



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN JAJARKOT DISTRICT OF NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS has killed more than 25 million people since it was first recognized in 1981, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history. It is an increasing public health problem of the people in the world. A descriptive study was carried out in 2013 at Jajarkot district of Nepal, to assess the knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents of higher secondary school. Facilitator based self administered questionnaire was distributed among 150 students who were selected through simple random technique lottery method. The study showed that majority of the respondents had knowledge about HIV/AIDS and more than two third (77.3%) had knowledge about the causative agent of the disease. Regarding the transmission of disease, majority (94.7%) had responded through needle sharing and 93.3% respondents responded through contamination of blood. Highest percent of respondent (51%) had knowledge in symptoms i.e. weight loss. Majority had knowledge that condom use during sexual intercourse can prevent HIV/AIDS. Despite having adequate knowledge still there exists various misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS among the adolescents. The knowledge among the respondents was quite satisfactory for most of the aspects like modes of transmission, sexual and behavioral practices and common symptoms and preventive measures of the disease.

Key Words: Adolescents, HIV/AIDS, Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS, a social disease took pandemic form within a short span of time affecting 40 million people through the globe. Adults of the developing countries are the main victim of the disease contributing to 95% of the total world's HIV infection and 90% death. In the absence of effective cure to this disease, it can be very easily prevented by IEC activities regarding behavioral changes. School children of today are exposed to the risk of being victims of HIV/AIDS - which was quite unknown to their predecessors a few decades ago. As children are a valuable resource for the future of a country, it is imperative that they be equipped with ample amount of information so as to protect themselves and their counterparts from falling a prey this still-an-incurable killer disease.

There is growing evidence of increased premarital sexual activities among young people and adolescents. To generalization is difficult, studies indicate that adolescents' involvement in premarital sexual experience was found higher. An important factor responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS in developing countries is believed to be poor knowledge about mode of transmission and its preventive measure. The results of a survey in Madagascar showed that 68% of participants in the study did not know that vaginal sex with a properly used condom is low risk. A study of students in the Islamic Republic

of Iran found that the knowledge of students about HIV/AIDS was only moderate.^{2,3} Therefore this study has been carried out to assess the knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This was descriptive cross sectional study conducted in all the higher secondary school of Jajarkot district from 30th October to 12th September, 2013. A total of 150 samples of adolescents were selected from simple random sampling technique. Self administered questionnaire was used to obtain desired information from the adolescents.

The respondents of the study were adolescents aged 15-19 years studying in higher secondary school of Jajarkot district. Participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent. Self administered questionnaire were distributed to the respondents.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

A) Inclusion Criteria

- Adolescent aged 15-19 yrs studying at higher secondary school of Jajarkot district was included in the study

B) Exclusion Criteria

- Adolescents with physical disability and inability to understand the questionnaire was not included as well as

adolescents who didn't want to participate by their own consent were excluded.

The data obtained were entered and analyzed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Univariate analysis were done for the study variables. In univariate analysis, frequencies of different demographic, socio economic characteristics and knowledge of HIV/AIDS were analysed.

RESULTS

The median age of the respondent was 17 yrs and majorities were Hinduism. Among total responses, 64% responded that the Radio was the major source of information regarding HIV/AIDS.

Majority of 79.3% respondents had knowledge that HIV/AIDS is a communicable disease while 20.7% didn't know that it is communicable. Among those 77.3% responded the causative agent to be virus (Table1) 94.7% responded that the mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS is due to needle sharing and mother to child. Thirty four percent had misconception regarding its transmission through mosquito bites and this misconception was found significantly higher among male respondents (Table2)

Most of the respondents, 51% had knowledge about symptoms of HIV/AIDS i.e weight loss, while 50% responded were weaknesses (Table3)

Among the total respondents, 96% had knowledge that HIV/AIDS is diagnosed by testing blood, 2.7% responded had knowledge by urine test while 0.7% responded by stool test as well as sputum test. Regarding the treatment for HIV/AIDS, 65.3% knew the availability of drugs for prolonging life for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Majority of the respondents 93.3% had knowledge of condom use and followed by 90% having single trusted sexual partner and avoid needle sharing which are the important measures to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS.(Table 4)

Table1: Causative Agents Responses (n = 160)

Causative Agents Responses	Percentage
Bacteria	22%
Virus	77.3%
Fungus	0.7%
Protozoa	0%

Table 2: Mode of Transmission of HIV/AIDS (n = 160)

Mode of Transmission of HIV/AIDS	Percentage
Unsafe sexual contact (non-use of condoms)	88.7%
Needle sharing	94.7%
Through contamination of blood	93.3%
Multiple sexual partners	88.7%
Contact with FSW	77.3%
Mother to child transmission	94.7%

Mosquito bites	34%
Fomite	12.7%
Contact such as touch, hugging, handshake	12%
Use of common latrine and soap	10%

Table 3: Sign and symptoms of HIV/AIDS (n = 160)

Sign and symptoms of HIV/AIDS	Percentage
Weight gain	4%
Weight loss	51%
Weakness	50%
Chronic diarrhoea	18%
Chronic fever	29.3%
Chronic cough	12.7%
Anorexia	26%

Table 4: Preventive Measures of HIV/AIDS (n = 160)

Preventive Measures of HIV/AIDS	Percentage
Avoiding sexual contacts with IDUs	82.3%
Avoid multiple sexual partners	88%
Having single trusted sexual partner	90%
Avoid needle sharing	90%
Condom use	93.3%
Avoid sexual contact with FSW	75.3%
Blood screening	85.3%
Improving nutritional status	43.3%
Protection from mosquito bite	44.7%
Sanitary latrine	33.3%

DISCUSSION

School children of today are exposed to the risk of being victims of HIV/AIDS - which was quite unknown to their predecessors a few decades ago. The epidemic of HIV/AIDS is now progressing at a rapid pace among young people.

Adolescent are at higher risk for HIV/AIDS, some of whom may lack proper knowledge regarding the disease. Inadequate knowledge, negative attitudes and risky practices are major hindrances to preventing the spread of HIV. Educational institutes are to be focused as they have been focus of outbreaks, as there are large numbers of young people with high level of close social contact. Knowledge, attitudes and belief studies are very useful tools to assess the extent to which individuals or communities are in a position to adopt risk free behavior.

The study showed that the majority of the respondents have knowledge about the causative agent, mode of transmission and Preventive Measures. The study conducted in Nepal showed that Nepalese youth had moderate HIV/AIDS knowledge and a moderate level of self-efficacy but they lacked knowledge in certain aspects of HIV transmission. The findings also indicate that there is a need for developing school-based and/or community-based programs that will increase HIV/

AIDS awareness among youth.⁴ The study performed in Ghana assessed the knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS among senior school girls in their teens and it was found that, senior school girls were knowledgeable on the nature, modes of transmission, and prevention of HIV/AIDS.⁵ The total percentage of correct responses about modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS was moderate. Misconceptions about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted e.g mosquito bites, hugging, sharing foods, drinks, latrine etc were prevalent (25% on average). Survey conduct by Thanavanh B et. al showed that the majority of students were aware that HIV can be transmitted by sexual intercourse (97.7%), from mother to child (88.3%) and through sharing needles or syringes (92.0%)⁶ which is similar to the finding of present study. Misconceptions about transmission of HIV were observed among 59.3% to 74.3% of respondents. Positive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS were observed among 55.7% of respondents⁶

In the present study, majority of students were aware about HIV/AIDS as being preventable. Moreover, the students were aware about the different methods of prevention. Ninety three percent respondents had knowledge about condoms as a means of prevention of HIV. The study conducted in India showed that Only 14.9% had knowledge about condoms as a means of protection, where awareness was significantly higher amongst boys. 48.2% of the students could name sexual route while 44.4% named sharing of syringes and needles as a mode of transmission and only 72% of students were aware about HIV/AIDS as being preventable.¹ The study performed in Kerala assessed the knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS among senior high school girls in their teens. It was found that, senior high school girls were knowledgeable on the nature, modes of transmission, and prevention of HIV/AIDS.⁷

CONCLUSION

The result of study showed adequate knowledge in HIV/AIDS among adolescents students of higher secondary school of Jajarkot district. However, number of misconception and negative attitude towards HIV/AIDS were common as well.

These needs to be addressed by behavior change communication targeting those having misconception and less knowledge about it. Education about HIV/AIDS in educational institutes is to be strengthened. Furthermore research regarding knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents is to be carried out.

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