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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN GANJAM DISTRICT OF ODISHA – A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

India is the large and second most populous country in the world. It has a large population with low literacy levels and constitutently low level of awareness and HIV/AIDS is one of the most challenging public health problem ever faced by the country. In our country there are 8.3 crores girls in the age group of 11 to 18 years which constitute 17% of the total female population of 49.69 crores among them 39% (9.3 Lakhs) of HIV positive (Unicef). New infections in females are occurring faster than in males. The dreaded AIDS virus has been spreading like wildfire in Aska Block, around 415 AIDS patients have been found the total of 30,176 HIV affected people, in the Odisha State, Ganjam district tops the list of most HIV victims in the state of Odisha with 12,017 people (2017). The research design adopted is quantitative, descriptive and cross sectional. The study attempts to describe female adolescents' knowledge, understanding and attitude towards HIV/AIDS. More than half of the adolescents under study have negative attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) and had very bitter feelings towards them even they believe that they should be boycott because it was very tedious to include them in the mainstream in the society. One fifth of the adolescents believe that they should be killed. The levels of understanding of adolescents with regard to HIV/AIDS and the people are affected with is to be raised significantly. Innovative non-classroom tools and techniques like peer educators, street plays, film screening could be used.

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INTRODUCTION

India thought to be currently having the greatest number of people living with HIV/AIDS and without considerable prevention and treatment efforts these numbers will continue to increase dramatically in the years to come. HIV infection in India is rapidly spreading from urban to rural areas and from marginalized, high risk populations, such as; sex workers, truck drivers, injecting drug users and men who had sex with men into the main stream population. Women often became infected from their spouse or partner, who rarely acknowledge extra marital relationships, from which psychological stress on individual with HIV in general is great and it is especial difficult and painful for women who become infected by their spouse with HIV/AIDS; often compounded in vulnerable groups such as women and children. While sexual taboos are slowly being challenged in India. There remains a significant proportion of the population who lack correct information about the disease and often their access to adequate health information and services is restricted. This study was conducted in Ganjam District of Odisha State i.e. it is the highly prevalent district in HIV/AIDS has placed 'A' category. The major causes of HIV/AIDS are due to the unsafe sexual behavior of the migrants' labours. 90% of the people migrate

with the hope of employment and eye-ful of dreams in search of livelihood. However, many of them return with only to counting the days of their life after being infected in the deadly virus. Adults are known to be the key carriers of the diseases, who bring home the infection and spread it within the family. Is it the fault of the children? Why should they be ostracized? They alone face the brunt of the dreaded diseases. Their lives are cut short before they begin to understand the world or for that matter what has happened to them. While some others live longer only to suffer wrath of social ostracization and humiliation. Ganjam district, one of the worst HIV/AIDS affected pockets of Odisha, has the highest number of HIV-infected children as well, Officials of OSACS reported that the district that has highest number of HIV positive persons has an equally high number of children forced to inherit the disease. (((The number in a single district is 530, a comparatively high number when the state figure is around 1,200. Across the state, a total of 19,188 HIV positive cases have been detected by the end of last October 2010));); sources said by OSACS. The most vulnerable population is the adolescent group who indulge in unsafe sex; despite much awareness campaign and information provided at railway station and after such places. Adolescence is a complex but natural process. Both the adolescent and the majority of adults surrounding them are unaware of the process itself and all its manifestations. Adolescents often adopt incorrect attitudes and behavioural

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patterns that can lead to both social problems and ill health. Adolescents risky behaviours often result from their inadequate knowledge and experience with such behaviours and their lack of understanding of the risks involved. Moreover, their cognitive limitations make it difficult for them to learn from the experiences of others (Prabhakar, et.al, 2009). Several studies conducted on Indian adolescent have found that many adolescents particularly males are sexually active and are likely to indulge in unsafe sexual activities making them vulnerable to STD's including HIV infection.. Unfortunately, the needs of adolescents have not been addressed by the health system (Prabhakar, et.al, 2009). Girls in one or more of the following life situations are judged to be the most vulnerable to HIV infection such as those out-of-school, especially very young adolescents (ages 13-17), girls living apart from their families, particularly those newly migrated to cities and in domestic service, girls acting as heads of households and pressured to earn income and married adolescents under 18 years old (Bruce, 2007). Married adolescents have higher HIV infection rates than unmarried sexually active adolescents. This difference has been attributed to married adolescents' inability to negotiate condom use (Clark *et al.*, 2006). The most socially isolated girls are six times more likely to have been physically forced to have sex than the most socially connected girls (Bruce and Chong, 2006). This reveals the increased incidences of sexual practices prevailing among the adolescents that have direct bearing upon their life situations and risk of unintended pregnancy, induced abortion, STD, RTI, HIV and AIDS. Hence, Adolescence is a critical phase in a girl's life, when she is in the threshold of womanhood. It is crucial for adolescents to achieve full potential of their individual capacities in a self enabling environment. There several needs and concerns which required to be addressed, including those of health, nutrition and education. The adolescent girls need to be informed and empowered to be able to face the challenge of life such as the issues of domestic violence, child marriage and dowry, etc. (Sharma 20011).

facilities, if a woman-fear of driven out from her mother-in-Law's house, etc.)

- Psychological harassment – Attempt to suicide
- In case of Child not allowed at school, college for study.
- In case of ANC, even Doctors are frightened to deliver the child

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 400 girl students of Class IX, X, XI and XII, were selected randomly, from different government higher secondary schools of Ganjam district. All schools and +2 Junior Colleges were in an urban setting and all students were from lower to middle socio-economic background, with the predominance of students coming from middle class families. All participants were between the age group of 13 to 17. They were instructed to fill a pre-structured, pre-tested question within the school premises. Since the questionnaires were in English, help of the local female teacher was obtained, in order to explain specific questions where ever necessary to ensure appropriate individualized responses. This study set out to describe the level of knowledge, attitude and behavior related to HIV and AIDs of female adolescents accessing in Odisha both rural and urban as well as to those who reside in the hostels under the guardian's supervision.

Specific objectives of the study

- To access their knowledge pertaining to HIV/AIDS
- To determine the respondents attitude towards HIV/AIDS

Research Design

The nature of the research study is both exploratory and diagnostic and the design adopted to carry out this research is the quantitative, descriptive and cross sectional.

Table 1. Distribution of universe and sample

Dist	Blocks	Schools/ Colleges	Universe	Percentage	Sample for the study
Ganjam	Aska	Govt. Girl's High School	250	40%	100
		Niranjan Women's College	250	40%	100
	Bhanjanagar	Govt. Girl's High School	250	40%	100
		Sabitri Devi Women's College	250	40%	100
		Total	1000	40%	Total sample 400

Causes

Female are more vulnerable to HIV infection due to their biological factors and girls may be more vulnerable to HIV infection than are older woman because of their crucial stage or the physiological properties of an immature genital tract. Sexual violence against woman is very high in some areas; again exposing them to high risk behavior without their consent. During child birth 37.45% of the virus can pass and breast feeding with 15% chances of each stge.

Apart from these there are other causes:

Lack of awareness/knowledge

- Social Stigma and Discrimination (Lost of social status, drive out from the village and fear to loss all social

By using this design, the researcher attempts to describe female adolescents' knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS, their attitude towards HIV/AIDS are mentioned clearly as reported by the respondents. The study population constituted of students in two Government Girl's High School and two (+2) Women's College located in the two prevalent blocks (Aska & Bhanjanagar) of Ganjam District is the suitable place which is presumed to being accuracy in the data to be collected. The researcher used various tools such as interview schedule, non-participant observation. The study was conducted in Ganjam districts of Odisha state i.e. Ganjam was selected for the study. Which was conservative, backward and more prevalence of HIV/AIDS district of the state has special significance in this study. There are total twenty two blocks among them twelve blocks are reported HIV/AIDS cases and among these again two blocks are more prevalent of HIV/AIDS in the district. These are Aska and Bhanjanagar.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Basic Knowledge of HIV/AIDS

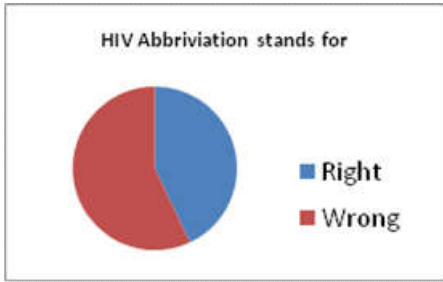
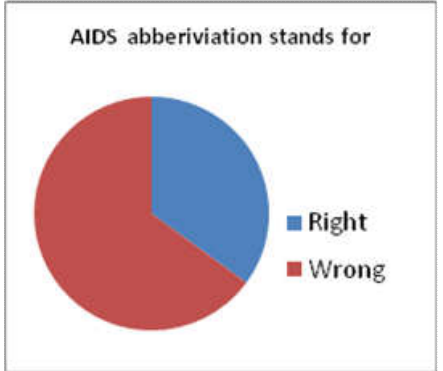
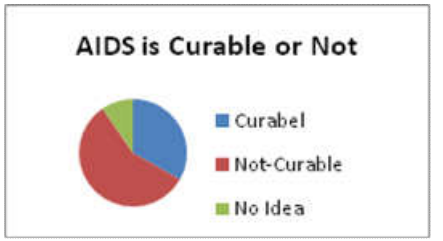
1.	HIV Abbreviation stand for Right Wrong	F 174 226	% 43.0 57.0	
2.	AIDS Abberiviation stand for Right Wrong	140 260	35.0 65.0	
3.	AIDS is Curable or Not Curable Not-Curable No idea No Idea	131 226 38	32.8 56.5 9.5	

Table 3. Positive Attitude towards HIV/AIDS Victim

HIV infected person can lead normal life	F	(%)
Yes	155	39.0
No	208	52.0
No idea	37	9.0

Faithful to one partner will help in the prevention of HIV	F	(%)
Agree	200	50
Disagree	111	28.0
Not Sure	89	22.0

The above table reflects on the knowledge about abbreviation of HIV/AIDS. About less than 50% adolescents had right knowledge about the HIV/AIDS abbreviation stands for

whereas more than 50% of them had wrong knowledge about it, in the same time 56.5% of them said AIDS is not curable and 33% said it is curable, which is completely wrong answer.

However 9.5% had no idea about it. The majority of them (52%) said HIV infected person cannot leave a normal life, however (39%) of them had positive attitude towards them; infect (9%) have no idea about the statement.

(28%) have neutral answer or not sure about the statement. More than half of the respondents disagree about the infection that spread through truck driver or sex worker. Whereas (31.6%) of them feel that truckers and sex workers are the

Table 4. Negative Attitude towards HIV/AIDS Victim

Sl. No	Variable	F	%	
1	I feel that a Person Infected by HIV Cannot Lead a Normal Life			<p>Percentage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Disagree Not Sure
	Agree	168	42.0	
	Disagree	164	41.0	
	Not Sure	68	17.0	
2	Avoid of Person Infected with HIV			<p>Percentage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Disagree Not Sure
	Agree	146	37.0	
	Disagree	181	45.0	
	Not Sure	73	18.0	
3	Feel Frightened to Meet any HIV Infected person			<p>Percentage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Disagree Not Sure
	Agree	167	42.0	
	Disagree	147	36.5	
	Not Sure	86	19.0	
4	Poor People are More Vulnerable to HIV infection			<p>Percentage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Disagree Not Sure
	Agree	134	36.8	
	Disagree	153	38.0	
	Not Sure	104	26.0	
5	All HIV Positive People Should be Killed			<p>Percentage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Disagree Not Sure
	Agree	81	20.0	
	Disagree	255	64.0	
	Not Sure	64	16.0	

About (50%) of the respondents had strongly agreed that “Being faithful to one’s spouse help in prevention of HIV;” however (28%) of them disagree and (22%) of them were not sure about the statement his study revealed that less than half of (41%) of the respondents disagree about their feeling towards having sex, but 31% of them agree to have sex with their life partner. In the same time little more than a quarter

carrier of HIV virus. Almost (agree 42% disagree 41%) of the students feel that the infected person can’t lead normal life. Whereas 17% of them are not sure about the positive people and 45% of them agreed that they should be avoided in coming contact with. However 18% are not sure what to do with them. About 42% were afraid to meet HIV+ people and 36.5% did not fear to meet them, 21.5% have neutral feeling for them

only 26% of those adolescents girls were not sure about the statement that “Poor people are prone to get HIV infection” whereas 36% agree and a similar proportion 38% disagree with the statement. “PLHIVs should be killed”: about 63.8% of the respondents either disagree or strongly agree with this statement. Nearly 20% agree or strongly agree whereas 16% were not sure of their sentiment towards the statement.

DISCUSSION

While discussing with the adolescents it was found that they are not getting adequate and correct information on sexual and reproductive health issues, which is leading to misconceptions and other problems. Teachers, in general had a favorable attitude towards providing information to the adolescents on sexual and reproductive health issues and comparatively negative behavior are more than that of positively behavior regarding HIV/AIDS (disease) towards the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs). Most adolescents in the present study had special interest for their life –year saved would be greatest if HIV is prevented in young individuals, moreover it may be easier to change sexual attitudes, practices and risky behaviours among the adolescents. Thus at this early age they have to be targeted by the HIV prevention programmes. Though awareness about HIV/AIDS is found slightly near about 50% believed that HIV/AIDS cannot be prevented and they have very much negative feeling towards PLWHAs. However their ignorance level is very high. Prevalence of HIV infection among female is increasing in Ganjam district and other districts of Odisha State and their number is increasing due to the lack of correct information, unprotected sexual behavior, lack of awareness and also the lower literacy rate. Inadequate knowledge about HIV led to the adolescents to entertain some of the misconceptions that encouraged to discrimination the people living with HIV/AIDS. Various International Agencies, Government agencies like Odisha State Aids Control Society (OSACS), District AIDS prevention and control unit (DAPCU) and Non- governmental organisations (NGOs) like Janasadharana, Aruna, etc. targeted interventions among the high-risk populations that include behavior change, health care, treatment of sexuality transmitted disease, promotion of condoms and creating an enabling environment for behavior change to reduce HIV/AIDS incidence.

Conclusion

Adolescent HIV/AIDS is a separate epidemic and needs to be handled and managed separately from adult HIV as not only they face problems in accepting their HIV status, need for life-long treatment and other positive family members but also have sad memories of their lost parents and a big question mark in the future regarding health, education, career and marriage. An adolescent is an individual who gets infected with HIV once but stays infected and affected for life over a longer period. Several innovative programmes have been implemented to create awareness among general public as well as high risk population. School and College based AIDS education programme has been organized by Government and non government organizations encouraging students to adopt positive life styles required for prevention of HIV/AIDS. Often such efforts have become sporadic than regular feature in the schools and colleges. Hence, the present study is a felt necessity to impart HIV/AIDS information to adolescent girls who have a great potential to learn and increase their knowledge, develop positive attitude and favourable practice

regarding HIV/AIDS and also to reach out to their peers, families and the society at large with AIDS awareness message. The education sectors of affected countries play an increasingly important role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Education has a dramatic impact on the prevention and control of HIV infection and development of nation. The increasing role of education sectors recognize that a good education is one of the most effective way of helping young people to avoid HIV/AIDS. For these adolescents and youth there is a window of hope, a chance of a life from AIDS if they can acquire the knowledge, skills and values to help them protect themselves as they grow up. Providing young people with the “Social Vaccine” of education offers them a real chance of productive life.

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