



## EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS: STRENGTHENING HIV/AIDS PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim and Objectives:** **Aim:** To evaluate undergraduate students in 180 members awareness, knowledge, and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, along with their attitudes toward its prevention, transmission, and treatment. This study seeks to identify knowledge gaps and provide insights for designing effective educational programs to enhance awareness and promote preventive measures.

#### Objectives

1. To assess the level of awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS among undergraduate students.
2. To identify common misconceptions related to HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention, and treatment.
3. To evaluate students' attitudes and perceptions toward HIV/AIDS and people living with the condition.
4. To analyze the sources of information that influence students' knowledge of HIV/AIDS.
5. To determine the relationship between demographic factors (such as age, gender, and academic background) and HIV/AIDS awareness.
6. To identify gaps in knowledge and areas that requires targeted educational interventions.
7. To provide recommendations for improving HIV/AIDS awareness programs among undergraduate students.

### KEYWORDS :

#### INTRODUCTION

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) remain significant global public health challenges. Despite extensive awareness campaigns, misconceptions, stigma, and a lack of accurate knowledge persist, particularly among young adults. Undergraduate students, being in a crucial phase of personal and social development, are at increased risk due to potential exposure to misinformation and risky behaviours. Understanding their level of awareness is essential for designing effective preventive and educational interventions.

The level of HIV/AIDS knowledge among undergraduates varies based on factors such as access to reliable information, cultural influences, and prior education. While many students may have heard about HIV/AIDS, misconceptions regarding its transmission, prevention, and treatment still exist. Stigma and discrimination toward individuals living with HIV/AIDS further hinder efforts to control its spread. Limited awareness and incorrect beliefs can lead to unsafe behaviours, increasing the risk of transmission.

This study aims to assess the awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of HIV/AIDS among undergraduate students. By identifying knowledge gaps and misconceptions, the findings will provide valuable insights for developing targeted awareness programs, improving health education strategies, and promoting responsible behaviours among young adults. Strengthening awareness at the undergraduate level is crucial in the broader effort to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce stigma associated with the condition.

#### Review of Literature

##### Effectiveness of Educational Interventions

Educational interventions play a crucial role in increasing HIV/AIDS awareness among undergraduate students. Studies have shown that well-structured educational programs, including workshops, peer education, and digital campaigns, significantly improve knowledge levels and encourage preventive behaviours. Interactive learning approaches, such as role-playing and group discussions, have proven to be more effective than traditional lecture-based methods. Research suggests that continuous reinforcement of HIV/AIDS education through academic

curricula can lead to sustained awareness and behaviour change among students.

##### Socio-Cultural Influences

Cultural beliefs and societal norms heavily impact students' perceptions of HIV/AIDS. In some regions, cultural taboos associated with discussing sexual health prevent young adults from seeking accurate information. Gender roles and social expectations may also affect knowledge levels, with studies indicating that female students often have less access to reproductive health education than their male counterparts. Additionally, religious beliefs and family values shape attitudes toward HIV/AIDS, influencing how students perceive individuals living with the disease and their willingness to engage in preventive measures.

##### Emotional and Psychological Factors

Emotional responses to HIV/AIDS, such as fear, stigma, and discrimination, often act as barriers to awareness and prevention. Many students experience anxiety about discussing HIV-related topics due to fear of judgment or social rejection. Studies highlight that stigma associated with HIV/AIDS not only reduces individuals' willingness to seek testing and treatment but also fosters misinformation. Addressing these psychological barriers through supportive educational frameworks and open discussions can help normalize conversations about HIV/AIDS, reducing stigma and promoting acceptance.

##### Comparative Success of Awareness Programs

Various HIV/AIDS awareness programs have been implemented worldwide, with differing levels of success. Research comparing university-led initiatives, government campaigns, and NGO-driven awareness efforts reveals that multi-faceted approaches tend to be the most effective. Programs that integrate digital media, peer education, and community involvement have shown higher engagement and retention of knowledge. Comparative studies also suggest that nations with comprehensive sex education policies tend to have lower rates of HIV-related stigma and higher awareness levels among students.

##### Conclusion from Literature

The reviewed literature underscores the need for well-structured, culturally sensitive, and psychologically

supportive educational interventions to enhance HIV/AIDS awareness among undergraduate students. While knowledge levels vary due to socio-cultural influences and emotional factors, effective awareness programs have demonstrated success in bridging gaps and promoting preventive behaviours. The findings highlight the importance of integrating HIV/AIDS education into academic curricula and addressing stigma-related barriers to ensure a more informed and responsible student population.

## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

This retrospective study included 180 undergraduates, including students of various medical and other sectors.

### Inclusion Criteria

Of all age groups and Participants were aged under 18 year to 24 years and above

### Exclusion Criteria

Patients unwilling to give consent. Patients unable to communicate.

### Data Collection Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data was collected through online responses using a pre-designed, semi-structured questionnaire.

### Confidentiality



### Ethical Considerations

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics

### Informed Consent

All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including confidentiality.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data was entered into a Microsoft Excel 2016 spread sheet. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS software

### Study Design

This study will employ a cross-sectional descriptive study design to assess HIV/AIDS awareness among undergraduate students. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data on students' knowledge, perceptions, and misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS. The study will take a quantitative approach to obtain measurable insights into awareness levels and identify factors influencing students' understanding of the disease.

### Study Population and Sampling

The study population will consist of undergraduate students from various academic disciplines. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure adequate representation of students from different faculties, age groups, and gender categories. The sample size will be determined using appropriate statistical methods to ensure reliability and generalizability of the findings.

### Data Collection Method

A pre-validated, self-administered questionnaire will be used to collect data. The questionnaire will include sections covering:

- Demographic details (age, gender, academic year, and faculty)
- Knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention, and treatment
- Sources of HIV/AIDS information
- Common misconceptions and stigma-related attitudes
- Willingness to engage in HIV prevention measures

The questionnaire will be distributed electronically via

Google Forms

### Surveys

Structured questionnaires were distributed to all 180 participants to evaluate their knowledge of AIDS/HIV, attitudes toward the topic. The surveys included both closed-ended questions (to quantify knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours) and Likert-scale items (to assess the intensity of attitudes and beliefs). Key variables measured included:

### Age Range

Participants were aged between under 18 year to 24 years and above

### Demographics

The sample included a balanced representation of gender, ethnicity, and religious groups to explore potential cultural and demographic differences in attitudes toward AIDS/HIV.

### Data Collection

Data collection responses to capture a holistic view of participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to AIDS/HIV.

### Interviews

To gain deeper insights into undergraduate students' awareness, perceptions, and misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS, semi-structured interviews will be conducted alongside the survey. These interviews will provide qualitative data to complement the quantitative findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of students' knowledge, attitudes, and personal experiences related to HIV/AIDS.

### Limitations of the Methodology

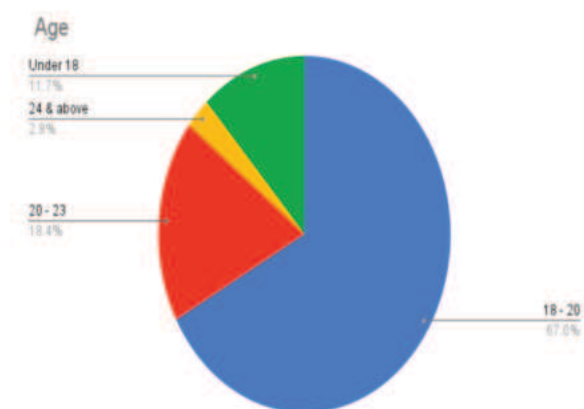
The study acknowledged several limitations that may influence the findings:

**Sample Bias:** The sample may not fully represent populations with limited access to education or those in remote areas, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research could focus on including harder-to-reach groups.

**Self-Reported Data:** Since the study relied on self-reported surveys and interviews, there may be risks of social desirability bias or recall bias, where participants may provide responses they perceive to be socially acceptable or may not accurately recall past behaviours or experiences.

**Potential Confounding Variables:** Other factors, such as media exposure, personal experiences with organ donation, or medical conditions affecting eligibility, were not directly assessed but may have influenced participants' attitudes toward organ donation.

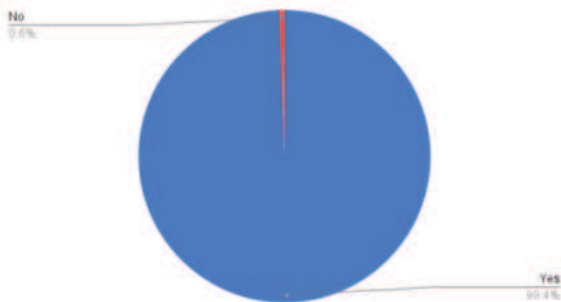
## RESULTS



Gender



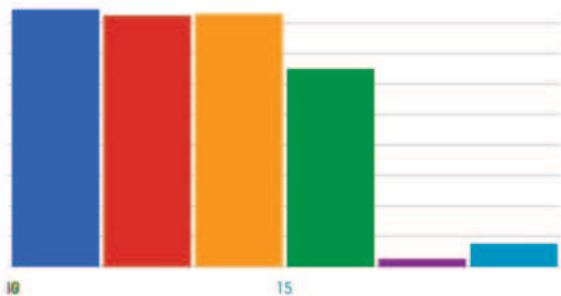
Have you heard about AIDS ?



AIDS/HIV in 180 members of students in which the studies is conducted.

6. How is HIV transmitted?

Bar



- 1 Unprotected sexual contact : 169 (26%)
- 2 Sharing needles or syringes : 165 (25.38%)
- 3 Blood transfusion with infected blood : 166 (25.54%)
- 4 Mother to mother during child birth & breastfeeding : 130 (20%)
- 5 Hugging or shaking hands : 5 (0.77%)
- Others : 15 (2.31%)

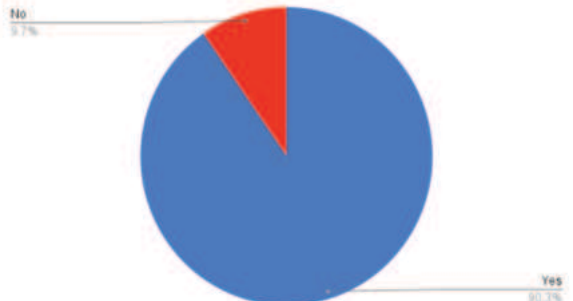
transmitted through blood transfusion with infected blood than unprotected sexual contact, most of them is unaware of this.

comfortable working or studying with someone who is HIV positive



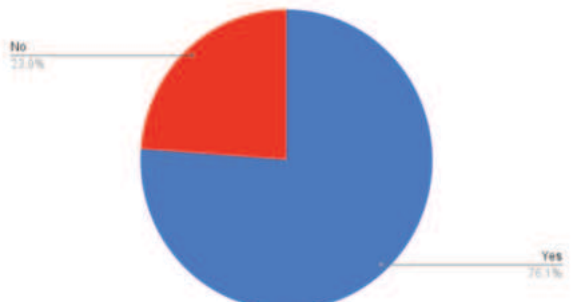
peer groups, everyone can normalize working with them. It is just a social stigma that it is spread through direct contact.

HIV/AIDS face social stigma &amp; discrimination



Most of the people have a social stigma about HIV/AIDS transmission just by direct contact. Social stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS remains a significant barrier to prevention, treatment, and support for those affected. Misinformation, fear, and cultural beliefs often lead to discrimination against individuals living with HIV, causing them to face rejection from their families, workplaces, and communities. Many people hesitate to seek testing or treatment due to the fear of being labelled, which can worsen the spread of the disease. Stigma also contributes to mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, for those diagnosed.

antiretroviral therapy (ART) knowledge



the ANTI RETROVIRAL THERAPY, which is being used to treat the patients with AIDS/HIV.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into undergraduate students' awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of HIV/AIDS. While many students are familiar with the disease and its primary modes of transmission, significant misconceptions and stigma persist. These results highlight both progress and areas that require further intervention in HIV/AIDS education.

### Knowledge and Awareness Levels

The study indicates that most students have a basic understanding of HIV/AIDS, particularly regarding its transmission through unprotected sex and shared needles. However, some misconceptions remain, such as the belief that HIV can be spread through casual contact, including hugging, sharing utensils, or mosquito bites. These findings align with previous research, which suggests that despite widespread access to information, misinformation continues to affect students' understanding. Addressing these misconceptions through structured awareness campaigns and university-led educational initiatives is crucial for improving knowledge.

### Sources of Information and Gaps in Education

Students reported learning about HIV/AIDS primarily from school-based education and social media. While formal education remains a key source, the growing reliance on social media raises concerns about the accuracy of information student's encounter. This highlights the need for universities to integrate comprehensive and evidence-based HIV/AIDS education into their curricula. Additionally, peer-led discussions, workshops, and collaborations with healthcare professionals could further enhance students' understanding and correct misinformation.

### Misconceptions and Stigma

The study also identified ongoing stigma and discrimination against individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Some students expressed discomfort interacting with HIV-positive individuals, indicating that negative perceptions persist. These attitudes can create barriers to HIV prevention and treatment efforts. Therefore, awareness programs should not only focus on knowledge but also on changing perceptions and promoting acceptance. Addressing stigma through open discussions and personal testimonies from people living with HIV could help normalize conversations and foster more compassionate attitudes.

### Attitudes Toward Prevention and Risk Perception

While students demonstrated awareness of preventive measures such as condom use and avoiding needle sharing, gaps remain in translating this knowledge into action. Some students showed uncertainty regarding the availability of treatment and the effectiveness of preventive strategies. These findings highlight the importance of reinforcing HIV/AIDS prevention messages through campus-based initiatives, interactive learning sessions, and health promotion campaigns to encourage safe practices and responsible decision-making.

### Implications for Public Health and Educational Interventions

The findings emphasize the need for stronger institutional efforts to improve HIV/AIDS awareness among students. Universities and public health organizations should implement engaging, evidence-based educational programs to ensure students receive accurate information. Integrating HIV/AIDS education into university orientation sessions, organizing awareness workshops, and using digital platforms for information dissemination could significantly enhance awareness and correct misconceptions.

### Limitations of the Study

Despite its valuable insights, this study has certain limitations. The sample was limited to undergraduate students from selected academic disciplines, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, as responses were self-reported, there is a possibility of social desirability bias, where participants provided answers they deemed socially acceptable rather than their actual beliefs. Future studies should include larger sample sizes and incorporate qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on HIV/AIDS.

### CONCLUSION

This study highlights both strengths and gaps in HIV/AIDS awareness among undergraduate students. While general awareness levels are high, persistent misconceptions and stigma emphasize the need for targeted educational interventions. Universities should take proactive measures by integrating HIV/AIDS education into academic programs, encouraging peer-led initiatives, and collaborating with healthcare professionals. Addressing these issues can improve students' understanding, reduce stigma, and ultimately contribute to more effective HIV/AIDS prevention efforts among young adults.

### Limitations

- While this study provides valuable insights into HIV/AIDS awareness among undergraduate students, several limitations should be considered:
- **Limited Generalizability:** The study focused on a specific group of undergraduate students, which may not fully represent the broader student population or young adults in different educational institutions and regions. A more diverse sample in future research would improve the generalizability of findings.
- **Self-Reported Responses:** As the study relied on self-reported data, there is a risk of social desirability bias, where participants may have provided responses they believed were socially acceptable rather than their actual knowledge or opinions. This could influence the accuracy of the results.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The research captures awareness levels at a single point in time, making it difficult to assess how knowledge and attitudes evolve over time. A longitudinal study would offer a better understanding of how awareness improves with educational interventions.
- **Recall Bias:** Participants may have had difficulty accurately recalling the sources of their HIV/AIDS knowledge, leading to recall bias. This could affect the assessment of how effective various information sources are in spreading awareness.
- **Limited Qualitative Insights:** Although the study utilized structured survey questions, it may not have fully captured students' personal experiences and deeper perceptions regarding HIV/AIDS awareness and stigma. A mixed-method approach incorporating focus groups or in-depth interviews would provide more comprehensive qualitative insights.
- **Exclusion of Broader Influencing Factors:** The study primarily examined students' knowledge and attitudes but did not extensively explore external influences such as cultural beliefs, religious perspectives, or personal interactions with individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Future studies could investigate these aspects to gain a more holistic understanding.
- **Potential Sampling Bias:** The sampling method may have inadvertently excluded certain student groups, such as those less academically engaged or those without easy access to digital survey platforms. A more inclusive sampling strategy in future research would enhance the reliability of the findings.

### REFERENCES

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This research surveys 313 undergraduate students from colleges in Nashik and Talegaon, Maharashtra, regarding their awareness about AIDS, highlighting knowledge gaps particularly among Arts students. cite turn0search2
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5. **Awareness and Knowledge about HIV/AIDS among Panjab University Students**  
This study explores the level of awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS among students at Panjab University, emphasizing the role of educational interventions in improving understanding.
6. **Knowledge, attitude, and beliefs towards HIV/AIDS among youth students in India**  
This research investigates the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding HIV/AIDS among youth students in India, providing insights into areas where educational efforts can be enhanced.
7. **Awareness of HIV/AIDS among first-year medical undergraduates in Nainital, Uttarakhand, India**

This study assesses the awareness levels of first-year medical undergraduates in Nainital, Uttarakhand, highlighting the importance of integrating comprehensive HIV/AIDS education into medical curricula.

8. **A comparative study on HIV/AIDS awareness among medical and non-medical students of Gujarat**  
This research compares the awareness levels of HIV/AIDS between medical and non-medical students in Gujarat, shedding light on the effectiveness of current educational programs.
9. **Knowledge about HIV/AIDS among Xth standard students in Mangalore, India**  
This study evaluates the knowledge about HIV/AIDS among 10th standard students in Mangalore, emphasizing the need for early educational interventions.
10. **HIV/AIDS Awareness: A scheduled caste-based study of university students**  
This research focuses on HIV/AIDS awareness among university students from scheduled castes, discussing the socio-cultural factors influencing knowledge levels.