

Study of HIV/AIDS awareness and educational characteristics of adolescent girls

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■ **ABSTRACT** : 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 per cent 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 its after effect, which creates the problem. This makes adolescence a crucial period in her life time. Education is a key to an effective response to HIV/AIDS. Studies show that educated women are more likely to know how to prevent HIV infection, to delay sexual activity and to take measures to protect themselves. Education also accelerates behavioural change among young people, making them more receptive to prevention messages. Universal primary education is not a substitute for expanded HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, but it is a necessary component that complements these efforts. On the basis of the above point of view the present study was conducted among 200 adolescent girls of Agra district to find out the level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS according to their educational characteristics. It is concluded from the study that level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of most of the respondents was at medium level. The study further indicated that respondents, who were from English medium, studying in C.B.S.E. and I.C.S.C. Board, from science and commerce streams and having high family education status along with highly educated father and mother had better awareness regarding HIV/AIDS than the other respondents.

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Acquired Immuno 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 means 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 per cent 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 its after effects, which creates the problem. This makes adolescence a crucial period in her life time.

Italia Yazdi (2002) observed that the fruits of NACO (2001) programme have not yet reached the interiors of India. Study showed that there was negligible condom use (5.13 %) for prevention of STDs in different villages, while more than 95 per cent of villagers were using it for family planning purposes only. They had no idea of its use to prevent STDs.

Schools can be a primary source of information about prevention methods in the fight against HIV. New analysis by the Global Campaign for Education suggests that if all children received a complete education, the economic impact of HIV/AIDS could be greatly reduced and around 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented each year—seven million in a decade. A joint report by UNAIDS/UNFPA/UNIFEM reported that in many countries, including the world's poorest, the more educated and skilled young people are, the more likely they are to protect themselves and the less likely they are to engage in risky sexual behaviour. The benefits of education come from actual knowledge that students gain about HIV, from training in negotiation and life skills and from their increased ability to think critically and analyze situations before acting.

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

The study further revealed that students belonging to public schools with educated parents have a better AIDS awareness profile.

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 revealed 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 researchers conducted the present study on HIV/AIDS awareness and educational characteristics of adolescent girls with the

following objective :

- To find out the level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls.
- To study the association between educational characteristics and HIV/AIDS awareness among adolescent girls.

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 were 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.

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:

- Level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS.
- Association between educational characteristics and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS :

Level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of the adolescent girls has been presented Table 1.

Table 1 : 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 level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS presented in Table 1 appears to be quite interesting.

Results revealed that 74 per cent of the respondents possessed medium level of awareness, while 22.5 per cent and 3.5 per cent of the respondents possessed low and high level of awareness, respectively.

Association between educational characteristics and HIV/AIDS awareness :

In this section the level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of the adolescent girls has been associated with their various educational characteristics, which has been presented in Table 2.

As regard to the educational characteristics of the respondents, studying class-wise data showed that 59.5 per cent of the respondents were studying in 11th class while 40.5 per cent of the respondents were studying in 12th class.

In the research sample, 50 per cent of the respondents

were selected from Hindi medium school and 50 per cent (25 % from C.B.S.C. Board and 25 % from I.C.S.C. Board) from English medium school.

Studying stream of the respondents showed that majority of the respondents (48.5 %) belonged to Art stream. While 26 per cent of respondents belonged to Science stream and remaining 25.5 per cent of the respondents belonged to Commerce stream.

Family educational status depicts that 49.5 per cent of the respondents had medium family educational status, while 44.5 per cent of the respondents family had high educational status. Only 6.0 per cent of the respondents belonged to low educational status.

As regard to the education of father and mother the data showed that they possessed the same literacy level. Maximum of them, both were graduates (39 % fathers and 41 % mothers). Twenty six per cent fathers and 28 per cent mothers were educated upto High School, while 12.5 per cent fathers and 19.5 per cent mothers were intermediate. Both were

Sr. No.	Educational characteristics		Awareness			χ^2	df
	Variables	Categories	Above average	Below average	Total		
1.	Studying class	11th Class	71	48	119	3.15	1
		12th Class	38	43	81		
		Total	109	91	200		
2.	Studying medium	English	70	30	100	19.38**	1
		Hindi	39	61	100		
		Total	109	91	200		
3.	Studying Board	U.P. Board	39	61	100	22.02**	2
		C.B.S.E. Board	37	13	50		
		I.C.S.C. Board	33	17	50		
		Total	109	91	200		
4.	Studying stream	Art	36	61	97	23.67**	2
		Science	39	13	52		
		Commerce	34	17	51		
		Total	109	91	200		
5.	Family education status	High	65	24	89	17.6**	2
		Medium	39	60	99		
		Low	5	7	12		
		Total	109	91	200		
6.	Education of father	Upto VII class	13	10	23	20.25**	2
		IX to XII class	27	50	77		
		Graduate and above	69	31	100		
		Total	109	91	200		
7.	Education of mother	Upto XII class	7	5	12	23.57**	2
		IX to XII class	35	60	95		
		Graduate and above	67	26	93		
		Total	109	91	200		

** indicate significance of values at P=0.01, respectively

postgraduate/ professionally educated but the number was quite less (11.0 % fathers and 5.5 % mothers). None were illiterate. Variation can be separately perceived in the education level of fathers and mothers till Middle School level. Fathers were more in number as compared to mothers till Middle School level categories.

Association between awareness regarding HIV/AIDS and educational characteristics of the respondents was worked out in terms of chi-square as depicted in Table 2. It is indicated that the variables under study *viz.*, studying medium, studying board, studying stream and family education status along with education of father and mother of the respondents were found to have positive and significant relationship with the awareness regarding HIV/AIDS. Thus, it is clear from the study that respondents who were from English medium, studying in C.B.S.E. and I.C.S.C. Board, belonging from science and commerce streams and having high family education status along with highly educated father and mother had better awareness regarding HIV/AIDS than the other respondents. The study further showed that the studying class was not found significantly related with the awareness regarding HIV/AIDS.

It is concluded from the study that level of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS of most of the respondents was at medium level. The study further indicated that respondents,

who were from English medium, studying in C.B.S.E. and I.C.S.C. Board, from science and commerce streams and having high family education status along with highly educated father and mother had better awareness regarding HIV/AIDS than the other respondents.

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