

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Outlook of Students and Teachers towards People Living with HIV/AIDS

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to highlight the mode of awareness and attitude of students and teachers towards people living with HIV/AIDS by studying a sample of 268 respondents lodged in four selected colleges of capital city, Guwahati of Assam, India. It also tries to focus their comments and suggestions to mitigate discrimination and to make further improvement of existing facilities provided by government for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS. The main contention of the study is that wider arrangement of public awareness camp on HIV/AIDS will lead to bring better result in preventing further spread of the disease and in reducing discrimination in society for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS. The findings of the study revealed the existence of a significant good level of awareness and positive attitude among the respondents towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

Key words: HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), PLWHA (People Living with HIV/AIDS), Guwahati, Assam, discrimination, attitude, awareness camp

1. Introduction

People's awareness on HIV/AIDS and supportive attitude towards PLWHA is a very important phenomenon for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS. In our society, generally if a person is identified as HIV positive, s/he is neglected and discriminated by majority people of the society. Moreover, due to fear of transmission of the disease, most of the people avoid her/him to accompany or even touching. They are induced to face problems in most of their livelihood tasks and deprive them of their human rights; especially they face problems during the course of their health treatment.

2. Review of Literature

Gruskin, S. and Tarantola, D. (2002) opined that "HIV continues to be marked by discrimination against population groups, that is, those who live on the fringes of society or who are assumed to be at risk of infection because of behavior, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or social characteristics, that are stigmatized in a particular society".

In the report of National AIDS Trust, July 2011, it is said that "Negative and judgmental attitudes towards HIV positive people are held by a minority of the public, they are most prevalent amongst people with a poor understanding of how HIV is transmitted".

Herek and Glunt (1988:888) noted that "Discrimination may spring from social disapproval of the infection and its implied behaviors or from fears due to lack of knowledge about how HIV/AIDS can or cannot be transmitted".

As per the findings of Government of India - Ministry of health and family welfare: State wise HIV prevalence (1998-2004), "there are several reasons for the stigma towards people living with HIV/AIDS among the general public, one of them could be inaccurate information about the transmission of HIV; creating irrational behavior and misperceptions of personal risks".

3. Objectives of the study

- To examine the attitude of teachers and students towards people living with HIV/AIDS.
- To expose the comments and suggestions of teachers and students in the context of further facilitation and better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS.

4. Methodology and material

The project is based on empirical study and the data was collected from four selected colleges of Guwahati city of India, namely: 1) Handique Girls College 2) Cotton College 3) B. Barooah College and 4) Arya Vidyapith College. The study was carried out by applying interview schedule technique to a sample of 268 respondents including 42 teachers and 226 students. To elicit the data, separate questionnaire for each respondent was prepared containing different questions relating to level of awareness and attitude, comments and suggestions etc. The data generated through this approach is analyzed, interpreted and findings drawn.

5. Findings

5.1. Attitude towards People living with HIV/AIDS

Supportive attitude of family members or colleagues takes a great role in maintaining mental and health condition of an affected person. In this connection, to understand the mode of attitude towards PLWHA, the data was analysed as shown in table 1.

SL No	If a friend of your children/brother/sister unfortunately turned to HIV positive, what will you do?	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1.	Advise him/her child to avoid the friend	01	00	01	0.37
2.	Allow to be a friend as usual and support him/her in all possible ways	66	140	206	76.86
3.	Allow him/her to meet as a friend with precaution	20	41	61	22.77
4.	No comment	00	00	00	00
	Total	87	181	268	100

Table 1: Attitude of the respondents in case of their close relative's friend unfortunately turned to HIV positive

The presented data in table 1 revealed that majority (76.86 percent) of the respondents commented to allow to be a friend as usual and support him/her in all possible ways while 22.77 per cent gave comment about to allow him/her to meet as a friend with precaution and 0.37 per cent of them commented that they will advise their child to avoid the friend.

5.2. Existence of discrimination against PLWHA

Stigma and discrimination experienced by HIV positive people always forces them to remember about their HIV status which leads to mental depression, deterioration of their health condition and alienation from human rights. In this connection, to examine the existence of discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, the data had been analyzed and it highlighted that 60.82 per cent of the respondents stated about existence of discrimination against PLWHA while 39.18 percent of the them noticed about non-existence of discrimination in our society. Further, to examine the types of discrimination faced by PLWHA, the data was elicited and shown in table 2.

SL No	Types of discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS in society	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1.	Restrictions on international travel	00	01	01	0.37
2.	Barriers to employment and housing	03	10	13	4.86
3.	Access to education	06	08	14	5.23
4.	Medical care and/or health insurance	13	38	51	19.02
5.	Discrimination in public places	35	49	84	31.34
6.	No comment	30	75	105	39.18
	Total	87	181	268	100

Table 2: Types of discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS in society

The data in table 2 showed that 31.34 per cent of the respondents expressed about existence of discrimination in public places while 19.02 per cent stated about ignorance in medical care and/or restriction on health insurance, 5.23 percent expressed about restriction on access to education, 4.86 per cent noticed about barriers to employment and housing and 0.37 per cent of them expressed about restriction on international travel. But there were 39.18 per cent of the respondents who did not give any comment regarding the matter.

5.3. Comments and suggestions of the respondents

People's supportive comments and suggestions play an important role to mitigate discrimination against PLWHA. It also helps the Government/organizations in further improvement of facilitating the PLWHA for their better livelihood. As regards to responses of the subjects on whether existing facilities made by the government are sufficient for increasing trend of PLWHA, it is confirmed from the data that 89.55 per cent of the respondents stated about insufficient of existing government facilities while 10.45 per cent of them commented about sufficient of existing government facilities. Further, the data also highlighted in what terms the existing government facilities are insufficient and it is shown in table 3.

SL No	In what term the existing facilities made by the govt. is insufficient for the increasing trend of HIV positive people	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1.	Infrastructure	27	29	56	20.89
2.	Insufficient number of doctors/paramedical	23	52	75	27.98
3.	Instruments	03	13	16	5.98
4.	Medicines	14	64	78	29.11
5.	Awareness Camp	04	11	15	5.59
6.	No comment	16	12	28	10.45
	Total	87	181	268	100

Table 3: Comments to improve the existing facilities made by the government for the increasing trend of HIV positive people

The data in table 3 revealed that 29.11 per cent of the respondents commented that it is insufficient in medicine while 27.98 per cent stated about insufficient number of doctors/paramedical, 20.89 per cent commented about insufficient infrastructure, 5.98 percent about insufficient in instruments and 5.59 per cent of them suggested about wide range of arrangement for awareness camp. But there were 10.45 per cent of the respondents who did not give any comment.

The data also exposed some suggestions of the respondents to mitigate the discriminations/improving the condition for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS

SL No	Suggestions to mitigate the discriminations/improving the condition for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1.	Arrangement for rehabilitation	21	06	27	10.08
2.	Reservation in job	03	04	07	2.61
3.	Make awareness about the disease to prevent further spread	34	92	126	47.02
4.	Make awareness to the people for cordial acceptance of PLWHA	29	79	108	40.29
	Total	87	181	268	100

Table 4: Suggestions to mitigate the discrimination/improving the condition for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS

The data in table 4 stated that 47.02 per cent of the respondents suggested to make awareness about the disease to prevent further spread, 40.29 per cent suggested for making awareness to the people for cordial acceptance of PLWHA while 10.08 per cent suggested for arrangement of rehabilitation and 2.61 per cent of the respondents suggested for reservation in job especially for PLWHA.

6. Discussion

The study highlights a significant good level of awareness and positive attitude towards PLWHA. So far as stigma and discrimination is concerned, the study reflects the respondents' comments mostly on existence of discrimination in public places and avoidance of medical care and health insurance. The study also reveals most of the respondents' comments to make awareness about the disease to prevent further spread and awareness to the people for cordial acceptance of PLWHA. It has proved from the study that majority of the respondents have awareness on HIV and sympathetic attitude towards PLWHA. The suggestions of improving the existing facilities made by the government for the increasing trend of PLWHA is quite miserable as majority of the respondents suggested about insufficient infrastructure, medical instrument, medicine, insufficient number of doctors/paramedical and suggested for wide range of awareness camp.

7. Conclusion

It can be noted that the study has observed a significant good level of awareness and positive attitude towards PLWHA but more sustained efforts are needed such as wide range of publicity, arrangement of awareness camps on HIV related issues etc. to make the public fully aware of the disease, its mode of transmission and prevention and at the same time to mitigate the stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Lastly, there is an enormous need from the side of the government in taking measures which would make the public fully aware of the disease and improving the existing facilities for better livelihood of people living with HIV/AIDS.

8. Notes

- Stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS always forces them to remember about their HIV status which leads to mental depression, deterioration of their health condition and alienation from human rights.
- People's supportive comments and suggestions play an important role to mitigate discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

9. References

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