

Evaluation of University Students' Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this study was to ascertain how college students felt about people who were HIV/AIDS positive.

Method: The study is cross-sectional and descriptive in nature. The data of the study were collected from 367 university students through an online questionnaire. The Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) Scale for University Students and the participants' personal data identification form were utilized as data collection instruments. The statistical program IBM SPSS 26.0 was utilized to analyze the data.

Results: It was discovered that the participants' mean age was 21.60 ± 2.50 , with 77.1% of them being female and 39.2% belonging to the senior category. The middle level scale had a mean overall score of 58.28 ± 11.72 . Gender and the overall Attitudes Toward Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale score showed a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$). It was discovered that women exhibited more empathy and had more favorable views toward those who were HIV/AIDS positive. Grade level and the sub-dimensions of acceptance, relationship, and empathy on the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale were found to be significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$) when the association between the two variables was evaluated.

Conclusion: In conclusion, sexually transmitted illnesses should be taught to university students who fall into the high-risk category for HIV/AIDS. Higher knowledge level university students will also have positive attitudes toward those living with HIV/AIDS. Nurses have a great role in informing and educating these individuals. Nurses should make interventions especially for adolescents with the role of educator and counselor. In addition, courses on infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases should be included in the curriculum of university students.

Keywords: AIDS, HIV, attitude

Üniversite Öğrencilerinin HIV/AIDS ile Yaşayan Bireylere Yönelik Tutumlarının Değerlendirilmesi

Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı üniversite öğrencilerinin HIV/AIDS pozitif kişiler hakkında ne hissettiklerini tespit etmektir.

Özgün Araştırma Makalesi (Original Research Article)

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Yöntem: Araştırma tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel bir çalışmadır. Çalışmanın verileri 367 üniversite öğrencisinden online anket şeklinde toplanmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak Üniversite Öğrencilerine Yönelik İnsan İmmün Yetmezlik Virüsü/Edinilmiş İmmün Yetmezlik Sendromu (HIV/AIDS) ile Yaşayan Bireylere Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği ve katılımcıların kişisel veri tanımlama formu kullanılmıştır. Veri analizinde IBM SPSS 26.0 istatistik programı kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Katılımcıların yaş ortalamasının $21,60 \pm 2,50$ olduğu, %77,1'inin kadın, %39,2'sinin yaşlı kategorisine ait olduğu belirlendi. Orta düzey ölçeğin ortalama genel puanı $58,28 \pm 11,72$ idi. Cinsiyet ile HIV/AIDS'li bireylere yönelik Genel Tutum Ölçeği puanı arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görüldü ($p < 0,05$). Kadınların HIV/AIDS pozitif olanlara karşı daha fazla empati gösterdikleri ve daha olumlu görüşlere sahip oldukları ortaya çıktı. İki değişken arasındaki ilişki değerlendirildiğinde, HIV/AIDS'li bireye yönelik Tutum Ölçeği'nin sınıf düzeyi ile kabul, ilişki ve empati alt boyutlarının anlamlı düzeyde ilişkili olduğu ($p < 0,05$) belirlendi.

Sonuç: Sonuç olarak HIV/AIDS açısından yüksek riskli grupta yer alan üniversite öğrencilerine cinsel yolla bulaşan hastalıkların öğretilmesi gerekmektedir. Bilgi düzeyi yüksek üniversite öğrencileri de HIV/AIDS ile yaşayanlara karşı olumlu tutumlara sahip olacaklardır. Bu bireylerin bilgilendirilmesi ve eğitilmesinde hemşirenin rolü büyüktür. Hemşire eğitici ve danışmanlık rolü ile özellikle ergen bireylere yönelik girişimlerini yapmalıdır. Ayrıca üniversite öğrencilerinin ders müfredatı içinde enfeksiyon hastalıkları ve cinsel yolla bulaşan hastalıklara yönelik derslere yer verilmelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: AIDS, HIV, tutum

Introduction

HIV/AIDS is a major global health issue to this day. The risk of social exclusion and discrimination of individuals with this disease is an important factor affecting the spread of the disease^{1,2}. One crucial issue that has to be addressed is how young people, particularly university students, feel and act toward those who are HIV/AIDS positive.

It's critical to comprehend how college students feel about people living with HIV/AIDS in order to improve social interactions and health services. This issue has been examined and explored in many academic articles. Numerous studies demonstrate the complexity of university students' attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS and the ways in which they are influenced by a variety of factors, including gender, social norms, educational attainment, and religious beliefs³. Despite the fact that nursing students' attitudes toward patients with HIV/AIDS were found to be positive, nurses in the study by Bonacaro et al. stated their worry of getting HIV/AIDS while providing care for these patients⁴. Another important study conducted by Sallam et al. examined the discriminatory behaviors of university students towards individuals living with HIV/AIDS⁵. This study showed that some students still have negative prejudices against these individuals and that these prejudices are widespread. These findings offer crucial hints for enhancing societal perceptions of people living with HIV/AIDS and lowering unfavorable stereotypes.

In conclusion, there is a lot of study to be done on how college students feel about those who are HIV/AIDS positive. The purpose of this article was to find out how university students felt about those who were HIV/AIDS positive. It is anticipated that the data from this study would be crucial in lowering discrimination against and promoting social acceptance of those living with HIV/AIDS.

Methods

Study Design: The study is cross-sectional and descriptive in nature.

Sample of the Research: 367 college students who volunteered to engage in the study made up the sample for this investigation.

Data Collection Method: Between September 23, 2023, and October 15, 2023, participants' responses to an online questionnaire served as the study's data collection method.

Data Collection: The Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) Scale for University Students and the participants' personal data identification form (gender, age, and grade level) were utilized as the study's data gathering methods.

Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) Scale for University Students

The scale was developed by Ceylan and Koç⁶. There are four sub-dimensions and eight items in the scale: Avoidance (2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18); Empathy (6, 8, 15, 16, 17); Relationship (3, 5); Acceptance (1, 7, 12). "Strongly disagree" is worth one point, and "strongly agree" is worth five points when it comes to assigning points for positive elements. The reverse scoring method is applied to negative things. Every item on the scale has a 5-point Likert scale, with a minimum score of 18 and a maximum score of 90 possible. Negative items are 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 18; positive items are 1, 6, 7, 12, 15, 16, and 17. "Strongly disagree" is worth one point, whereas "strongly agree" is worth five points when rating positive stuff. The reverse scoring method is applied to negative things. There is no cutoff point on the scale. A positive shift in university students' attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS is shown by an increase in their scale score. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was determined to be 0.85. This study's Cronbach's alpha was determined to be 0.84.

Data Analyses: The statistical analysis in the study was conducted using the IBM SPSS statistics 26.0 application. Along with descriptive statistical techniques, the study data were evaluated (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percent). The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine data that did not exhibit a normal distribution, and the Student T test was used to evaluate data that did. More than two normally distributed and non-normally distributed variables were

assessed using one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests, respectively. The significance level of $p < 0.05$ and the 95% confidence range were used to analyze the results.

Ethical Considerations: The Istanbul Gelişim University Ethics Committee Presidency granted approval for the study project on September 22, 2023, and assigned the research number, 2023-07-59. Prior to the survey, the study participants were notified and a consent form was signed.

Results

Table 1 displays the students' biographical information as well as the overall Attitudes Toward Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale score. It was discovered that the mean age of the participants was 21.60 ± 2.50 , with 77.1% of them being female and 39.2% being in their senior year. Table 1 displays the average total scores for each of the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale sub-dimensions. The moderate level of the scale had a mean overall score of 58.28 ± 11.72 (Table 1).

Table 1. Personal characteristics of the students and the total score of the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale (n=367)

	n	%
Gender		
Female	283	77.1
Male	84	22.9
Class level		
Freshman	72	19.6
Sophomore	62	16.9
Junior	87	23.7
Senior	144	39.2
Postgraduate	2	0.6
Age (mean)	21.60±2.50	
Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale sub-dimensions (mean scores)		
Acceptance	9.08±2.72	
Avoidance	25.87±7.78	
Relationship	4.30±2.42	
Empathy	19.03±2.74	
Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale total score (mean)	58.28±11.72	

Descriptive statistical methods (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percent)

Table 2 evaluated the link between the sub-dimensions of the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale, the scale's overall score, the students' gender, and their grade level. Gender and the overall Attitudes Toward Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale score, as well as the sub-dimensions of empathy, were shown to be significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$). It was discovered that women exhibited more empathy and had more favorable views toward those who were HIV/AIDS positive.

The grade level and the sub-dimensions of acceptance, relationship, and empathy on the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale were shown to be significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$) when the relationship between the two was analyzed. It was observed that the average scores of first-year students in the acceptance sub-dimension, first-year students in the relationship sub-dimension, and graduate students in the empathy sub-dimension were higher than the others (Table 2).

Table 2. The relationship between gender and grade level and the Attitudes Towards Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale (n=367)

	Acceptance	p	Avoidance	p	Relationship	p	Empathy	p	Scale total score	p
Gender										
Female	9.20±2.71	.12	26.24±7.71	.09	4.40±2.51	.13	19.20±2.58	.02	59.04±11.45	.02
Male	8.68±2.75		24.62±7.94		3.95±2.07		18.45±3.16		55.70±12.33	
Class level										
Freshman	9.87±3.15	.04	27.22±8.66	.25	5.07±2.75	.02	18.75±3.14	.05	60.92±13.66	.11
Sophomore	9.34±2.64		25.29±7.29		4.00±2.19		18.74±2.84		57.84±10.97	
Junior	8.70±2.59		25.26±7.29		4.00±2.19		18.60±2.81		56.56±11.38	
Senior	8.80±2.55		25.69±7.80		4.01±2.29		19.53±2.36		58.02±11.08	
Postgraduate	9.50±0.70		34.00±1.41		5.00±1.41		21.00±1.41		69.50±2.12	

Student T test, Mann-Whitney U test, One-way ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis

Discussion

The Attitudes Toward Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS Scale had a moderate level mean total score of 58.28±11.72. The scale and the students' gender were found to be significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$). There was no discernible correlation ($p > 0.05$) between the scale's overall score and grade level. Nonetheless, a noteworthy correlation was discovered among the scale's sub-dimensions (acceptance, empathy, and relationship) ($p < 0.05$). According to the literature, students' opinions on people living with HIV/AIDS were found to be negative in the study done by Kok et al. with nursing students, and their positive attitudes rose with grade level⁷. In research

by Günbatan et al., 87.2% of dentistry students said they wished to be trained, and 81.6% of them felt they didn't know enough about HIV/AIDS⁸. Nursing students' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS were shown to be negative in the study done by Nazik et al⁹. It is evident from the literature reviews that students have negative attitudes toward those living with HIV/AIDS. In this study, students' attitudes were found to be moderate. Individuals experience their first sexual intercourse at adolescent ages¹⁰. Sexually transmitted diseases are more common at the age when they experience their first sexual intercourse¹¹. Adolescents are presumed to possess greater awareness and perspectives on HIV/AIDS, a serious health concern. As a result, it is feasible to view the study's findings negatively. It is believed that when students learn more about HIV/AIDS, their attitudes toward those who are affected by the disease would improve.

In a study including college students, Saruç et al. discovered that gender had no discernible effect on knowledge or attitudes toward HIV/AIDS ($p > 0.05$)¹². This study reveals that students' perceptions of people living with HIV/AIDS vary according to their gender. This study's findings diverge from those reported in the literature. The percentage of female participants in the study by Saruç et al. was 58.9%, whereas the percentage of female participants in the current study was 77.1%. We can think that the reason why the results of the two studies are different is that the proportion of female and male participants in the sample is different.

Ethical Considerations

The Istanbul Gelişim University Ethics Committee Presidency approved the study project on September 22, 2023, and assigned the research number, 2023-07-59. Prior to the survey, the study participants were notified and a consent form was signed.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Conclusion

The views of university students toward people living with HIV/AIDS are moderate. There is a noteworthy correlation between gender and perceptions of those living with HIV/AIDS. Compared to men, women scored higher on the scale. The literature's findings indicate that university students who engage in their first sexual encounters are significantly more likely to become infected with STDs. Therefore, individuals at this age should be informed and educated. Adolescents with a high degree of knowledge will view people living with HIV/AIDS positively if they know how to protect themselves. Nurses have a great role in informing and educating these individuals. The nurse should make interventions, especially for adolescents with the role of

educator and counselor. In addition, courses on infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases should be included in the curriculum of university students.

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