

Adolescents' Attitudes towards People with HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

The possibility of interacting with an HIV-infected person has increased. This study is aimed at determining the adolescents' attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS and compares their attitudes when they are grouped according to gender and type of school. The descriptive research design utilizing the quantitative technique was used. This study was conducted in four (4) secondary schools of Cagayan de Oro City. A total of 675 fourth year high school students were randomly chosen as the respondents. A standardized questionnaire by Buseh (2001) was used in the gathering of data. The measures of central tendency focused on weighted mean were used in the analysis of data. The positive attitude that children with HIV/AIDS should not be curtailed of their right to go to school reflected the fact that the respondents consider the less probability of school children to engage in sex which is one of the modes of HIV/AIDS transmission. Meanwhile, the attitude that people entering and leaving one country to another should be tested for the AIDS virus implied that the respondents are aware that international travellers could have a greater probability of being contaminated with HIV virus. A very poor attitude was that the respondents disagree that people with AIDS shall be allowed to work as teachers and strongly disagree to eat in a public eating place even if one of the people working there had the AIDS virus. These findings persisted even when the adolescents were grouped according to gender and type of school. In conclusion, the adolescents manifested both positive and negative attitude towards people with HIV/AIDS. It is recommended that an annual school activity on Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign about awareness and attitude towards HIV/AIDS be conducted.

Keywords: Health, adolescents' attitudes, HIV/AIDS, people with HIV/AIDS, gender, type of school, descriptive design,

INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is a deadly disease and a serious health threat to the populace, especially to adolescents. This group of young people is vulnerable to be infected with the virus because they are at that certain stage in life when they experience an upsurge of sexual feelings following the latent sexuality of childhood. It is during adolescence that they learn to control and direct sexual urges. Moreover, this stage is the period of transition between childhood and adulthood, a time of profound biologic, intellectual, psychosocial, and economic change (Hokenberry& Wilson, 2007). The changes of adolescence have important implications for understanding the kinds of health risks to which young people are exposed, the health-enhancing and risk-taking behaviours in which they engage, and the major opportunities for health promotion among this population (Hokenberry and Wilson, 2007).

Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or HIV/AIDS remains one of the world's most significant public health challenges, particularly in low and middle-income countries (WHO, November 2013). It continues to be a major global public health issue, having claimed more than 36 million lives so far and specifically, there were approximately 35.3 [32.2-38.8] million people living with HIV in 2012 as cited by the World Health Organization (October, 2013). Furthermore, Oatway (WHO, 2013) mentioned that an estimated 2.3 million people were newly infected with the Virus in 2012.

While the prevalence of HIV and AIDS is still low in the Philippines, the country's HIV and AIDS registry for 2013 reveals a 79% increase in newly reported HIV cases, compared to the same period in 2012. Filipinos who engage in risky behaviour, such as intravenous drug users and those who perform unprotected sex with multiple partners are most at risk, and they are mostly adolescents and young adults. The Philippines now is one of only two countries in Asia, and one of seven globally, where the number of new HIV cases has increased by over 25 per cent from 2001 to 2009 (UNICEF, 2013).

The recent surveillance report of the Department of Health of Region X (2013) recorded a total of 129 reported cases of HIV/AIDS from 1991 to present from the five provinces namely, Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental and Misamis Oriental. The recorded data of DOH shows that Misamis Oriental has the highest incidence and prevalence rate (79 or 61.24%) of HIV/AIDS reported cases. Indeed, there data are alarming. This implies a foreseeable glimpse of adolescents' health five to ten years from now if there is

no response to this. It is therefore important to explore this situation. One needs then to have a good knowledge and understanding how young people think and feel about the disease and to people with HIV/AIDS. The current scenario calls for a significant collaborative effort for all concerned groups of individuals. This is a challenge that has opened the researcher's interest to take part through this academic endeavour. Thus, the result of the study may provide avenue to help facilitate the design and implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities for adolescents in the secondary schools.

FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Information-Motivation-Behavioral Skills Model (IMB model) developed by Fisher and Fisher in 1992. The IMB constructs observe patient's adherence on the aspects of: a) Information is the basic knowledge about a medical condition that might include how the disease develops, its expected course and effective strategies for its management; b) Motivation encompasses personal attitudes towards the adherence behaviour, perceived social support for such behaviour, and the patients' subjective norm or perception of how others with this medical condition might behave; and c) Behavioral skills include ensuring that the patient has the specific behavioural tools or strategies necessary to perform the adherence behaviour such as enlisting social support and other self-regulation strategies. Interventions based on this model have been effective in influencing behavioural change across a variety of clinical applications. In both prospective and correlational studies, the information, motivation and behavioural skills constructs have accounted for an average of 33% of the variance in behaviour change (World Health Organization, 2003).

The IMB model demonstrates that information is a prerequisite for changing behaviour, but in itself is insufficient to achieve this change. Motivation and behavioural skills are critical determinants and are independent of behaviour change. Information and motivation work largely through behavioural skills to affect behaviour, however, when the behavioural skills are familiar or uncomplicated, information and motivation can have direct effects on behaviour. In this case, a patient might fill a prescription (a simple, familiar behaviour) based on information given by the provider. The relationship between the information and motivation constructs is weak. In practical terms, a highly motivated person may have little information, or a highly informed person may have low motivation. However, in the IMB model, the presence of both information and

motivation increase the likelihood of adherence (World Health Organization, 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to (1) determine the adolescents' attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS and (2) compare their attitudes when they are grouped according to gender and type of school.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used was the descriptive research method applying the quantitative technique to elicit the adolescents' attitude towards people with HIV/AIDS. This research design was also deemed appropriate because the adolescents' attitudes were compared when they were grouped according to gender and type of school. A descriptive research design describes the nature of the phenomenon under investigation after a survey of current trends, practices and conditions that relate to that phenomenon (Tan, 2011).

The research instrument utilized in the study was the questionnaire used by Dr. Aaron G. Buseh of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in his study conducted in May 2001. The questionnaire of the study has thirteen (13) main questions. Sub-questions on the demographic characteristics of the students and their family members were also included. However, to establish culture-free standards of the questionnaire, a reliability test was given to twenty (20) students from the same schools that were not included in the final conduct of the study.

The study was conducted in four Secondary Schools of Cagayan de Oro City. Two of the schools were chosen from the public schools and the other two were chosen from the private schools.

The respondents of the study comprised of six hundred seventy-five (675) high school students from the four secondary schools in Cagayan de Oro City. The Slovin's formula was used in the sampling procedure. The simple random sampling was finally employed utilizing the lottery method so that each student had an equal chance or probability of being chosen as respondents of the study.

The rights and privacy of the respondents were protected. Proper research ethics was applied through an informed consent from principals and the respondents themselves.

The study considered only the adolescents' attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS and the population of the study only included the students from the secondary schools because this group of students are within the target age range for the study. In addition, this study considered only adolescents within the age range 14-16 years old who are in school currently enrolled in the same year the study was conducted. The honesty of the responses was considered to determine the students' exact standpoint towards people with HIV/AIDS.

Descriptive statistics was utilized to summarize the basic features of the data in this study particularly on the adolescents' attitudes towards people with AIDS. It has described what is or what the data show. Specifically, the weighted mean was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of the study aimed at determining the adolescents' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS.

Table 1. Adolescents' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS

INDICATORS	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION
a) Children with the AIDS virus should be allowed to attend school with other children	3.37	Strongly Agree	Very Good Attitude
b) I would be friends with someone who has AIDS	2.60	Agree	Good Attitude
c) People with AIDS virus should be allowed to work as teachers	1.64	Strongly Disagree	Very Poor Attitude
d) I would eat in a public eating place even if one of the people working there had the AIDS virus	1.21	Strongly Disagree	Very Poor Attitude
e) Anyone who catches AIDS only has himself or herself to blame	2.48	Disagree	Fair Attitude
f) I feel sorry for people who have AIDS	2.68	Agree	Good Attitude
g) I would visit a friend if I knew that he or she has the AIDS virus	2.62	Agree	Good Attitude
h) Other students should be told if a student with the AIDS virus is attending their school	3.20	Agree	Good Attitude
i) I would be willing to help look after a relative who has AIDS	2.65	Agree	Good Attitude
j) People entering the country should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.41	Strongly Agree	Very Good Attitude
k) I would not go to a dentist who treats people with the AIDS virus	2.81	Agree	Good Attitude
l) People leaving their country should be tested for the AIDS virus before they leave	3.29	Strongly Agree	Very Good Attitude
m) People who want to marry should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.20	Agree	Good Attitude
OVERALL	2.70	Agree	Good Attitude

As revealed in Table 1, very good attitude was discerned from the data that children with the AIDS virus should be allowed to attend school with other children (3.37 or strongly agree). It is implied that the adolescents did not display

a discriminatory attitude towards people with HIV virus. These were mostly girls at 16 years of age, who were enrolled in a public school and were of a Christian religion. In addition, the positive attitude that children with HIV/AIDS should not be curtailed of their right to go to school reflected the fact that the adolescents considered a less probability of school children to engage in sex which is one of the modes of HIV/AIDS transmission.

Moreover, the adolescents strongly agreed that people entering the country should be tested for AIDS virus (3.41) and people leaving their country should be tested for AIDS virus before they leave (3.29). These data disclosed that the adolescents are aware that international travellers could have a greater probability of being contaminated with HIV virus.

Meanwhile, a very poor attitude was disclosed on the adolescents' strong disagreement that people with AIDS shall be allowed to work as teachers. They also strongly disagreed to eat in a public eating place even if only one of the food servers has the AIDS virus. Thus, though the adolescents are informed, they have a poor comprehension of the biological aspects of HIV transmission and HIV characteristics.

This study has similar findings in the study of Hayyawi et. al. (2010) about HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes and beliefs among a group of Iraqis/Connaissances, which found out that the respondents' knowledge level was associated with negative attitudes towards HIV-positive individuals in public places and at work, since the group with higher knowledge level were more accepting towards contact with HIV-positive individuals than those with low knowledge level. It was also cited that the findings agree with the results of the Turkish study where people with good knowledge about AIDS were more tolerant of people with AIDS. However, it came out that more than half of the study sample overall would avoid HIV-positive individuals at work or in public.

The second objective of the study aimed at comparing the adolescents' attitude towards people with HIV/AIDS when they were grouped according to gender and type of school.

Table 2. Adolescents' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS when grouped according to gender

INDICATORS	BOYS			GIRLS		
	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION
a) Children with the AIDS virus should be allowed to attend school with other children	3.36	SA	VGA	3.37	SA	VPA
b) I would be friends with someone who has AIDS	2.56	A	GA	2.62	A	GA
c) People with AIDS virus should be allowed to work as teachers	1.63	SD	VPA	1.65	SD	VPA
d) I would eat in a public eating place even if one of the people working there had the AIDS virus	1.19	SD	VPA	1.22	SD	VPA
e) Anyone who catches AIDS only has himself or herself to blame	2.46	D	FA	2.48	D	FA
f) I feel sorry for people who have AIDS	2.67	A	GA	2.69	A	GA
g) I would visit a friend if I knew that he or she has the AIDS virus	2.60	A	GA	2.63	A	GA
h) Other students should be told if a student with the AIDS virus is attending their school	3.20	A	GA	3.21	A	GA
i) I would be willing to help look after a relative who has AIDS	2.63	A	GA	2.67	A	GA
j) People entering the country should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.40	SA	VPA	3.43	SA	VGA
k) I would not go to a dentist who treats people with the AIDS virus	2.80	A	GA	2.82	A	GA
l) People leaving their country should be tested for the AIDS virus before they leave	3.27	SA	VPA	3.30	SA	VGA
m) People who want to marry should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.19	A	GA	3.21	A	GA
OVERALL	2.69	A	GA	2.71	A	GA

Legend:

Strongly Agree- SA	Agree- A	Disagree- D	Strongly Disagree- SD
Very Good Attitude- VGA	Good Attitude- GA	Fair Attitude- FA	Very Poor Attitude- VPA

Table 2 presents the adolescents' attitude toward people with HIV/AIDS when they were grouped according to gender. A very good attitude was similarly manifested on the response that children with the AIDS virus should be allowed to attend school with other children as discerned by the weighted mean of 3.36 for boys and 3.37 for girls. Regardless of the adolescents' gender, they possessed a positive attitude that children have the right to equal opportunity to go to school even if they are infected with the AIDS virus.

The data revealed that the adolescents' positive attitude toward people with HIV/AIDS is free of gender bias. This implied that both male and female adolescents disclosed a similar attitude that the youth shall be given an equal opportunity for educational pursuit regardless of HIV/AIDS. The finding confirms Zulueta's principle (2010) that there is gender equity in people's perceptions of anything as long as they express similar ideas and opinions.

On the other hand, both groups similarly expressed a strong agreement that people entering another country and leaving their country should be tested for the AIDS virus.

Meanwhile, both boys and girls respondents similarly showed a very poor attitude that people with AIDS virus should be allowed to work as teachers. In similar vein, both groups also expressed a very poor attitude that eating in a public eatery is unsanitary even if only one of the workers had the AIDS virus. In these aspects, the findings validated Zulueta's principle (2010) that gender equity is also reflected in the adolescents' negative perceptions toward people with HIV/AIDS.

Table 3. Adolescents' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS when grouped according to type of school

INDICATORS	PUBLIC SCHOOLS			PRIVATE SCHOOLS		
	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION
a) Children with the AIDS virus should be allowed to attend school with other children	3.38	SA	VGA	3.35	SA	VGA
b) I would be friends with someone who has AIDS	2.63	A	GA	2.57	A	GA
c) People with AIDS virus should be allowed to work as teachers	1.61	SD	VPA	1.66	SD	VPA
d) I would eat in a public eating place even if one of the people working there had the AIDS virus	1.23	SD	VPA	1.18	SD	VPA
e) Anyone who catches AIDS only has himself or herself to blame	2.45	D	FA	2.50	D	FA
f) I feel sorry for people who have AIDS	2.65	A	GA	2.71	A	GA
g) I would visit a friend if I knew that he or she has the AIDS virus	2.59	A	GA	2.65	A	GA
h) Other students should be told if a student with the AIDS virus is attending their school	3.18	A	GA	3.23	A	GA
i) I would be willing to help look after a relative who has AIDS	2.62	A	GA	2.68	A	GA
j) People entering the country should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.39	SA	VGA	3.43	SA	VGA

k) I would not go to a dentist who treats people with the AIDS virus	2.78	A	GA	2.83	A	GA
l) People leaving their country should be tested for the AIDS virus before they leave	3.26	SA	VGA	3.31	SA	VGA
m) People who want to marry should be tested for the AIDS virus	3.17	A	GA	3.23	A	GA
OVERALL	2.69	A	GA	2.72	A	GA

Legend:

Strongly Agree- SA Agree- A Disagree- D Strongly Disagree- SD
 Very Good Attitude- VGA Good Attitude- GA Fair Attitude- FA Very Poor Attitude- VPA

Table 3 reveals the adolescents’ attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS when they were grouped according to type of school. As seen in the data, adolescents from both public and private schools manifested very good attitude on such aspects as: children with the aids virus should be allowed to attend school with other children and people entering another country and leaving their own country should be tested with the AIDS virus.

On the other hand, both groups similarly expressed a very poor attitude that people with AIDS virus are not worthy to become teachers. In addition, they manifested a discriminatory attitude that they would not eat in a public eating place if one of the people working there had the AIDS virus.

The implication reflected in this finding is that students from either private schools or public schools could have imbued with appropriate knowledge about HIV/AIDS. This in turn, reflected on their attitudes towards people infected with it.

CONCLUSION

The adolescents’ positive attitude is saliently manifested in their tolerance that students with AIDS virus should not be curtailed of their right to pursue a formal education. In addition, their positive attitudes extend to their precautionary measures in accepting the fact that international travellers should be tested with the AIDS virus. Meanwhile, the most expounded poor attitude is expressed on their strong disagreement that people with the AIDS virus should not enter the teaching profession. These specific positive and negative attitudes persist even when the adolescents are grouped according to gender and type of school.

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