

A Comparative Study on the Awareness Level on AIDS Between Male and Female Subjects from Rural India

KIRSAL HİNDİSTAN'DAKİ KADIN VE ERKEKLER ARASINDA AIDS KONUSUNDA BİLGİ DÜZEYLERİ ÜZERİNE KIYASLAMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Summary

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a matter of social concern. Awareness is the key to prevention and therefore it is widely said in India - 'Know AIDS for No AIDS'. The study was carried out to assess the awareness in a comparative way between the male and female subjects.

All subjects included in the study were literate and above 18 years of age. The study revealed significant results. More than 70% females revealed that their husbands use condom. More than 96% of unmarried males endorsed the use of condoms to prevent AIDS whereas more than 82% unmarried females endorsed the use of condoms to prevent AIDS. All the females and about 92% males were ignorant regarding the transmission of HIV from an infected mother to her fetus.

Bioethically 'right to awareness' holds great significance especially in case of diseases like AIDS which not only brutally kills the host, but also ruins his social esteem and life. Especially the female should be made more aware about HIV and AIDS considering their vulnerability. Moreover, most of the subjects included in the study were not aware about the difference between HIV sero-positively and AIDS. We need to promote awareness camps and other related activities against AIDS to ensure AIDS free society.

Key Words: AIDS, Bioethics, HIV

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Özet

AIDS bir sosyal ilgi olayıdır. Farketme önleminin anahtarıdır ve bu nedenle Hindistan'da "AIDS'i tanımak, AIDS'e yakalanmamak demektir" diye söylenir. Bu çalışma kadın ve erkekler arasında yapılan bir kıyaslamada hastalığı farketmeyi inceler. İncelemeye alınan kişiler 18 yaşın üstündeydi. Çalışma, önemli sonuçları ortaya çıkardı. %70'den daha çok kadının eşi kondom kullanıyordu. Evli olmayan erkeklerin %96'dan fazlası, AIDS'den korunmak için kondom kullanıyordu, halbuki bekar kadınların %82'si AIDS'i önlemek için kondom kullanmaktaydı. Bütün kadınlar ve takriben erkeklerin %92'si infekte bir anneden fetusa HIV geçişi konusunda bilgisizdiler.

Biyotetik olarak farkında olma gerçeği AIDS ve buna benzer bütün hastalıklarda önemlidir. Özellikle kadınların bu konuda daha çok farkında olmaları gerekir. Bu bakımdan AIDS'den haberdar olma ve ona karşı savaşıma konusunda dernekler ve etkinlikleri geliştirmemiz gerekir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AIDS, Biyoetik, HIV

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Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a subject of concern across the globe. India is not an exception. AIDS is regarded as a giant monster. The disease has severe social reper-

cussions and those in grip of AIDS termed as 'people living with AIDS (PWA)' are the worst sufferers. They lose social acceptability, family concerns and face apartheid.

The institution of repute in this segment National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), observes that Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra states of India are the epicenters of AIDS in India. The surveillance report of NACO mentions that Tamil Nadu has maximum reported cases of full blown

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AIDS (9323) followed by Maharashtra (4459), Karnataka (796) and Manipur (761).

The NACO tabulates its report as follows:

AIDS CASES IN INDIA	RISK/TRANSMISSION CATEGORIES		
Cumulative			
MALES	14680		
FEMALES	4435		
Total	19115		
		<u>No. of cases</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Sexual		15839	82.86
Perinatal transmission		336	1.76
Blood and blood products		784	4.10
Injectable Drug Users		815	4.26
Others (not specified)		1341	7.02
Total		19115	100.00

The worst sufferers among the PLWAs are the women. Moreover, the women are the most vulnerable. The drift of rural male population towards the urban areas in search of employment, further indulgence in sexual activities with casual partners and occasional visit to their partners in rural areas is the significant mode of transmission. As the data suggests, 82.8% of the reason for the transmission of disease are sexual, this can be concluded that there exists a poor awareness level towards safe practices in sexual activities. In the light of the mentioned facts, the aforementioned study becomes mandatory.

The working hypothesis for the study was whether awareness among rural males is higher than rural females?

Methodology

Subject

All subjects included in the study were literate and above 18 years of age. The subjects were chosen randomly. All subjects had fair idea about AIDS i.e. AIDS was not a new term to them. In total the sample size was 120 out of which 60 were male and 60 female. The samples were drawn randomly from the states of Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa of India.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a set of 10 simple questions to get an overview of awareness level. The questions had options in terms of YES/NO or had suggestive statements and the subjects were asked to tick the best option. The questionnaire was in Hindi and the for publication purpose its is being translated to English.

The questionnaire had two parts – Part A and Part B. Part- A of the questionnaire aimed at obtaining the respondent's profile whereas the Part B was for obtaining information to know the awareness level of the subjects.

All subjects were ensured that their participation in the study was voluntary and there was no objection to their non-participation.

Analysis

The responses were analysed using percentage and comparative graphical representation i.e. through bars and pie. The analysis of data was categorised on the basis of sex.

Results

Subjects

Total number of subjects included in the study was 120. Out of that 60 were male and 60 were female. Most of the females in the study were married whereas most of the males in the study were unmarried. Most of the males in the population were educated unemployed. 9 out of 60 males were graduates, 27 were matriculate and the rest were intermediates. 2 out of 60 males were working for the Government, 31 were self-employed, 5 were into business and the rest were unemployed. The background profile of the subjects are summarised in the Table 1.

Discussion

As per the study more males are aware about what AIDS stands for than the females. 75% of the males and about 62% of females are aware about the full name for AIDS. Again 62% males and 48% females had knowledge of HIV being responsible for AIDS. All the males and the females were aware about AIDS being incurable. About 38% females and 21% males had sympathy for PLWAs. Further,

Table 1. The Questionnaire**Part: A – RESPONDENTS' PROFILE**

1. NAME:
2. AGE :
3. SEX : Male/Female
4. PROFESSION:
 - a. Government servant
 - b. Private Servant
 - c. Self Employed
 - d. Business
 - e. Unemployed
 - f. Student
1. LITERACY:
 - a. Matriculate
 - b. Intermediate
 - c. Graduate
 - d. Post graduate
 - e. Other higher qualification

Part: B – QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you know what AIDS stands for? Yes/No
2. Do you know how it transmitted? Yes/No
3. Do you know that AIDS has no cure, it can only be prevented? Yes/No
4. People living with AIDS need (choose any one which according to you is the best answer):
 - a. Sympathy
 - b. Care
 - c. Love
 - d. Hatred
 - e. Boycott
1. If your wife/husband is reported to have AIDS or declared HIV sero-positive, what will be your further action:
 - a. You will leave him/her
 - b. You will ask him/her to stay at other place
 - c. You will restrict him/her to a room
 - d. Abuse him/her
 - e. You will accept him/her as he/she is
1. Are you married? Yes/No
 - a. If yes, do you use condoms (males) / your husband uses condom? Yes/No
 - b. If no, do you endorse condoms to prevent AIDS. Yes/No
1. Do you go to CSW/Male prostitutes or endorse paid sex? Yes/No
2. Do you know that AIDS is not transmitted by touch, sharing same furniture etc? Yes/No
3. Do you ask the barber to change the blade prior to a shave (only for males) or the nurse/attendant at dispensary to use disposable needles? Yes/No
4. Do you know that AIDS may spread to child from an infected mother? Yes/No

about 27% males and 5% females felt that PLWAs should be socially boycotted. 45% of males and 35% of females said that they would leave their wife and husband respectively if they come to

Table 2. Background Profile of Respondents

	MALE	FEMALE
Number of subjects	60	60
Age in Years (average)	29 (20-38)	26.5 (18-35)
Married/Unmarried	28/32	37/23

know about they being infected by HIV. About 7% males and 16% females said that they would accept their respective wife and husband even if they know that she/he is having AIDS.

55% of males and about 52% females included in the study were married. More than 90% of married males revealed that they use condoms. More than 70% females revealed that their husbands use condom. More than 96% of unmarried males endorsed the use of condoms to prevent AIDS whereas more than 82% unmarried females endorsed the use of condoms to prevent AIDS. 90% males and all the females included in the study were against paid sex. More than 91% females and about 72% males were aware that AIDS is not transmitted by touch, sharing furniture etc. More than 96% females and 68% males asked barbers or nurse/attendant to change the blade/needles (surgical instruments) to change before using.

All the females and about 92% males were ignorant regarding the transmission of HIV from an infected mother to her fetus.

The study suggests that females are less aware about some facets of AIDS but they are more concerned about the prevention of the same. Moreover both males and females are ignorant about the fact that AIDS may get transmitted from the mother to fetus.

Conclusion from Bioethical Perspective

AIDS is a social subject apart from its clinical facet. As there is no cure and the infected one is bound to die. The therapy available just helps to enhance the survival expectancy of the patient. Prevention through awareness is the only option. Rural India and especially the women are the most vulnerable.

Bioethically 'right to awareness' is a must. In present context women must be made aware of

Table 3. Optionwise Spreadsheet of the Questionnaire (Males)

Question Number	Optionwise, Number of respondents									
1.	YES	45	NO	15						
2.	YES	37	NO	23						
3.	YES	60	NO	00						
4.	Sympathy	13	Care	7	Love	18	Hatred	6	Boycott	16
5.	A	27	B	9	C	17	D	3	E	4
6.	YES	28	If yes	Y=25	N=3	NO	32	If no	Y =31	N=1
7.	YES	6	NO	54						
8.	YES	17	NO	43						
9.	YES	19	NO	41						
10.	YES	5	NO	55						

Table 4. Optionwise Spreadsheet of the Questionnaire (Females)

Question Number	Optionwise, Number of respondents									
1.	YES	37	NO	23						
2.	YES	29	NO	31						
3.	YES	60	NO	00						
4.	Sympathy	23	Care	3	Love	12	Hatred	19	Boycott	3
5.	A	21	B	6	C	22	D	1	E	10
6.	YES	37	If yes	Y=28	N=9	NO	23	If no	Y =18	N=5
7.	YES	0	NO	60						
8.	YES	5	NO	55						
9.	YES	2	NO	58						
10.	YES	0	NO	60						

everything about AIDS and HIV considering their vulnerability. The study revealed that literate rural women from India, although are aware of the disease, need to be further educated on the subject. Motherhood is a part of women's life and awareness regarding transmission of HIV from mother to fetus is dismal. Infact awareness about condoms guarding against AIDS is appreciable yet objectionable sexual habits like multiple sexual partners is the reason behind dramatic rise in AIDS cases in India.

Every human being irrespective of sex has right to be informed. Physicians, non government organisations (NGOs) and the Government must support and organise awareness drive against AIDS. It is a common observation that even physi-

cians dealing with HIV sero - positives and AIDS patients have their own prejudices interfering with their ethical duties. AIDS is an issue of concern and the subject may be adopted as a part of curriculum in every disciplines of study.

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