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Research Article

GENERAL POPULATION AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGAN DONATION IN ASEER REGION, SAUDI ARABIA: SURVEY STUDY

¹Shahid Aziz, ²Fahad Hassan AL- Amri, ³Mohammed AL-Zydy, ⁴Ibrahim Nasser Asiri,
⁵Mohammed Nasser Asiri, ⁶Salman Qassim Mashiakhi, ⁷Abdulrahman mohammed alsohaimi ,
⁸Mohammed Abdullah M ALrajhi.

¹Assistant Professor of Medicine, college of Medicine, King Khalid University, P O Box : 641, Pin Code: 61421, Abha, Saudi Arabia, Email : shahidaziz123@gmail.com, saziz@kku.edu.sa, ²Medical student, Affiliation: King Khalid University, [Email:alfahadhassan12@gmail.com](mailto:alfahadhassan12@gmail.com), ³Medical student, King Khalid University., ⁴Medical student, King Khalid University, ⁵Medical student, King Khalid University., ⁶Medical student, King Khalid University., ⁷Medical student, King Khalid University, ⁸Medical student, King Khalid University.

Abstract:

Background: Organ donation is when a person allows an organ of theirs to be removed, legally, either by consent while the donor is alive or after death with the assent of the next of kin. Donation may be for research, or , more commonly healthy tissues and organs maybe donated to be transplanted into another person, who needs organ transplantation to achieve a clinically healthy status.

Aim: To assess general population awareness and attitude regarding organ donation in Aseer region, Saudi Arabia.

Methodology: A descriptive population based cross-sectional survey was conducted targeting general population in Aseer region who were aged 18 years or more and have an access to social websites. Data was collected using pre-structured questionnaire by the researchers after intensive literature review and experts' consultations. The questionnaire sections included were, participant's demographic data including age, gender, education, and marital status. Sections II and III of the questionnaires considered knowledge and attitude regarding organ donation.

Results: A total sample of 350 respondents were included in the study with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years old and mean age of 28.5 ± 9.8 years. Exactly, 93.4% of the sampled population knew about organ donation. About 28% of the screen population, defined organ donation as removal of the tissues of the human body for the purpose of transplantation to another person. About 24% of the general population screened, would like to donate generally while 17.4% refused to donate.

Conclusions & recommendations: In conclusion, the participants showed acceptable level of awareness regarding organ donation especially for the aim of organ donation and its rules and legislations. Also, Participants were mainly of positive attitude towards organ donation for any person regardless of his/her age, religion, mental status, or health status.

Keywords: Organ donation, Organ transportation, Awareness, Attitude, barriers.

Corresponding author:

Shahid Aziz,

Assistant Professor of Medicine, college of Medicine, King Khalid University,
P O Box : 641, Pin Code: 61421, Abha, Saudi Arabia,
Email : shahidaziz123@gmail.com, saziz@kku.edu.sa.

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INTRODUCTION:

was conducted targeting general population in Aseer region who were aged 18 years or more and have an access to social websites. Asser is in the southern region of Saudi Arabia located in the southwest of the country that is named after the Aseer tribe. A total sample of 350 participants were included based on previous study conducted in Pakistan by Saleem et al (12) which detected that 60% of the participants were knowledgeable regarding organ donation and with precision of 5% at 95% confidence level, a total sample of 370 participants are required for the current research. Data were collected using pre-structured questionnaire by the researchers after intensive literature review and experts' consultations. The questionnaire sections were participant's demographic data including age, gender, education, and marital status. Sections II and III considered knowledge and attitude regarding organ donation which were assessed using tool formed of 37 items some for awareness and others for attitude. Knowledge of the respondents was assessed through questions regarding meanings of the terms "organ donation", awareness of donation by living people as well as cadavers, risks involved in organ donation, and the sources of information for their knowledge. Attitudes of the respondents regarding organ donation was determined through questions regarding opinions on issues such as the willingness to donate organs in the future, influence of religion on attitude towards organ donation, allowance for incentive-based organ donation, and factors influencing choice of recipient for future donation. Practices were measured by enquiring about actual donation of any organ and any untoward effects observed by individuals in the process that they attribute to organ donation (12). The sample units were responders for online questionnaire that were available then data was extracted consecutively till reaching the required sample size.

Data analysis

After data were collected it was revised, coded and fed to statistical software IBM SPSS version 20. The given graphs were constructed using Microsoft excel software. All statistical analysis was done using two tailed tests and alpha error of 0.05. P value less than or equal to 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. Frequency and percent were used to describe the frequency distribution of personal data, knowledge and attitude items.

RESULTS:

A total sample of 350 respondents were included in

Health-related behavior in early life influences later risks for lifestyle-related disorders. It is therefore important to investigate health behaviors among young people. University students represent a major segment of the young adult population health-related behavior in early life influences later risks for lifestyle-related disorders. It is therefore important to investigate health behaviors among young people. University students represent a major segment of the young adult population Organ donation is when a person allows an organ of theirs to be removed, legally, either by consent while the donor is alive or after death with the assent of the next of kin. Donation may be for research, or, more commonly healthy tissues may be donated to be transplanted into another person(1,2). Common transplantations include: kidney, heart, liver, pancreas, intestines, lungs, bones, bone marrow, skin, and corneas(3). Some organs and tissues can be donated by living donors, such as a kidney or part of the liver, part of the pancreas, part of the lungs or part of the intestines [3] but most donations occur after the donor has died(4). As of February 2, 2018, there were 115,085 people waiting for life-saving organ transplants in the US.[4] Of these, 74,897 people were active candidates waiting for a donor(5). While views of organ donation are positive there is a large gap between the numbers of registered donors compared to those awaiting organ donations on a global level. Organ transplantation has recently drawn significant attention due to ethical considerations for wide range debate in many countries including Saudi Arabia. Emerging concerns intertwined with it include the burgeoning trend of transplantation, lack of rules and standards to govern it and exploitation of human rights (6-8).

Many public awareness surveys showed that more than 95% of respondents were aware of organ donation and that 60% to 70% of them were willing to donate, organ shortages still prevail worldwide (9, 10). The unfamiliar and the unknown nearly always trigger fear in people. Organ transplantation is one such phenomenon. Few people know what organ transplantation really entails with the result that even fewer people carry organ donor cards and pledge their organs after their death (11).

This cross-sectional survey was conducted to scrutinize the attitude, and knowledge of our local population regarding organ donation and to identify any causes of negative attitudes regarding donation.

METHODOLOGY:

A descriptive population based cross-sectional survey

status, 48% of participants can donate to any person regardless of his/her health status while 29.4% preferred physically fit recipient. Exactly 56% of the participants preferred donation for persons with the same religion while 23.4% didn't care about it. Regarding factors affecting organ donation decision, 34% of the participants enquired about health status, 24.3% reported relation to patient, 10.9% reportedly were concerned about respect and dealing ethically with the organ for legal donation purposes.

Figure (1) illustrates the source of information regarding organ donation. Internet and online resources were the most frequently recorded (57.7%) followed with mass media (41.7%), friends (36%), doctors (29.1%) while radio was recorded among 16.9% of the study participants.

Finally, on relating sample awareness regarding organ donation with their characteristics, (Table 4) it was clear that 97.3% of females were aware regarding donation compared to 90.5% of males with recorded statistical significance ($P = 0.012$). As for mean of organ donation, it was given correctly and interpreted significantly higher among those who know about organ donation (96%) compare to 84.2% of others who defined it incorrectly. About 95% of those who recorded risk of organ donation were aware of it compared to 89.5% of those who didn't know about its risk ($P = 0.050$). All other factors were insignificantly associated with organ donation awareness.

DISCUSSION:

Organ transplantation is the most preferred treatment modality for end stage organ disease and organ failures (13). Many organs such as the kidney, liver and cornea are commonly transplanted to human recipients. The need for the organ transplants is high and the gap between organs available for transplantation and number of individuals waiting for a transplant is progressively increasing globally (14).

In our cross-sectional study of the general population's awareness and attitude toward organ donation in Aseer region of southwestern Saudi Arabia was done among the local adult population aged between 18 to 60 years and it was determined that 93.4% of the study participants had awareness of organ donation in this region and out of which 57.4% were male and 42.6% were female participants. Adequate knowledge and awareness regarding organ donation were found to be more among those participants who belonged to the age group of less than or equal to 30 years, male gender, educated up to university level, and those whose marital status was single. Also, study participants of educational status up to higher secondary and university level were

the study with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years old and mean age of 28.5 ± 9.8 years. Male respondents were 57.4% of the sample and 65.1% were university graduates while 45.1% were married (Table 1).

As for population awareness regarding organ donation (Table 2), 93.4% of the sampled population know about organ donation. Regarding consent for living donor 73.4% of the population recorded consent is the right of donor himself. For dead donor, 72.9% of the participants told it's the right of his family. About 45% of participants recorded that Parents / guardians can make substitute decision making for mentally disabled persons in the regard of organ donation while 32.6% did not know. Obligated Promotion for organ donation was the answer of 68% of the participants and 45.5% of those who refused promotion was due to probability of leading to organ trade / violation of rights. On asking about mean of organ donation, 28.3% told it is removal of the tissues of the human body for the purpose of transplantation to another person and 10.9% reported it is removal of the tissues of the human body from a cadaver while 54.3% selected all answers. Saving someone's life was the most selected aim of organ donation (96%). About 51% of the participants agreed on organ donation is risky. Regarding risk, 18% body weakness, 16.3% recorded infection, 8.4% pain while 47.2% selected all of them. Regarding legislation, 71.7% of the participants know about presence of legislations to regulate organ donation, 29.5% know about international legislations and 14.3% know about local legislation. As for organs that can be donated, 69.7% knew about kidney, 48.3% knew about blood, 28.9% for heart, while liver was reported by 75.4% of the participants.

Considering population attitude towards organ donation (Table 3), 42.9% of the participants would only like to donate under special circumstances and 24% would like to donate generally while 17.4% refuse to donate. Regarding religious restrictions for organ donation, 69.7% of the participants know about it. About 57% of the participants told about they believe that there is a danger that donated organs could be misused, abused or misappropriated sometimes while 5.1% told it is all the time. On asking about to whom you can donate, 40.9% told about family member and 47% told anyone. Also 54.9% of the participants don't care about age of recipient while 28.6% preferred young aged recipient. As for mentality of recipients, 46% of the participants told they can donate to recipients regardless of mental status and 49.4% preferred donation for a psychologically normal person. Regarding health

also, which include reporting the adequacy of awareness and knowledge and the nature of attitude toward organ donation is one of the important strengths of the study. Also, a good response rate is an added strength of this study.

Organ donation is emerging as an important topic of public health awareness with its importance magnified by an ever-increasing gap between the requirement and actual status of donation. There are certain misconceptions and sociocultural beliefs concerning organ donation which require redressal via "awareness campaigns". The involvement of health care providers in such campaigns at the level of primary health-care centers is an important and initial point of care which is closest to the general population in any community. Also, since the registration process for organ donation is complex and cumbersome, therefore its simplification and easy access to the registration facility at the primary level of health-care needs to be done to avoid hinderance in registration for organ donation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In conclusion, the participants showed acceptable level of awareness regarding organ donation especially for the aim of organ donation and its rules and legislations. Also, participants were mainly of positive attitude towards organ donation for any person regardless of age, religion, mental status, or health status. Doctors' role as a source of information was poor as it was the fourth in order while internet and mass media played the highest role. More awareness regarding organ donation importance, new and more safe technologies, religion based rules should be provided through health education programs, physicians should pay more time to explain to potential donors and recipients, explaining to them in-depth from a medical point of view, is also recommended. Also showing samples of cases who donated organs should be put under focus through the media to improve population attitude and overcome their fears.

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found to have a significantly positive attitude toward organ donation, which corroborates with many previously done studies that identified these factors of higher or highly educated men and women (higher literacy rate) and individuals with higher socio-economic status were identified to be strong predictors for higher levels of organ donation awareness (15,16,17).

A probable explanation of the relatively higher level of awareness in this study is the increasing number of organ donation awareness campaigns which have been instrumental as one of the key factors in improving the awareness (18).

Most of the previously done studies regarding awareness of organ donation strategies in Saudi Arabia have ceded lower levels of awareness in comparison to most of the similar research studies done in other parts of the world (19,20,21).

However, in comparison to the previous studies done in the country, the increased level of organ donation knowledge and awareness in our study yields a positive trend analysis concerning organ donation both among living potential donors and next of kin(family) of deceased potential donors. This reflects a small but a definitive improvement of organ donation awareness in our study.

The prerequisites for the success of any organ transplantation program depends upon awareness, positive attitude of the general public toward organ donation and consent by the next of kin(relatives) for organ donation in the event of brain death (22).

The lower rate of willingness or non-willingness toward organ donation among some religions is primarily attributable to the religious beliefs to the tune of one-third of the respondents. Our observation in this regard are further supported by the research conducted in Pakistan, (23) where religious beliefs were found to be a major deterrent for many people from expressing a motivation to donate organs. This observation is consistent with that of a study done earlier in Saudi Arabia, (24) which revealed that concerns about not receiving adequate healthcare after organ donation was the primary reason for lack of willingness to donate.

Limitations of this study were its cross-sectional nature which precludes the strength of association between awareness regarding organ donation and various sociodemographic factors and also the modest sample size of this study which future such studies will need to enhance the sample size to assess the extent to which the results of this study can be generalized. However, this study has few strengths

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Table (1): Personal data of participants regarding organ donation in Aseer region, Saudi Arabia

Personal data	No	%	
Age in years	18-	63	18.0%
	20-	148	42.3%
	30-	71	20.3%
	40+	68	19.4%
Gender	Male	201	57.4%
	Female	149	42.6%
Qualification	Illiterate	14	4.0%
	Intermediate	48	13.7%
	Secondary	60	17.1%
	University	228	65.1%
Marital status	Single	192	54.9%
	Married	158	45.1%

Table (2): Population awareness regarding organ donation in Aseer region, Saudi Arabia

Awareness regarding donation		No	%
Knowledge about organ donation	No / don't know	23	6.6%
	Yes	327	93.4%
For living donation, who should give consent	Donor him self	257	73.4%
	Family of donor	32	9.1%
	Friends of donor	10	2.9%
	Doctor of donor	51	14.6%
For donation after death, who should give consent	Family of donor	255	72.9%
	Friends of donor	2	.6%
	Doctor of donor	28	8.0%
	Donor before death	14	4.0%
	No one	51	14.6%
Parents / guardians can make substitute decision making for mentally disabled persons in the regard of organ donation	Yes	157	44.9%
	No	79	22.6%
	Don't know	114	32.6%
Organ donation should be promoted	Yes	238	68.0%
	No	49	14.0%
	Don't know	63	18.0%
If no, why	Fear that organs could be wasted / mistreated	9	8.2%
	Would not want to be cut open or mutilated	3	2.7%
	Religious beliefs	32	29.1%
	Family/parent refusal	1	.9%
	Harmful for the donor	14	12.7%
	Fear of postoperative pain	1	.9%
	Can lead to organ trade / violation of rights	50	45.5%

Table (2): continued.....

Awareness regarding donation, continued		No	%
	Removal of the tissues of the human body from a cadaver	38	10.9%
	Removal of the tissues of the human body from a living donor	20	5.7%
Meaning of organ donation	Removal of the tissues of the human body for the purpose of transplantation to another person	99	28.3%
	Transfer of cell/ova/fetus/sperm	3	.9%
	All of the above	190	54.3%
Aim of organ donation	To save someone's life	336	96.0%
	Out of compassion/sympathy	6	1.7%
	For money	5	1.4%
	As a 'responsibility'	3	.9%
Organ donation involve any risks	Yes	178	50.9%
	No	48	13.7%
	Don't know	124	35.4%
If risky, mention	Infection	29	16.3%
	Bodily weakness	32	18.0%
	Anxiety and depression	3	1.7%
	Pain	15	8.4%
	Bleeding	3	1.7%
	All of the above	84	47.2%
	None of the above	12	6.7%
Are there legislations for organ donations	Yes	251	71.7%
	No	21	6.0%
	Don't know	78	22.3%
Know about legislation with regards to organ donation	Local legislation	36	14.3%
	International legislation	74	29.5%
	Don't know	141	56.2%
Organs that can be donated	None	6	1.7%
	Kidney	244	69.7%
	Blood	169	48.3%
	Heart	101	28.9%
	Eyes	64	18.3%
	Liver	264	75.4%
	Skin	60	17.1%
	Bone marrow	106	30.3%
	Lungs	87	24.9%

Table (3): Population attitude towards organ donation in Aseer region, Saudi Arabia

Attitude regarding organ donation	No	%	
Attitude towards the possibility of your own organs being used for donation	Would never consider donating an donate	61	17.4%
	Will think about it	84	24.0%
	Would only like to donate under special circumstances	150	42.9%
	Would definitely want to donate irrespective of circumstances	55	15.7%
Your religion allows organ donation	Don't know	97	27.7%
	No	9	2.6%
	Yes	244	69.7%
you believe that there is a danger that donated organs could be misused, abused or misappropriated	Never	104	29.7%
	Sometimes	199	56.9%
	Most of the time	29	8.3%
	All the time	18	5.1%
Would you like to donate your organs	Family member	143	40.9%
	Friends	3	.9%
	Any one	167	47.7%
	Don't want to donate	37	10.6%
Age of recipient	Don't care	192	54.9%
	Young age	100	28.6%
	Middle age	35	10.0%
	Old age	23	6.6%
Mentality of recipient	Normal person	173	49.4%
	Mentally retarded	16	4.6%
	Don't care	161	46.0%
Health status of recipient	Physically fit person	103	29.4%
	Physically unfit persons	79	22.6%
	Don't care	168	48.0%
Religion of recipient	Same religion	196	56.0%
	Different religion	72	20.6%
	Don't care	82	23.4%
Factor holds the greatest importance near you when donating an organ	Health status	121	34.6%
	Relation to the person	85	24.3%
	Religion	23	6.6%
	Assurance of the respectful treatment of the organ	38	10.9%
	Age of the person	11	3.1%
	None of all	72	20.6%

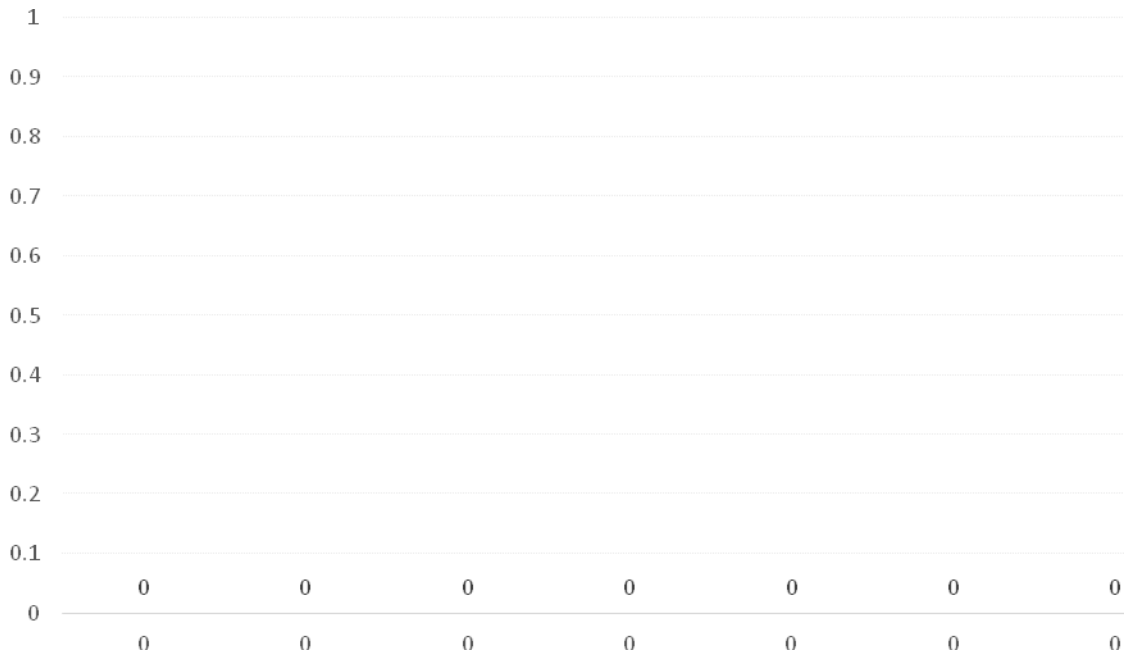


Figure (1): source of knowledge regarding organ donation among general population, Aseer, Saudi Arabia

Table (4): Distribution of awareness with participants' data regarding organ donation in Aseer region, Saudi Arabia

Factors		Know about organ donation				P
		No / don't know		Yes		
		No	%	No	%	
Age in years	18-	2	3.2%	61	96.8%	.090
	20-	14	9.5%	134	90.5%	
	30-	6	8.5%	65	91.5%	
	40+	1	1.5%	67	98.5%	
Gender	Male	19	9.5%	182	90.5%	.012*
	Female	4	2.7%	145	97.3%	
Qualification	Illiterate	2	14.3%	12	85.7%	.267
	Intermediate	5	10.4%	43	89.6%	
	Secondary	5	8.3%	55	91.7%	
	University	11	4.8%	217	95.2%	
attitude towards the possibility of your own organs being used for donation	Would never consider donating an donate	6	9.8%	55	90.2%	.258
	Will think about it	4	4.8%	80	95.2%	
	Would only like to donate under other special circumstances	12	8.0%	138	92.0%	
	Would definitely want to donate irrespective of circumstances	1	1.8%	54	98.2%	
Would you like to donate your organs	Family member	8	5.6%	135	94.4%	.200
	Friends	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	
	Any one	11	6.6%	156	93.4%	
	Don't want to donate	4	10.8%	33	89.2%	

Age of recipient	Don't know	16	8.3%	176	91.7%	.353
	Young age	3	3.0%	97	97.0%	
	Middle age	2	5.7%	33	94.3%	
	Old age	2	8.7%	21	91.3%	
Mentality of recipient	Normal person	10	5.8%	163	94.2%	.826
	Mentally retargeted	1	6.3%	15	93.8%	
	Don't care	12	7.5%	149	92.5%	
Health status of recipient	Physically fit person	5	4.9%	98	95.1%	.698
	Physically unfit persons	6	7.6%	73	92.4%	
	Don't care	12	7.1%	156	92.9%	
Religion of recipient	Same religion	11	5.6%	185	94.4%	.475
	Different religion	7	9.7%	65	90.3%	
	Don't care	5	6.1%	77	93.9%	
Meaning of organ donation	Removal of the tissues of the human body from a cadaver	6	15.8%	32	84.2%	.048*
	Removal of the tissues of the human body from a living donor	3	15.0%	17	85.0%	
	Removal of the tissues of the human body for the purpose of transplantation to another person	4	4.0%	95	96.0%	
	Transfer of cell/ova/fetus/sperm	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	
	All of the above	10	5.3%	180	94.7%	
Aim of organ donation	To save someone's life	22	6.5%	314	93.5%	.552
	Out of compassion/sympathy	0	0.0%	6	100.0%	
	For money	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	
	As a 'responsibility'	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	
Organ donation involve any risks	Yes	9	5.1%	169	94.9%	.050*
	No	1	2.1%	47	97.9%	
	Don't know	13	10.5%	111	89.5%	

* $P \leq 0.05$ (significant)