

Hiv/Aids Awareness and the Level of Sexual Risk Behaviours Among Senior High School Students

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Abstract: - The study primarily aimed to assess the level of Senior High School students' awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their sexual risk behaviours in the division of General Santos City and to find out if there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The research is a combination method of qualitative and quantitative to explore different phenomenon on every aspect of this timely and relevant social issues today- the HIV and AIDS. The statistical measure used to test the hypothesis were the Average Percentage, Mean, Z- test and Pearson Product-moment Correlation. The challenges encountered in reducing the rate of HIV/ AIDS cases among young people were determined through various qualitative techniques of research. Findings revealed that students' awareness on HIV/ AIDS were Fair for both male and female students. Although their level of sexual risk behaviours were Very Low, still it posed a great threat in spreading the virus, especially to male students who are likely to indulge in risky sexual activities compared to female students. The study concluded that there is no association between students' awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their sexual risk behaviours.

Keywords: HIV/ AIDS, Sexual Risk Behaviours, Level, Senior High School Student , HIV/ AIDS, Sexual Risk Behaviours, Level, Senior High School Students

INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted infections have become the most formidable challenge for public health, human rights and development in the new millennium. Many adolescents around the world are sexually active and because many of the sexual contacts between them are not protected, they run the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/ AIDS which is very significant issues in today's world.

Historically, the knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) has been very low, even in communities where there is a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections. Sometimes, these infections can be considered inevitable (Anwar et al., 2010) or they can also be considered an initiation into adulthood and are believe to be easily curable (Kamarudin, 2003).In the Philippines, the Department of Health (DOH) has recorded more than 1,200 cases of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) recently diagnosed during January 2019 (Department of Health, Philippines, 2019).According to the Department of Health, based on data from May 2017, there were 1,098 new HIV-positive individuals reported in the HIV/ AIDS and ART Registry of the Philippines (HARP). This was 48% higher than the previous year and also the highest number of cases recorded since 1984. In January 2019 there were 1,249 recently confirmed HIV-positive people reported (Ibid). Out of this number 16% had clinical manifestations of advanced HIV infection. Among the data provided, 32% of confirmed HIV / AIDS cases came from 15 to 24 years age bracket.In the South Cotabato there were 134 secondary students registered as HIV/ AIDS cases since 2018, which is 7% higher than the previous year. As enunciated by Daisy Avance Fuentes during an interview, she stated: "It is devastating to know that there have been cases of younger age groups, particularly among high school students" (Mindanao News, HIV Spread among High School Students in South Cotabato Alarms Execs, retrieved June 03, 2019).The HIV/ AIDS epidemic is progressing at a rapid pace among young people. Since high school students who in the first phase of youth is a delicate period due to inadequate mental, physical and social maturity (Sri ram and Raj, 2014). The incomplete psychological development during this period and the influence of the group on equal results in adopting risky behaviours that make them more vulnerable to HIV/ AIDS.

Because children are valuable resource for a country's future, it is imperative that they have the information necessary to protect themselves and their counterparts from being victims of this deadly disease that is still incurable. Therefore, the study will focus on obtaining information on HIV/ AIDS awareness among high school students who at their age are vulnerable to this transmittable disease. Additionally, study will also look into the level of students sexual risk behaviours in the division of General Santos City, the school year 2019-2020.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a triangulation design of research, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research which looked into the present condition on the learners' awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their level of risky sexual behaviours which is very much significant and relevant social issues and/or problem the world in facing in particular, the Philippines, in today's generation. This mixed method design of qualitative and quantitative research not only gave a multidimensional perspective of the phenomenon (Foster, 1997) but it also provided rich and unbiased data that can be interpreted with comfortable guarantee (Breitmayer, Ayres, and Knafl, 1993; Jick, 1979). Thus, the triangulation design ensure the internal and external strengths, validity and reliability, a complete multidisciplinary vision (Boyd, 2000) and procedures to reduce potential biases within the research (Mitchell, 1986; Shih, 1998) and a way increase validity, strength and interpretative potential of the study, decrease the biases of researchers and provided more the analyses (Denzin, 1970) the researcher used a technique that involves triangulation and to be more specific a methodological triangulation method. The methodological triangulation used by the researcher which combine multiple methods to collect data such as documents, interviews, focus group discussions, observations, questionnaires and surveys to gather data on the HIV/ AIDS awareness among Senior High School students and the level of their risky sexual behaviours provide richer and more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

Respondents of the study were the Senior High School students in the five (5) mega public secondary schools in this Division of General Santos City namely; General Santos City National High School, Lagao National High School, Labangal National High School, Fatima National High School and Irineo L. Santiago National High School of Metro Dadiangas. The researcher chose Senior High School students since this age bracket of learners are more prone to be infected with HIV/ AIDS based on the data given by UNICEF (2019). Senior High School students as respondents of the study will be answering the survey questionnaire to assess the level of their awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their risky sexual behaviours. There are 378 respondents to be used as a sample size of the study out of 7,157 total population of Senior High School learners in the entire division of General Santos City through random sampling.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study used a random sampling technique. As suggested by L.R. Gay (1996), small population can be the best sample size for the study using Slovin's formula. Since there were 6, 259 total populations of Senior High School students in the division of General Santos City. Using Gay's suggestion, applying Slovin's formula, the sample size were reduced to only 378 total learner respondents. The sample size per school proportionally determined based on the total learner population in each school and selected by means of random sampling through fishbowl technique.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Two sources of data were utilized in collecting information for the study. These were the primary and secondary data. Primary data was made up of survey questionnaire for quantitative variables, while the

secondary data came from the Key Informants Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion, Observations and Documents which were also utilized in this research endeavour.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher adapted the survey questionnaire from the previous study of Davis, Tang, Chan, and Noel (1999) in the Part I of the Questionnaire which will measure the level of awareness of Senior High School students on HIV/ AIDS. Part II of the questionnaire will be adapted and modified from the previous studies of Asrat, (2014) and Shiferaw, et al (2011), this is to gauge students in Senior High School's risky sexual behaviour.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

To obtain the necessary data, an adapted survey questionnaire was taken from the study of Davis, Tang, Chan, and Noel (1999) and Asrat, (2014) and Shiferaw, et al (2011), Key Informants Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion, Observations and Documents will also be used.

STATISTICAL TREATMENT

The gathered quantitative data in this study were analysed and interpreted using statistical test. The responses were based on the survey questionnaire. Average Percentage was used to measure the level of Senior High School students' awareness on HIV/ AIDS in terms of: Transmission Myth, Attitude, and Facts. To gauge the level of Senior High School students' sexual risk behaviours, mean was employed to determine the significant difference between the levels of students' sexual risk behaviours between male and female, z- test was used. Pearson product-moment correlation employed to determine the significant relationship between Seniors High School students' awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their level of sexual risk behaviours. All tests was done at 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSES

The qualitative data that were gathered in the study was analysed by means of the following technique in qualitative research. The researcher's own understanding, perception and conceptual orientation will be reflected in the process and results of data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The overall process of generation, selection, interpretation and explanation of any descriptive data can become the process of 'the interpretations of the interpretations' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 9).

Thus, aim to produce a 'descriptive explanation' (Mason, 1996) of the issues in the light of the research questions. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) a Qualitative Approach of Thematic Analysis was carried out in the gathered data taken from the informants to explore their experiences, a method used for 'identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the set of data. Thus, each data was studied and examined repeatedly, and those relevant responses were extracted from the set of data to compile and to form themes.

The themes were compared with each other and with the original set of data to ensure that they are consistent, coherent and distinctive. Descriptive Narrative Analysis was also done as an approach taken from interview data and focus group discussion that has concern with understanding about the factors contributing to the rapid spread of HIV/ AIDS among adolescents. To ensure the reliability of all the data gathered the researcher cross-validated it through triangulation from documents, observation that will be taken from informants, results of survey, interviews such as KII and focus group discussion or FGD.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ASSESSMENT ON THE LEVEL OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' AWARENESS ON HIV/ AIDS

In the assessment of students' awareness on the HIV/ AIDS despite the transmission myth, the attitude they are manifesting in handling situation and the facts they know will help reduce the risk of the possible expansion of infections. Table 1 shows the level

Table 1: Senior High School Students Awareness on HIV/ AIDS

| Students Awareness | Average Percentage | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Transmission Myth | 54.87 | Fair |
| Attitude | 55.56 | Fair |
| Facts | 53.41 | Fair |
| Overall Percentage Awareness | 54.61 | Fair |

As evident on the responses of learners with an average percentage of 54.87 indicates that awareness on HIV/ AIDS among young people is Fair despite the misconception on the transmission of HIV/ AIDS. The study results further revealed that that some students lacked knowledge about HIV and AIDS in certain key areas that need to intensified. Better knowledge and more positive attitudes however are education, suggesting that educational campaigns might be helpful to increase knowledge and awareness and reduce stigma and eliminate, if not, to reduce the number of person believing on the fallacy and/ or transmission myth of the virus.

ASSESSMENT ON THE LEVEL OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS

The tendencies of sexual activity at an early age are increasing alarmingly in the world. In many countries, most young people are sexually active before the age of 20 and premarital sex is common between the ages of 15 and 19 (unicef, 2002). The world health organization reported in 2015 that risky sexual behaviours resulted to unsafe sex was the second in the top ten risk factors in the global burden of all diseases caused worldwide (harvey and beckman, 2016).thus, looking into the level of students' risky sexual behaviours is vital in understanding the present situation of today's youth engaging in these risky activities which eventually, if not address, will result to social issue. The following table will show the risky sexual behaviours of today's young generation in different criteria namely: influence of social media, peer influence, influence of video content materials, non-self-protection efficacy.

Table 2: Senior high school students' sexual risk behaviours

| Sexual Risk Behaviours | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Influence of Social Media | 2.04 | 0.58 | Low |
| Peer Influence | 1.30 | 0.31 | Very Low |
| Influence of Video Content -Materials | 1.65 | 0.54 | Very Low |
| Non Self-protection Efficacy | 1.78 | 0.53 | Very Low |
| Influence of Substance Use | 1.07 | 0.14 | Very Low |
| Overall Sexual Risk-Behaviours | 1.57 | 0.35 | Very Low |

It should be noted, however, that young people (adolescence) can often be inconsistent in their thoughts and behaviour. At this time, a vast experimentation and the challenge of concomitant borders flourish. This includes collaboration with new groups of friends, the development of different interests and the search for new experiences. This evolutionary behaviour can be a threat in health and wellbeing of today's young generation. The knowledge on the level of the risky behaviour, more particularly the risky sexual behaviour, of the young people is imperative. As magnified in the survey, the over-all level of the sexual risk behaviours among Senior High School learners is very low with a mean of 1.57

DIFFERENCE ON THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS' AWARENESS ON HIV/ AIDS BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE

Awareness on HIV / AIDS are one of the main pillars in the fight against the disease. Young people are more likely to be infected because they participated in risky practices due to lack of adequate information. Therefore, evaluating the level of awareness among young people will help to assess the present situation in regards to learners' knowledge on this pandemic disease- the HIV/ AIDS.

Table 3: Z-test for the Level of Awareness on HIV/ AIDS between Male and Female Senior High School Students

| Group | n | Mean | SD | df | z | P | Interpretation |
|-------|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|-------|---------------------------|
| Male | 191 | 54.87 | 7.13 | 376 | 0.742 | 0.229 | No Significant Difference |

significant $\alpha = .05$

Accurate HIV/ AIDS knowledge will support adolescents in making informed choices about practices that may protect them from HIV infection. Research has also shown that greater knowledge of HIV and AIDS may not necessarily lead for a positive behaviour change, but knowledge of a disease can be a first step towards behaviour change in risk (Bigala, 2014; Omoyeni, 2014).

Increase knowledge, develop better skills and generate positive attitudes that can reduce risky behaviour among young people (Chaves, et al., 2013). Thus, knowledge about the disease is a prerequisite for the behavioural changes that will protect most students from HIV/ AIDS infections.

DIFFERENCE ON THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS' SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE

Young people often have to struggle with their social autonomy, mutual pressure and lack of effective maturity to make positive sexual decisions, which often lead to negative attitudes and behaviour which contribute to its high vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections. HIV and AIDS are not simply public challenge to health, but constitutes a social threat with a devastating impact among young people. Therefore, the study will examine the sexual risk behaviours between male and female to figure out whether there are differences in the maintenance of ambivalent sexist beliefs.

Table 4: Z-test for Level of Sexual Risk Behaviours between Male and Female Senior High School Students

| Group | N | Mean | SD | Df | z | P | Interpretation |
|-------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Male | 191 | 1.87 | 0.14 | 376 | 38.41 | 0.0001 | With Significant Difference |

*significant $\alpha = .05$

Table 12 revealed that there is a significant difference on the level of students’ sexual risk behaviors between male and female. The male students (M= 1.87, SD= 0.14) has significantly higher mean than female students (M= 1.25, SD= 0.17, z (376) = 38.41, p = 0.0001). It was found out in this study that male students are more inclined to risky sexual behaviours in comparison to female.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENIORS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ AWARENESS ON HIV/ AIDS AND THE LEVEL OF THEIR SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS

According to World Health Organization (2019) every twelve seconds someone in the world is infected with HIV. When HIV is not treated properly, it will lead to AIDS and, worse, to death. Therefore, HIV and AIDS are one of world’s enormous problems. People know that HIV is dangerous, but most of these people don't know exactly what HIV and AIDS are, what the causes are and how to prevent the infection. Therefore, looking into the level awareness of young people on the virus and how it will affect their behaviour is the paramount consideration of the study. As viewed in Table 5 the relationship of students’ awareness on HIV/ AIDS and their level of sexual risk behaviours, shows that there was no significant relationship between the knowledge of HIV and the overall intention to engage in risky sexual behaviour (r= 0.06, p= 0.237). Based on the data, It is concluded that awareness have no impact on the formation of student’s behaviour more particularly in their sexual risky activity.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Senior High School Students Awareness on HIV/ AIDS and the Level of their Sexual Risk Behaviours

| Variables | Test for Relationship | p | r | Interpretation |
|--|-----------------------|-------|------|-----------------|
| Students Awareness X Students Sexual Risk Behaviours | 1.399 | 0.237 | 0.06 | Not Significant |

Level of significance $\alpha = .05$

The result further explains that even though there are programs and/ or activity in both private and public institution in spreading awareness about HIV/ AIDS, the data reveals the increasing rate of infected individuals (Philippine National AIDS Council, 2018), even with the information dissemination and advocacy intervention in bolstering awareness on every individual, most likely, the young people.

Despite the effort to control the spread of HIV and AIDS, the number of HIV- infected people continues to increase. The failure of present prevention strategies which rely more often in spreading awareness through media campaign such as posting of information to certain conspicuous places, advertisement in television or through social media implies less effective in modifying behavioural practices in the young generation of people (Ana Marie Cang and Washington Loreno, in an interview, 2019).As what the health officials in the city of General Santos commonly mentioned reason why awareness is not enough in battling the HIV/ AIDS because awareness alone cannot change someone’s behaviour. It must be noted, based in study, in order to reduce the increasing rate of HIV and AIDS cases, individuals’ behaviour should be given a special focus. As viewed on the current statistics of cases, the rate is increasing (Ibid) since most of the public and private organizations and/or institutions engage in this health issues is to spread awareness against this deadly virus, rather than shaping someone’s behaviors. Although in the process awareness is important but not enough in modifying behaviour (Kelly and Barker, 2016) which cannot be formed only by infusing knowledge but needs a lot of effort and time. Awareness must be combined with effective techniques in behavioural modification, one of those is through education which provides reinforcement for behavioural change (Kazdin, 1981). Additionally, it could be concluded that information about HIV and AIDS is not yet internalized by adolescent. Thus, strategy to modify risk

behaviours need to remain a main priority for HIV prevention other than spreading awareness of HIV/AIDS.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HIV/AIDS is one of the most important health issues in today's world affecting people especially the young adults. As such, young people tend to engage in a sexual activity at a younger age. Consequently, it is imperative that students must be armed with sufficient and accurate knowledge in regards to HIV and AIDS as primary step in combating this social problem as they are the future and the key to effective HIV prevention. Apart from awareness it must be noted more importantly and necessarily to reduce the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS infected individuals is to look into the behaviour of the young people which could aggravate the risk of transmitting the virus. Findings of the study led to conclusion that awareness on HIV alone is not enough for change since it has no significant relationship to the behaviour of young people and not the only essential precursor of sexual risk behaviours. It was also found out that in order to reduce the rising rate of sexually transmitted infections in the country among adolescents there is a need of a comprehensive approach, most likely, a behavioural modification. Awareness in terms of the issues and problems must be combined with intensive program that could modify someone's risky behaviour. Hence, achieving these goals requires sustainability, speeding up efforts, efficiently and effectively, in all HIV prevention and programs. One way to shape the positive behaviour of learners towards the risk of HIV/AIDS is through education as it plays a vital role in behavioural modification. HIV education programs for adolescents and young adults provides a positive impact on their behaviour which is quite strong and encouraging for them. Thus, given that programs reduce risky sexual behaviour and consequently would reduce the acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases among the young people. Aside from education, family also plays an important role in helping adolescent acquiring skills or strengthening their characters. The family is the fundamental factor in supporting adolescents emotionally, economically, and providing them an identity and feeling of belongingness. Any kind of positive or negative behaviour in the family has a direct effect on young adult where moral values begins. Although adolescents are susceptible to risky behaviours, parental support might buffer against the adolescent's tendency towards high-risk behaviours. On the basis of the findings and conclusions, these recommendations are hereby presented which in turn would help reduce the risk of HIV and AIDS transmission among young adult as one of the most relevant and significant social issues of the Philippines today. Awareness must be combined with comprehensive and intensive approach that could lead into behavioural modification among adolescents since behaviour is an important factor that could help reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS or any sexually transmitted infections. There must be a continuous trainings and other programs that would help develop the skills and attitude of young people in reducing the risk and their vulnerability to infections.

This prevention program should be combined with a complimentary combination of behavioural and structural strategies that could help develop positive attitude and behaviour. Education is very important in behavioural modification. Hence, it is vital that sexuality education must be incorporated in the K to 12 curriculum not an integration but a separate subject. More importantly, ensures that teachers must be adequately trained and given up-to-date resources be trained too. Even though nowadays teachers can get information from various sources, it may not be age-appropriate or fully correct. It is very important that programs are grounded in scientific facts and the best possible evidences. Parents should be encouraged and take part in teaching and providing sufficient information on sex education as well as sexuality issues with their children at home. This will allow parents to instil their family values into their perceptions and understanding of sex. Finally, further study about HIV/AIDS awareness and risky sexual behaviours of learners is highly recommended with comprehensive scope and variables that could have significant relationship.

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