



## HIV/AIDS AWARENESS; LONG DISTANCE TRUCK DRIVERS

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**ABSTRACT... Objectives:** To examine the awareness regarding HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour among long distance truck drivers (LDTDs) in Bahawalpur division. **Study design:** A cross sectional population study. **Setting:** Three districts (Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and RYK). **Data:** Sample of size of 120 LDTDs is taken by using convenient sampling technique. **Methods:** Descriptive and inferential analysis carried out. **Results:** Every 6 out of 10 LDTDs have heard about HIV/AIDS and believed that sexual intercourse is a major mode of its transmission. The use of condom before sex is seldom among truckers. Exactly half of LDTDs have only one sexual partner while nearly quarter (23.3%) of the respondents currently having two sexual partners. Over half (54.2%) of truckers made payment for sex with commercial sex workers (CSWs) and only 3.3% did so with their helper/conductor. Two models are executed separately to explore the association of trucker's knowledge about HIV/AIDS (Model 1) and those who paid for sex (Model 2). Pearson chi-square analysis exhibits that respondents having age group 25-30 year, those with native of Punjabi language, those who manage to earn more than 15,000 Pakistani rupees per month, those having secondary level of schooling and those watching TV has higher knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. LDTDs with age thirty years and over, Saraiki speaking, monthly income less than 10,000, illiterate, unmarried, watching TV and remain away from home during current trip a week are found to be more prone to pay for sex to CSW. **Conclusions:** The awareness of HIV/AIDS and knowledge of its transmission through sexual contact is high among LDTDs but still public health strategies are needed to promote the knowledge of all possible transmission modes of HIV/AIDS and use of condom before sex, ultimately to improve health outcomes.

**Key words:** Bahawalpur; HIV/AIDS; LDTDs

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## INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS is social disease and a major health concern which remains incurable. Globally 35 million people were living with HIV in 2013 whereas around 78 million people have been infected since the start of the epidemic and 39 million people have died of AIDS-related illness.<sup>1</sup> Higher proportion of people living with HIV lived in Sub-Saharan Africa (24.7 million) followed by Asia and the Pacific (4.8 million), Western and Central Europe and North America (2.3 million), Latin America (1.6 million), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (1.1 million) and Middle East and North Africa (230000).<sup>1</sup> Ignorance and unsafe reproductive health behaviour are the important causes of HIV transmission and social scientists believed that the HIV/AIDS can only be prevented

by social vaccine which involves spreading education on how to protect oneself, hundred percent condom use, and changing sexual behaviour.<sup>2</sup> LDTDs remain one of the key forces in the spread of HIV/AIDS in many countries<sup>3-5</sup> as they are highly mobile and spending long hours on the road away from their families which makes them very likely to use the services of CSWs in stop-over near major transportation routes.<sup>6</sup> A study conducted in India and revealed that LDTDs are an important high-risk group as they traveling from one place to another place and caused for HIV spread.<sup>7</sup>

## Background

Pakistan, the second most populous Muslim country after Indonesia in the world, where the

society is still not accepted the HIV/AIDS and other STDs due to old age stigma and taboos related to these diseases, particularly in remote areas where these diseases considered as a very shameful and people hide their diseases and not seeking any sort of treatment due to low literacy, poverty and social norms. Low prevalence and high risk country for HIV spread, according to USAID estimates of 2007, HIV cases increased from 51,000 to 96,000 and majority being male (72%).<sup>8</sup> Now Pakistan jumped from low prevalence to concentrated epidemic category.<sup>9</sup> The most serious transmission modes of HIV are people who inject drug (PWID), transgender, male and female sex workers with prevalence rate are 27.2%, 5.2%, 1.6% and 0.6% respectively.<sup>9</sup> The surveillance round among twenty cities conducted in 2011 and the results suggested that an overall HIV prevalence were 7.2% and 3.1% among hijra sex workers and male sex worker respectively.<sup>10</sup> Bahawalpur division contains the districts of Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, and Rahim Yar Khan. Its area 45588 km<sup>2</sup> and population is 7635591. Bahawalpur division is a less developed and agricultural area with large proportion of dwellers are Sariki speaking.

Studies conducted to explore the knowledge of HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour of LDTDs.<sup>11-13</sup> In a survey study at Lahore, 300 LDTDs randomly selected to examine the sexual behaviour among truck driver and their helpers. The finding revealed that multiple sexual partnerships with men and women are common among truckers,<sup>11, 12</sup> The awareness regarding HIV/AIDS and knowledge of sexual transmission of HIV was high whereas the use of condom before sex is rare and most truckers believed that HIV/AIDS did not exist in Pakistan.<sup>11</sup> In other study by Agha in 2000, approximately 34% of truckers had ever had sex with a female CSW and approximately 11% had ever had sex with a male CSW. Approximately 49% of truck drivers reported ever having had sex with another man. Most truckers were not aware that condoms are an effective way of preventing HIV. Moreover, they did not consider themselves at risk of acquiring HIV as they believed that HIV was a disease that only affected immoral persons. The use of a condom in the last incidence of sex

was between 3 and 6% with any non-marital partner. Condoms were generally considered to be a family planning method and their use was higher in marital sex (8%).<sup>13</sup> A behavioural surveys conducted in 2006, among 213 truck cleaners and 906 truck drivers. The results showed that an even higher prevalence of male-to-male sex: nearly 73.1% had ever had sex with a man, while 55.0% reported sex with another man in the past year. Half of the men who reported sex in the last year had sex with a man in the past month. This means that about a quarter of truck drivers can be considered to be regularly sexually active with other men, most of the time, it is assumed, with their truck cleaners.<sup>14</sup> In a recent study conducted in 2014, eleven young men working as assistants to truck drivers who acknowledged having had sexual experiences with men were interviewed and their social background and sexual beginning and their successive sexual lives were explored. For most truck cleaners, the first occurrence of sexual contact between the truck cleaner and the driver was forced and happened at an early age. Sex with other men, as well as with women (including sex workers) was widely reported.<sup>15</sup>

## METHODS AND MATERIAL

A sample of 120 LDTDs are obtained at two stages. At first stage a sample of 12 truck stops randomly elected by using proportional allocation method from complete list of 40 truck stops from three districts (Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and RYK). In a second stage 12 selected truck stops are visited and 10 drivers are interviewed successfully from each by using convenient sampling technique. Quantitative analysis and Pearson chi-square test for independence are performed to examine the HIV/AIDS related knowledge, conception and sexual behaviour among LDTDs. The statistical software SPSS version 21 is used for complete analysis of data.

## RESULTS

Table-I. Presents the characteristics of LDTDs. The analysis of the data brings out that 44% of the respondents belong to thirty and over age group. More than 40% of truckers have not attended school at all while almost half (46.7%) of LDTDs earn 10000 to 15000 Pakistani rupees

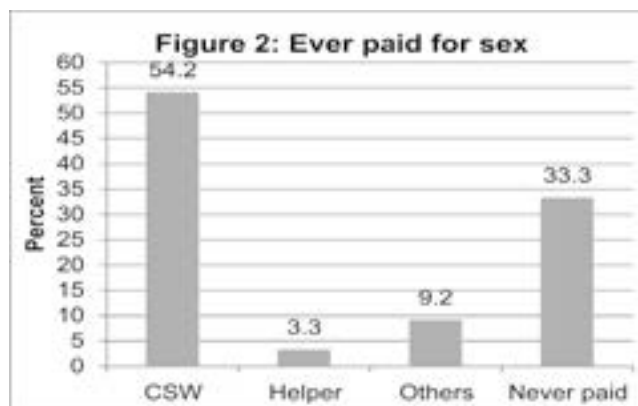
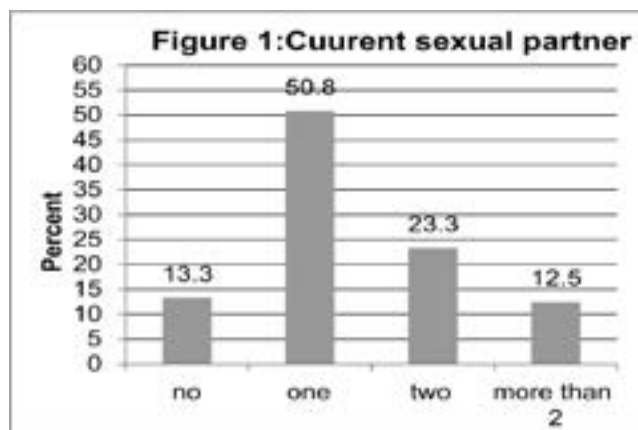
per month. Exactly three- fourth of truckers are married. Large proportions (51% and 44%) of the respondents are Punjabi and Saraiki respectively. More than two third (71%) of the respondents have access to TV whereas newspaper is a least (7.5%) media mode for LDTDs. Slightly more than half (52.5%) of truckers stayed away from home nearly one week during current trip.

	Frequency	%
Respondent's age in groups		
<25	27	22.5
25-30	40	33.3
30+	53	44.2
Respondent's educational level		
Illiterate	49	40.8
Primary	46	38.3
Secondary	23	19.2
Higher	2	1.7
Respondent's monthly income (PKRs)		
<10000	51	42.5
10000 to 15000	56	46.7
15000+	13	10.8
Respondent's marital status		
Unmarried	30	25
Married	90	75
Respondent's ethnicity		
Urdu	17	14.2
Punjabi	51	42.5
Pashtun	6	5
Saraiki	40	33.3
Sindhi	5	4.2
Balochi	1	0.8
Access to media mode		
TV	71	59.2
Radio	12	10
Newspaper	9	7.5
Others	28	23.3
Number of days away from home during current trip		
A week	63	52.5
15 days	54	45
More than month	3	2.5

**Table-I. Distribution of Socio Demographics Findings (n=120)**

**LDTDs knowledge and precipitation regarding HIV/AIDS**

Table-II. Showed the frequency distribution of LDTDs about knowledge and precipitation regarding HIV/AIDS. The sample finding reveals that the majority (61.7%) of the respondents heard about of HIV/AIDS whereas the media mode TV is a key source of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS. Higher proportion (60.8%) of LDTDs believed that HIV/AIDS transmitted through sexual intercourse whereas quarter (24.2%) of respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS spread out due to blood transfusion. The practice of condom before sex is seldom, 78.3% respondents never used the condom before sexual intercourse. Higher proportion (71.7%) of the respondents agreed that sexual contact with many partners increase the risk of getting HIV/AIDS. The trucker's knowledge how to prevent from HIV/AIDS and medically diagnose are examined. Larger proportion of truckers agreed that avoiding sexual contact tends to prevent from HIV/AIDS while exactly 80% of the LDTDs never test for HIV/AIDS.



	Frequency	%
Ever heard about HIV/AIDS		
No	46	38.3
Yes	74	61.7
Source where you heard about HIV/AIDS		
TV	61	50.8
Radio	8	6.7
Newspaper	2	1.7
Others	49	40.8
mode of HIV/AIDS transmission		
Through sex	73	60.8
Through blood transfusion	29	24.2
Others	16	13.3
Don't know	2	1.7
Do you ever used condom before sex?		
No	94	78.3
Yes	26	21.7
Does sexual contact with many partners increase the risk of getting HIV/AIDS?		
No	31	25.8
Yes	86	71.7
Don't know	3	2.5
Knowledge of HIV/AIDS protection		
Avoiding sex	67	55.8
Using condom	16	13.3
Avoiding contaminated blood transfusion	23	19.2
Don't know	14	11.7
Do you ever test for HIV/AIDS?		
No	96	80.0
Yes	24	20.0

**Table-II. LDTDs knowledge and precipitation on HIV/AIDS (n=120)**

### Bivariate Analysis

Two model are executed separately to explore the association of trucker's knowledge about HIV/AIDS (Model 1) and those who paid for sex (Model 2) with age, education, ethnicity, respondent's monthly income, access to media modes, marital status and number of days away from home during current trip are reported in Table-III. Pearson chi square analysis exhibits that with the exception of marital status and number of days away from home during current trip all other characteristics (age, education, ethnicity, respondent's monthly income and access to media modes) are found

to be statistically significant (P-Value <0.005) with respect to knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Respondents having age group 25-30 year, those with native of Punjabi language, those who manage to earn more than 15,000 Pakistani rupees per month, those having secondary level of schooling and those watching TV has higher knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. The analysis of Model 2 brings out that LDTDs with age thirty years and over, Saraiki speaking, monthly income less than 10,000, illiterate, unmarried, watching TV and remain away from home during current trip a week are found to be significant and more prone to pay for sex to CSW.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study showed that majority of LDTDs heard about of HIV/AIDS but insufficient knowledge about transmission modes. A similar finding has been reported elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Among various transmission modes of HIV/AIDS large number of truckers only know the particularly one mode that is sexual intercourse.<sup>11</sup> Frequent unsafe sex and inconsistent use of condom by the LDTDs only 21.7% truckers used the condom during sex, 71% of the respondents agreed that sexual contact with many partners increase the risk of getting HIV/AIDS. A study conducted in India and found that 78% truckers said that they had sex with multiple partners and lower knowledge of condom use.<sup>3</sup> A survey study conducted in Nigeria to examine the barriers to condom use and its consistence use among LDTDs and finding showed that drivers agreed that the use of condom reduce their sexual satisfaction, caused health problem for them and hindered their sexual interest.<sup>4</sup> The trucker's knowledge of prevention of HIV/AIDS and medically test of HIV/AIDS are underlined. Larger proportion of truckers agreed that avoiding sexual contact tends to prevent from HIV/AIDS<sup>11, 16, 17</sup> while poor knowledge about test HIV/AIDS, more than three quarters(80%) of LDTDs never test for HIV/AIDS.<sup>17</sup> Multiple sexual partnerships with men and women are common among truckers.<sup>7, 11, 18</sup> exactly 50% of LDTDs have only one sexual partner while nearly quarter of the respondents currently having two sexual partners. More than half of the respondents

Covariate	Response	Model 1			Model 2				
		Ever heard about HIV/AIDS		P-Value	Ever paid for sex				P-Value
		No	Yes		CSW	Helper	Others	Never paid	
Age	<25	55.6%	44.4%	0.003	59.3%	0.00%	7.4%	33.3%	0.001
	25-30	17.5%	82.5%		25.0%	5.0%	15.0%	55.0%	
	30+	45.3%	54.7%		73.6%	3.8%	5.7%	17.0%	
Ethnicity	Urdu	52.9%	47.1%	0.001	58.8%	0.00%	23.5%	17.6%	0.001
	Punjabi	19.6%	80.4%		31.4%	2.0%	11.8%	54.9%	
	Pashtun	100.0%	0.00%		16.7%	0.00%	.0%	83.3%	
	Saraiki	57.5%	42.5%		92.5%	5.0%	2.5%	0.00%	
	Sindhi	60.0%	40.0%		0.00%	20.0%	0.00%	80.0%	
	Balochi	100.0%	0.00%		100.0%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Respondents monthly income	<10000	56.9%	43.1%	0.001	80.4%	3.9%	.0%	15.7%	0.001
	10000 to 15000	26.8%	73.2%		39.3%	3.6%	12.5%	44.6%	
	15000+	15.4%	84.6%		15.4%	0.00%	30.8%	53.8%	
Educational level	Illiterate	65.3%	34.7%	0.001	73.5%	2.0%	6.1%	18.4%	0.001
	Primary	30.4%	69.6%		43.5%	6.5%	4.3%	45.7%	
	Secondary	00.0%	100.0%		39.1%	0.00%	17.4%	43.5%	
	Higher	00.0%	100.0%		0.00%	0.00%	100.0%	.0%	
Marital status	Unmarried	46.7%	53.3%	0.200	53.3%	0.00%	13.3%	33.3%	0.05
	Married	35.6%	64.4%		54.4%	4.4%	7.8%	33.3%	
Access to media mode	TV	29.6%	70.4%	0.040	73.2%	2.8%	2.8%	21.1%	0.001
	Radio	66.7%	33.3%		33.3%	0.00%	33.3%	33.3%	
	Newspaper	33.3%	66.7%		33.3%	.0%	22.2%	44.4%	
	Others	50.0%	50.0%		21.4%	7.1%	10.7%	60.7%	
away from home during current trip	A week	33.3%	66.7%	0.460	57.1%	1.6%	9.5%	31.7%	0.037
	15 days	44.4%	55.6%		51.9%	5.6%	9.3%	33.3%	
	More than month	33.3%	66.7%		33.3%	0.00%	0.00%	66.7%	

**Table-III. Cross tabulation of outcome variable versus explanatory variables**

made payment for sex with CSW<sup>11, 17, 18</sup> and only 3.3% of the respondents did so with helper. Age, education, ethnicity, respondent's monthly income and access to media modes are found to be statistically significant with respect to knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

Finally, it is concluded that respondents having age group 25-30 year, those with native of Punjabi language, those who manage to earn more than 15,000 Pakistani rupees per month, those having secondary level of schooling and those watching TV has higher knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. LDTDs with age thirty years and over, Saraiki speaking, monthly income less than 10,000, illiterate, unmarried, watching TV and remain away

from home during current trip a week are found to be significant and more prone to pay for sex to CSW. These statistical outcomes are important to formulate public health strategies to promote the knowledge of all possible transmission modes of HIV/AIDS and use of condom before sex, ultimately to improve health outcomes.

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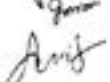
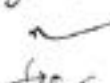

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2	Muhammad Imran	Statistical model, write up	
3	Syed Arrif Ahmed Zaidi	Literature review	
4	Mr. Najeeb ur rehman	Discussion review	
5	Fiaz Ahmad	Final work	