



## AWARENESS OF STD AND HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR: A COMMUNITY BASED STUDY IN THE URBAN SLUMS OF JORHAT DISTRICT, ASSAM

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### ABSTRACT

Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are transmitted from one person to another through sexual contact, caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites. STDs are becoming a major public health problem in India. The objective of this paper is to determine the prevalence of awareness of STD among the youth age group of 15-24 years old residing in the urban slum of Jorhat town. The study shows that in the age group 15-19 years, 62% individuals were not aware about STDs while about 52% were not aware in the age group 20-24 years. The present study reveals that only about 61% individuals opined that STDs are transmissible and only 42% say that STD is preventable. It is concluded from the study that majority of the individuals in the study group are unaware about STD's.

**KEYWORDS :** STD, Awareness, Jorhat district

### INTRODUCTION:

Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are a group of communicable disease that are predominantly transmitted by sexual contact and caused by a wide range of bacterial, viral, protozoa, fungal agents and ectoparasites [1]. STDs has become an important health issue in the present health scenario due to its rising incidence, related morbidities and mortalities. The estimated prevalence of STD is from 13.5 - 14% in the population. In world, more than 1 million people acquire a sexually transmitted disease every day. Each year, an estimated 500 million people acquire one of the four STDs, i.e. Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis and Trichomoniasis. More than 290 million women have a Human Papilloma Virus Infection, which is one of the most common STD [1].

In India, STDs are becoming a major public health problem. During 2013, about 33,570 cases of syphilis were reported in the country. Also 97,180 gonorrhoea cases were reported. Now a day's chancroid or soft sore, LGV, donovanosis are common in India [1]. Over 20 pathogens have been found to be spread by sexual contact. The highest rates of incidence are observed in 20-24 years old, followed by 25-29 and 15-19 years age groups [1]. Thus, youth period is a highly vulnerable period as it involves high risk behaviour. A number of factors like age, sex, marital status, religion, cultural contacts along with curiosity, peer pressure, school drop etc. influence the incidence of STDs. Poor socioeconomic status and lack of knowledge and awareness further aggravate STDs. All these factors make the youth the third most vulnerable group for STDs [2]. Creating awareness about STDs among the youth is the best way to put a check on the situation.

According S. Garg et al. [3], 70% of the study participants were unable to mention even one symptom of STI, 39.2% were aware that condom afford protection against STI and 73.4% know that staying in a monogamy relationship could prevent STI. Thus the overall awareness level about STI and their prevention was rather low. J. Kishore et al. [4] remarked, 42% of the adolescent hadn't heard of HIV or AIDS and 62% hadn't heard of STD. Knowledge about the mode of transmission and prevention of this infection was poor among them. Television (49.1%) was a major source of information followed by posters (23%) and radio (14.3%) for the adolescent about HIV or AIDS and STD. Male adolescent had significantly high risk behaviour as compared to the female adolescent. Tushar Rai et al. [5] revealed that only 51.2% of adolescent of urban slums

in Dehradun were aware of STD.

A community based cross sectional study of HIV was performed by Sudha B Yadav et al. [6]. She suggested that out of 1237 subjects, 60% know something about HIV. Out of them 90% know about the mode of transmission and about more than 80% were aware of mode of prevention. According to 'Awareness about HIV or AIDS among adolescent boys in tribal villages of Nilgiri district, South India', among 300 respondent 63% were aware of STD, 93% had knowledge of HIV or AIDS and only one respondent was revealed to be involved in homosexual activity [7]. Ruchi Agarwal et al. [8] performed a study based on awareness of women about STDs, HIV /AIDS, and condom use in India. According to this study, 15-45% of the married women from 4 states of India are not aware of any STD and HIV/AIDS. The present study was aimed to determine the prevalence of awareness of STD among the youth age group of 15-24 years old residing in the urban slum of Jorhat town, their health seeking behaviour and also socio-demographic factors affecting the awareness among the age group.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A community based study was conducted to assess the awareness of STD in the age group of 15 to 24 years (youth) in the urban slums of Jorhat town during the year 2016. Jorhat Municipal Board has identified 7 slum pockets (Source: Municipal Record, 2011) [9] of which 1 was chosen randomly, which was "Harijan Colony, Raja-maidam road, Jorhat." It is situated in the western part of the district, north of A.T. Road.

The sample size for the study was calculated by using the formula:  $n = z^2 pq/d^2$ . Where, n= sample size, p= anticipated prevalence, d= absolute error, q= 1-p, z= 1.96, for a 95% confidence interval as per the data obtained from "Samantha et al (2011)" [25] there are 14% prevalence of STD among youths of Assam. So considering 14% of prevalence of STD with 5% of absolute error, the sample size was calculated to be 185. So, 185 study subjects between 15-24 years both male and female were interviewed. They were selected randomly from 104 houses of the selected area after obtaining their consent.

The variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, socioeconomic status, knowledge about STD clinics, knowledge about treatment, willingness to visit a facility in

case symptoms arise were considered as a study variables. A pre-designed and pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire with close ended questions was used to collect our necessary information. The candidates of the study participated voluntarily and proper privacy was maintained during the interview. To analyse the data simple statistical tools like table, diagram, percentage etc. were used.

**RESULTS:**

Out of 185 study subjects, 77 (42%) belong to age group of 15-19 years and 108 (58%) belong to age group of 20-24 years. Among them, 98 (53%) are male and 87 (47%) are female. Only, 1% belongs to upper socioeconomic class and 37% belong to upper lower socioeconomic class. Majority (32%) falls under middle school certificate and only 1% fall under profession/honours (table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Baseline Characteristics Of The Study Population**

a. Age groups		
AGE GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
15-19 (late adolescent)	77	42%
20-24 (young adults)	108	58%
b. Gender		
GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
MALE	98	53%
FEMALE	87	47%
c. Socio economic status		
SOCIO ECONOMIC CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Upper	1	1%
Upper middle	13	7%
Lower middle	42	23%
Upper lower	69	37%
Lower	60	32%
d. Educational Status		
EDUCATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Illiterate	30	16%
Primary school certificate	30	16%
Middle school certificate	59	32%
High school certificate	36	19%
Post high school diploma/intermediate	19	10%
Graduate/post graduate	10	5%
Professional/ honours	1	1%

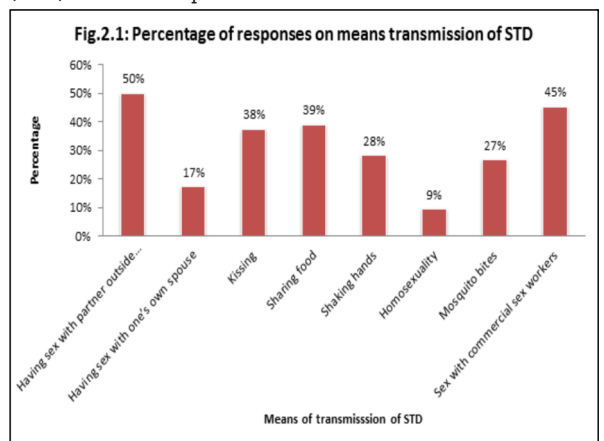
Out of 77 subjects in age group of 15-19 years, 26 (34%) are aware of STD, 48 (62%) are not aware and 3 (4%) did not respond. Out of 108 subjects in age group of 20-24 years, 38 (35%) are aware of STD, 56 (52%) are not aware and 14 (13%) did not respond. Out of total subjects 35% and 56% of 15-24 years are aware and not aware of STD respectively. Out of 98 male and 87 female subjects, majority i.e. 48 (49%) and 56 (64%) are not aware of STD. Amongst the illiterates, primary school certificates, middle school certificates majority (67%, 80%, and 61% respectively) are not aware of STD. Alternatively, amongst the post high school, diploma holders, graduates, post graduates and profession/honours majority (68%, 60%, and 100% respectively) are aware of STD. Amongst 57 unemployed, only 19(33%) are aware of STD. Similarly amongst 68 employed, 24(35%) are aware of STD. In case of self-employed, 16(43%) are aware of STD. Amongst the Lower socioeconomic class, majority i.e. 63% are not aware of STD. But different result is observed in case of upper socioeconomic class, where 100% are aware of STD (table 2.2).

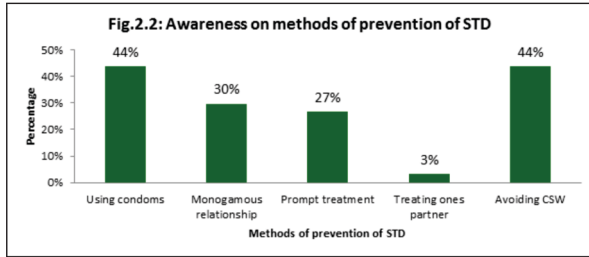
**Table 2.2: Distribution Of Study Subjects According To Awareness**

a. Age groups				
AGE GROUP	AWARE	NOT AWARE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
15-19 (late adolescent)	26	48	3	77

20-24 (young adults)	38	56	14	108
b. Gender				
GENDER	AWARE	NOT AWARE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
MALE	43	48	7	98
FEMALE	21	56	10	87
c. Socio economic status				
SOCIO ECONOMIC CLASS	AWARE	NOT AWARE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
Upper	1	0	0	1
Upper middle	6	7	0	13
Lower middle	17	23	2	42
Upper lower	30	36	3	69
Lower	10	38	12	60
d. Educational Status				
EDUCATION	AWARE	NOT AWARE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
Illiterate	6	20	4	30
Primary school certificate	5	24	1	30
Middle school certificate	15	36	8	59
High school certificate	18	17	1	36
Post high school diploma/intermediate	13	5	1	19
Graduate/post graduate	6	2	2	10
Professional/ honours	1	0	0	1
e. Occupation Status				
OCCUPATION	AWARE	NOT AWARE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
Unemployed	19	33	5	57
Employed	24	41	3	68
Self employed	16	19	2	37
Student	5	11	7	23

Among the study subjects who are aware about STD; 5%, 7% and 16% could mention one symptom, two symptoms and more than two symptoms of STD respectively. Interestingly, 72% did not know about the symptoms. Also, 19% think STD is cannot be transmitted and 20% are not sure if STD can be transmitted. But, majority i.e. 61% thinks STD can be transmitted. Out of the total aware subjects, only 42% say that STD is preventable. But, 73% think STD to be treatable. Television has been their major source of information on STD (69%) and 5% from parents and relatives.





The diagram (Fig 2.1) percentage of responses on means transmission of STD shows, 50% think having sex with partner outside as means of transmission of STD. But, only 9% think homosexuality as means of transmission of STD. Fig. 2.2 shows, 44% of the respondents think that STD can be prevented by using condoms. Another 44% say that it can be prevented by avoiding commercial sex workers. 30% say monogamous relationship aids in preventing STD. 27% think prompt treatment can prevent STD. However 3% believes that by treating ones partner STD can be prevented.

### DISCUSSION:

The results of the study were compared in this section in the light of available data, information and observation made by other workers elsewhere.

As what the study has brought to light, most of the youth in urban slums is not aware about STD's, mostly due to lack of at least high school education. The females had a lower awareness level than the males while people belonging to the Lower Socio-Economic suffered a greater lack of awareness.

The study shows that in the age group 15-19 years, 62% individuals were not aware about STDs while about 52% were not aware in the age group 20-24 years. This was almost at par with what was revealed by J Kishore et al. [4], where 62% hadn't heard of STD. The awareness level, 34% among age group 15-19 years and 35% among 20-24 years, was however revealed to be lower than what is found by Tushar Rai et al. [5], where 51.2% of adolescent were aware of STD.

The study showed that 24% of the female individuals under study were aware of STDs, this was more than the awareness level among women revealed in the study 'Awareness of women about STDs, HIV /AIDS, and condom use in India' by Ruchi Agarwal et al. [8], where awareness among women about STD excluding HIV was as low as 3.2%.

According to S Garg et al. [3], 70% of the study participants were unable to mention even one symptom of STI, 39.2% were aware that condom afford protection against STI and 73.4% know that staying in a monogamy relationship could prevent STI. Thus the overall awareness level about STI and their prevention was rather low. This was revealed in the present study too, where 72% individuals could not name at least one symptom of STDs and 44% were aware that condoms afford protection. However, only 30% saw the importance of monogamous relationship in preventing STDs, being surer about the role of avoiding CSW's in preventing STDs.

The present study brought to light that the major source of information about STDs as thought by the individuals under study was television (69%). This was a reproduction of what was found by J Kishore et al. [4], that television (49.1%) was a major source of information for the adolescent about HIV or AIDS and STD.

According to Sudha B Yadav et al. [6], out of 1237 subjects who participated in survey, 90% know about the mode of transmission and about more than 80% were aware of mode of prevention. In the present study on youth at urban slums, however only about 61% individuals opined that STDs are

transmissible and only 42% say that STD is preventable.

### CONCLUSION:

It is concluded from the study that majority of the individuals in the study group are unaware about STD's. Awareness was more among those who have completed high school education, employed and belongs to upper middle class. Thus education, employment and Socio economic factors play a role in determining awareness.

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