

**A STUDY ON HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AMONG
ADOLESCENT GIRLS OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
OF AGRA DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is one of the most important and urgent public health challenges facing government and society around the world. The situation regarding HIV/AIDS in the world is dramatic. The number of HIV infected patients is quite large and there is no continent on world map where, there are not a large number of HIV victims.

Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Around half of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the world are females. According to NACO (2005), India is the second largest population infected with HIV/AIDS. Over 35 percentage of all reported AIDS cases are among 15 to 24 years. Girls are not so much aware about this concept being contracted with the disease and it's after effects, which creates the problem. This makes adolescence a crucial period in her life time.

Therefore it was essential to know the level of awareness about HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls. So to find out the level of awareness about HIV/AIDS the researcher conducted the present study among 200 adolescent girls of Agra district.

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It is concluded from the study that the respondent's awareness regarding basic facts about HIV/ AIDS, causes of HIV infection, prevention against HIV infection and government programme and policy against HIV/AIDS was high. While regarding to the sexually transmitted infections, symptoms of HIV/AIDS, progression stages of HIV/AIDS and medical tests and treatment for HIV/AIDS, the awareness level in most cases was low. Overall level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of most of the respondents was at medium level.

Keywords: Adolescent girls, HIV/AIDS, Awareness.

Introduction

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS, as it is popularly known as, is the new scourge of the last two decades of the twentieth century. AIDS is a disease caused by a virus named HIV (Human Immuno deficiency Virus). HIV weakens the immune system or the body's own defence system but this process is slow. It takes years after being infected for a person to notice that he/she has been infected. HIV+ve mean that the person has the virus and is harboring HIV infection. Specialists have identified four major mediums of HIV/AIDS transmission viz. intimate sexual contact, exposure of infected blood, shared uses of infected needles/syringes and transmission from an infected pregnant woman to her fetus.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic remains among the most significant challenges to public healthcare systems worldwide. Globally, there are 34.2 million “people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA)” at the end of 2011. The situation of AIDS in Asia is as a 'ticking bomb' with scarce statistics and perspectives. Considering the potential catastrophes of India and China, unfortunately, India falls within the high-risk region of South Asia and South East Asia, which is just next to sub-Saharan African region as regards the number of HIV infected cases, is concerned. At the end of 2010, provisionally estimated 24.0 lakhs people have been infected with HIV/AIDS in the country.

The growing epidemic has adversely affected the psychosocial, cultural, and developmental domains, hence making it a major public health concern. HIV/AIDS has gained prominence in India as a growing public health issue.

Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Around half of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the world are females. According

to NACO (2005), India is the second largest population infected with HIV/AIDS. Over 35 percentage of all reported AIDS cases are among 15 to 24 years.

In many countries it is likely that the rates of HIV/AIDS victims will increase faster amongst girls than the boys because of cultural and social norms, which subject girls to sexual experience at an earlier age. Girls are not so much aware about this concept being contracted with the disease and it's after effects, which creates the problem. This makes adolescence a crucial period in her life time.

Melkote et al. (2000) conducted a study on "Predictor's Attitudes to Persons with AIDS among Young Adults in India". The study was conducted among 203 students from 14 different departments of the University of Hyderabad. Study reported higher scores on knowledge of AIDS transmission, more positive attitude towards AIDS and safe sex.

Mitra (2000) conducted a study to access the level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the street and working children of Narkeldanga. Results indicated that awareness level was low. Percentage of kids who had heard about STD/AIDS were 10 percent, the number who were aware about how the disease spreads were 15 percent, 12 percent were aware about how the disease does not spread while 5 percent knew about how the disease could be prevented.

Singh et al. (2000) reported that the AIDS awareness profile of the metropolitan students (69.5 percent) was better than the satellite town students (53.25 percent). The girls in the metropolis scored the best with 75.9 percent. The metropolis boys stood next with 63.6 percent. The satellite town girls had a higher figure (59.8 percent) as compared to the satellite town boys (46.7 percent).

The public school boys had the best awareness score with 66.9 percent and the public school girls stood next with 63.44 percent. The government school-boys scored 57.8 percent and girls 54.98 percent.

Italia Yazdi (2002) observed that the fruits of NACO programme have not yet reached the interiors of India. Study showed that there was negligible condom use (5.13 percent) for prevention of STDs in different villages, while more than 95 percent of villagers were using it for family planning purposes only. They had no idea of its use to prevent STDs.

WHO (2002) conducted a study to assess the awareness and knowledge among students in class IX and XI of selected government and private schools/colleges on HIV/AIDS and STD in Dharan, Nepal. Overall result reveals that students of class IX were better informed than class

XI students. Students from private schools were better informed than those in government schools.

On perusal of the above point of view the researcher conducted the present study entitled "A Study on HIV/AIDS Awareness among Adolescent Girls of Senior Secondary School of Agra District" with the following objective:-

- To find out the level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls.

Research Methodology

A multistage sampling technique was used to select the ultimate unit of the sample with a view to get a representative sample of the area. The present study was conducted in Agra district. Agra district is divided into two areas as Agra rural and Agra urban. The research was conducted in Agra urban. Agra urban comprises of Nagar Nigam, Nagar Palika and Nagar Panchayat. Agra city comes under Nagar Nigam. Thus Agra city (Nagar Nigam) was selected purposively for the present study.

List of Intermediate colleges of Agra city were collected from D.I.O.S. office, Panchkuiya, Agra. According to this list there were total 117 Hindi medium colleges and 23 English medium colleges. Out of these colleges two Hindi medium colleges namely "K.G. Inter College" and "Tulsi Devi Girls Inter College" and two English medium colleges namely "Agra Public School" and "St. Anthony's Junior College" were selected randomly. Fifty adolescent girls of 11th and 12th class from each Intermediate college were selected for the present study randomly. Thus total 200 respondents were taken as a sample.

The data were collected from primary as well as secondary sources. Secondary data was collected from different libraries, organization, agencies and Internet etc. Primary data were collected through a well constructed questionnaire.

After the collection of data, it was tabulated and was subjected to statistical analysis i.e. percentage.

Result and Discussion

The results obtained were thoroughly examined, interpreted and discussed with all care. After statistical analysis the results have been presented under the following heads according to the objectives of the study:

- Awareness regarding different aspects of HIV/AIDS.
- Level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS.

Awareness regarding different aspects of HIV/AIDS

The following table gives a clear picture regarding awareness about different aspects of HIV/AIDS. The findings have been presented showing the comparative results between before intervention period and after intervention period. They clearly show the impact of intervention programme.

Table 1: Awareness regarding different aspects of HIV/AIDS **N=200**

Different aspects of HIV/AIDS	Level of Awareness	Number	Percentage
Basic facts about HIV/AIDS	High	132	66.0
	Medium	61	30.5
	Low	07	03.5
	Total	200	100
Sexually Transmitted Infections	High	13	06.5
	Medium	56	28.0
	Low	131	65.5
	Total	200	100
Causes of HIV Infection	High	114	57.0
	Medium	64	32.0
	Low	22	11.0
	Total	200	100
Symptoms of HIV/AIDS	High	03	01.5
	Medium	32	16.0
	Low	165	82.5
	Total	200	100
Progression Stages of HIV/AIDS	High	01	00.5
	Medium	31	15.5
	Low	168	84.0
	Total	200	100
Prevention against HIV Infection	High	104	52.0
	Medium	65	32.5
	Low	31	15.5
	Total	200	100
Medical Tests and Treatment for HIV/AIDS	High	02	01.0
	Medium	19	09.5
	Low	179	89.5

	Total	200	100
Government Programme and Policies against HIV/AIDS	High	123	61.5
	Medium	55	27.5
	Low	22	11.0
	Total	200	100

Table 1. reveals the awareness regarding different aspects of HIV/AIDS. The results show that most of the respondents (66 percent) had high level of awareness regarding basic facts about HIV/AIDS, while only 30.5 percent and 3.5 percent of the respondents had medium level and low level of awareness respectively.

The data related to the awareness about sexually transmitted infections reported that majority of the respondents (65.5 percent) had low level of awareness, while only 28 percent and 6.5 percent of the respondents had medium level and high level of awareness respectively.

Regarding awareness about causes of HIV infection, most of the respondents 57 percent had high level of awareness, while 32 percent and 11 percent of the respondents had medium level and low level of awareness respectively.

Regarding awareness about symptoms of HIV/AIDS maximum number of the respondents (82.5 percent) had low level of awareness. Only 16 percent and 1.5 percent of the respondents had medium level and high level of awareness respectively.

Related to the progression stages of HIV/AIDS, 84 percent of the respondents had low level of awareness, while 15.5 percent of the respondents had medium level of awareness. Only one respondent scored high level of awareness score.

Regarding to the prevention against HIV infection, the findings show that high level of awareness reported by 52 percent of the respondents, while only 32.5 percent and 15.5 percent of the respondents had medium level and low level of awareness respectively.

Regarding to the awareness about medical tests and treatment for HIV/AIDS, it is clearly shows that most of the respondents (89.5 percent) reported low level of awareness, while 09.5 percent of the respondents had medium level of awareness. Only two respondent scored high level of awareness score.

As regards to the awareness about government programme and policies against HIV/AIDS the result indicates that 61.5 percent of the respondents had high level of awareness,

while only 27.5 percent and 11 percent of the respondents had medium level and low level of awareness respectively.

Total Level of Awareness Regarding HIV/AIDS

Till now the researcher has discussed the awareness regarding various aspects of HIV AIDS. The following table shows the total level of awareness (all aspects included) achieved by the respondents regarding HIV/AIDS.

Table 2: Total level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS N=200

Level of Awareness	Number	Percentage
High	07	03.5
Medium	148	74.0
Low	45	22.5
Total	200	100

The analysis carried out with the data obtained by respondents on total level of awareness regarding different aspects of HIV/AIDS presented in Table 2. appears to be quite interesting.

Results reveal that 74 percent of the respondents possessed medium level of awareness, while 22.5 percent and 3.5 percent of the respondents possessed low and high level of awareness respectively.

Summary and Conclusion

It is concluded from the study that the respondent's awareness regarding basic facts about HIV/ AIDS, causes of HIV infection, prevention against HIV infection and government programme and policy against HIV/ AIDS was high before the intervention programme. While regarding to the sexually transmitted infections, symptoms of HIV/ AIDS, progression stages of HIV/AIDS and medical tests and treatment for HIV/AIDS, the awareness level in most cases was low. Overall level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of the most of the respondents was at medium level.

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