

## Knowledge and Awareness about HIV/AIDS among Garments Workers in Gazipur District, Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to identify the socio-demographic correlation of knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS among the garments workers in Gazipur district, Bangladesh. For this a total number of 178 garments workers have been interviewed through a structured questionnaire by purposive sampling technique. The results shows that about half of them do not know how to read and write and also do not use condom during sexual intercourse. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis between having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS and some selected background characteristics is performed. The result reveals that among the selected variables 6 variables are statistically associated with having knowledge about HIV/AIDS of the garments workers. A logistic regression model is employed which reveals that respondent's age, education, marital status, place of birth, listening about HIV/AIDS and media information about HIV/AIDS highly significant effects on knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS of garment workers.

**Key words:** HIV/AIDS, garments workers, chi-square test, logistic regression model, odds ratio

### INTRODUCTION

The fatal disease Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a condition caused by a virus called Human Immunodeficiency (HIV). This virus attacks the immune system, the body security force that fights off infections. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a serious global problem. The first HIV/AIDS case in Bangladesh was reported in 1989. Since then a total cumulative of 1207 cases of HIV/AIDS have been confirmed and reported as of first December 2007. Of these 365 have developed AIDS out of whom 123 have since died (Rahman, 2007). Although, national HIV prevalence remains under 1 percent among the general population in Bangladesh, there are risk factors that could fuel the spread of HIV among high-risk groups.

Bangladesh National Garments Workers Federation (BNGWF) (1999-2004) observed that garment sectors are the main industry of Bangladesh. This sector have developed here rapidly because it is a labor-intensive industry, ordinary technology, cheap labor and small capital. Before the liberation of Bangladesh, there was only one garment factory. In 1977, the number rose to 8. In 1984, the number was 587. In 1998, the number stood at 2650 and now the number of garments in Bangladesh is 3300. The numbers of garment workers in Bangladesh are

1.6 million in 2004. Number of woman workers is 1320000. This sector employs 1.8 million workers, 90% of them are women and therefore, particularly vulnerable to intimidation and repression. Garment workers constitute 40% of the total industrial workforce of Bangladesh (Communist Internationalist, 2006). Now in Bangladesh, 2 million garment workers are working in the Ready Made Garment (RMG) units, of whom 80% are women. RMG roughly covers 76% of the total export of the country (Rashid, 2006). This minimum wage was not revised till now. Most of the garment factories do not follow the labor law and International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. Most of the cases, the workers cannot enjoy the weekly holiday. There is no job security, social security, gratuity or provident fund for the garment workers. Most of the cases the management does not provide appointment letters/ contract letters, identity cards and service books (BNGWF, 2004). Some times they work whole night. Overtime work is compulsory and forceful. There are not any housing facilities from the owners. Most of the cases maternity leaves are absence and there are no transportation facilities. Most cases, there is no doctors, first aid, sufficient light and ventilation. In some cases, there are no sufficient and pure drinking water and toilets for the workers. Health-safety and security condition are not sufficient. Management

does not ensure the security of the women workers. Women workers faced rape and sexual harassment outside the factories and some times inside the factories. There is other form of sex discrimination. Women workers are deprived from equal wage, dignity, rights and promotions. In garment sectors, 90% are young girls and women from 12 years upwards; physical and sexual abuse in the workplace is common (NLC, 2006).

Thus, the purpose of the present study is to identify the factors affecting knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS of the garment workers in Gazipur district, Bangladesh.

**Sources of data:** For the present study, data were collected from 178 women who were working in a garment factory of Gazipur district, Bangladesh. The respondents were successfully interviewed using a pre-designed questionnaire through a purposive sampling technique.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To test the association between dependent and independent variables, bivariate analysis is used in the present study. Logistic regression analysis is also carried out to know the effect of some selected variables on dependent variable. The dependent variable used in logistic regression model as a dichotomous binary variable, which is of the following form:

Y = 1, if the respondents having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS.  
= 0, otherwise.

The variables that are considered as independent in the present study are: respondents age, education, marital status, place of birth, listening about HIV/AIDS, condom

used during sexual intercourse, is HIV/AIDS a transmitted disease, is HIV/AIDS a dangerous disease and media information about HIV/AIDS.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Percentage distribution:** Table 1 represents the percentage distribution of the respondents and chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value between knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS and some selected background characteristics. From the Table 1, it is observed about 70% of the garments workers are very young (whose ages are less than 25 years). About half of them do not know how to read and write and also do not use condom during sexual intercourse. More than half of the garments workers are unmarried (53.9%), only 57.30% listening about the dangerous disease of HIV/AIDS. One-third of the respondents whose place of birth are rural areas of Bangladesh. At the same time, the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test reveals that age of the respondents, their education, marital status, place of birth, listening about HIV/AIDS and media information about HIV/AIDS are significantly associated with having knowledge about HIV/AIDS of the garments workers (Table 1).

**Multivariate analysis:** The results of logistic regression analysis are shown in Table 2 in terms of regression coefficients, significant probability and relative odds ratio that are calculated for each category of the categorical variables. The analyzed result shows that, 6 explanatory variables are statistically significant out of 9 variables. These significant predictors are respondent's age, their education, marital status, place of birth, listening about HIV/AIDS and media information about HIV/AIDS.

Table 1: Percentage distribution and chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value between knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS and selected background characteristics

Background characteristics		No. of garment workers	Percentage (%)	Knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS		$\chi^2$ -value
				No	Yes	
Age in years	<25	124	69.2	54.0	46.0	9.001***
	≥25	54	30.8	29.6	70.4	
Educational level	Illiterate	90	50.6	61.1	38.9	15.342***
	Literate	88	49.4	31.8	68.2	
Marital status	Unmarried	96	53.9	61.5	38.5	18.414***
	Married	82	46.1	29.3	70.7	
Place of birth	Rural	129	72.5	51.2	48.8	3.870**
	Urban	49	27.5	34.7	65.3	
Listening about HIV/AIDS	No	76	42.7	65.8	34.2	19.565***
	Yes	102	57.3	32.4	67.6	
Condom used during sexual intercourse	No	89	50.0	51.7	48.3	1.282
	Yes	89	50.0	41.6	58.4	
Is HIV/AIDS a transmitted disease	No	25	14.0	56.0	44.0	1.026
	Yes	153	86.0	45.1	54.9	
Is HIV/AIDS a dangerous disease	No	55	30.9	49.1	50.9	0.194
	Yes	123	69.1	45.5	54.5	
Media information about HIV/AIDS	No	117	65.7	52.1	47.9	4.161**
	Yes	61	34.3	36.1	63.9	

Note: \*\*\*p<0.01 \*\*p<0.05

Table 2: Logistic regression estimates of the effect of some socio-demographic characteristics on having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS of garment workers

Background characteristics		Co-efficient ( $\beta$ )	Odds ratio
Age in years	<25(r)	-	1.00
	$\geq 25$	0.74	2.09***
Educational level	Illiterate (r)	-	1.00
	Literate	1.21	3.37*
Marital status	Unmarried (r)	-	1.00
	Married	0.68	1.97***
Place of birth	Rural(r)	-	1.00
	Urban	0.75	2.11***
Listening about HIV/AIDS	No(r)	-	1.00
	Yes	1.20	3.32*
Condom used during sexual intercourse	No(r)	-	1.00
	Yes	-0.70	0.51
Is HIV/AIDS a transmitted disease	No(r)	-	1.00
	Yes	0.50	1.62
Is HIV/AIDS a dangerous disease	No(r)	-	1.00
	Yes	-0.11	0.90
Media information about HIV/AIDS	No(r)	-	1.00
	Yes	0.87	2.34**

Note: (r) indicates reference category

Age is one the most important demographic factors in determining the extent of knowledge and awareness of human being. The result shows that it has statistically significant effect on having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS. The odds ratio corresponding to the age group  $\geq 25$  years is 2.09. It clearly indicates that the garment workers whose age are  $\geq 25$  years are 2.09 times more likely to have knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS than that of the women whose age are <25 years (Table 2).

Education is another significant predictor on having knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The garment workers who are literate are 3.37 times more likely to have knowledge about HIV/AIDS compared to their illiterate counterparts (reference category).

Marital status of the respondents is also significantly associated with having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS. The analyzed result reveals that the respondents who are to be married have 1.97 times higher knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS than the respondents who are not to be married (Table 2).

Table 2 shows that garment workers whose place of birth were urban have 2.11 times more likely to have knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS than those workers whose place of birth were rural.

Another strong predictor of having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS is listening part, which is a major reported source of knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS. As shown in Table 2, the garment workers who had listen about HIV/AIDS were almost 3.32 times more likely to have knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS compared to their counterparts who had not listen about HIV/AIDS.

Similarly, the garments worker who had access to such media information were almost 2.34 times more likely to have knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS

compared to their counterparts who had not access to media information. The other variable such as sexual intercourse without condom is HIV/AIDS transmitted disease; is HIV/AIDS dangerous has no significantly (statistically) effect on having knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS of garments workers.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analyzed result shows that higher number (69.0%) of the respondents are in the age of <25 years, nearly half (50.6 and 53.9%) of them were illiterate and unmarried. The study also shows that 53.4% garments workers have no actual knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS. Among the garments workers, knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS largely depend on their age and education. From the logistic regression model, it is indicated that are respondent's age, their education, marital status, place of birth, listening about HIV/AIDS and media information about HIV/AIDS.

A number of implications and recommendations to increase the knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS among garments workers is immense need that could every much useful in preventing the human devastating diseases- HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh.

- Various initiatives for comprehensive education and training regarding risk behavior among the garment workers should be taken.
- Existing awareness programs through meetings, processions, seminars and symposiums about HIV/AIDS for the garment workers should be enhanced.
- These should be done by involving Governmental sectors, NGOs, civil society.

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