



**The Health Education /Health Awareness of Communal Members
Regarding HIV/AIDS
(A Case Study of District Swat, Pakistan)**

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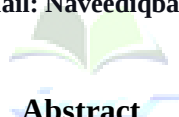
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Abstract

The research has been carried out for "The Health Education /Health Awareness of Communal Members Regarding HIV/AIDS." The research was carried out in Swat District. A quantitative research methodology was used for this study. A sample of 60 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling, and the respondents were male, female, and transgender. An interview schedule was used as an instrument for data collection. The objectives of the study were to find out the level of awareness about HIV/AIDS based on health education and the perceptions of people regarding HIV/AIDS. The findings demonstrated that the majority of respondents were aware of the AIDS disease. The respondents acknowledged that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through blood transfusion and were also aware of the modes of transmission like sharing needles, sexual intercourse, and unsafe sexual relationships. The study suggested that seminars and workshops are needed to raise general awareness about HIV/AIDS, and respondents emphasized the importance of including broad information about HIV/AIDS in academic curricula.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS, Health education, HIV/AIDS' history*



Introduction

The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is actually caused by a virus known as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which first appeared as a global cause of death for human beings when it was acknowledged and reported for the first time in the United States of America in 1981 (Ibrar, 2014). As compared to other sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS is widely spreading and has infected millions of people all over the world. Since it emerged, it has killed 39 million people, and about 36.1 million are currently infected with HIV/AIDS. Youngsters are at high risk for HIV/AIDS. The main thing that is more worrying is that, the millions of children whose father or mother died due to HIV/AIDS are growing up with this disease and facing financial and social traumas (Zubair, 2002). In many countries, the highly spreading rate of HIV/AIDS is related to many causes, such as poverty, lack of awareness and knowledge regarding the spread of diseases, and lack of preventive measures taken against diseases. Further causes of HIV/AIDS spread, such as an unsafe environment, overcrowded families, unsafe health practices, etc., increase vulnerability to being infected with HIV/AIDS (World Bank, 2008).

The majority of medical professionals concur that HIV is a virus that mostly spreads through risky sexual behavior and that its primary impact is the development of AIDS. Unprotected sexual behavior, blood transfusions from HIV-positive to HIV-negative individuals, use of HIV-positive surgical tools and needles, and other interconnected sources are the major ways that HIV and AIDS are spread (Karewa, 2000). Knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS are crucial for its prevention. Unfortunately, only a very small percentage of individuals are aware of HIV/AIDS. Although condom use is already widespread in certain nations, it has not yet attained universal approval. The fight to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS has been underway for years, and recent reductions in the incidence of infection in very destitute nations are evidence of the progress of these efforts. A number of countries sponsored by the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other partners have been successful in controlling HIV/AIDS. However, many nations still require assistance in order to get control of it (Afridi, 2012).

Understanding how HIV/AIDS is transmitted is essential for its prevention. In poor nations, around one-third of the populace is familiar with the disease's fundamentals. The use of condoms is currently becoming more popular in some places, but it has not acquired much relevance internationally, and young people in underdeveloped nations are particularly unaware of its use. With indicators of changing habits and a slowing rate of transmission in



many densely populated nations, the fight to control HIV/AIDS has advanced and is beginning to yield fruit. With the assistance of WHO, UNAIDS, and other partners, a number of nations demonstrated significant progress in the management of HIV/AIDS. However, there is still a lot of work to be done before the world can fulfill its goals. The rise of newly infected HIV/AIDS patients and patients who need to be treated but have extremely limited means and access to health care are still receiving very little attention from the general public. HIV/AIDS prevalence, which is still extremely low in certain countries, has to be successfully eradicated globally. Political strategies and economic backing are also necessary (Khan, 2002).

HIV/AIDS cases are increasing in KP and FATA at a concerning rate, which is upsetting for those connected to the health division as well as for civic groups. According to a department of health study, 678 of the 960 HIV/AIDS patients that were registered over a six-month period were males, 236 were women, and 46 were children (NACP, 2016). A number of factors, including a lack of family planning, a lack of knowledge and education, cultural stigmas associated with family planning, and a lack of contraceptive usage, make it difficult to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to safeguard against it. At least 6,853 people with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were identified as having them as of 2015 (KPHD, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Countries having higher health ratio have significantly higher contributions to every sector in the country. Among other grave issues in Pakistan the downtrodden health care system is also multiplying the worries and grievances. The health care system of Pakistan has been ranked on 154 among 195 countries and it is behind India and Bangladesh in health care quality and accessibility (Frontier, 2018). There has been a low interest and dedication to properly deliver health care services in the country. After starting of the National AIDS Control Program in 1987, Pakistan is working very hard against HIV/AIDS with the assistance of United Nations agencies and other International Organizations i.e. UNAIDS, WHO, UNICEF, ILO, UNDP etc. Despite all these efforts the current reports shows an alarming increase in the rate of HIV/AIDS in Pakistan. Pakistan is being placed in the top 11 countries having high rate of HIV/AIDS patients. Nearly 150000 citizens of Pakistan were the victims of HIV/AIDS. Out of them 99000 were men, 43000 were women and 3500 were



children below the age of 15 years (UNAIDS, 2019). In addition the government has taken various steps for increasing the awareness level in people about HIV/AIDS; the outcomes are still not satisfactory (Ibrar, 2014). Keeping in view the above scenario, the researcher realized the importance and need of conducting a research study on the issue at hand. This research aimed to find out the Health Education /Health Awareness of Communal Members Regarding HIV/AIDS in the study area.

Objectives of the study

- To find out the awareness about HIV/AIDS based on health education
- To know about the perceptions of people regarding HIV/AIDS

Research questions

This study was an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of health education in molding the mindset of people about the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the study area?
2. What do community people perceive about HIV/AIDS in the target area?
3. What is the role of health education in the prevention of HIV/AIDS?

Significance of the study

This research served as a foundation stone for others who are interested in conducting further research on HIV/AIDS. This study is beneficial for the researchers as they carry out their future research in the area of HIV/AIDS. This is also helpful for health practitioners to understand the perceptions of the community regarding the issue at hand. Apart from that, the study provides guidance and assistance to development sector organizations in order for them to gain a better understanding of the HIV issue.

Literature review



Understanding how HIV/AIDS is transmitted is essential for its prevention. In poor nations, around one-third of the populace is familiar with the disease's fundamentals. The use of condoms is currently becoming more popular in some places, but it has not acquired much relevance internationally, and young people in underdeveloped nations are particularly unaware of its use. Children are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The biggest concern is that millions of children who lost a parent to AIDS or HIV are now growing up with the illness and experiencing emotional and financial hardships. Numerous studies carried out in China, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh have indicated that newspapers and television are the primary means of disseminating information on HIV/AIDS and health. People may now learn about health concerns and how to prevent them through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube thanks to globalisation (Kaur, 2014).

In Pakistan, males who have intercourse with other men and transgender people have extremely little knowledge about sexually transmitted illnesses like HIV/AIDS. According to newsletter articles, males who have sex with other males include married men who have additional male sexual partners in addition to their wives as well as young boys who have sex with senior guys. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it has been stated that some regions, including Bannu, have a culturally acceptable tolerance for having teenagers as sexual partners. Comparatively to the rest of the globe, gay behaviour is also present among Pakistani inmates. According to a poll done in the province of Sindh, 120 male convicts (4%) out of 3392 had sex with other male prisoners. The expectation is that convicts will have less understanding and awareness of HIV/AIDS, making them more susceptible to contracting the disease (Khan, 2002). In Pakistan, injectable drug usage is prevalent in many places, and those who use these drugs run a significant risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Additionally, because some drugs render their users unconscious and lead to risky sexual behaviours, it raises the danger of having sex. Smuggling of illegal narcotics into Pakistan from Afghanistan via KP's frontier areas is a major source of the country's supply. According to a poll done in Pakistan, there are more than three million drug users there, and that number is rising by 7% annually (National Survey on Drug Abuse in Pakistan, 1993).

According to certain research, there is a very low level of understanding among those in high-risk categories for HIV/AIDS, such as commercial sex workers, drug abusers, convicts, blood donors, etc. There are certain societal and cultural hurdles to discussing and treating the issues pertaining to sexually transmitted illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, because Pakistan



is an Islamic nation, which is one reason for the low level of awareness reported in these studies. Government and the media play relatively little of a role in educating the people about HIV/AIDS or in addressing it publicly. Up until 1993, it was against the law to talk about HIV/AIDS awareness and education on radio or television. The government abolished this restriction in 1993, and as a result, the first condom advertisement appeared on television and in publications in March 1994. (Mahmood, 2002).

Literacy and Health Education

A person is called illiterate if they are unable of reading or writing a basic statement about their daily lives (Global Monitoring Report, 2005). The degree of knowledge and awareness that individuals have about HIV/AIDS and literacy are directly related. Literate folks will have the ability to read about something and comprehend it. A 2010 study by the WHO and UNESCO found a correlation between reading level and longevity, well health, and use of healthcare services. Pakistan, one of the most populous nations in South Asia, with a 54% literacy rate. Due to a lack of education, individuals are less knowledgeable about family planning, HIV/AIDS treatment, and prevention (Mahmood, 2002).

A person can become aware of and learn about HIV/AIDS through becoming literate. People who can't read or write are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. However, women have lower levels of education than men, which makes them less aware of and knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and increases their susceptibility to infection (Juliana, 2013). According to a USAIDS report from 2002, illiteracy is the main factor contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Education has a direct impact on a person's degree of HIV/AIDS awareness. Illiterate individuals have a lower risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than literate individuals. People who are illiterate will have difficulty learning about HIV/AIDS and raising awareness of it because they cannot understand HIV/AIDS-related materials, especially those that are printed (Okoli, 2006).

It is described as "the capacity of a person to obtain, comprehend and practise essential health knowledge and services needed for well health" and is a subcategory of general literacy or education. Even in wealthy countries, where 90 million people are anticipated to be affected, there is a lack of or inadequate health literacy. Different illnesses are brought on by poor health literacy, particularly chronic illnesses like diabetes and HIV/AIDS. An individual must be able to interpret medical advice, implement treatment plans, and get



medical care. All of these skills may be directly impacted by a person's level of health literacy. Numerous researches have indicated that knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS are strongly correlated with health literacy abilities. According to many research, people with HIV/AIDS who have low health literacy have poorer understanding of the disease and are less skilled at managing their medications effectively than people with high health literacy levels (Howard, 2017).

Methodology

The current study was quantitative. The researcher conducted the study quantitatively to obtain information regarding the health education of community members and how health education can play a role in the eradication of HIV/AIDS. The study was conducted in the district of Swat, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This district is experiencing significant migration from across the country and internationally. As a result, the researcher chose the Swat district to learn how Swat residents are acquainted with HIV/AIDS disease. A stratified random sampling technique was employed for the selection of respondents. This technique was used to give representation to all genders. For this purpose, an interview schedule was chosen by the researcher as an instrument based on its suitability for the collection of data. The data was collected from 60 respondents, of whom 20 were male, 20 were female, and 20 were transgender. These respondents were selected from the total population of District Swat, which were 2,309,570 according to the 2017 census. The data was collected through interview schedules, and further data were processed and analyzed with the help of MS Excel and SPSS in the form of tables with frequency distribution and percentage.

Results and Discussions

This section includes the findings and results obtained through data collection and explanation of the collected data. In this chapter the researcher analyzed and interpreted the collected data and also includes the description of research findings.

General Awareness regarding HIV/AIDS

S.No	Statement	Response	Total
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		Yes	No	Don't know	
1.	You know about AIDS.	60(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	60(100%)
2.	You think that HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease.	46(76.7%)	10(16.7%)	4(6.7%)	60(100%)
3.	HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through blood transfusion.	51(85%)	2(3.3%)	7(11.7%)	60(100%)
4.	HIV/AIDS can be caused from sharing needles.	44(73.3%)	7(11.7%)	9(15.0%)	60(100%)
5.	You think HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease.	51(85%)	2(3.3%)	7(11.7%)	60(100%)
6.	You know having unsafe sexual relationship can cause HIV/AIDS.	48(80%)	5(8.3%)	7(11.7%)	60(100%)
7.	Is condom use is effective in HIV/AIDS prevention?	29(48.3%)	11(18.3%)	20(33.3%)	60(100%)
8.	HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by getting in contact with HIV/AIDS patients physically.	28(46.7%)	29(48.3%)	3(5%)	60(100%)
9.	You are aware of the facilities in your area where HIV/AIDS can be tested.	16(26.7%)	44(73.3%)	0(0%)	60(100%)
10.	You ever tested for HIV/AIDS infection.	6(10%)	54(90%)	0(0%)	60(100%)



11.	A person having HIV/AIDS can be cured.	23(38.3%)	19(31.7%)	18(30%)	60(100%)
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Explanation:

The table indicates the response of the study respondents to the statements about general awareness and knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. All 60 respondents (100%) have heard of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the table shows that 46 (76.7%) respondents know that HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease, 10 (16.7%) responded that HIV/AIDS is not a fatal disease, and 4 (6.7%) respondents didn't know whether HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease or not. Similarly, this table shows that 51 (85%) of respondents are aware that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through blood transfusion, 2 (3.3%) are unaware, and 7 (11.7%) are unaware. Similarly, 44 (73.3%) respondents were aware that HIV/AIDS can be caused by sharing needles, 7 (11.7%) were not aware that HIV/AIDS can be caused by sharing needles, and 9 (15.0%) respondents were unaware. This finding of my research relates to Mahmood (2002), who stated that in Pakistan, injecting drug use is practiced in various areas, and injecting drug users are at high risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS.

The table also shows that 51(85%) respondents know that HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, 2(3.3%) respondents didn't know that HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, while 7(11.7%) respondents didn't know about it. Furthermore, 48 (80%) respondents were of the view that it can cause HIV/AIDS, 5 (8.3%) respondents were of the view that having an unsafe sexual relationship doesn't cause HIV/AIDS; and 7 (11.7%) respondents didn't know about it. At this point, my study is in congruence with Ibrar (2014), i.e., in homosexual and heterosexual interactions, most couples perform unsafe sexual practices. Simultaneously to a question, Is condom use effective in HIV/AIDS prevention? 29(48.3%) respondents replied yes, 11(18.3%) replied no while 20(33.3%) replied don't know.

In the same way, 28 (46.7%) of the respondents were of the view that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by getting in contact with HIV/AIDS patients physically, 29 (48.3%) viewed that HIV/AIDS can't be transmitted by getting in contact with HIV/AIDS patients physically, and 3 (5%) didn't know about it. The table also shows that 16(26.7%) were aware of the facilities in their area where HIV/AIDS can be tested while 44(73.3%) respondents were unaware of it.



Similarly, the table shows that 16 (26.7%) of the respondents tested for HIV/AIDS, while 44 (73.3%) didn't test for HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the table also shows that 23 (38.3%) respondents believed that a person having HIV/AIDS can be cured, 19 (31.7%) were of the view that a person having HIV/AIDS can't be cured, and 18 (30%) respondents didn't know about it.

Literacy and health education

S.No	Statement	Response			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
1.	You think literacy level is directly related to the awareness of HIV/AIDS.	49(81.7%)	5(8.3%)	6(10%)	60(100%)
2.	You think illiterate people have less knowledge to take precautionary steps regarding HIV/AIDS.	51(85%)	7(11.7%)	2(3.3%)	60(100%)
3.	You ever been taught in university/college/school about HIV/AIDS.	20(33.3%)	40(66.7%)	0(0%)	60(100%)
4.	It's needed that educational institutions arrange educational seminars about HIV/AIDS.	51(85%)	8(13.3%)	1(1.7%)	60(100%)
5.	Are you agreeing that health education should be taught as one of the school subjects?	53(88.3%)	5(8.3%)	2(3.3%)	60(100%)



6.	You have attended any seminar or workshop regarding health education or HIV/AIDS.	6(10%)	51(85%)	3(5%)	60(100%)
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Explanation:

The table shows that literacy and health education are related to HIV/AIDS perceptions. The majority of respondents, 49 (81.7%), believe that literacy is directly related to HIV/AIDS awareness. This finding of my research relates to Mahmood (2002), who stated that there is a direct relationship between literacy and the level of knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS among people. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents, i.e., 51 (85%), thought that illiterate people have less knowledge to take precautionary steps regarding HIV/AIDS, while the rest of the respondents, i.e., 7 (11.7%), were not in agreement with it and the rest of them, i.e., 2.3%, didn't know about it. Similarly, 20 (33.3%) of respondents were taught about HIV/AIDS in university, college, or school, while the remaining 40 (66.7%) were not. Furthermore, 51 (85%) of respondents agreed that educational institutions should hold HIV/AIDS educational seminars; 8 (13.3%) disagreed, and 1 (1.7%) did not know about it. Similarly, 53 (88.3%) respondents agreed that health education should be taught as one of the school subjects, while 5 (8.3%) disagreed and the rest, i.e., didn't know about it. In the same way, most of the respondents, i.e., 51 (85%), didn't attend any seminar or workshop regarding health education or HIV/AIDS, while 6 (10%) of them attended a seminar or workshop regarding health education or HIV/AIDS, and 3 (5%) didn't know about it.

Conclusion

The study was conducted for "The Health Education /Health Awareness of Communal Members Regarding HIV/AIDS." The study was conducted in District Swat, and the respondents were of all genders, i.e., male, female, and transgender. Based on the nature of the study, a quantitative and cross-sectional approach has been utilized. A total of 60 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. An interview schedule was used as an instrument for data collection, whereas MS Excel and SPSS were used for the purpose of data analysis. The main objective of this study was to increase general awareness about HIV/AIDS through health education. According to the findings, the majority of



respondents were aware of the disease AIDS. Most of the respondents acknowledged that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted. Further, they were also aware of the mode of its transmission and that the use of a condom is an effective way to prevent HIV/AIDS. Most of the respondents show that there is no proper facility in our area to test for HIV/AIDS. Education and HIV/AIDS are inextricably linked. There is a need for seminars and workshops to raise general awareness about HIV/AIDS; respondents also emphasize the importance of including broad information about HIV/AIDS in academic curricula. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that the literacy rate be increased in order to gain a better understanding of HIV/AIDS. For this purpose, health education should be a part of curriculum in educational institutions.

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