

A Study to Assess Knowledge and Attitude Towards HIV among Students from Pune City

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Abstract

Background: India has the third largest HIV epidemic in the world. The Indian epidemic is characterized by low levels in the general population and elevated concentrations among high-risk groups. The present study was planned to determine the awareness of HIV among students from Pune city.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out among students from Pune city, India during March, 2020. 50 students were approached to participate in the study (males: 32; females: 18). Pretested questionnaire was distributed and collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 16.

Results: Study participants had high knowledge (86%) and attitude score (87%). There was no significant difference between males and female participants for attitude and knowledge, except for one question regarding knowledge about HIV transmission via breastfeeding to child.

Conclusions: Present study showed that there are no misconceptions or negative attitudes regarding HIV among students.

Keywords: AIDS, Attitude, HIV, Knowledge

Introduction

HIV/AIDS has become one of the most devastating diseases humanity has ever faced. It has become a major public health concern with about half of new infections occurring in young people¹. Sub-Saharan Africa, which has just over 10% of the world's population, remains the most seriously affected region¹. The impact of HIV/AIDS has caused much consternation among policy-makers as it threatens to erode socio-economic through its associated increase in morbidity and mortality of people in the productive age group².

A more serious challenge today, is the growing infection rates among the adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. Research has shown that the highest group found to be infected with the virus is the age group 15 to 24³. This adolescent high-risk group accounts for 60 percent of all new infections in many countries⁴. Transactional sex, very common among young adults in Africa has been identified as one of the critical pathways for the transfer of the virus in Africa⁵. It is not surprising that

sexual intercourse has become the most predominant mode of transmission of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for approximately 90% of all infections⁶.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection because of the physical, psychological, social and economic attributes of adolescence⁷. Young adults are also at risk as a result of high risky sexual behaviors, attitudes, and constraints of the societies in which they grow up⁸. Qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in Ghana suggest that the lifestyles of university students are placing them at risk of contracting the HIV^{9, 10}. Moreover peer pressure to obtain luxury items, such as expensive clothing, jewelry, fashionable hairstyles, accessories, and makeup, motivates young women to engage in transactional sex¹¹⁻¹³.

It has also been demonstrated that increased knowledge about AIDS is not a predictor for behavioural change 14-17, although knowledge about the disease is a prerequisite for change 18. Knowledge of HIV and other STIs have been lacking among adolescents in

Ghana, with sparse and limited literature in this area as previous studies conducted have focused on public universities¹⁰ with little or no data on private university students. According to the 2008 Ghana Demographic Health Survey (GDHS) 98% of women and 99% of men were aware of HIV in Ghana. However, this has not translated into comprehensive knowledge and safe sexual behaviour as only 25% of females and 33% of males aged 15 – 24 years had comprehensive knowledge of HIV¹. This has health implications for propagation of the HIV/AIDS disease prevention and policy formulation.

In essence, there is a need to gather information on the basic knowledge of private university college students about HIV/AIDS, etiology, transmission, methods of prevention as well as their sexual practices since almost 45% of Ghana's population of about 24 million is aged 15 years or less.

Methodology

Research approach- Descriptive

Research design- One shot case study (Pre-Experimental)

Sampling technique- Convenience sampling

Sample size- 50

Data collection method- Survey questionnaire was prepared in English

Data entry and analysis: Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods and a bivariate analysis was conducted with all relevant independent variables, p- value ≤ 0.05 was considered as significant. SPSS version 16 was used for statistical analysis.

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Results

Table 1 shows participants knowledge and attitude towards HIV as well as bivariate analysis to determine differences between male and female responses. There were 50 participants consisting of 32 males and 18 females. Participants had overall good knowledge and attitude as seen by average knowledge score of 86% and average attitude score of 87%. Out of 15 questions regarding knowledge about HIV other than 3 questions regarding transmission through breastfeeding, kissing/hugging, and insect bite, more than 80% of the participants gave right answers. Only 48% of the participants gave correct response "yes" to HIV transmission through breastfeeding. Similarly, only 62% and 72% participants gave correct response "no" to HIV transmission through kissing/hugging and insect bite respectively. Out of 11 questions focused on attitude towards HIV, other than only 1 question focusing on secrecy about family member's HIV, more than 80% of the participants gave the right answers. Thirty-five percent of the participants felt the need to keep secrecy if family member becomes infected with HIV.

Table 1: Knowledge and attitude towards HIV

Variable	Expected answer	Male n (%)	Female n (%)		χ^2 value	p-value
Gender		32	18		NA	NA
Education						
12TH		14	9			
UG		10	5		4.13	0.13
PG		8	4			
HIV Knowledge						
HIV can be transmitted through contaminated syringes.	Yes	94%	95%		0.21	0.64

HIV can be transmitted through blood or blood product transfusion.	Yes	97%	100%		2.07	0.15
HIV is a sexually transmitted disease.	Yes	98%	100%		1.03	0.31
HIV testing before marriage decreases the spread of disease.	Yes	89%	91%		0.13	0.71
A pregnant woman can transmit HIV to her fetus.	Yes	86%	90%		0.41	0.52
HIV can be transmitted by sharing public telephone.	No	97%	94%		1.79	0.18
HIV can be transmitted through shaking hands.	No	95%	95%		0.0	0.98
Healthy-looking individuals can be living with HIV.	Yes	86%	82%		0.42	0.52
People can protect themselves from contracting HIV by using condoms.	Yes	92%	91%		0.11	0.74
HIV can be transmitted by sharing a meal with a person living with HIV.	No	92%	88%		0.67	0.41
HIV can be transmitted to a child through breastfeeding.	Yes	43%	58%		4.02	0.04
HIV can be transmitted by swimming in a public pool.	No	92%	94%		0.36	0.55
HIV can be transmitted by using a public toilet.	No	89%	93%		0.51	0.48
HIV can be transmitted through kissing/hugging a person living with HIV.	No	73%	70%		0.25	0.62
HIV can be transmitted through mosquito or other insect bites.	No	62%	63%		0.01	0.94
HIV attitude						
Would go to a restaurant if knew that the owner is living with HIV?	Yes	83%	72%		3.71	0.05
I am willing to share a meal with a person living with HIV.	Yes	85%	84%		0.05	0.82
Individuals living with HIV should be quarantined.	No	83%	81%		0.12	0.73
A female /male teacher living with HIV should be allowed to continue teaching.	Yes	96%	96%		0.05	0.82
Will host an individual living with HIV at home?	Yes	89%	82%		2.09	0.15
Member of my family can become friend with an individual living with HIV.	Yes	91%	93%		0.15	0.7
I am willing to work in an institution that tends to individuals living with HIV.	Yes	88%	94%		1.86	0.17
Will volunteer in an institution that works for people with HIV?	Yes	87%	96%		3.47	0.06
Want to remain secret if family member becomes infected with HIV.	No	64%	69%		0.5	0.48
An individual living with HIV can go to school and earn a degree.	Yes	98%	97%		0.49	0.48
Will maintain friendship if a friend becomes infected with HIV?	Yes	97%	97%		0.0	0.99

Conclusion

Present study showed that there are no myths or negative attitudes regarding HIV/AIDS among students of Pune city. Knowledge levels of students about basics of transmission, prevention and diagnosis and their attitude towards HIV positive clients are important. Many migrants are travelling worldwide and experiencing rapid changes in cultural as well as religious changes contributing to heightened risk of HIV/AIDS. On this background it is extremely important to have adequate knowledge about the disease so that they can help to protect themselves and others against possible risks. The generalizability of study results is limited due to the sample size, differences in the level of education, and cultural values among people from different states and cities.

Ethical Issues: There was no ethical issues in the study. However, the study has undergone the Institutional Ethics Sub-committee at Symbiosis College of Nursing (SCON), Pune, Maharashtra India.

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Conflict of Interest: Nil

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