

## A Study on HIV/AIDS Awareness Among Adolescent School Girls

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### ABSTRACT

Currently AIDS is an emerging disease. It has yet no cure in the medical sciences. Information and prevention of HIV and AIDS is the only way to avoid this disease. Risk of HIV infection in women is two and half times more than men. Several methods for awareness of HIV and AIDS are being run by the Government and Non-government organizations. The present research work was conducted to study the situation of HIV and AIDS awareness among adolescent girls. For this study, 70 adolescent girls of age group 12 to 16 years were selected from a girl's school by random sampling method. For the collection of data from respondents, a structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher. These data were analyzed in terms of number and percentage. In this study, 82% adolescent girls could mark AIDS as fast spreading, incurable disease, whereas 71% girls knew the real cause of AIDS. In the summary of this study, middle level of awareness for HIV and AIDS was found among the adolescent school girls of age group 12-16 years.

**Key words:** Adolescent Girls, AIDS, Awareness, HIV

### INTRODUCTION

In current scenario, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an emerging disease caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Almost four decades ago, first case of HIV/AIDS was found in India in Chennai. By the year 2001, as per UNO, about 40 million people in the world had been affected with HIV/AIDS. According to National AIDS Control Organization of India (NACO), the prevalence of AIDS in India in 2013 was 0.27 percent, which is down from 0.41 percent in 2002. <sup>[1]</sup> The National AIDS Control Organization estimated that 2.39 million people live with HIV/AIDS in India in 2008–09. <sup>[2]</sup> An investigation by the Million Death Study Collaborators in the British Medical Journal (2010) estimates this population to be between 1.4–1.6 million people. <sup>[3]</sup>

According to NACO data, India has demonstrated an overall reduction of 57 percent in estimated annual new HIV infections (among adult population) from 0.274 million in 2000 to 0.116 million in 2011, and the estimated number of people living with HIV was 2.08 million in 2011. <sup>[4]</sup> According to more recent UNAIDS report released on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2015; India has shown a 66% decline in number of new HIV infections since 2000. <sup>[5]</sup>

A study published in the medical journal "The Lancet"

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reported an approximately 30% decline in HIV infections among young women aged 15 to 24 years attending prenatal clinics in selected southern states of India from 2000 to 2004 where the epidemic is thought to be concentrated. Recent studies suggest that many married women in India, despite practicing monogamy and having no other risk behaviors, acquire HIV from their husbands; so HIV testing of all married males can be an effective HIV prevention strategy for general population. <sup>[6]</sup>

The states with high HIV prevalence rates include Manipur (1.40%), Andhra Pradesh (0.90%), Mizoram (0.81%), Nagaland (0.78%), Karnataka (0.63%) and Maharashtra (0.55%). The adult HIV prevalence in India is declining from estimated level of 0.41% in 2000 through 0.36% in 2006 to 0.31% in 2009. <sup>[7]</sup>

HIV/AIDS is not limited for specific group, community, religion, age, mass and sex. In all types of infection, HIV is very mortal because there is no cure of this disease in medical sciences. There are many causes of HIV infection but major causes are infected blood, from infected mother to her child, re-use of infected syringe and unsecured sex. In all cases of AIDS, about 82.65% people are infected of this disease due to unsafe sexual relations. According to WHO, the women and children are very vulnerable to HIV infection. According to various studies, risk of HIV infection in women is two and half times more than men, because the facilities available for the prevention of HIV are less available to women. Besides this, usually they are not able to put any kind of pressure on men for use of precautions at the time of sex. There is unavailability

of tools for women about this. On the other hand, probability of AIDS in Indian women is greater because their less knowledge of sex affair is supposed to be their symbol of virginity. Even if they get knowledge from other sources, they are not able to request for the safe sex behavior because sex is not supposed to be a subject in our culture in which women can begin discussions on this matter.

After improvement in health services and awareness of HIV/AIDS, deaths become less by AIDS, but still, the reduction in women deaths was lesser in comparison to men. Women death reduces up to 35% when men death recorded reduction up to 65%. To control the transmission of HIV/AIDS in India, the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2012-17) was developed with target set to achieve 90% coverage of schools and colleges through education programs and 80% awareness among the general population in rural areas. As risk of infection in such kind of diseases like HIV/AIDS is more in women, the present study was conducted to assess the current status of awareness level about HIV/AIDS in adolescent school girls of a selected district.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted to know the current status of awareness level about HIV/AIDS in adolescent school girls. Study period was during January 2006 to April 2006. For this study, the students of Guru Nanak Girls Public School, Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) were selected by random sampling. We registered the girls of class 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, of age group 12-16 years. 14 students from each class were selected by random sampling method for the study. For data collection, a questionnaire was prepared, which was divided in to three units. In unit 'A', questions were related to social and economic profile of the respondents; in unit B, questions were related to HIV/AIDS awareness; and in unit 'C', the questions were related to the resources about knowledge of AIDS. In this questionnaire, there were two types of questions, optional and open type. To ensure that all the respondents may understand the questions clearly, the questionnaire was developed in Hindi. The questionnaire was distributed among all the respondents at same time, and one and half hours was given to each. All the data were analyzed statistically.

## OBSERVATIONS

### A. Socioeconomic Profile: [Table 1]

In this study, total 70 adolescent girls (students) participated. Out of them, 81.43% respondents belonged to age group 12-14 years, whereas 18.57% respondents were in the age group 14-16 years. Out of all the respondents, 88.58% were Hindu, 8.57% Muslim and 2.85% Sikh. Fathers of 54.29%, 35.71%, 8.57% respondents were in the occupation of service class, business group and farming respectively. Most of the respondents (67.15%) belonged to joint families and 32.85% were from nuclear families.

**Table 1: Profile of Respondents**

Age Group	No. of Respondents (N=70)	Percent (%)
12-14 years	57	81.43
14-16 years	13	18.57
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	62	88.58
Muslim	6	8.57
Sikh	2	2.85
<b>Father's Occupation</b>		
Service	38	54.29
Business	25	35.71
Farming	6	8.57
Others	1	1.43
<b>Family Type</b>		
Joint Family	47	67.15
Nuclear Family	23	32.85

### B. Knowledge and Awareness about HIV/AIDS: [Table 2]

In this study, about 40% respondents stated that AIDS is incurable disease. Almost 67.1% respondents knew the full form and meaning of HIV/AIDS correctly. About 71.4% respondents knew the correct causes of HIV/AIDS. 82.8% respondents knew the modes of spread of HIV/AIDS. Only 25.7% respondents were aware about HIV test.

**Table 2: Knowledge and Awareness about HIV/AIDS**

Questions	Correct Knowledge		Incorrect Knowledge	
	(N=70)	(%)	(N=70)	(%)
Highly contagious incurable disease	28	40	22	31.4
Full form of HIV/AIDS	47	67.1	23	32.8
Nature of AIDS	28	40.0	42	60.0
Causes of HIV	50	71.4	20	29.6
How HIV/AIDS spread	58	82.8	12	17.2
How HIV/AIDS does not spread	58	58	12	17.2
Awareness about HIV test	18	25.7	42	74.3
What is STD	16	22.9	54	77.1
Is HIV sexually transmitted	22	31.4	48	68.6
Can AIDS avoided by condoms	48	68.6	22	31.4
Who can be the sufferer of AIDS	62	88.6	8	11.4
Which age groups people are more affected	32	45.7	38	54.3
Most affected state	40	57.1	30	42.9
Major factors of HIV/AIDS in India	36	51.4	34	48.6
General symptoms of AIDS	38	54.3	32	45.7
How do you behave affected people	65	92.8	5	7.2

[Table 2] also shows that only 22.9% were aware about STDs (Sexual Transmitted Diseases), but 31.4% said that HIV infection occurs due to sexual transmission. 68.5% respondents said that AIDS can be avoided by using condoms. Around 88.6% told that AIDS may affect any class or groups. Approximately 45.7% respondents answered correctly that people of 15-24 years age group are more affected with AIDS. Only 57% respondents knew the name of states which are mostly affected. About 51.4 percent respondents knew the main reasons of spread of AIDS in India. Nearly 54% adolescent girls had correct knowledge regarding general symptoms

of HIV/AIDS. 92.8 percent had thoughts to behave friendly with infected people.

### C. Resources of Knowledge and Awareness: [Table 3]

Majority of respondents (88.6%) got most knowledge about HIV and AIDS through television. This was followed by the NGO's programs (80% respondents).

**Table 3: Resources of Knowledge and Awareness**

Resources	No. of Respondents (N=70)	Percent (%)
Television	62	88.6
Radio	13	18.5
News paper	5	7.1
Road side play	6	8.6
NGO	56	80.0
Friends	6	8.6
Family	2	2.9
School	14	20.0

In the answers of another question, 93% said that their family members do not discuss about HIV or AIDS. All respondents accepted that they do not have more knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS due to conservativeness, culture, ignorance, difference between age and open talks.

## DISCUSSION

HIV/AIDS infection is rapidly spreading in India. Unfortunately, in 21<sup>st</sup> century, awareness of people about the disease is still low. Awareness is the main key to prevention of HIV/AIDS. The current study assessed the awareness level of the adolescents about HIV/AIDS in a Girls school of Faizabad district of U.P. In this study, we had thus also measured the school going adolescent girl's knowledge level regarding HIV/AIDS.

In this study, only 52.8% respondents heard that HIV/AIDS is a highly incurable disease; whereas other studies conducted in different parts of India showed that most of the adolescent respondents heard about HIV/AIDS. [8, 9, 10, 11] The respondents of those studies were of higher age groups than our respondents. On the other hand, according to the National Family Health Survey-III (2005-2006) at the country level, 64.8% of rural youth had heard of HIV/AIDS. [12] The results of our study are also similar.

In this study, about 71% respondents knew about the causes of the HIV/AIDS. A similar study conducted in urban and rural areas of Jammu found that only 48% urban and 55% rural respondents were aware about causes of HIV/AIDS. [13] In the current study, we found that 71% respondents knew modes of AIDS infection, whereas 17% of respondents knew that unprotected sex is the only cause of HIV infection. In a study conducted in the state of Maharashtra, 50% respondents knew that the disease was transmitted through only sexual intercourse. Other study shows sexual transmission as most common mode of transmission. In our study, respondent's myths were - HIV/AIDS transmitted through

shaking hands (1.5%), sharing food (3%), mosquito bite (9%), and by kissing (4%); but 82 % knew that HIV is not transmitted by above causes. A similar study in Nanded, Maharashtra by N.R. Aswar et al (2013), also found that various misconceptions were prevailing among them regarding mode of transmission of HIV. About 26.5% of them thought it can be transmitted by shaking hands with HIV patient while mosquito bite, sharing food, using clothes of patients and aerosols were considered as modes of transmission by 26.7%, 23.3%, 21.67% and 13.33% of the girls respectively. [14]

In this study, all the respondents accepted that they do not have more knowledge regarding this disease due to conservativeness, culture, ignorance, difference between age and lack of open talks. The most common sources of information regarding this disease were television, radio, schools, NGOs, friends, newspapers, magazines and books. Various other studies also found same sources of information for this disease. Parents are not found to be an important source of information, which is also very disappointing.

## CONCLUSIONS

HIV/AIDS is highly spreading incurable disease and prevention is the only way of avoiding it. In this study, about half of the adolescents heard about HIV/AIDS. Findings of this study show that school adolescents had inappropriate knowledge about this problem. These results reveal that the efforts of government and non government organizations about HIV/AIDS awareness may be very slow. Conservative culture, ignorance, difference between age and lack of open talks are also responsible for insufficient awareness about HIV/AIDS.

### Recommendations

Overall health is a very important factor for human beings. During this study, the researchers experienced that people suffer from this infectious disease due to lack of appropriate knowledge about it. Here we can give following suggestions for eradication HIV/AIDS:

1. Health is the key of success in any part of life. So health education should be made an essential part of syllabus in all schools as well as other subjects, beginning after primary classes. A trained teacher should be appointed for this subject who can teach students effectively.
2. Programmes like workshops, seminars, group discussions should be conducted by schools, colleges and NGOs for students to promote health education.
3. Students should be promoted for active participation in AIDS awareness campaigns like Red Ribbon Express and World AIDS Day programs etc.
4. Electronic media can play role in enhancement of health education. All channels should conduct such programs to improve knowledge about health educations as well as HIV/AIDS awareness etc.

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