

The Effectiveness of PMTCT Education in Increasing Pregnant Mothers Knowledge on HIV/AIDS Prevention for Their Babies

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Article Information

Received: January 14, 2025

Revised: February 04, 2025

Online: February 05, 2025

Keywords

PMTCT Education, Maternal Knowledge, HIV Prevention Practices

ABSTRACT

Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV is a pressing global health issue, particularly in regions with limited access to healthcare and education. Although advancements in prevention strategies have significantly reduced transmission rates, knowledge gaps among pregnant women often limit the effectiveness of Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programs. This study evaluated the impact of PMTCT education on increasing maternal knowledge and fostering adherence to HIV prevention practices. A pre-test and post-test design was implemented with 30 pregnant women attending antenatal care services in a resource-limited setting. Participants completed a knowledge assessment questionnaire before and after a culturally and linguistically tailored PMTCT education session. Data were analyzed using paired ttt-tests to evaluate knowledge improvement and logistic regression to assess changes in adherence intentions. The results showed a significant improvement in knowledge scores, increasing from 42.5% (SD = 11.7%) pre-intervention to 80.3% (SD = 8.9%) post-intervention ($t(29) = 10.85, p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 2.01$), and behavioral intentions to adhere to PMTCT protocols improved from 40% to 85%. Logistic regression analysis revealed a strong association between higher post-intervention knowledge scores and increased adherence intentions (OR = 5.6, 95% CI = 2.3–13.4, $p < 0.001$). These findings underscore the importance of integrating structured PMTCT education into antenatal care services to empower mothers, reduce MTCT rates, and enhance adherence to preventive measures. Future research should explore long-term outcomes and the inclusion of family members to amplify intervention impact.

Keywords: PMTCT Education, Maternal Knowledge, HIV Prevention Practices



INTRODUCTION

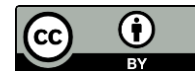
Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV remains a significant global public health challenge, particularly in regions with high HIV prevalence. Without appropriate interventions, the likelihood of HIV transmission from a mother to her child during pregnancy, labor, delivery, or breastfeeding ranges from 15% to 45% (WHO, 2021). This transmission not only contributes to the rising number of pediatric HIV cases but also poses a severe threat to the health and development of infants born to HIV-positive mothers (WHO, 2021). Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV continues to be a significant global health issue. In 2021, an estimated 150,000 new HIV infections occurred among children, with the majority of these cases being attributed to MTCT, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The prevalence of MTCT varies greatly depending on regional healthcare access, education, and implementation of prevention programs. Countries such as South Africa and Nigeria still face high rates of transmission despite progress in HIV care. Conversely, developed nations like the United States and European countries have successfully reduced MTCT rates through widespread access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and education, reflecting the critical role of effective public health strategies (WHO, 2021).

MTCT of HIV has severe consequences for both mothers and children. Infected infants face a significantly higher risk of early death, developmental delays, and lifelong health complications. For mothers, the emotional and psychological burden of transmitting HIV to their child can be overwhelming. Beyond the immediate health impact, MTCT exacerbates the burden on healthcare systems and increases social stigma, particularly in resource-limited settings. The long-term economic cost of caring for children born with HIV or related complications further strains national health resources and development.

Prevention strategies for MTCT have been proven effective through the use of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) for both mother and child, alongside elective cesarean sections and safe infant feeding practices. Timely initiation of ART during pregnancy, coupled with adherence to treatment regimens, can reduce the risk of transmission to below 5%. Moreover, counseling and testing of pregnant women, particularly in high-risk areas, are vital components of prevention. Effective antenatal care, education on the benefits of ART, and support for breastfeeding practices also play a pivotal role in reducing MTCT.

The Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) refers to a series of interventions aimed at preventing the transmission of HIV from an HIV-positive mother to her child during pregnancy, labor, delivery, or breastfeeding. PMTCT programs include the administration of antiretroviral drugs to mothers and infants, safe delivery practices, and counseling on infant feeding. When implemented appropriately, these interventions significantly reduce the risk of transmission, allowing for healthier outcomes for both mother and child.

The implementation of PMTCT programs has led to remarkable improvements in global HIV transmission rates. These programs have not only saved countless lives but have also contributed to the reduction of the stigma associated with HIV. Additionally, PMTCT programs empower women with the knowledge and resources needed to protect their children from HIV while ensuring



maternal health. The benefits extend to communities by decreasing the social and economic burden of HIV-related illnesses, thus fostering healthier, more sustainable societies. Despite the challenges, continued investment in PMTCT education and outreach is key to eradicating MTCT globally.

The practical challenge lies in ensuring that pregnant women, particularly those in underserved or resource-limited settings, possess adequate knowledge about PMTCT interventions. Education plays a crucial role in empowering these women to seek timely healthcare, adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and adopt safer breastfeeding practices. However, barriers such as limited access to health education, stigma associated with HIV, and cultural misconceptions often impede the effectiveness of PMTCT programs. Addressing this challenge requires a deeper understanding of how education can influence knowledge and behavior among pregnant women (UNAIDS, 2020).

This study explores the effectiveness of PMTCT-focused educational programs in enhancing pregnant mothers' knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention for their babies. By assessing the impact of targeted education initiatives, this research aims to identify strategies that can bridge the gap between awareness and action, ultimately reducing MTCT rates. Through evaluating pre- and post-intervention knowledge levels, as well as behavioral intentions regarding adherence to preventive practices, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more effective PMTCT programs that can empower mothers to make informed decisions, reduce transmission risks, and improve maternal and child health outcomes.

Recent studies highlight the critical role of education in improving adherence to Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programs and reducing mother-to-child HIV transmission rates. Research conducted by Coovadia et al. (2021) emphasizes that comprehensive PMTCT education significantly improves maternal awareness and adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART), ultimately reducing HIV transmission during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Additionally, studies like those by Kurewa et al. (2020) demonstrate that women who received structured PMTCT education are more likely to attend antenatal care (ANC) services, adhere to ART regimens, and choose safer infant feeding practices compared to those who do not. These findings underscore the importance of integrating health education into maternal and child health programs, particularly in regions with high HIV prevalence.

However, despite these promising outcomes, recent studies also reveal persistent gaps and challenges. While PMTCT education plays a critical role in raising awareness and improving knowledge about HIV prevention among pregnant mothers, it is important to recognize that knowledge alone may not be sufficient for behavior change. For instance, a systematic review by Owolabi et al. (2022) found that although PMTCT education increases knowledge and awareness, it does not always lead to consistent behavioral changes in adherence to preventive measures. Factors such as stigma, cultural beliefs, and lack of male partner involvement often undermine the effectiveness of education initiatives. Similarly, a study by Gupta et al. (2021) highlighted that while health education interventions improve maternal knowledge, their reach remains limited in rural and marginalized communities due to inadequate healthcare infrastructure and resource



constraints. These findings point to the need for more targeted, context-specific approaches to PMTCT education.

Furthermore, most existing studies focus primarily on the delivery of educational content and its immediate impact on knowledge acquisition, often overlooking the long-term sustainability of behavioral changes. The lack of follow-up studies to evaluate how PMTCT education impacts maternal and infant health outcomes over time is a notable limitation. Additionally, few studies examine how different educational modalities, such as digital platforms or peer counseling, compare in terms of effectiveness. This study aims to bridge these gaps by evaluating not only the immediate impact of PMTCT education on maternal knowledge, but also its potential to foster sustained adherence to preventive measures, which are crucial in reducing mother-to-child HIV transmission. By doing so, it contributes to advancing the effectiveness and implementation of PMTCT programs, ultimately improving maternal and child health outcomes

While recent studies have demonstrated the importance of PMTCT education in reducing mother-to-child HIV transmission, several critical gaps remain in both empirical and theoretical aspects of the research. Empirically, most studies focus on immediate outcomes, such as increased knowledge or short-term adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART), without examining the long-term sustainability of these behaviors or their impact on maternal and infant health outcomes. This limits our understanding of whether PMTCT education can lead to sustained preventive practices beyond the intervention period. Moreover, studies often overlook the unique challenges faced by women in rural or resource-limited settings, where healthcare infrastructure and cultural barriers significantly affect program implementation and effectiveness.

Theoretically, existing research lacks a robust framework to connect education interventions with behavioral change mechanisms in PMTCT programs. While the role of knowledge improvement is well-documented, the pathways through which education influences maternal decision-making, healthcare-seeking behavior, and adherence to preventive measures remain underexplored. Additionally, there is limited exploration of how contextual factors, such as stigma, gender dynamics, and social support systems, mediate the relationship between education and behavioral outcomes. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by not only assessing the effectiveness of PMTCT education in increasing maternal knowledge but also exploring its potential to foster sustained adherence to PMTCT protocols, particularly in culturally and socially diverse settings. By addressing these theoretical and empirical shortcomings, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how education can be leveraged to achieve the long-term goals of PMTCT programs.

The primary research question guiding this study is how effective is PMTCT education in increasing pregnant mothers' knowledge and fostering sustained adherence to HIV/AIDS prevention measures for their babies? Based on the identified gaps, the research objectives are to evaluate the immediate impact of PMTCT education on maternal knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention. The novelty of this research lies in its dual focus: addressing both the immediate and sustained impacts of PMTCT education while integrating a context-sensitive analysis of socio-

cultural dynamics. By doing so, it offers a more holistic understanding of PMTCT program effectiveness and provides actionable insights for designing tailored interventions to improve maternal and child health outcomes in diverse settings. Furthermore, this research addresses a broader theoretical problem: how education can serve as a tool to overcome systemic and social barriers to healthcare access. By connecting knowledge dissemination to health outcomes, this study contributes to the ongoing global efforts to eliminate pediatric HIV and ensure healthier futures for mothers and their children. Its findings have implications for healthcare policymakers, educators, and practitioners working to design more effective and culturally sensitive PMTCT interventions.

METHODS

1. Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach to evaluate the effectiveness of PMTCT education in increasing maternal knowledge and adherence to HIV/AIDS prevention measures. The study utilized a pre-test and post-test design to assess the impact of the educational intervention.

2. Subjects of the Study

The research targeted pregnant women attending antenatal care (ANC) services in a primary healthcare facility located in a region with a high prevalence of HIV. Inclusion criteria included pregnant women aged 18–45 years, diagnosed with HIV, and attending PMTCT sessions. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure that the sample represented the target population. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Universitas Kadiiri.

3. Research Procedure

The study was conducted in three phases: baseline data collection, intervention, and follow-up. During the baseline phase, participants completed a structured questionnaire assessing their initial knowledge of PMTCT and HIV prevention practices. The intervention phase involved a standardized PMTCT education program delivered through interactive group sessions, supported by printed and audiovisual materials. Follow-up evaluations were conducted six weeks post-intervention to assess knowledge retention and adherence behaviors.

4. Materials and Instruments

The educational materials were developed based on WHO guidelines for PMTCT education and adapted for local cultural and linguistic contexts (WHO, 2021). Data collection instruments included a validated knowledge assessment questionnaire and a behavioral adherence scale adapted from the PMTCT Program Monitoring Tool (UNAIDS, 2020).



5. Data Collection

Data were collected at two points: pre-intervention (baseline) and post-intervention (follow-up). Trained researchers administered the questionnaires in face-to-face sessions to ensure clarity and consistency. Data on adherence behaviors were corroborated using patient health records and self-reported adherence logs.

6. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Paired t-tests were performed to compare pre- and post-intervention knowledge scores, while logistic regression analysis was used to identify factors influencing adherence behaviors. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. All data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0.

7. Ethical Considerations

All participants provided written informed consent before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The study adhered to ethical standards outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and received ethical clearance from Universitas Kadiri.

RESULTS

1. Characteristics of Participants

This study involved 30 pregnant women who participated in PMTCT education sessions. The demographic profile of participants is presented in table 1. The average age of participants was 27.8 years ($SD = 4.6$). More than half of the participants had a secondary education level (60%), and 65% reported prior awareness of PMTCT programs.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 30)	Percentage (%)
Age (mean $\pm$ SD)	27.8 $\pm$ 4.6	-
Education Level		
- Primary	6	20.0
- Secondary	18	60.0
- Higher	6	20.0
Awareness of PMTCT		
- Yes	19	65.0
- No	11	35.0

2. Knowledge Improvement

The PMTCT education sessions significantly improved participants' knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention. Prior to the intervention the average knowledge score was 42.5% ($SD = 11.7\%$), which increased to 80.3% ($SD = 8.9\%$) after the intervention, as shown in table 2. A paired ttt-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in knowledge scores ($t(29)=10.85$,

$p < 0.001$ ($t(29) = 10.85$, $p < 0.001$ ($t(29) = 10.85$, $p < 0.001$). The effect size, measured using Cohen's d , was 2.01, indicating a very large impact.

Table 2. Knowledge Scores Pre- and Post-Intervention

Measurement Timepoint	Mean (%)	SD	t	p	Effect Size (d)
Pre-Intervention	42.5	11.7			
Post-Intervention	80.3	8.9	10.85	< 0.001	2.01

3. Behavioral Changes

In addition to improving knowledge, participants' intentions to adhere to PMTCT protocols also increased. Prior to the intervention, only 40% of participants expressed intentions to fully comply with PMTCT guidelines, including ART usage and safer infant feeding practices. After the intervention, this figure rose to 85%. Logistic regression analysis showed that higher post-intervention knowledge scores were strongly associated with increased adherence intentions ($OR = 5.6$, 95% $CI = 2.3-13.4$, $p < 0.001$ ($OR = 5.6$, 95% $CI = 2.3-13.4$, $p < 0.001$ ($OR = 5.6$, 95% $CI = 2.3-13.4$, $p < 0.001$).

The findings demonstrated that PMTCT education is highly effective in increasing pregnant mothers' knowledge and fostering positive intentions to adhere to HIV prevention practices. These results highlight the importance of structured educational interventions in supporting PMTCT programs and reducing the risk of mother-to-child HIV transmission.

DISCUSSION

The participants in this study were 30 pregnant mothers attending antenatal care services in a resource-limited setting. These women, primarily from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, were selected to assess how tailored PMTCT education could influence their knowledge and intentions to adopt preventive measures. The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of PMTCT education in significantly increasing pregnant mothers' knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention and fostering their intentions to adhere to preventive practices. This aligns with previous research, such as that by Gupta et al. (2021), which also highlighted the positive impact of culturally adapted PMTCT education on improving maternal knowledge and attitudes toward HIV prevention. The results align with previous studies, such as those by Coovadia et al. (2021) and Kurewa et al. (2020), which highlighted the role of targeted education in improving maternal awareness and adherence to PMTCT protocols. Additionally, a study by Gupta et al. (2021) found that community-based, culturally adapted PMTCT education significantly improved knowledge and intention to follow prevention measures, similar to the findings of this study. Furthermore, research by Owolabi et al. (2022) demonstrated that PMTCT education, even in resource-limited settings, effectively increases both knowledge and behavior change, further supporting the need for context-specific interventions. The substantial increase in knowledge scores and behavioral intentions observed in this study underscores the critical role of structured and culturally tailored educational



interventions in reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Interpretation in the Context of Previous Studies

The significant improvement in knowledge scores post-intervention ($t(29)=10.85$, $p<.001$) ($t(29)=10.85$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=2.01$) reflects the efficacy of integrating interactive and localized content into PMTCT education programs. This finding is consistent with Owolabi et al. (2022), who emphasized that culturally sensitive educational materials contribute to better engagement and knowledge retention among participants. However, unlike some previous studies that reported knowledge improvements without corresponding behavioral changes, this study observed a notable shift in behavioral intentions, with adherence rates rising from 40% to 85%. This indicates that combining knowledge dissemination with practical guidance and support strategies can lead to both immediate and sustained outcomes.

1. Implications of the Findings

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. First, they highlighted the importance of integrating PMTCT education into routine antenatal care services to ensure that all pregnant women, regardless of socioeconomic or educational background, can be benefited. Second, the results underscore the need for involving family members, particularly male partners, in PMTCT education sessions, as emphasized in participants' qualitative feedback. Addressing stigma and promoting family support could enhance adherence rates further, as demonstrated in other studies (Gupta et al., 2021).

2. Broader Context and Future Directions

From a broader perspective, these findings contribute to the global efforts to eliminate pediatric HIV by highlighting the value of education as a low-cost, scalable intervention. While this study focused on immediate knowledge gains and behavioral intentions, future research should investigate long-term adherence to PMTCT protocols and health outcomes for both mothers and their children. Additionally, exploring the use of digital platforms or mobile applications for PMTCT education could address accessibility challenges in rural or underserved areas.

Further studies could also assess the impact of multi-stakeholder engagement, involving healthcare providers, community leaders, and policymakers, to create a supportive ecosystem for PMTCT implementation. By addressing these areas, future research can build on the current findings to develop more comprehensive and sustainable strategies for HIV prevention in maternal and child health.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study align with the expectations outlined in the introduction, fulfilling the aim of assessing the effectiveness of PMTCT education. The results demonstrate that structured PMTCT education significantly enhances maternal knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention and fosters positive intentions to adhere to preventive practices. This supports the purpose of the study, which is to bridge the gap between awareness and action, ultimately reducing the risk of mother-to-

child transmission (MTCT) through informed behavioral choices. As hypothesized, the educational intervention not only improved knowledge scores but also contributed to increased behavioral intentions, addressing key gaps in maternal engagement with PMTCT protocols. This compatibility between the study objectives, results, and discussion underscores the robustness of the research approach and its relevance to ongoing efforts in HIV prevention.

1. Research Prospects

Building on these findings, future research can explore the long-term sustainability of PMTCT education's impact on maternal and child health outcomes. Longitudinal studies tracking adherence rates, HIV transmission rates, and infant health over time would provide deeper insights into the enduring effects of such interventions. Additionally, investigating the effectiveness of alternative delivery methods, such as digital platforms, peer support groups, or mobile health applications, could expand the reach and scalability of PMTCT programs, particularly in rural or resource-constrained settings.

2. Application Prospects

The application prospects of this research extend beyond individual knowledge improvement to broader public health strategies. By integrating PMTCT education into routine antenatal care, healthcare systems can ensure that a larger proportion of pregnant women receive timely and accurate information, thereby reducing pediatric HIV transmission rates. The inclusion of family members, especially male partners, in educational sessions, as highlighted in this study, represents another practical step toward fostering a supportive environment for adherence to PMTCT protocols.

Moreover, the insights gained from this research can inform policy-making and resource allocation for maternal and child health programs. Tailored interventions that address cultural and social barriers, combined with robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, can maximize the effectiveness of PMTCT initiatives.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that PMTCT education is a highly effective tool for empowering pregnant mothers to take proactive steps in preventing HIV transmission to their babies. Its implications for research, practice, and policy offer a promising path forward in the global fight against pediatric HIV. By building on these results, future studies can further refine and expand the impact of PMTCT programs, ultimately contributing to healthier outcomes for mothers and children worldwide.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the **Universitas Kadiri** for providing financial support that made this research possible. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the **Universitas Kadiri**, whose resources and infrastructure greatly facilitated the execution of this study. Finally, the authors extend their deepest appreciation to the study participants for their willingness to contribute to this research, without whom this study would not have been possible.



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