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Assessment of Awareness towards Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) of Senior High School Students of Aliaga National High School, S.Y.2018-2019

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to evaluate the level of awareness on Sexually Transmitted Infections as perceived by Senior High School Students of Aliaga National High School, Aliaga Nueva Ecija, and academic year 2018-2019. Using a questionnaire designed to measure the student's knowledge and attitude towards STIs. This study revealed that the respondents' level of awareness towards STIs was moderately aware, an indication that the students were knowledgeable concerning the nature, transmission, and prevention of STIs. Surprisingly, when it comes to the students' level of awareness about HIV/AIDS the result of the study yielded a much higher level of awareness. But still, the students needed a more detailed understanding of the disease to prevent stigmatization and discrimination of an infected person. This study provides a benchmark for further elaborate studies in the area of sex education towards developing appropriate health education and awareness programs.

Keywords: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), HIV, AIDS, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD)

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexually Transmitted Infections remain a public health problem worldwide. The importance of HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, and Gonorrhoea awareness is a must for us to act upon if we want a better world. December 1 is marked as the World AIDS Day for it was created to bring awareness about the pandemic AIDS caused by

the HIV infection because thousands of people across the world are suffering from this epidemic disease [1]. At the same time, according to ASHA (American Sexual Health Association), each month of April is being recognized as STD Awareness Month in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [2]. The only thing we can do is to prevent the

widespread of AIDS and other related STIs for a better future.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 87 million new gonococcal infections (gonorrhoea) occurred among 15–49-year-olds in 2016. Gonorrhoea rates are rising in many countries [3]. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, racial/ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, and sex workers appear to bear disproportionate burdens of gonorrhoea [4]. While in the case of syphilis the World Health Organization (WHO) 2016 estimates, more than 12 million people are infected with syphilis every year, most of who lived in developing countries [5].

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

2.1. Research design

The researchers used the descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods for this research in gathering data

from the selected respondents.

2.2. Participants

There are a total of 741 students from grade 11 and 12 in the Aliaga National High School in the academic year 2018 -2019.

2.3. Data instrument

A survey was made to each respondent using a survey questionnaire prepared by the researchers to provide answers based on the research problems and validated by the statistician. In the given questionnaires five options of response which represent the answers were designed to give the numerical interpretation. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaire to every respondent to ensure that the persons who answered each questionnaire are the target samples.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Factors that may lead to sexual activities

ITEMS	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. The more a person drinks alcoholic beverage, the stronger becomes his/her intention to engage in either safe or unsafe sex.	4.1	Aware	1
2. Texting with sexual motives can increase the risk of a person engaging in sexual activities	3.6	Aware	6
3. Peer pressure is a factor for an individual to get engaged in sexual activities	3.7	Aware	3
4. Curiosity among teens is a reason why they may try sex and other sex-related activities	3.7	Aware	4
5. Social Media such as the internet and other related means of communication can increase a person's interest in sexual pleasure	3.9	Aware	2
6. Lack of education on the possible consequences of engaging in sexual activity at an early age	3.6	Aware	7
7. Growing up with a broken family	3.7	Aware	5
8. Lack of guidance and supervision particularly by the parents/guardian	3.6	Aware	8
9. Overbearing, overprotective supervision by the parents/guardian	3.5	Aware	9
10. The physical environment and the community setting where a person grows can be a factor that will influence his/her towards sexual activity	3.2	Moderately Aware	10
Total	3.7	Aware	

Table 2. AIDS nature and symptoms

ITEMS	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. AIDS is a disease of the human immune system caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)	4.2	Aware	1
2. People who are infected with HIV may have no symptoms for 10 years or longer, but they can still transmit the infection to any others during this symptom-free period	3.0	Moderately aware	9
3. If the infection is not detected and properly treated, the immune system gradually weakens and AIDS develops.	3.4	Moderately aware	6
4. The symptoms of AIDS are mainly the result of infections that do not normally develop in people with a healthy immune system.	3.5	Aware	5
5. AIDS means Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome which primarily destroys the human immune system	4.0	Aware	2
6. The common AIDS symptom is diarrhoea that lasts for more than one week	3.2	Moderately aware	7
7. Dry cough and shortness of breath for a longer period of days	3.8	Aware	3
8. Profound, and frequent unexplained fatigue or tiredness of the body	3.1	Moderately aware	8
9. Rapid weight loss without any other reasons	3.6	Aware	4
10. Constant frequent fever and night sweat even without any other illness.	2.8	Moderately aware	10
Total	3.5	Aware	

In the profile of the respondents out of 260 respondents in terms of gender, the researchers were able to obtain 122 Male respondents with an equivalent of 46.9% and 138 Female respondent's with an equivalent of 53.1% making a total percentage of 100%.

The table 1 showed the respondents are aware of the following factors that may lead to sexual activities with a total weighted mean of 3.7 with a corresponding verbal interpretation of Aware.

In terms of the respondent's highest level of awareness, it can be seen on statement number 1 with a mean of 4.1 or aware. The respondents are well informed that drinking alcoholic beverages is a strong factor that can increase an individual's possibility to engage in any sexual activities.

Table 2, the general weighted mean of the respondents on AIDS nature and symptoms is 3.5 which was verbally

interpreted as Aware. This proves that the respondents do have significant information and knowledge on what the nature of AIDS is all about and its symptoms.

The first statement was about the awareness of the respondents was the highest with a mean of 4.2. It indicates, that majority of the respondents knew that AIDS is diseased in the human immune system caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV. However, statement number 10 showed the least awareness of the respondents with a mean of 2.8 though still with a verbal interpretation "Aware".

The table 3 showed that the respondents were aware of the mode of transmission of AIDS with a general weighted mean of 3.6 verbally interpreted as Aware. This means that the respondents do have significant information on the following ways in which AIDS can be acquired or transmitted.

Table 3. AIDS mode of transmission

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Having sexual intercourse with multiple partners	4.1	Aware	1
2. Having unsafe sexual practices by not using any protection during sex such as a condom for males and progesterone for females.	3.7	Aware	3
3. Getting blood transfusion without precaution	3.4	Moderately aware	8
4. Needle sharing during injection of an illegal substance (drugs)	3.6	Aware	4
5. Having sex with persons of high-risk infection and transmission like sex workers (prostitutes)	3.9	Aware	2
6. Sharing of needles such as those used on tattoo making and even body piercing	3.6	Aware	5
7. Exposure to infected body fluids or tissues like blood	3.6	Aware	6
8. From mother to child during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding	3.6	Aware	7
9. AIDS can't be transmitted through physical contacts such as hugging or kissing	3.4	Moderately aware	9
10. Body fluids such as saliva, tears, sweat, urine, and vomit don't transmit AIDS	3.1	Moderately aware	10
Total	3.6	Aware	

The data also showed that the highest awareness of the respondents is on statement number 1 with a weighted mean of 4.1 (Aware) which means that the respondents do have sufficient knowledge and awareness of all the following AIDS modes of transmission, having sexual intercourse with multiple partners post the highest risk in acquiring the said disease.

On the other hand, the least awareness of the respondents is on statement number 10 with a mean of 3.1 or moderately aware only. This means that some of the respondents were not that highly aware that body fluids such as saliva, tears, sweat, urine, and vomit don't transmit AIDS. Therefore, it is not transmitted through saliva, tears, or sweat, neither, by mosquitoes, or by ticks, and other insects. Even by hugging, shaking hands, sharing toilets, sharing dishes, or closed-mouth or "social" kissing with someone who has HIV.

The table 4 showed that the respondents were moderately aware of how AIDS can be prevented with a

total weighted mean of 3.3. This means that the level of awareness and knowledge of the respondents on how aids can be prevented is not sufficient enough, which only means that the respondents were still needing reinforcements on acquiring information that will increase their knowledge on how to prevent AIDS. Synovitz, *et al.* (2002) noted that community education on the subject of sex should enrich the foundational teaching set forth by parents, but recent studies have noted the appearance of an inverse relationship between sex education in high school and knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases among college students.

The data also showed that the highest awareness of the respondents on how to prevent AIDS is on statement number 1 with a weighted mean of 3.7 or Aware. This means that the respondents do have substantial sufficient knowledge and awareness that to maintain only one sexual partner on their entire life or practice homogenous relationship post the highest probable prevention in acquiring AIDS.

Table 4. AIDS prevention

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. By being faithful and having only one sexual partner in the entire life	3.7	Aware	1
2. Use of Condom during sexual intercourse	3.6	Aware	2
3. Strict Screening on blood donors	3.2	Moderately aware	4
4. Regular checkup and screening of pregnant mothers	3.1	Moderately aware	6
5. Screening of blood before transfusion	3.5	Aware	3
6. Abstinence from sex or not engaging in any sexual activity until marriage	3.1	Moderately aware	7
7. Use of clean needles and syringes	3.0	Moderately aware	9
8. Avoiding sex on risky persons	3.2	Moderately aware	10
9. Proper disposal of needles and syringes after use	3.2	Moderately aware	5
10. Avoid using needles and syringes already used	3.1	Moderately aware	8
Total	3.3	Moderately aware	

Table 5. Gonorrhoea nature and symptoms

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a bacterial infection that tends to attack the mucous membranes of the body	3.7	Aware	1
2. Gonorrhoea is a bacterial disease	3.2	Moderately aware	3
3. Gonorrhoea can also be transmitted/spread from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth	2.9	Moderately aware	9
4. The symptoms of gonorrhoea from a male may be different from women	3.1	Moderately aware	6
5. An infected woman may have gonorrhoea but may not show any symptoms at all	3.4	Moderately aware	2
6. Gonorrhoea resides in the warm and moist body cavities of both men and women and is highly contagious.	3.2	Moderately aware	4
7. Most common cause of female infertility due to gonorrhoea may also cause sterility in men	3.2	Moderately aware	5
8. Gonorrhoea can cause blindness on a baby upon the delivery of an infected mother or other eye-related infections	3.0	Moderately aware	7
9. An infected person with gonorrhoea experiences yellow, white, or green discharge from the vagina or penis	3.0	Moderately aware	8
10. Common symptoms of gonorrhoea are pain and frequent urination on both men and women	2.9	Moderately aware	10
Total	3.2	Moderately aware	

The least awareness of the respondents is on statement number 7 with a weighted mean of 3.0 or moderately aware. This means that the respondents were not that highly aware of the role of keeping and assuring that the needles and syringes are sanitized to avoid the possible

spreading of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV.

The table 5 showed that the total weighted mean of 3.2 or interpreted as moderately aware. This proves that the respondents were moderately aware of the nature

Table 6. Gonorrhoea mode of transmission

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Gonorrhoea is transmitted primary during sexual intercourse	4.1	Aware	1
2. Gonorrhoea can also be transmitted through anal sex	3.4	Moderately aware	4
3. Gonorrhoea can be transmitted through oral sex	3.2	Moderately aware	7
4. A mother infected by gonorrhoea can transmit this disease to her baby during pregnancy	3.4	Moderately aware	5
5. Having sex with more than one partner increases the risk of getting or acquiring gonorrhoea	4.0	Aware	2
6. Not using protection during sex such as condoms can be very vulnerable to transmission of gonorrhoea	3.5	Aware	3
7. Getting contact with the discharge from the penis or vagina can be a source of transmission	3.3	Moderately aware	6
8. Transmission of gonorrhoea by having contact with the vaginal or seminal fluid of an infected person	3.1	Moderately aware	8
9. Gonorrhoea can be transmitted through sharing of food and utensils	3.0	Moderately aware	9
10. Gonorrhoea can't be transmitted through casual physical contact such as hugging or holding hands	2.8	Moderately aware	10
Total	3.4	Moderately aware	

Table 7. Gonorrhoea prevention

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Having and keeping only one sexual partner in your entire life.	2.9	Moderately aware	5
2. Not having sexual intercourse on risky persons such as sex workers (prostitutes)	3.3	Moderately aware	1
3. Engaging in sex with only one person. The husband and wife only by being monogamous.	2.9	Moderately aware	6
4. Applying the use of protection during sexual intercourse such as a condom	2.8	Moderately aware	8
5. Avoiding sexual intercourse with more than one partner	2.9	Moderately aware	7
6. Having and submitting to a regular check-up and screening of pregnant mother	2.6	Moderately aware	9
7. Living and maintaining good physical hygiene	3.1	Moderately aware	2
8. Having regular screening and periodic check-ups of a sexually active partner	3.1	Moderately aware	3
9. Any signs or indications of symptoms for a sexually active person such as frequent and painful urinating should immediately seek or undergo medical attention to any health care provider to be tested on this sexually transmitted disease	3.0	Moderately aware	4
10. It should be an SOP for an infected person to avoid any sexual activity until the disease is completely cured	2.5	Moderately aware	10
Total	2.9	Moderately aware	

and symptoms of the disease Gonorrhoea. In comparison with the respondents' knowledge and awareness about AIDS, their awareness of the nature and symptoms of this sexually transmitted disease Gonorrhoea declined.

At the same time, the highest level of awareness of the respondents is on statement number 1 with a weighted mean of 3.7 or aware. It is an indication that the respondents knew very well that Gonorrhoea is

Table 8. Syphilis nature and symptoms

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Identify the early signs and symptoms of syphilis as it may vary depending on which of the four stages it presents (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary).	3.3	Moderately aware	1
2. Painless sores and swollen lymph nodes are the general symptoms of primary syphilis.	2.9	Moderately aware	5
3. Primary syphilis is the first stage of the disease. Presence of painless sores for about 2-3 weeks after you get infected.	3.1	Moderately aware	3
4. Those inflicted by secondary syphilis may also have a fever, fatigue, aches and pains, and loss of appetite, among other symptoms.	3.0	Moderately aware	4
5. If an infected person with syphilis has not received treatment during the first two stages of the disease then there is a danger that it will progress to the latent stage	2.6	Moderately aware	9
6. During the latent stage of the disease syphilis the only way to diagnose it is thru an accurate blood test.	2.8	Moderately aware	7
7. Syphilis if not adequately or properly treated may result in long-term complications and/or even death.	2.9	Moderately aware	6
8. Syphilis is a bacterial disease	2.8	Moderately aware	8
9. Pregnant mothers infected with syphilis disease can pass it to the baby developing in their womb. This is called congenital syphilis.	3.2	Moderately aware	2
10. Medicine such as antibiotics are used to treat and cure syphilis.	2.5	Moderately aware	10
Total	2.9	Moderately aware	

transmitted primarily through sexual intercourse and caused by a bacterial infection.

The least awareness of the respondents is on statements number 3 and 10 with a mean of 2.9 or moderately aware. Again, in this area of awareness of the respondents, they were not highly aware that Gonorrhoea can be spread to a baby upon birth by the infected mother and that painful and frequent urination was one of its symptoms.

The table 6 results showed that the total weighted mean of 3.4 with a verbal interpretation of moderately aware proves that the respondents are moderately aware of the following means of transmission of the disease Gonorrhoea. This data justifies that the level of awareness of the majority of the respondents signifies that they were informed on ways in which this Sexually Transmitted Infection (Gonorrhoea) can be transmitted.

This data also shows that the highest awareness of the respondents is on statement number 1 with a weighted mean of 4.1 or Aware. The reflection of this data supports the idea that the respondents know very well that among the other ways on how this sexually transmitted infection can be transmitted, it is by having sexual intercourse with an infected person is the primary mode of transmission of this STI.

In table 7 level of awareness of the respondents about Gonorrhoea prevention, the data shows that the general weighted mean of the respondents' level of awareness is 2.9 with an equivalent verbal interpretation of moderate awareness.

The least level of awareness of the respondents is on statement number 10 with a mean of 2.5 (moderately aware). A simple analysis of this data is that most of the respondents were not that highly aware that a person infected by gonorrhoea should not have any sexual

contact or avoid any sexual activity until it is completely cured.

In table 8, the results showed that the total general weighted level of awareness of the respondents on the nature and symptoms of syphilis was 2.9 as verbally interpreted (moderately aware). It was an indication that the respondents weren't that highly aware of the symptoms and nature of these sexually transmitted infections syphilis.

As noted the respondents' highest level of awareness is on statement number 1 with a mean of 3.3 or moderately aware, this means that the respondents were highly aware that the symptoms of syphilis may vary depending on its stage of development. This may be the result of sex education being a part of the school curriculum in our country. School-going students should be well informed on the health risks associated with any sexual activity.

4. CONCLUSION

In general, the studies reported that the senior high school students of Aliaga National High School SY 2018-2019 indicate moderate levels of awareness and knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases. This level of awareness and knowledge of the respondents are neither low nor high. However, the reported knowledge and awareness of the respondents about HIV or Aids was quite high, its nature and symptoms, mode of transmission, and prevention probably, because this is the most prevalent example of Sexually Transmitted Infection. About the other two STI's the respondents' level of awareness was not as high as their level of awareness on AIDS. The data reveals, that the respondents were moderately aware of the nature and symptoms, mode of prevention, and transmission of Gonorrhoea and Syphilis. The overall knowledge about the respondents' awareness of the following factors that

may lead to sexual activities indicates that they are well informed and knowledgeable about it. The respondents know well the different factors which can influence an individual's desire and risk of engaging in sexual activity.

According to Visalli, G. et al, with similar studies that the findings of our study are in general consistent with the findings on condom use. The importance of using a condom during sexual intercourse to prevent the risk of acquiring STIs. Although, as shown by the data and of the findings in other areas and items in this study, the researchers do uphold that knowledge and proper education can be a reliable key towards behavior change, adolescents' sex education is important for STIs prevention, and the school setting plays an important role.

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6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

7. SOURCE/S OF FUNDING

NA

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