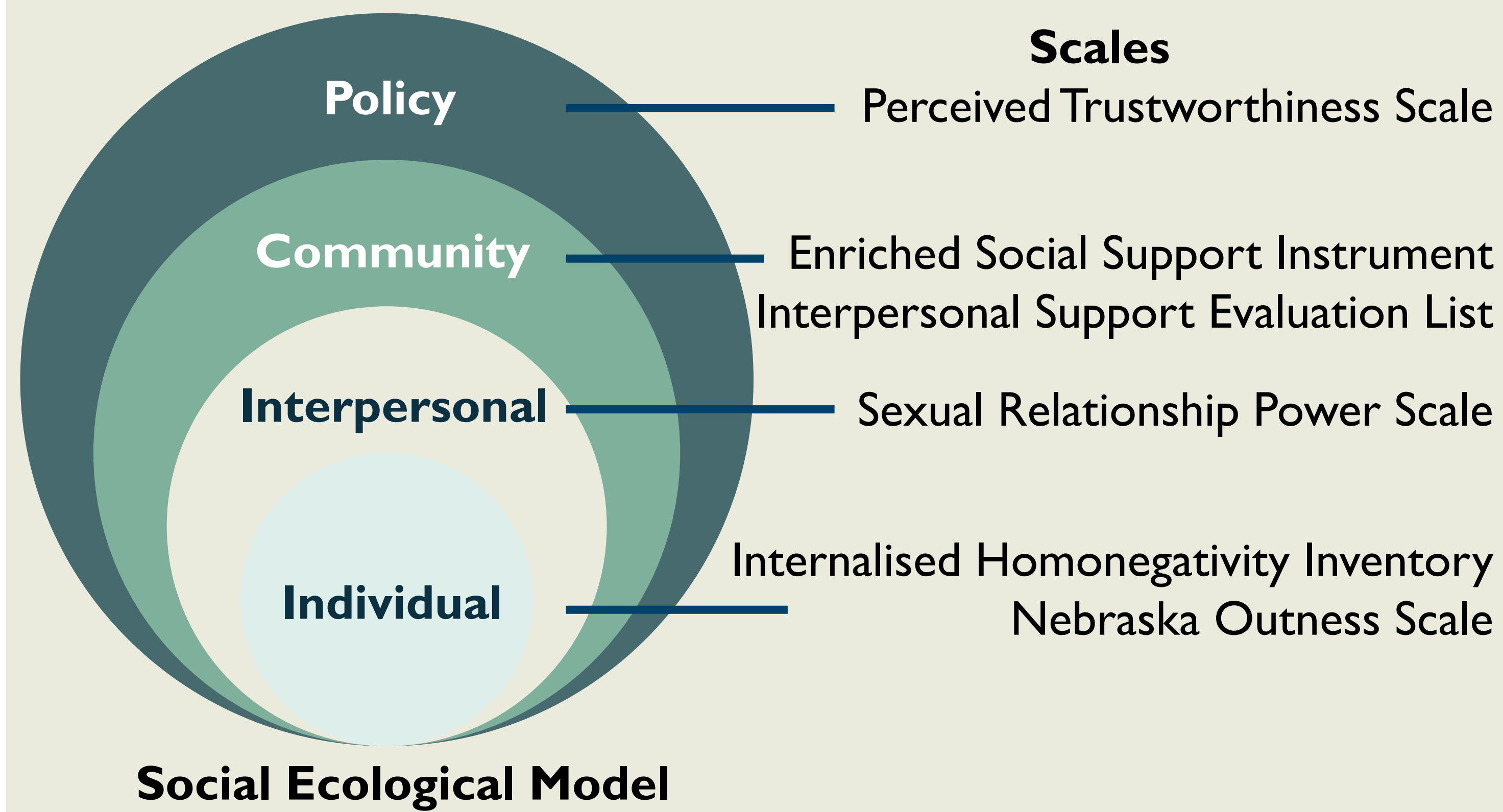


Background

- HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis has been proven to be an effective biomedical prevention means, especially for men who have sex with men (MSM), a community disproportionality affected by the epidemic
- Without a publicly funded PrEP programme in Hong Kong, assessment of current utilisation pattern and associating factors is needed

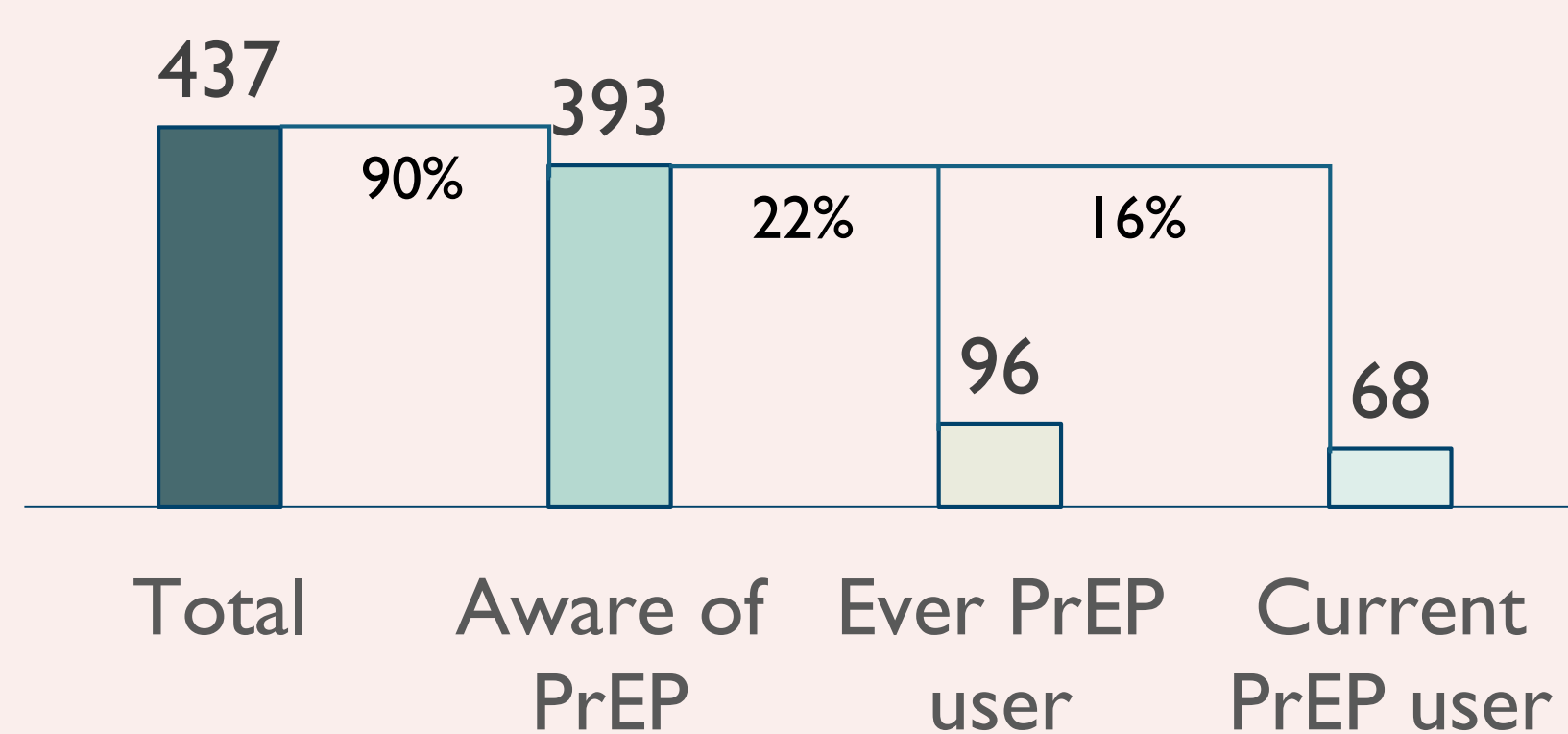
Methods

- A cross-sectional study was conducted between December 2024 and March 2025 using an online self-administered questionnaire
- Validated scales were used to assess the 4 levels in social ecological model: sexual orientation disclosure, internalised societal negativity towards homosexuality, sexual relationship power dynamics, social support from the community, and trust in public health authorities
- These characteristics, along with sociodemographics and behavioural variables, were compared between PrEP users and non-users using bivariate analysis



Results (I)

- Totally 437 participants were recruited, among which 68 (16%) were currently using PrEP



Variables	Current PrEP users (n=68)	Not current PrEP users (n=369)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	P
Median age, years (IQR)	34 (29-40)	31 (27-34)	N/A	<.01
Monthly income over HK\$30,000	37 (54%)	108 (29%)	2.88 (1.70-4.89)	<.01
Attained university level education or above	58 (85%)	254 (69%)	2.63 (1.30-5.32)	.01
Engaged in chemsex in the past 6 months	29 (43%)	31 (8%)	8.11 (4.43-14.85)	<.01
Inclined to have CLAI in the coming 6 months	60 (88%)	158 (43%)	10.02 (4.66-21.55)	<.01

Results (II)

Individual level

- Current PrEP users were more “out” with people around them, such as members of the immediate family, friends, co-workers, and even strangers (all $p < .05$)
- They had a lower level of internalised homophobia
 - When I think of my homosexuality, I feel depressed. ($p = .02$)
 - Sometimes I feel that I might be better off dead than gay. ($p < .01$)
 - I sometimes feel that my homosexuality is embarrassing. ($p = .03$)
 - I am disturbed when people can tell I am gay. ($p = .02$)
 - I wish I could control my feelings of attraction toward other men. ($p < .01$)

Interpersonal level

- PrEP users were less likely to experience anger from partners when discussing about condom use ($p = 0.02$), and were more likely to have a monogamous partner ($p = 0.0499$)

Community level

- PrEP users received more social support from peers ($p = 0.047$)
 - To show you love and affection ($p = .02$)
- They also had higher belonging support from peers ($p = 0.04$)

Policy level

- Conversely, PrEP users had a lower overall trust in local public health authorities ($p = .02$)

Disagreed the public health authorities in Hong Kong ...	Odds ratio (95% CI)	p
... is capable.	1.67 (1.08-2.56)	.02
... carries out its duty very well.	1.71 (1.11-2.61)	.01
... is genuinely interested in the well-being of citizens.	1.81 (1.18-2.79)	<.01

Conclusions

- PrEP uptake among MSM in Hong Kong is suboptimal and inequitable
- Users were aware of their risk and willing to use PrEP
- The absence of a public PrEP programme and distrust in health authorities prompted them to access PrEP elsewhere
- Non-users had a more negative self-image, and a lower sexual relationship control, and received fewer support from community members
- PrEP-associated stigma existed within and outside the community
- Promoting community support could allow non-users to observe positive benefits brought by PrEP and encourage uptake



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