

Research Article

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

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Abstract

Data was collected from 175 high school teachers from 15 high schools in Puducherry U.T. in February 2007. Respondents were asked to complete the HIV/AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes Scales for Teachers designed to measure knowledge and assess attitudes related to HIV/AIDS. and prevention education. Teachers were also asked questions regarding their teaching experience and academic disciplines. Respondents included all subject teachers and physical education and craft teachers. As a whole 60% of respondents answered correctly. Results were discussed with respect to teachers teaching science, arts and crafts.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS knowledge, teacher attitudes, prevention education, high school teachers, science teachers, arts teachers, craft teachers, physical education, teacher training, awareness.*

Introduction

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become a human, social on economic disaster, with far reaching implications for individuals, communities and countries. Adolescent age group is an important segment of population and potential resource for prevention of HIV transmission. These young people constitute an important target group and a potential resource for the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection. A large number of young people throughout the world attend schools or are in contact with those who do.

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Till date there is no cure for HIV/AIDS and the only amount we have got against HIV/AIDS is prevention {WHO, 1993}. This can be achieved by primary prevention through dissemination of information, health Education and Communication {IEC}. School teachers as a group come in close contact with the adolescence population. They are the ones who can instill correct values in the impressionable minds at this growing age. Correct values, once imbibed go a long way in shaping the life of school children. Hence teachers views and knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS are very important. So that they impart correct knowledge about this dreaded disease AIDS to the school children. These school children will ultimately serve as catalytic agents to spread awareness and correct knowledge in the community in the long run {Benara *et al*, 1992 and Manangatty *et al*, 2007}. Keeping the above-mentioned points in mind, a study was conducted amongst the High School teachers of various disciplines working in the Puducherry U.T.

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OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the level of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS Education among the high school teachers of Puducherry U.T.
2. To find out the attitude of high school teachers of Puducherry U.T. towards HIV/AIDS Education.

METHOD

Sample

The respondents comprised of 175 high school teachers including all subject teaches, physical education teachers and art and craft teachers working in 15 high schools in Puducherry.

Tool

The knowledge and attitude scale standardised by the authors was used for the study to assess the knowledge and attitude of high school teachers towards HIV/AIDS Education. The knowledge scale consists of 7 true or false statements and the attitude scale consists of 4 statements to be answered in a five-point scale.

RESULTS

Overall findings

An overall finding reveals that 67% of the teachers answered the entire knowledge question correctly. 84 % of the teachers have positive attitude towards HIV/AIDS education.

findings from Knowledge Scale

1. 82% of respondents correctly identified the following statement as true: *There have been no cases of AIDS spread by AIDS victims to their immediate people through usual daily contact.*
2. 76% respondents correctly identified the following statement as false: *HIV lives and functions in warm, moist environments for days outside the body.*
3. 74% of respondents correctly identified the following statement as false: *AIDS is an infectious disease caused by bacteria.*
4. 63% of respondents correctly identified the following statement as false: *The number of HIV-infected persons will be decreasing during the next two years.*
5. 64% of respondents correctly identified the following statement as false: *It is possible to detect HIV antibodies in the bloodstream immediately after becoming infected.*
6. 63% of respondents correctly identified the following statement as true: *AIDS patients can be identified by their various health disorders.*
7. 45% respondents correctly identified the following statement as true: *In recent years, adolescents are among groups with the largest increase in HIV infection.*

Findings from attitude Scale

1. 91% of respondents "agreed or strongly agreed" with the following statement: *I would support including AIDS education in the curriculum in a school where I was teaching.*
2. 86% of respondents "agreed or strongly agreed" with the following statement: *I believe it is the regular elementary classroom teacher's responsibility to teach AIDS education.*

3. 85% of respondents "agreed or strongly agreed" with the following statement: *I feel that more time should be spent teaching future teachers about HIV/AIDS in college courses.*
4. 73% of respondents "agreed or strongly agreed" with the following statement: *I feel that I could comfortably answer students' questions about HIV/AIDS.*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study found that 76% of teachers possessed a fairly good understanding of HIV/AIDS. The authors noted that teachers are most likely responsible for formal HIV/AIDS education but that students may seek advice from a trusted teacher from any discipline. Although teachers in this study have shown an overall good understanding and positive attitude towards HIV/AIDS, discipline wise teachers knowledge and attitude need to be studied separately.

Teachers' attitudes toward HIV/AIDS were generally positive. Results indicated a direct relationship between teachers' knowledge of HIV/AIDS and positive or supportive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS.

The study found nearly universal support for AIDS education, with almost more than 90% of respondents stating they would support AIDS education at their school.

Finally, the authors noted that most respondents believed prospective teachers should receive more specific training related to HIV/AIDS. The authors state that these results confirm a need for increased emphasis on teacher training both for pre-service and in-service educators.

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