

Dismantling the Silence: An IPA Inquiry into Clinical Alienation, Digital Friction, and Preventive Cancer Stigma among Gen Z Indian Women

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Abstract

Many young women in urban India are still reluctant to participate in preventive health measures, despite the fact that HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening have been shown to be successful in avoiding cervical cancer. In order to investigate how Generation Z women comprehend and overcome obstacles to cervical cancer prevention in a modern Indian urban setting, this qualitative study uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The results show a complicated interaction between institutional, social, digital, and personal factors. Participants reported a recurring conflict between knowledge of cancer risk and a propensity to steer clear of discussions or preventative measures. It was challenging to emphasise preventative treatment since cultural discomfort with sexual and reproductive health sometimes encouraged fear, shame, and silence. Social media turned out to be a double-edged sword: although it made people more aware about HPV vaccination, it also fuelled suspicion, confusion, and doubt about the safety of the vaccine. Conflicting messages on the internet overwhelmed participants, and many of them completely stopped interacting with health-related content. The idea that hospital settings are judgemental and exclusive was a particularly important issue. Many participants believed that talks of reproductive health neglected unmarried young women since gynaecological treatment was primarily focused around marriage, pregnancy, and fertility. Engagement with screening and vaccination programs was further inhibited by worries about being questioned, judged, or morally examined when seeking routine reproductive healthcare. These results emphasise the necessity of cervical cancer preventive programs that go beyond biological messaging. The chapter makes the case for peer-led, youth-centered, stigma-free strategies in higher education settings that normalise preventative healthcare and enable young women to make health-related decisions without worrying about social stigma or condemnation.

Keywords

Cervical cancer prevention, HPV vaccination, Generation Z women, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Preventive health behaviour.