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ROLE OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN MANAGING ADOLESCENTS' PROBLEMS: EVIDENCE FROM SOME SELECTED CASE INVESTIGATIONS

Education

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ABSTRACT

India has the largest population of adolescents in the world (243 million). Furthermore, Assam is home to an estimated 6.5 million adolescents, which accounted 21.3 % of the total population of the state. So, the only challenge before us is to turn such a huge power in to human resource by ensuring sound physical and psychological environment. The psychological wellbeing and security is of no less importance than the physical wellbeing and security. There is dynamic interplay between the two. But it is very unfortunate to see that most of the efforts of parents, society as well as government are directed towards the physical wellbeing, whereas the mental aspects do not find its due importance. This can be perceived from indifferent attitude prevailed on the part of the society and government towards mental health issues. In India not more than 1 % of health budget is spend on psychological treatment. Considering the issues, the present paper focuses the developmental features and vulnerability of this period from psychological point of view incorporating some selected case investigations and tries to forward some interventions on the part of teachers and educational institutions to deal with them.

KEYWORDS

Teachers, Educational Institutions, Manage, Adolescents, Problems.

The term 'Adolescene' itself signifies the nature of adolescents. The word comes from a Latin word 'adolescere' which means 'to grow'. It is in this sense that the period is characterized by rapid growth and development in almost all the dimensions of personality—physical, mental, emotional, social, moral and sexual. The stage experiences optimum developmental rate which is never experienced in life and reaches its peak. Though we generally perceive that the period starts from the age of 12 or 13 and lasts till 18 or 19, yet it is not conclusive. As development is a continuous process it is difficult to place a sharp demarcation on it. The classification of different stages of human life is done on the basis of some developmental characteristics. And there are different factors like heredity, environment, culture, climate, and geographical factors etc. which influence the developmental features of individuals. The period of adolescence starts as soon as the child acquires puberty (the ability to reproduce his/her own species) and lasts till achieving maturity. As such there are individual differences in terms of age range of adolescence. Generally boys attain adolescence one or two year after the girls do. Similarly, in western countries, children become adolescents later than ours. However, WHO defines adolescence both in terms of age (spanning the ages between 10 and 19 years) and in terms of a phase of life marked by special attributes. These attributes include:

- Rapid physical growth and development
- Physical, social and psychological maturity, but not all at the same time
- Sexual maturity and the onset of sexual activity
- Experimentation
- Development of adult mental processes and adult identity
- Transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence

Rationale behind the Present Paper

India has the largest population of adolescents in the world (243 million). Furthermore, Assam is home to an estimated 6.5 million adolescents, which accounted 21.3 % of the total population of the state (Patnaik, J.B., February 26, 2011). So, the only challenge before us is to turn such a huge power in to human resource by ensuring a sound physical and psychological environment.

The psychological wellbeing and security is of no less importance than the physical wellbeing and security. There is dynamic interplay between the two. But it is very unfortunate to see that most of the efforts of parents, society as well as government are directed towards the physical wellbeing, whereas the mental aspects do not find its due importance. This can be perceived from indifferent attitude prevailed on the part of the society and government towards mental health issues. India spends 0.06% of its health budget on mental healthcare. This is less than Bangladesh (0.44%). Most developed nations spend above 4% of their budgets on mental-health research, infrastructure, frameworks and talent pool, according to this 2011 World Health Organization. (Hindustan Times, September 9, 2016)

The present paper focuses the developmental features and vulnerability of the period from psychological point of view incorporating some selected case investigations and also tries to forward some interventions on the part of teachers and educational institutions to deal with them.

Significance of the Period

It would not be wrong to say that adolescence is the most critical stage of life. It is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. They are neither child nor adult. There are drastic physical changes in both boys and girls. The human body finds its final shape in terms of size, weight and height during this stage. Emotionally they become so unstable and intense like that of infants. It is a period of heightening of all emotions like anxiety, fear, love, anger etc. Their social surroundings also broaden and they are directly getting involved in social activities, and herby tries to be recognized in the society. Intelligence reaches climax and powers like logical thinking, abstract reasoning, problem solving etc. are almost developed at this stage. Sexually the adolescents are mature. In fact, their whole personality structure and behavior is dominated by sex. They are more energetic and adventurous during this stage. Due to this behavior, sometimes adolescents tend to accept the impossible, the failure to achieve which may turn themselves into problems.

Vulnerability of Adolescents

The period of adolescence is vulnerable in different ways

- Due to peer pressure the adolescents often resort to undesirable activities and commits antisocial activities.
- They are energetic, love adventures and hence daring in nature.
- The period is characterized by poor academic performance and often school dropout.
- Adolescents are emotionally instable and experience emotional intensity. They often develop immature emotional romantic relationship with members of opposite sex which creates several problems.
- This stage is characterized by malnourishment. *45%* girl adolescents and 20% boy adolescents are under nourished in India which stands at 1st position among nations of world.
- Early marriage is another problem of this period. In India 47% of girls are married by 18 years of age, and 18% are married by 15 years of age.
- Adolescents are sexually active. In developing countries except China, 11% girl and 5% boy adolescents (15-19 yrs) had sex before marriage. Globally, about 2.2 million adolescents were living with HIV in 2010) (Source: UNICEF, 2012)

Do we really know the Teenagers?

- Independent in Nature: Because of their independent nature they do not like any interference from others. Frustration in seeking independence may lead to rebellious attitude at times.
- Anxiety: The adolescents constantly make comparisons of themselves with their contemporaries with regard to height,

weight, facial blemishes etc. And if it is not in keeping with what is considered the norm, may cause some anxiety and mal-adjustment.

— Aggressive or Withdrawal Behaviour: There is a craving for recognition in adolescents. Self consciousness, self respect and personal pride is too much increased. Any attack on their phenomenal self creates strong reactions and behavioural problems, either aggressive or withdrawn.
— Curiosity about Sexual Matters: Curiosity about sexual matters and fantasies about the people of opposite sex are common in this period. Sexual offence and unwanted pregnancies are the result of their curiosities and immaturities. At times, they become perturbed and develop a sense of guilt which creates so many complexities in their minds.
— Depression: Depression is another problem of this age. This can be the result of emotional insecurity arising out of relationships, physical deformities, low self-esteem or disappointments.
— Eating Disorders: Eating disorders are mainly observed amongst the female. Though it can also occur in male, 90-95% of cases are female (The New York Times, n.d.). Psychological and cultural factors like current emphasis on the slim and shapely figure are the contributing factors.
— Adolescent Suicide: Suicide rates in India are highest in the 15-29 age group. Among men, 40 per cent of suicides are among people age 15-29. For women, it is nearly 60 per cent (NDTV, June 2012).
— Stage of Heroism: As it is the stage of heroism, boys are extremely vulnerable to automobile accidents while trying to show off their 'macho' image.
— Abuse of Addictive Substances: Abuse of addictive substances (like smoking cigarette, drinking alcohol) starts from these years. It is estimated that about 90% of abusers started their habit before the age of 18 (Youth Smoking, n.d., *In* Wikipedia).
— Delinquency: Adolescents occasionally break the law and indulge in antisocial behaviour. Its common manifestations are: stealing, running away from home, uncontrollable behavior, sexual offences etc. Frustration is the main cause of delinquency besides causes like less supervision, negative peer influence, desire to have new experiences etc.
— Some Common Stressors among Adolescents

- Break up with boy/girl friend
- Peer pressure
- Performance related stress
- Increased arguments between parents
- Body changes
- Serious illness or injury of
- family member
- Trouble with classmates
- Trouble with parents

Some Case Investigations

Case One

A 1st semester (B.A.) female student, most often keep herself quiet at home and sometimes tears in her eyes. Her parents brought the thing in to the notice of the principal of her college with the thought that she might be unhappy in her college. The principal organized a review meeting, talked to her close friends and found that nothing throbbing was there in the college, rather she was unhappy at home. Her father himself even admitted that he sometimes used to scold his daughter. The girl had dominated her life and wanted to be free from her parents. She was most often being criticized by her parents and sometimes by teachers for not performing well in studies.

Issues

— Difficulty with parents and teachers
— Feeling of Insecurity at home
— Poor Performance in Academics

Case Two

A 3rd semester (B.A.) female student did not go back to home from her college on the day of Saraswati puja. Her parents were worried and came to the Principal. Afterwards, it was known that she was in love affair with a boy and wanted to marry him. On that particular day, she had escaped with the boy. Few days before the incident, her parents found a costly mobile phone in her possession which was gifted by her boyfriend. Therefore, parents scolded her severely and punished physically.

Issues

— Conflict with parents
— Development of romantic relationship feelings

Case Three

A 3rd semester (B.A.) female student, staying in college hostel, once attempted suicide. The issue was taken prompt action by the college authority, after knowing the incident from her hostel mates. It seemed she was in love affair with a neighbouring boy who was much older than her and working as a mechanic who is educated only upto eight standard. The affair had been running for 2 yrs and her parents were aware of that. Parents tried keeping close watch on her and many times physically punished her for meeting that boy, but it didn't help them. They wanted to bring her away from the boy and hence kept her in hostel. She has been academically good but since last two years her academic performance is deteriorating. After the incident of suicide attempt, the college authority advised her parents to keep her along with themselves and not in hostel anymore and approach her in a very kind and sympathetic manner. After few days, it was known that she escaped with the boy.

Issues

— Conflict with parents
— Development of romantic relationship feelings

What Can the Teachers and Educational Institutions Do?

— Every teachers dealing with adolescents should have knowledge of Adolescent Psychology and Development.
— Teenagers want independence, freedom and recognition of their self. The teacher should incorporate these in his teaching, co-curricular activities as well as informal dealings with them.
— Teachers and Management of educational institutions should be student friendly and should provide freedom and opportunities for free expression.
— Teachers should not miss the opportunity of admiring teens for their good performance. It helps in building their confidence and self-esteem.
— Adolescents should not be murmured and criticised blindly. The teacher should be witty, and never critical and discouraging. The worst of the pupil has some quality; the teacher should recognise it and use it.
— The teacher should be kind and sympathetic towards adolescents and their problems.
— When the students fail to do well, the teacher should see his faults first and the students afterwards.
— Stop treating them as children and give them due recognition.
— Value the opinions of adolescent students and give a patient hearing.
— Teachers should observe their informal behaviour from a distance and avoid intervention in their activities
— Methods of teaching should be democratic as per the diverse need of adolescents. They should not be compelled in any way. Discussions, clarifications, project method etc. should be employed which may enable adolescents to see the reality of situations and realise the strength of social norms.
— Provide knowledge of health, personal hygiene, cleanliness, various diseases and their prevention.
— Provide adequate provision and facilities for physical exercise.
— Provide adequate information regarding sex hygiene, the process of birth of a baby, and the hazards of immature and before marriage intercourse etc. in a very frank, scientific and impersonal manner.
— A network of co-curricular activities, where boys and girls get a chance to know and work shoulder to shoulder with each other should be provided in educational institutions.
— It is futile to punish their misbehaviour, rather should try to discover the root causes of such behaviour and remove them.
— Educational institutions should ensure a safe, secure and supportive environment for adolescents.
— Provide emotional education to them and try to channelise their emotional energies towards the constructive ends through organising different activities like drama, mime, poem recitation, and writing competitions, painting competitions etc.
— Provision of excursion, project work, N.C.C., swimming, etc. should be provided to satisfy their thirst of curiosity, wandering and adventure.
— Provision of value education should be provided in educational institutions.
— The teachers should develop and maintain a sound moral character and try to be the students' role model.

— Educational institutions should arrange guidance and counseling services regularly, more particularly vocational guidance to facilitate their need of economic independence.

Conclusion

Adolescence is the very crucial phase of human development. Intervention in proper time is only the way out for prevention of any unwanted situations. When parents, teachers and elders observe that their child is deviating from the right track then they should not hesitate to say 'no' with proper justification. One should remember that a stitch in time saves nine. Every citizen including parents, teachers other family members, relatives, social workers, academician ns, bureaucrats, politicians, policy-makers should be aware of their role in building up the most powerful resource i.e. Youths.

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