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FACTORS AFFECTING PARENTAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAM FOR ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

HIV has rapidly entrenched itself throughout the world over the past three decades. The adolescent cohort is one of the most vulnerable groups as far as risk of HIV/AIDS is concerned.

The adolescent is the most impressionable age. They are in search of answers to their questions, and parents need to be aware of the importance of life skills education. This paper is an attempt to explore the factors influencing parental attitude towards AIDS awareness program for adolescent students. The author reviewed the findings of previous researches in the area and collected data through semi structured interview.

Key Words : Factors, Parental attitude, AIDS awareness program, Adolescents

Introduction

After almost thirty years of existence of HIV/AIDS, students and teachers are still not equipped to battle against this pandemic, although school is considered to be a focal point or a very crucial platform to discuss these issues.

India is having a large population with low literacy levels leading to a lower the level of awareness of HIV/AIDS; the disease is posing an alarming hazard on the public health scenario. At the same time, discussing sex has been restricted in the Indian societal set-up. Adolescence is masked with myths and misconceptions about sexual health and sexuality. Adolescents are potential asset for changing attitudes and behavior towards AIDS, i.e. they are not just targets but actors in the campaign against HIV/AIDS.(When young people are equipped with knowledge and skills, they can play a strong role during an epidemic. The spread of HIV/AIDS relies primarily on personal human behaviour, even if individuals everywhere had the full benefit of measures taken to reduce vulnerability and full access to the tools and skill to prevent transmission, it is factitious to think that all the spread would stop. After almost thirty years of existence of HIV/AIDS, students and teachers are still not equipped to battle against this pandemic, although school is considered to be a focal point or a very crucial platform to discuss these issues.

In a study, it was found that adolescents were more likely to learn about aids awareness programs if they had parental support.



Parents' role in running AIDS awareness program for adolescents

The adolescent's attitude towards aids awareness program is important as they are the future of the society. This can be achieved by parents talking to their children about the importance of life skill education and social issues advocacy.

Aids awareness programs are usually targeted towards adults but adolescents are not spared from these problems. They often have a lack of knowledge about HIV, AIDS and STDs because they have been kept in the dark by their parents or guardians. This program is a way to help them understand what they should know about these problems and how they can protect themselves from it.

Aids awareness programs for adolescents should be conducted by qualified teachers with an understanding of the social dynamics of adolescents. The program should be designed in a way that it touches on all aspects of life skill education and not just HIV/AIDS or STDs.

Aids awareness programs have been made available to adolescents in school, but parents are not always supportive of these programs.

The main reason for this is that parents are not aware of the dangers that their children face when they are not educated about sexually transmitted diseases and how to protect themselves.

It is widely known that HIV rates in the world are on the rise. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including poverty, lack of education and poor health infrastructure.

The AIDS epidemic is a global pandemic that has been affecting people all over the world since the 1980s. The HIV virus can be spread through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or semen, or by exposure to contaminated needles. In Africa, where many people live in poverty and have limited access to healthcare facilities and education, the risk of HIV transmission is high.

Parent - child relationship and attitude towards AIDS awareness program

Parent communication is the part of the process of change within a family and can be positive or negative, effective or ineffective. It is very important for parents to be able to communicate openly and effectively with their adolescents. Open, effective communication benefits not only adolescents but also every member of the family. Many adolescents lack strong and stable relationships with their parents or other adults, which are necessary to openly discuss reproductive health (RH) concerns. As a result, many teenagers do not have access to reliable information regarding their RH needs. In most cultures, parents and family members are an influential source of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values for children and young people. Parents often have the power to guide children's development in sexual health matters, encouraging them to practice reasonable sexual behavior and develop good personal decision-making skills. Even though parents are the main sources of information for RH issues, in Indian social scenario there remains a silence between many parents and their adolescent children on these matters.



Perception of adolescents about parents influences the communication process

Adolescents – parents generation gap is also one of the reason for communication gap between them. They consider parents as old fashioned people and hesitate in discussing matters like – reproductive health issues, sex related issues and problems associated with AIDS. Moreover adolescents sometimes see parents as being out of touch with current adolescent lifestyles and pressures, hence parental expertise may be undermined accordingly (James Jaccard www.family.jrank.org).

Lack of parental interest

Parents in Indian society lack interest in discussing sex related matters and adolescents are afraid to ask questions related to sexual issues as they would be seen as “disrespectful” and “disobedient”. Sexual issues are seen as topics of adult discussions only. Moreover, the parents are more interested in issues like – career opportunities, stream scope, institution for further studies etc. but sex related issues are of least interest for them. Their lack of interest in sex related issues force the child to discuss such matters with some other person. The other person is providing the correct information cannot be assured; on the other hand there may be misguidance in this issue. When school management tries to organize any awareness program on AIDS or sex related issues, these parents resist and considers this as wastage of time.

Social norms and taboos related to gender and sexuality

In traditional societies like India, the common beliefs, customs and practices connected with health and disease have been found to be intimately related to the causes of a disease. For example, religion is very important in guiding individual health behaviour. Disease has been attributed to extra-biological reasons such as man's disobedience of natural and religious laws. It has been attributed to the sins and crimes committed by a person in the present life or in the previous lives (Srivastava and Saksena, 1991: 74). Some diseases have been attributed to the wrath of gods and goddesses. Sickness to people in rural India is as much a moral as a physical crisis, that is, in their conception; the roots of illness extend to the realm of human conduct and cosmic purpose (Carstairs, 1955). Further, Hasan (1967) points out that in a village, people attach no importance to health; their beliefs, values, customs and practices are directly related to the phenomenon of health and disease. In his village study, he argues that there are some factors which directly affect the health of the community. These are related to certain beliefs, values and religious taboos. Further, the lack of knowledge in rural areas affects and influences the health behaviour of the people (Hasan, 1967). Such social norms and taboos restrict parents and other members to be a part of awareness programs on AIDS and sex related problems.

Conclusion:

As discussed, parents' lack of interest, communication gap with children, parenting style, social norms and taboos, family environment etc. are the major factors influencing parental attitude toward AIDS awareness programs for adolescents. The school or any agency planning to organize such programs should :

- ✓ Give orientation to parents and other family members, on the purpose and method of delivery of AIDS awareness programs



- ✓ Include introductory sessions in curriculum for adolescents
- ✓ Organize monthly talk to discuss sex related issues
- ✓ Parents should also be given some role in organizing such programs
- ✓ Include and given major responsibility to those parents who have already attended orientation on AIDS awareness program
- ✓ Organizing similar orientation for concerned community members.

Thus, organizing AIDS awareness programs needs to be started with the orientation of parents and community members, explaining them about the importance of such programs for the good health and better future of their children.

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