KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS REGARDING HIV/AIDS IN SRINAGAR JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

HIV and AIDS is a matter of concern because the number of cases has increased dramatically over the last 30 years. Students need to have appropriate knowledge and attitudes about HIV and AIDS because they are the futureof nation, therefore will play a key role in prevention of spread and care of people with AIDS. The aim of the study was to explore the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes about HIV/AIDS of college students in Srinagar. A descriptive study was conducted over a sample of 300 educated adolescents selected at random from various Degree colleges of Srinagar. The results obtained in our study reveal that 91% of male students and 93% female students had heard about HIV/AIDS and students considered HIV/AIDS as a fatal disease. Further, the study reveal that college going students had adequate knowledge of the basic facts about HIV/AIDS, the transmission of HIV and how they can protect themselves. In order to increase the level of awareness, it is recommended that HIV education should be part of curriculum among all levels of educational institutions should play crucial role in preventing HIV/AIDS. Mass media or social media campaign cannot only raise the level of knowledge in college students but also in general public of the state.

Keywords:*HIV, AIDS, knowledge, attitudes, sexual behaviour, studentsrinagar*

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Introduction

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome is a fatal disease caused by a retrovirus virus (HIV) Human Immuno deficiency virus which breaks down the body's immune system. It is the final stage of HIV infection which causes service damages to the immune system and causes fatal infection. AIDS is the second widely spread communicable disease worldwide and the sixth common cause of death globally WHO (2004)1 HIV is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It can also be spread by contact with infected blood and from illicit injection drug use or sharing needles. It can also be spread from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. it may take years without medication before HIV weakens the immune system to the point that patient have AIDS.

HIV disease is characterized by a gradual deterioration of the immune system. Crucial to this process are CD4+ immune cells which are disabled and killed during the course of the infection Gottlieb et al. (1981)2 and Fahey et al. (1990)3. These cells, also called the T-helper cells, play a central role in the immune response, signaling other cells such as the crytotoxic T and B cells to perform their functions. Normally, a healthy person has a CD4 count of 800 to 1200 CD4+ T cells per cubic millimeter (mm3) of blood. However, through several mechanisms, CD4 cells are destroy, and minor infections such as cold sores (herpes simplex), condyloma (warts) and fungal _ infections, particularly thrush and vaginal candidias is occur. These infections are trouble some but not life threatening. However, as the CD4 count falls below 200/ mm3, the patient becomes particularly vulnerable to the serious opportunistic infection and cancers that typify AIDS, the end stage of HIV disease. AIDS is defined as a reliably diagnosed opportunistic disease or infection that is predictive of cellular immune deficiency and occurs in a person with no known preexisting illness or therapies that would produce immune suppression (Groopman et al., 1985) 4. According to Global HIV & AIDS Statistics- 2021 fact sheet, 84.2 million people have become infected with HIV and 40.1 million people have died from AIDS-related illness since the start of the epidemic. Total numbers of people living with HIV all over the world were 38.4 million in 2021 out of which 36.7 million are adults, 19.7 million women 16.9 million men and1.7 million are children below the age of 15 years (UNAIDS)5. HIV/AIDS is the second contagious disease and sixth common

cause of death in the world (WHO)6. The first case of AIDS was reported in USA in the year 1981. In India the first case of HIV was reported in Chennai city in Tamil Nadu in 1986 is in the same year was reported in Kashmir in a businessman who has who had gone to Germany and possibly contracted the infection there. According to JKSACS (2021), till September 2022, total number of people living with HIV in J&K is 6982, 1253 died, 680 lost to follow up, and 3299 are alive on ART. (JKSACS, 2022)7. The number of cases reported in Kashmir is comparatively less than other states of India. The reason for the less number can also be due to the unreported cases of HIV owing to the stigma and discrimination attached to the disease (Naik, Padikkal& Naik, 2015)[8]. People tend not to disclose their status and suffer from stigma, victimization, ostracization and' isolation (Ciambrone, 2003)9. Disclosing HIV is challenging and has many repercussions (Radha, 2012)10.

In Jammu & Kashmir 92% of women have heard of HIV or AIDS. In urban areas, 95 percent know about HIV or AIDS, compared with 90 percent in rural areas. Young women age 15-24 years are more likely (93%) than older women age 40-49 (87%) to have heard of HIV or AIDS. Women having no schooling (83%) and women not having regular exposure to media (81%) are less likely than other women to have heard of HIV or AIDS. Men are more aware than women about HIV/AIDS. Almost all men (97%) have heard of HI9V or AIDS, including 99 percent of men in urban areas. (National Family Health survey (2015-16)[11]. Studies investigated attitudes towards AIDS patients showed that people being afraid of HIV/AIDS had higher homophobia compared to those with less fear of HIV/AIDS [12,] In some societies AIDS is still relatively a new subject in this part of world due to social restrictions on open discussion of sexuality, particularly amongst unmarried youths.

Spreading knowledge and awareness about HIV is one of the key strategies utilized in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS worldwide. Almunthr13

In view of the studies like Abdul Bari et al.,2 Wilson et al.,3 Zahid,4 Shakil,5 Campbell,6 Boesten,7 Nafisa,8 Iqbal 9 Afsar 10 CistinaOuzouni, Konstantinos Nakakis 11 Bilal12, Bashie Gaash13The researchers chose the present topic in order to know the AIDS problem in Srinagar.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To measure the level of awareness among college going students about HIV/AIDS in Srinagar.
2. To fine the level of knowledge about the modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS.
3. To measure the level of knowledge about the precautionary measures about HIV/ AIDS.
4. To identify the sources of information of collegegoing students about HIV/AIDS.

Methodology

The present study was conduct on a sample of 300 students equally divided into two groups from different colleges of Srinagar. A descriptive study was conducted based on sample random sampling method. The level of awareness among college students about HIV/AIDS was assessed through face-to-face interview and the answers given to the questions in the designed questionnaire for the purpose. Design of the close-ended questionnaire (contained 26 questions about general awareness and about HIV/AIDS, modes of transmission, precautionary measures and some suggestive measures) was simple and the level was that of a layman's understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table no :1

Age group	Frequency Male	Frequency Female	PercentageMale	PercentageFemale
18 - 20	80	79	(53.3%)	(52.6%)
21- 23	38	42	(25.%)	(28%)
24 - 26	40	29	(26.6%)	(19.3%)
Total	150	150	100%	100 (%)

Table 1 shows the distribution of age group of the participants in the present study. The total number of participants were 300 under which there are 146 (48.6%) under age group 18-20, 79(26.6%) under 21-23 age group and 75(25%) under 24-26 age group.

Table 1

Response of adolescent students about HIV/AIDS (Questionnaire)

SNo	Question Asked	Male		Female	
		Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%
1.	Have you heard about HIV/AIDS?	147(98%)	3(2%)	140(93.3%)	10(6.6%)
2	Is HIV/AIDS a fatal disease?	138(92%)	12(8%)	128(85.3%)	22(14.6%)
3	Is HIV/AIDS a communicable disease	120(80%)	30(20%)	99(66%)	51(34%)
4	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted from HIV/AIDS infected mother to child?	141(94%)	9(6%)	128(85.3%)	22(14.6%)
5	Do HIV/AIDS infections decrease immunity?	111(74%)	39(26%)	97(64.6%)	53(35.3%)
6	Is HIV/AIDS diagnosed by blood?	140(93.3%)	10(6.6%)	127(84.6%)	23(15.3%)
7	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by having	148(98.6%)	2(1.3%)	144(96%)	6(4%)
8	Is HIV/AIDS diagnosed by urine? sexual intercourse with HIV/AIDS infected person?	31(20.6%)	119(79.3%)	40(26.6%)	110(73.3%)
9	Can HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by having sexual intercourse with HI/AIDS infested person	141(94%)	9(6%)	140(93.3%)	10(5.6%)
10	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by kissing with infected person?	33(22%)	117(78%)	41(27.3%)	109(72.6%)
11	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by sneezing or coughing of HIV/AIDS patient?	19(12.6%)	131(87.3%)	27(18%)	123(82%)
12	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by blades used by HIV/AIDS infected person?	147(98%)	3(2%)	142(94.6%)	8(5.3%)
13	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by shaking hand with HIV/infected person?	20(13.3%)	130(86.6%)	32(21.3%)	118(78.6%)
14	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by sharing syringes/needles with infected person?	143(95.3%)	7(4.6%)	140(93.3%)	10(9.3%)
15	Can people get Aids virus by Mosquito bites?	34(22.6%)	116(77.3%)	41(27.3%)	109(72.6%)
16	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by sharing toilet seats with infected people?	32(21.3%)	118(78.6%)	47(31.3%)	103(68.6%)
17	Is it necessary to isolate a patient affected by HIV/AIDS	37(24.6%)	113(75.3%)	49(32.6%)	101(67.3%)
18	Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted by transfusion of HIV/AIDS infected blood and blood components?	147(98%)	3(2%)	143(95.3%)	7(4.6%)

19	Do you think that person immediately dies as soon as he/she gets infected HIV?	31(20.6%)	119(79.3%)	57(38%)	93(62%)
20	Can precautionary measures save human beings from HIV/AIDS?	142(94.6%)	8(5.33%)	136(90.6%)	14(9.3%)
21	Do you keep yourself updated about latest infection control procedures of infectious disease including HIV/AIDS?	120(80%)	30(20%)	115(76.6%)	35(23.3%)
22	Can parents play a vital role in prevention of HIV/AIDS?	110(73.3%)	40(26.6%)	96(64%)	54(36%)
23	Can importing sex education to students play an important role in prevention of HIV/AIDS	138(92%)	12(8%)	97(64.6%)	53(35.3%)
24	Is it possible for a healthy looking person to have the AIDS virus?	136(90.6%)	14(9.3%)	83(55.3%)	67(44.6%)
25	Can media play a vital role in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS among general public?	129(86%)	21(14%)	115(76.6%)	35(23.3%)
26	Can friends play a vital role in prevention of HIV/AIDS?	126(84%)	24(16%)	129(86%)	21(14%)

HIV/AIDS, questionnaires were distributed among students and the results obtained are shown in the following tables. As shown in Table 1 that majority of the students about 98% of the male and 93.3% of female students had heard about HIV/AIDS, 92% of male respondents and 85.3% of female respondents consider HIV/AIDS as a fatal disease, 80%male respondents and 66% female respondents considered HIV/AIDS as a communicable disease, 94% of the male respondents and 85.3% of female respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS can be transmited from infected mother to child infection 74% male 64.6% female respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS decreases the immunity, 93.3% of the male respondents and 84.6% of female respondents were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS is diagnosed by blood, 98.6% male students and 96% female students were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS be transmitted by having sexual intercourse with HIV/AIDS infected person, 20.6% of the male respondents and 26.6% of female respondents were of the view that HIV/AIDS is diagnosed by urine,94% male and 93.3% female students were of the opinion that HIV/

AIDS can be transmitted by having sexual intercourse with HI/AIDS infested person, 22% male and 27.3% female students agree that HIV/AIDS is transmitted by kissing with infected person,12.6% male and 18% female students were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by sneezing or coughing of HIV/AIDS patient, 98% male and 94.6% female students were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by blades used by HIV/ AIDS infected person, 13.3% male and 21.3% female students were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by shaking hand with HIV infected person, 22.6% male and 93.3% female respondents agree that HIV/ AIDS be transmitted by sharing syringes/needles with infected person, 98% male and 27.3% female respondents were of the opinion that people get Aids virus by Mosquito bites21.3% male and 31.3% students were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS be transmitted by sharing toilet seats with infected people, , 24.6% male and 32.6% female respondents were of the opinion that it is necessary to isolate a patient affected by

HIV/AIDS, 98% of the male respondents and 95.3% of female respondents were of the opinion that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by transfusion of HIV/AIDS infected blood and blood components, 20.6% male and 38% female students were of the opinion that think that person immediately dies as soon as he/she gets infected by HIV, 94.6% male and 90.6% female students were of the opinion that precautionary measures can save a person from

HIV/AIDS, 80% male and 76.6% female respondents keep themselves updated about latest infection control procedures of infectious disease including HIV/AIDS,73.3% male and 64% female students were of the opinion that parents siblings can play a vital role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, 92% male and 64.6% female students were of the opinion that imparting sex education to students play an important role in prevention of HIV/AIDS, 90.6% male and 55.3% female respondents were of the opinion

that it is possible for a healthy looking person to have the AIDS virus 86% male and 76.6% female students were of the opinion that Can media/social media play a vital role in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS among general public, 84.5% male and 84% female students were of the opinion that friends can play a vital role in prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Table 2. Understanding and awareness of public high risk life styles

SNo.	Factor	Male (Yes%)	Female(Yes%)
1	Unsafe sex	53(35.33%)	50(33.3%)
2	People with multiple	17(11.33%)	19(12.6%)
3	Needle sharing populations	11(7.3%)	13(8.6%)
5	Premarital sex	13(8.6%	10(6.6%)
6	Drug addictions	7(4.6%)	7(4.6%)
7	Long route drivers	7(4.6%)	6(4%)
8	Prostitutes	14(9.3%)	18(12%)
9	All of the above	28(18.6%)	27(18%)
	Total	**150**	**150**

Students were asked whether the life style of peoples affects the chances of HIV infection or not. Their response was gathered in "yes" and "no" replies. Information obtained in presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that 35.3% male and 33.3% female respondents were aware and understand unsafe sex, 11.3% male and 12.6% female respondents were aware and understand People with multiple sex partners7.3% male and 8.6% female were aware and understandNeedle sharing populations8.6% male and 6.6% femalewere aware and understand premarital sex4.6% male and 4.6% female were aware and understand Drug addictions 4.6% male and 4% female were aware and understand

Long route drivers 9.3% male and 12% femaleunderstand prostitutes18% male and 18% female were aware and understandall of the above given factors are the public high risk life styles.

Table.3 Precautionary measure against HIV/AIDS

S.no	Factor	Male%	Female%
1.	Transfusion of screened blood	52(34.6%)	50(33.3%)
2	Use of new blades	17 (11.3%)	15(10%)
3	New and disposable syringe	14(9.3%)	16(10.6%)
4	Abstinence	10(6.6%)	15(10%)
5	Practicing safe sex	22(14.6%)	20(13.3%)
6	Avoiding drug addiction	15(10%)	14(9.3%)
7	All of the above	20(13.3%)	20(13.3%)
	Total	150	150

In order to access the knowledge of students regarding precautionary measures that can prevent the peoples from HIV infections questions as shown in Table 3 were asked.

The information obtained revealsthat 34.6% male, 33.3% female respondents believe that transfusion of screened blood, 11.3% male, 10% female respondents Use of new blades 9.3% male, 10.6% female respondents New and disposable syringe 6.6% male, 10% female respondents Abstinence 14.6% male, 13.3% female respondents Practicing safe sex 10% male and 9.3 % female respondents Avoiding drug addiction, 13.3% male and 13.3% female respondents believe that All of the above believe that factos can be the main precautionary measures to prevent HIV infection.

Table no 4: Sources of HIV/AIDS information

S.no	Source of information	Male%	Female%
1	Television	267(89%)	251(83.6%)
2	Internet	238(79.3)%	233(77.6)%
3	Newspaper	232(77.6%)	183(61%)
4	Radio	209(69.6%)	248(82.6%)
5	Family member	92(30.6%)	65(21.6%)
6	Friends	205(68.3%)	139(46.3%)
7	Teacher	121(40.33%)	106(35.3%)

The majority of the participants was (89.%) of male and 83% of female stated that the main source of information about HIV and AIDS was television (**Table 4**) newspapers and magazines were sources of information for (89%) male and (83.6%) female student .

Whereas 79.3% male and 77.6% female respondents a reported the internet as source of information. 69.6% of male and 82.6% of female respondents reported Radio as a source of information, 30.6 male and 21.6 female respondents reported family members, 68.3% male and 46.3% female reported friends, and 40.33%male and 35.3 female% respondents from teacher reported the as source of information.

Conclusion

The present study showed that the both the male and female students had fairly good knowledge about HIV and AIDS. However, taking into consideration that the target population of the present study was college students, their knowledge on HIV/AIDS was a bit poor. This study shows a dismal picture of HIV awareness and attitudes among the educated population. The study highlighted some misconceptions about HIV

transmission, intolerant attitudes towards knowledge, stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV that need to be addressed. HIV/AIDS education programs should include specific interventions to change practice along with knowledge and attitudes. Future research involving nationally representative samples of males and females, college-aged and out-of-school adolescents could make a significant contribution to HIV/AIDS prevention. The results also suggest that carefully planned information, education and communication can be used to correct misunderstandings about HIV/AIDS and its prevention practices. Mass media or public media campaigns can raise the bar of knowledge for students. AIDS awareness should be included in the curriculum at all levels of education, as researchers have supported the idea of school education on HIV/AIDS. This curriculum helps students expand their knowledge of AIDS and dispel misconceptions about casual contact as a route of transmission of the disease; and reducing students' fear and vulnerability of having classmates with AIDS or HIV infection, especially at the university level. Similarly, education has been recommended as the best line of defense against the spread of AIDS

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