

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE****Awareness and Knowledge About STDs Among Adult People  
in a Selected Area in Bangladesh**Khwaja Sajed Anwar<sup>1</sup>, Salahuddin Ahmed<sup>2</sup>, Ishrat Mafiz<sup>3</sup>, Ayesha Nasreen<sup>4</sup>**Abstract :**

*Knowledge and awareness concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has become the burning issue of the day. Although STDs pose serious risks to health security, there is very little literature quantifying the knowledge and awareness of these diseases. The aim of this study /was to determine knowledge and awareness, about STDs among the people in a selected area of Bangladesh. In this descriptive type of cross sectional study an attempt has been made to know the knowledge and awareness among 200 adult people from Keraniganj Upazilla of Dhaka district. Pre-tested questionnaire was used for data collection which includes information regards to STD. The data were compiled and tabulated manually according to key variable-in master sheet. Finally data were analyzed in computer. Majority participants (63%) were female. Most of the individual as 15-25 age group (34%) followed by 26-35 age group (28.5%) and 36-45 age group (23%). The majority of the respondents (82.5%) stated that they had knowledge about STDs, and (17.5%) of them did not have any knowledge at all. Majority (67.5%) acquired the knowledge from media, followed by (21%) friends and (14%) doctors. Out of 200 respondents thought the risk group of STDs mainly identified as by sex worker followed by professional blood donor, drug addict, and bus or truck drivers. Almost 26.5% respondents thought that STDs could be prevented by using condom, avoiding illegal sexual contact (34%,. religious binding (32%), raising social awareness (27%), safe blood donation. It is considered that the awareness and knowledge about the STDs are increasing than the other previous studies but some information needs to be addressed more for affective impact. The findings of this study are believed to serve as an useful basis for further research and planning.*

**Introduction:**

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Bangladesh are currently a topic of great concern.

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Knowledge and awareness concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has become the burning issue of the day. Although STDs pose serious risks to health security, there is very little literature quantifying the knowledge and awareness of these diseases and their principal socioeconomic determinants. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one third of the 333 million new cases each year of curable sexually transmitted infection (STIs) occur among people under 25 years of age<sup>1</sup>. Young people bear a special burden in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and adolescent women

are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Among adolescents, girls are more vulnerable to STDs than their male counterparts, including HIV/AIDS, especially through heterosexual intercourse with others. This increased vulnerability is attributable to issues beyond their control, such as sexual violence and exploitation, early sexual initiation and the inability to negotiate for safe sex. Other contributing factors include strong discrimination, lack of educations, lack of power, lack of access to contraception and reproductive health issues. Therefore, it is difficult for adolescent women to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and unwanted pregnancies. In addition young people are not informed about the sexually transmitted diseases, and their knowledge about the different diseases is very poor. Although there have seen many studies that have examined the knowledge about STDs among various age groups and social groups, very few studies have investigated the level of knowledge of young women about STDs. The knowledge of women concerning either the mode of transmission or prevention of STDs is very limited.

An integrated approach including useful and fruitful media campaigns to educate woman about the health consequences of STDs including HIV/AIDS is strongly suggested for creating knowledge and awareness. and for controlling the spread of STDs among the people in Bangladesh<sup>2</sup>.

Bangladesh is a low HIV/AIDS prevalent country but it is at a critical moment in the course of its AIDS epidemic. According to the UNAIDS estimates, Bangladesh, with a

population of 136 million, had about 13,000 people living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001 with the HIV prevalence in the adult population being less than 0.01% .However, although the overall prevalence of HIV in Bangladesh is low, it is a high-risk country for HIV/AIDS. This is due to the presence of covert multi-partner sexual activity/the low level of knowledge and low condom use, unsafe professional/blood donation, high incidence of self-reported sexually transmitted infections among vulnerable groups, the return of expatriates working in different countries, and the high levels of HIV/AIDS in two neighboring countries, India and Myanmar. The country's vulnerability is very high compared to other parts of South Asia, and infection rates within the vulnerable groups are increasing, thereby leading to an ever-greater possibility that the virus will spread to the general. In this critical situation, public awareness can play a dominant role in preventing an epidemic of HIV/AIDS .However, the awareness level and knowledge of the correct ways to avoid HIV/AIDS among the general public in Bangladesh has been classified as a high risk country for STD like HIV/AIDS although only 0.001% of the population is known to have been infected<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, it is important to identify the reasons that are associated with the level of awareness, which will be helpful in strengthening the capacity of government 'non-government organizations (NGO) development-partner agencies for programmer planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation regarding AIDS awareness. In this regard, a few national and international researchers have attempted to understand the reasons and offer some explanations .The respondents education level, contraceptive usage, mass media and HIV



workshops was statistically positive significant effects on HIV /AIDS knowledge and the awareness of female garment workers<sup>4</sup>.

The lack of adequate updated information on prevalence rates and the relatively high unsafe sexual practices amongst the reproductive age groups both in urban and rural areas signifies and justifies the importance of an awareness study to make a new primary assessment and contribute to planning and implementation of STD Management being conducted under the National AIDS/HIV programme under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare<sup>5</sup>.

This was carried out to assess awareness and the knowledge of people regarding STD and its mode of transmission, regarding STD prevention and control measures in adult people in a selected area in Bangladesh.

#### Materials and method :

It was a descriptive type of Cross sectional study conducted from October 2015 to March 2016 at some selected villages of Keraniganj upazilla, Dhaka. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to include 200 adults aged 15-70 years. Pretested questionnaire was used for data collection which includes information in regards to STD. After introductory conversation and obtaining consent from the respondent the relevant data were collected by face to face interview using close and open questionnaire. Data were recorded in the questionnaires. All filled up questionnaire were verified for its consistency and were analyzed by SPSS-17th version.

#### Results :

The minimum age of the individual was 15 and maximum age of the individual was 68 years

and most of the individual was 15-25 age group ( 34%) followed by 26-35 age group (28.5%) and 36-45 age group (23%). Out of 200 respondents 37% were male & 63% were female. Table-I shows that out of 200 respondents; 27.5% respondents were illiterate. 29% passed/their primary level and 31.5% passed their secondary level. Bes/des, 8% were in higher secondary level; 3.5% were in honors level of and 0.5% had others educational qualification. In this study out of 200 respondents 87% were married, 11 % were unmarried. 1.5% was widow and only 0.5% was divorced.

Most of the respondents (52%) were house wife, followed by businessman(19%), Service holder (10%), other occupation/life rickshaw puller , day labour, house maid etc.(7.5%) and students(7%).

**Table-I:** Distributions of the respondents according to their educational qualifications.

Educational qualifications	Number of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	55	27.5%
Primary	58	29%
Secondary	63	31.5%
Higher secondary	16	18%
Honors	7	3.5%
Others	1	0.5%
Total	200	100%

**Table-III:** Distribution of the respondents according to their knowledge of spread of SID

Spread of STD	Number of respondents	Percentage
Sexual contact	119	87.5%
Unsafe blood transfusion	83	61.03%
Multiple use of same syringe	61	44.85%
Shaving from salon	19	13.97%
Others	04	2.94%

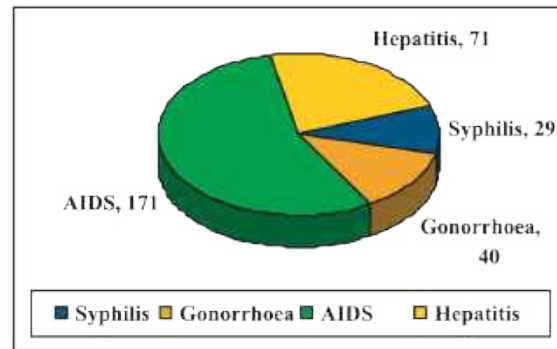
Among the respondents who know about the spread of STD, 87.5% knows about sexual contact, 61.03% said unsafe blood transfusion, 44.85% said multiple use of same syringe, 13.97% said saving from salon and 2.94% said about other causes.

Majority of the respondents (66.5%) had knowledge about risk group of STD. Only 33.5% had no knowledge about it. Out of 200 respondents the risk group of STDs mainly identified as (49.5%) sex worker followed by professional blood donor (24.5%), drug addict (35%), bus and truck driver (14.5%). The findings also revealed that out of 200 respondents, 52.5% people had knowledge about prevention of STDs and 47.5% people did not have any knowledge about STDs.

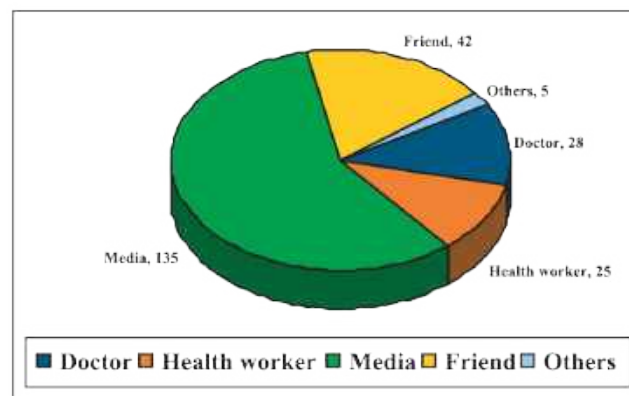
**Table-III:** Distribution of the respondents according to knowledge about prevention of STD

Prevention of STD	Number of respondents	Percentage
By using condom	53	26.5%
By avoiding illegal sexual contact	68	34%
By religious binding	64	32%
By increasing social awareness	54	27%
By safe blood donation	41	20.5%
Others	2	1%
Total	200	100

Table III reveals that 26.5% people thought that STDs could be prevented by using condom, 34% people thought that STDs could be prevented by avoiding illegal sexual contact. 32% people thought that STDs could be prevented by religious binding. 27% people thought that STDs could be prevented by raising social awareness, 20.5% people thought that STDs could be prevented by safe blood donation and 1% people thought that STDs could be prevented by other methods.



**Figure-1:** Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge about specific STD by name



**Figure-2:** Distribution of respondents according to their source of knowledge about STD.

Figure-1 shows that reveals that in case of knowledge about specific STD, the most known STD was AIDS (85.5%) followed by Hepatitis B,C (35.5%), Gonorrhoea (20%) and Syphilis (14.5%).

Figure-2 reveals that in case of , among the respondents who had heard about STDs 14% people heard from doctor, 12.5% people from health workers, 67.5% people from media, 21% peoples from friends & 2.5% peoples from others source about STD. Out of 200 respondents; 68% respondents have knowledge about the spread of STD. Moreover, 32% of respondents said they have no knowledge about the spread of STD.



### Discussion :

The awareness level and knowledge of the correct ways to avoid HIV/AIDS and other STDs among the general public in Bangladesh are quite low. A total of 68.2% of the women respondents in a 2014 survey conducted in Dhaka said they do not know about STDs, while 31.8% of respondents know about STDs from listening to the radio and 42.6% of the respondents know about STDs from watching television<sup>5,6</sup>.

In this descriptive type of cross sectional study an attempt has been made to know the knowledge and awareness about population of Keraniganj upazilia of Dhaka district. Among the 200 of respondent 82.5% stated that they had knowledge about STDs, and (17.5%) of them did not have any knowledge at all. Mostly their knowledge about specific STD, was AIDS (85.5%) followed by Hepatitis B,C (35.5%), Gonorrhoea (20%) and Syphilis (14,5%) some stated that they knew only about Scabies as STD. In a similar study it was found that the men aged 15-54, 18% had never heard of HIV/AIDS. 24% have heard but do not know of any correct way to avoid it and only 58% know one or more correct ways to avoid the disease. On the other hand, 40% of women had never heard of HIV AIDS. 19% had heard but do not know any correct way and only 41% knew one or more correct ways to avoid the disease.<sup>2</sup>

In 2007, the MCH-FP Extension Project (Rural) of ICDDR,B surveyed 8674 married women of reproductive age in 4 rural thanas to examine their awareness of STDs<sup>6,7</sup>. Only 12% of the original group had even a basic understanding about STDs and how to protect themselves from them. 25% of the women surveyed had ever heard of either syphilis or gonorrhoea. Of these

women, less than half could mention specific mechanisms involved in the transmission of this diseases. 7% reported that syphilis and gonorrhoea are transmitted through sexual intercourse. 13% reported that the infections are transmitted from spouses to their partners. 4% reported that STDs can be spread by having multiple sexual partners<sup>7,8</sup>. The results of logistic regression analysis indicate that awareness of STDs was higher amongst city dwellers than rural citizens. A socio-demographic factor could be the fact that Dhaka is the capital city and there is better access to information and education facilities than a rural thana.

Judging from the profile of the respondents in the study, it may be beneficial to incorporate basic information on sexually transmitted disease like AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhoea etc and their prevention in the mass media by ensuring the availability of related articles about STD from the health personal. Further research should be undertaken to provide more comprehensive data representative of the whole country

In this study sample size was not adequate to represent the real status of awareness about STD of the people of the whole country and the respondents were in hesitation and fell shyness to express their monthly family income personal information and their sexual relation accurately.

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