



A Study of Knowledge about Reproductive Health in High School Girls in Chennai

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Abstract

WHO defines adolescence as the age between 10-19 years. In India it is 10-18 years of age which constitute about 1/5 th of the population- 200 million. 20% of the world's population constitute adolescence among which 85% of them live in developing countries.

Adolescent problems constitute a bulk of morbidity which is greatly unrecognised and uncared of- mainly because in countries like India its still a taboo to talk about reproductive health problems. A large variety of morbidity like- nutritional deficiency, menstrual disorders, RTI's, HIV/AIDS are serious problems which complicate the existing problems like teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortions.

Teenage pregnancies- **10-15%** of the total pregnancies, and illegal abortion rate is alarmingly increasing.

Keywords: Reproductive Health, School Girls

Introduction

Urban teenage pregnancy- 8.7%, rural teenage pregnancy- 19%, in chennai city- **16%** therefore it is very important for implementing new programs to increase reproductive health knowledge among the adolescence.

Within the framework of the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health , which states that complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the

absence of disease or infirmity, reproductive health is a very important factor.

One interpretation of this implies that men and women ought to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of birth control.

Therefore every women has the right to have all the knowledge about this period from the time of her pubertal changes and the consequences of his or her actions, which unfortunately is not the case in India.

This study is to know the knowledge of puberty , menstruation among the students and to promote the need of sex education in our academics.

Objective

A) To study the knowledge about reproductive health among 8,9,10 girls in chennai selected schools.

B) To implement this knowledge for formulating effective sex education programs in schools and colleges.

Material and Method

This is a cross sectional study done in the month of March and April of 2017. All the high schools were listed and 3 were randomly selected. All the students who were present on the day of the study- 8,9,10 th standard girls are included in this study

The data was collected in the month of March and April of 2017 using a pre designed, pre structured and self

administered questionnaires. Totally 280 girls participated in this study.

After taking permission from the school authorities- the class teachers and the students were explained about the objective of this study, confidentiality of the answers and informed consent was taken.

All the responses were entered in microsoft excel and analysed.

Results

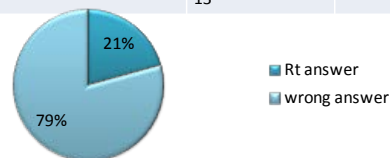
SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE(N-280)	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
STANDARD		
8th	82	29.2%
9th	111	39.6%
10th	87	31%
TYPE OF FAMILY		
NUCLEAR	100	35.7%
JOINT	156	55.7%
3 rd GENERATION	23	8%
MOTHER'S EDUCATION		
ILLITERATE	246	87.8%
LITERATE	34	11.7%

GENERAL QUESTIONS

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT	YES	NO
REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS	50 (17%)	230 (82.3%)
AGE OF MARRIAGE IN GIRLS (18-23 YEARS)	274 (97.8%)	6 (2.2%)
NUMBER OF CHILDREN A COUPLE CAN HAVE ACCORDING TO FAMILY WELFARE PROGRAM (2)	211 (75.3%)	69 (24.6%)
NUMBER OF YEARS OF GAP BETWEEN TWO CHILDREN(3 YEARS)	170 (60.7%)	110 (39.3%)

Knowledge about Puberty and Pubertal Changes

QUESTION	RIGHT ANSWER	NOT ANSWERED
WHAT IS PUBERTY?	58 (20.7%)	222 (79.2%)
THE DIFFERENT ANSWERS WERE		
1)CHANGES DURING 10-19 YEARS OF LIFE	30	
2)DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY SEXUAL CHARACTERS	10	
3)PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES OCCURS	5	
4)MENARCHE	13	



79.2% of the students didn't answer or answered about what is puberty.

QUESTION	NUMBER	PERCENT
WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL CHANGES IN A GIRL DURING PUBERTY?		
1)PUBIC HAIR GROWTH	10	3.5%
2)BREAST ENLARGEMENT	8	2.8%
3)MENARCHE	36	12.8%
4)ALL OF THE ABOVE	200	71.4%
5)I DON'T KNOW	26	7.5%

71.4% had the right knowledge about the physical changes in girls during the puberty. Among the 8, 9, 10 th students 8 th students had the least knowledge of it.

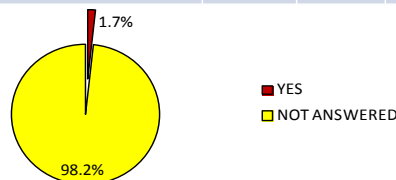
QUESTION	NUMBER	PERCENT
NAME FEW PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DURING PUBERTY?		
1) DEPRESSED AND SCARED	64	22.8%
2) INCREASED ANGER	38	13.5%
3) ANXIOUS AND FEARFUL DURING THE CYCLES	24	8.5%
4) I DON'T WANT TO MENTION	154	55%

Nearly 55% of the students didn't want to mention about the psychological changes during puberty.

QUESTION	NUMBER	PERCENT
WHY DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH PUBERTAL CHANGES?		
1) CHILDHOOD DEVELOPEMENTAL PROBLEMS	19	6.7%
2) NO PROPER GUIDANCE ABOUT THE CHANGES DURING PUBERTY	24	8.5%
3) FORCED INTO INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL ACTIVITY DUE TO LACK OF CONFIDENCE AND INCREASED FEAR	25	8.9%
4) ALLOF THE ABOVE	182	65%
5) I DON'T KNOW	30	10.7%

65% of them thought the due to childhood developemental problems, no proper guidance about the pubertal changes, forced into inappropriate sexual activities being causes from them to not to be able to deal with the pubertal changes

QUESTION	YES	NO	NOT ANSWERED
DO ADOLESCENCE GET INDULGED IN SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION?	5 (1.7%)	0	275 (98.2%)
IF YES WHY?			
PEER PRESSURE – ALL 5 GAVE THIS AS THE ANSWER			



When questioned about the smoking, alcohol and drug addiction nearly 98% didn't answer about it but the 5 who answered all gave peer pressure as the answer.

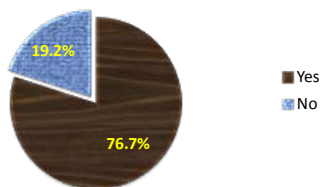
Knowledge About Menstruation And The Practices

WHAT IS THE AGE OF MENARCHE?	11-15 YEARS	>18 YEARS	<10 YEARS
	167 (59.6%)	80 (28.5%)	33 (11.7%)

DID YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MENTRUATION BEFORE MENARCHE?	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
	25 (8.9%)	242 (86.4%)	13 (4.6%)

Nealy 86.4% of the students had no right knowledge about the menstruation before menarche.

DOES MENSTRUAL CYCLE INTERFERE WITH YOUR ROUTINE ACTIVITY LIKE ATTENDING TO SCHOOL?	YES	NO
	215 (76.7%)	54 (19.2%)
IF YES THE FOLLOWING WERE THE MOST COMMON ANSWERS		
SEVERE LOWER ABDOMEN PAIN	98	
HEAVY FLOW	50	
SEVERE BACK PAIN AND WHITE DISCHARGE PER VAGINA	67	



Nearly 76% of students had severe lower abdominal pain, WDPV, heavy menstrual flow during the cycles

WHAT IS THE MATERIAL YOU USE DURING THE MENSTRUAL CYCLES	CLOTH	PAD
	165 (58.9%)	115 (41.07%)

DO YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR PROBLEMS OF MENSTRUATION	YES	NO
	31 (11%)	249 (88.9%)

In this 21 st century nearly 58.9% of tudents are using cloth during menstrual cycles

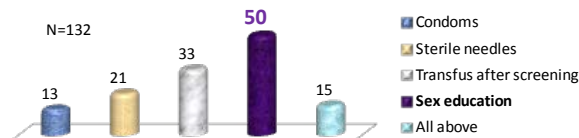
Knowledge About Std's

NAME FEW SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES	NO ANSWER	AIDS	OTHER THAN AIDS	MALARIA, DENGUE, CANCER
	97 (34.6%)	82 (29.2%)	1 (0.3%)	100 (35.7%)

HOW DOES AIDS SPREAD?	IDON'T KNOW	SEXUAL CONTACT/UNSTERILE NEEDLES/UNSCREENED BLOOD TRANSFUSION	COUGH/TOUCH/S HARING FOOD
	98 (35%)	127 (45.3%)	55 (19.6%)

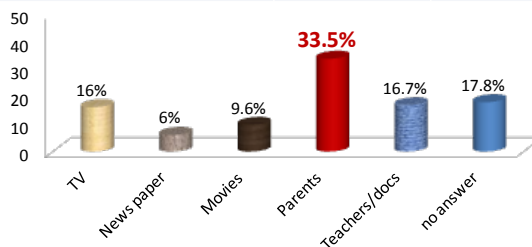
35% of students didn't know how AIDS spread. 19.6% thought cough, touching and sharing food can spread AIDS

CAN AIDS BE PREVENTED?	YES	NO	IDON'T KNOW
	132 (47.1%)	94 (33.5%)	54 (19.8%)
IF YES HOW?			
USING CONDOMS	13		
STERILE NEEDLES	21		
BLOOD TRANSFUSION AFTER SCREENING	33		
SEX EDUCATION	50		
ALL OF THE ABOVE	15		



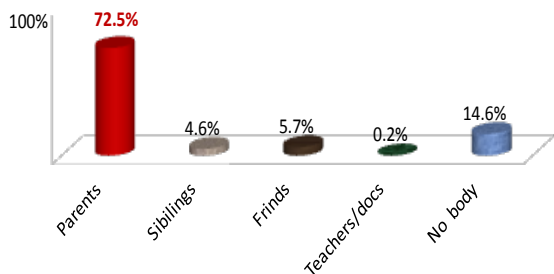
47.1% of students have the knowledge that AIDS can be prevented. in that many say it can be if they are given good sex education.

WHERE DO YOU GET ALL THE ABOVE INFORMATIONS FROM?	NUMBER	PERCENT
1) TV	45	16%
2) NEWSPAPER	17	6%
3) MOVIES	27	9.6%
4) PARENTS	94	33.5%
5) TEACHERS/FRIENDS/DOCTORS	47	16.7%
6) NO ANSWER	50	17.8%



The above information on STD's are got by the students mainly by parents 33.5% their source of information also being TV, movies, newspapers, friends, doctors

WITH WHOM DO YOU DISCUSS YOUR PROBLEMS DURING PUBERTY AND MENTRUATION WITH?	NUMBER	PERCENT
1)PARENTS	203	72.5%
2)SIBLINGS	13	4.6%
3)FRIENDS	16	5.7%
4)TEACHERS/DOCTERS	7	0.2%
5)NOBODY	41	14.6%



72.5% of the students discuss their puberty and menstrual problems with their parents.

DO YOU THINK SEX EDUCATION IS REQUIRED TO BE ADDED INTO YOUR ACADEMIC COURSE?	YES	NO	IDON'T KNOW
	145 (51.7%)	75 (26.5%)	60 (21.4%)
IF YES FROM WHEN?			
1) PRIMARY SCHOOL	19 (13.1%)		
2) SECONDARY SCHOOL	68 (46.8%)		
3)PUC	34 (23.4%)		
4)DIPLOMA COLLEGE	24 (16.5%)		

51.7%- want sex education to be added in their academic course

Discussion

Around 60-80% of the students knew the answers for questions like marriageable age for girls, gap between the children , number of children a couple can have according to Indian government but only 17% answered about whether they knew what the reproductive organs were. Government of India has put forth lots of advertisements

in TV, radio and newspapers about family welfare but failed to talk about basics like the reproductive organs.

Though 71% of girls has heard about puberty and menstruation only 20.5% of them have the right knowledge about it- according to another study in bangalore city 80% had heard about menstruation but 45% of them had the right knowledge.

When questioned about the psychological changes during puberty nearly 55% of the girls didn't want to answer about it because of the stigma attached to it. They would have all thought that speaking openly about them could cause problems in their life.

And later when questioned about why they had problems in dealing with pubertal changes nearly 65% of them said that they had childhood developmental problems, no proper guidance from the family members about the changes and they being forced into inappropriate sexual activities very early in life due to which they lack confidence and develop extreme fear.

According to a study in bangalore city 57.9% of adolescent in their study had prior knowledge of menstruation, but in our study only 8.9% of the students had the knowledge.. which is significantly different.. may be because of the type of schools. We took only the government schools whereas in the Bangalore city study in included even convents where sex education already is the part of syllabus.

About 76.7% of girls say that menstruation interfere with their routine activity like attending school- almost 40% complain of WDPV, which is a sign of RTI.- this result is comparable with the other studies. They have no knowledge about the tablets available for the treatments of the menstrual problems (88%)

The sanitary pad usage in the bangalore city study only 44.1% whereas in this study it is 41.07%- comparable.

We got answers like usage of ashes(2), mud (1) for menstruation.

72.5% of the girls discuss their menstrual problems with their mothers and 33.5% say that they get all the information on reproductive health from their mother.

The literacy rate among mothers is only 11.7%.

When questioned about STD's nearly 35% of the students thought malaria, dengue were STD's. Nearly 19.6% of students thought that AIDS spread by coughing, touching, sharing of food. This tells us the level of the knowledge in their society and teaches us the depth into which we need to enter for them to understand correctly about reproductive health

Although the teachers in the school can make a lot of difference in these percentages- they are unable to break the brick of hesitation. Students are still asked to read the chapters on reproductive health by themselves in the house.

Nearly 51% of students want sex education to be added in their syllabus and 19% of students are not able to give an opinion on it. This is the state of our society.

One of the popular argument against sex education is – early sexual activity

In 1999- WHO did a study on sex education in 5 countries- found that there was no early sexual activity among adolescents

It was also proven that many youngsters postponed their first sexual intercourse and the ones already involved in sexual activity- decrease in sexual partners and had safe sex.

Conclusion

The findings in this study in force the need to implement effective reproductive health programs in which the parents should also be a part of , to bring the girls out to understand the natural phenomenon of menstruation and pubertal changes. More advertisements about reproductive

organs ,STD's should be proposed by the Indian government

Movie makers and TV show makers being responsible citizens should stop sexualizing the women which can prevent many problems like rape, unsafe abortions in our society.

Sex education- is a very effective tool, can definitely bring about lots of changes when implemented strongly and by the right person.the right persons being teachers and doctors.

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