

## Adolescents Attitude towards Sexuality: A Cross Cultural Perspectives



### Sociology

**KEYWORDS :** Adolescent, Attitude, Sexuality

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### ABSTRACT

*Background: The concept of sexuality are learned, human sexuality involves at least three dimension, biological, psychological and socio cultural. Am: To assess the adolescent's attitude towards sexuality across culture. Material and Methods: in the present study 300 adolescents were selected on the basis of cluster random sampling from nine different schools of Ranchi. Attitude towards Sexuality (Abraham 1997) was used for the assessment of attitude towards sexuality. Result: Attitude towards sexuality among adolescents is having a lot of deference's across the cultures.*

### Background

Sexuality is natural part of life. The concept of sexuality are learned, from our viewpoint human sexuality involves at least three dimension, biological, psychological and socio cultural. Sexuality is encompassing the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitude, values and behaviors of individuals. Its various dimensions include the anatomy, physiology and bio-chemistry of the sexual response system; identify orientation, roles and personality; and thought, feelings and relationship. The expression of sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural and moral concerns (SIECUS, 2005). Human sexuality is part of one's total personality. It involves the inter-relationship of biological, psychological and socio-cultural dimensions.

The experience of adolescents during teen years would vary considerably according to the cultural and social values of the network of social identities they grow in. Sexual development among adolescent is complex and dynamic. As children get older, they gain a greater sense of their sexual self, enhanced by interplay of biological and social changes, as the individual matures through childhood into adolescence. Although puberty begins at different age, virtually all boys and girls have started the process by 14 years of age (Ponton & Judice; 2004). Kamuss (2003) identified factors that have been associated with risky sexual behaviours and pregnancy, including race, ethnicity, social influences; attitude toward contraception and safe sex behavioural skills. Apart from these changes in value system and social expectation leading to complex in sexual world of adolescents. In Indian society, adolescents were introduced to their sexual role by various ceremonies and rituals. As in some other culture, these include instruction on their sexual roles, marriage customs, sexual morality and acceptable sexual behaviour. But in recent decades globalization and urbanization lead to many social changes and it also attract the adolescent who are facing a number of problems that are ultimately forcing them to violate the traditional norms as laid down by the society ( Nath & Nayar). In Kakar and Chowdhary's (1970) study of sexual behaviour of male prior to marriage found that lack of awareness and inadequate sexual knowledge lead to experimentation with sex workers, friends or relatives of opposite sex, convert observation of sexual activities of others and to masturbation. Reddy et. al. (1983) in a study of adolescent found that sample youth had their first sexual Experience between the ages of 15 to 24 years. Homosexual activities were also reported in this study, 38 percentage of women in the sample reported their first sexual activity had been with a partner of same sex. Family Planning Association of India undertook a study in 1990 among teenagers (between 14 and 17 years). And found that about one

fourth of them expressed their acceptance of premarital sexual contact. Sexual behaviour and attitude towards various aspects and forms of sex and sexuality are little known in India particularly among adolescents compare to their western counterparts. Presently with rapid social change and globalization adolescents are more vulnerable for risk taking sexual behaviour. In India teenagers are facing with ever widening gap between the physically ready age and culturally accepted age of sexual intercourse. Youngsters are in fact wedged between near-obsessive preoccupations with sex in the media and a absolute wall of silence from other sources of information (Mane and Maitra, 1992).

In India heterosexual acts are the only socially accepted sexual expression and more common relationship between males and females in society. Although homosexuals existed even since ancient days in India, but this is newer attained social approval in any section of Indian population. In resent past homosexuality is slowly gaining acceptance, in part due to the efforts of one or two organized group in metro cities that are affiliated with a couple of activist homosexual group connected to international bodies of gays but still there dearth of scientific literature in India (Nath & Nayar). A study conducted by Elizabeth and Imo (2008), on attitude of secondary school adolescents in Uyo, towards sexual practices the findings shows that there is prevalence of a permissive attitude towards sexual practices. There was no difference in terms of age and sex. Boys showed more inclination towards sexual activity than girls, while involvement in sexual activity increases with age.

**Aim:** To assess the adolescent's attitude towards sexuality across culture

### Objective:

- To find out differences in the attitude towards sexuality among adolescent of Scheduled Tribe, Muslim and Hindu communities.
- To find out the gender differences in the attitude towards sexuality among adolescent of Scheduled Tribe, Muslim and Hindu communities.

### Methods:

In the present study 300 (100 Scheduled Tribes, 100 Muslims and 100 Hindus) adolescents studying in class 11<sup>th</sup> and class 12<sup>th</sup> were selected on the basis random sampling technique from nine different schools of Ranchi district three schools from rural area, three schools from urban area and three schools from semi-urban area. Socio-demographic data sheet and Sexual Attitude Scale (Amit Abraham; 1997) was used for this study.

Results:

Table: 01 Age of Respondents

Group		Mean	Standard Deviation
Hindu	Male (N=50)	16.81	0.76
	Female (N=50)	16.75	0.78
Muslim	Male (N=50)	16.64	0.64
	Female (N=50)	16.62	0.76
Schedule Tribes	Male (N=50)	16.62	0.76
	Female (N=50)	16.70	0.68
Total	Male (N=150)	16.69	0.73
	Female (N=150)	16.69	0.75

Mean ±SD age of male respondent was 16.69±0.73 and for female it was 16.69±0.75. Hindu male adolescents mean age was 16.81 and female mean age was 16.75. Mean age of Muslim male and female respondent were 16.64 and 16.62 respectively. In present study mean age of male Schedule tribe respondent were 16.62 and for female Schedule tribes 16.70 was reported.

Table No. 2: Socio-demographic Variable of Adolescents

Variables		Hindu (N=100)	Islam (N=100)	Schedule Tribes (N=100)
Sex	Male	50	50	50
	Female	50	50	50
Education	11 <sup>th</sup>	74	78	71
	12 <sup>th</sup>	26	22	29
Marital status	Unmarried	100	100	100
Religion	Hindu	100	--	--
	Islam	--	100	--
	Christian	--	--	52
	Sarna	--	--	48
Domicile	Urban	40	42	41
	Semi-urban	21	22	28
	Rural	39	36	31
Type of family	Joint	70	80	35
	Nuclear	30	20	65
Monthly Income of the Family	<5000	59	60	20
	5001-10000	0	16	34
	10001-15000	21	15	32
	>15000	20	9	14

Table two shows adolescents from all three groups having equal number of male and female respondents, in the area of education most of the adolescents were studying in 11<sup>th</sup> standard, all are unmarried and in the area of religion from Hindu and Islam religion 100 adolescents from both group and 52 from Christian and 48 from Sarna. Most of the adolescents staying in urban area from all three groups, most of Hindu and Islam adolescents coming from joint family but adolescents from tribal community living with nuclear family. 50% of the Hindu, 60% Islam and 20% Adolescents family Monthly income is 5000 or less and very few (20% Hindu, 9% Islam and 14% Schedule Tribes) were coming from high income (15000 or more) families.

Table no. 3 Gender Difference among adolescent on Sexual Attitude Scale

Variable	Mean	SD	t Value (df=298)	P Value	
Premarital	Male	21.280	12.208	2.473	0.014*
	Female	18.213	9.034		

Polygamy	Male	37.146	6.144	0.779	0.437
	Female	36.566	6.750		
Pornography	Male	40.400	12.623	2.100	0.037*
	Female	37.273	13.158		
Lesbianism	Male	26.846	9.456	0.406	0.685
	Female	26.413	9.031		
Homosexuality	Male	21.340	7.806	0.548	0.584
	Female	20.860	7.352		

\*P≥0.05 level of significance

In all domain of attitude towards sexuality male shows positive attitude compare to females. Findings reveals that significant difference was found in the area of attitude towards premarital sex and Pornography at 0.05 level between male and female. (Details given in table-03)

Table no. 4 differences in adolescent attitude towards sexuality among various cultures

Areas of Social Attitude	Group	N	Mean	SD	ANOVA (df = 2)	P- value
Premarital	Hindu	100	19.790	13.782	44.431	.000**
	Muslim	100	13.370	2.149		
	ST	100	26.080	8.839		
Polygamy	Hindu	100	39.040	4.760	70.906	.000**
	Muslim	100	39.830	2.518		
	ST	100	31.700	7.485		
Pornography	Hindu	100	35.960	17.729	26.413	.000**
	Muslim	100	45.910	3.476		
	ST	100	34.640	10.233		
Lesbianism	Hindu	100	30.080	11.699	51.844	.000**
	Muslim	100	20.000	.000		
	ST	100	29.810	7.348		
Homosexuality	Hindu	100	22.910	9.399	45.330	.000**
	Muslim	100	16.000	.000		
	ST	100	24.390	6.661		

\*\*P≥0.001 level of significance

Variable	Mean	SD	t Value (df = 298)	P Value	
Premarital	Male	21.280	12.208	2.473	0.014*
	Female	18.213	9.034		
Polygamy	Male	37.146	6.144	0.779	0.437
	Female	36.566	6.750		
Pornography	Male	40.400	12.623	2.100	0.037*
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Table four shows attitude towards sexuality in the area of premarital sex, adolescent from Schedule Tribes shows positive attitude (26.08±8.83) followed by Hindu Adolescents (19.79±13.78) and then Muslim Adolescent (13.37±2.14), in the polygamy area Muslim Adolescents (39.83±2.51) score high followed by Hindu Adolescents (39.04±4.76) and here adolescents from Schedule Tribe group scores (31.70±7.48) less than other both groups, again in the pornography area adolescents from Muslim community scores high (45.91±3.47) and adolescents from Hindu community (35.96±17.72) and Schedule Tribe community (34.64±10.23) scores less from the first group. Lesbianism is the area where adolescents from Hindu community scores high (30.08±11.69) followed by adolescents from

Schedule Tribe community (29.81±7.34) adolescents from Islamic community scores (20.00) less than other groups, in the area of homosexuality again adolescent from this community scores (16.00) very low in comparison to Hindu adolescents score (22.91±9.39) and high scorer (24.39±6.66) Schedule Tribe adolescents. Table also shows adolescents from different culture having highly (0.001) significant difference in all five area of attitude scale.

### Discussion

Adolescent today faced with an exceptionally difficult and ambiguous situation, in which both socio demographic and environmental factor combine to vigorously provide sexual activity and social norms there has been rapid increased in concern, research and intervention on adolescent sexuality in sexual behavior. Yet in Indian context comparatively less is known. In India sexual behaviour outside and before marriage has been viewed more on pathology than normal physiological phenomena with a range of normality. Traditionally, premarital sex activity was controlled in India. As the marriages were mostly arranged by elders, premarital sex was not the accepted practice. Although premarital sex among the tribal societies of India has been widely reported, but there is very little scientific and reliable literature available on this topic in either the rural or urban areas. Young girls and boys, in all cultures experience sexuality in diverse ways. The concept of sexuality includes not only sexual identities, sexual norms, sexual practices and behaviours, but also feelings, desires, fantasies and experiences related to sexual awareness, arousal and sexual acts within heterosexual as well as homosexual relations. This includes subjective experiences as well as the meanings attached to them. Thus, the concept of sexuality encompasses not only the biological and psychological, but also the social and cultural dimensions of sexual identity and sexual behaviour.

Present study found that boys were showing more positive attitudes towards all five sub area of attitude towards sexuality scale. This finding is supported by previous study (Elizabeth and Emo; 2008) as male adolescents showing more inclination towards all areas of scale present study findings can be attributed to the cultural characteristic of India where boys are having more freedom in their life and they are more vocal in comparison to girls, so male adolescents score high and result showed more positive attitude towards sexuality among male adolescent. Additionally present study was carried out by male researchers so it may be possible that girls respondent were reluctant to reveal such issue to male researchers.

Present study was conducted on adolescents from various cultures and we found that attitude towards sexuality is having significant difference in all the selected groups. This scale was including five area of sexuality present study we found that adolescents attitude influenced by their culture. In modern societies, education and mass media have emerged as two agencies playing an important role in the shaping of sexuality, especially of youth. There is a great reluctance to accept that young people may be engaging in risky premarital sex. It is generally believed that because premarital sex is a taboo in India and because the family exerts control over young people, the youth abstain from premarital sex (Abraham 2000). Review of studies on youth sexuality in India indicates that premarital sex among the youth is on the increase especially in urban areas (Watsa 1994; Savara and Sridhar 1992). For instance, a recent study among the students (16-18 years) of a Delhi secondary school showed that about 60 per cent of the boys and fewer girls were involved in sexual activities.

In present study we found that Schedule Tribe adolescents having positive attitude towards premarital sex it is supported by previous studies, it is also influenced by their living style and mixing with opposite sex friends. Young males are observed to engaged in risk sexual activity casual sex and relationship with sex worker (NACO; 2001, Abroham et. al., 2001). Young girls have had far less sexual experience because of the implication on social prestige of the family in the wake of loss of virginity as an unwanted prudency (FPAI, 1990). Little information is available on the different expression of sexual desire among young people however in rural areas any form of friendship and free

mixing among adolescent is strictly controlled and regulated by family elders as soon as girl attain puberty there is very little information about the current practice of male or female homosexuality there are few mainly urban survey cited were the percentage of man having sex with man in the population vary around 1.5 % to 15% in some selected group there is virtually no information on lesbian or any segment of Indian population. Adolescents are poorly informed about physical well being, health, their bodies and sexuality. Inadequate information tends to render them helpless and confused most of the times. The ignorance gets accentuated by lack of proper sex education, low educational attainment and the influence of socio-cultural background. The reluctance among parents and teachers to impart relevant information is a matter of concern. In fact, parents want their children to be uninformed about matters related to sex and reproduction, since sex and puberty are considered to be extremely embarrassing. Sexual intercourse was reported more by boys than girls. The range of sexual intercourse varied from 2.9% among rural girls to 28.8% among rural boys in Rajasthan, and 1.6% among urban girls to 14.4% among urban boys in Delhi. In the area of polygamy present study found adolescents from Muslim community were scored high which is showing more positive attitude towards polygamy, we can say that in Muslim community polygamy is acceptable so their attitude is more positive in comparison to other groups.

Another area is pornography where all groups were having almost similar attitude as all forms of sexually oriented publications are illegal in India and government-appointed Central Board has the power to make cuts or ban the indecent or obscene scenes in films. Although pornographic books, magazines, and videos are illegal, their display and sales are casually noticed in urban areas, especially in the major cities. Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi (2001) conducted a survey and it was found that a large number of adolescents in all states had exposure to sex and pornographic literature. In the west sexuality norms that govern both the gender are relatively seen in India however they are different.

In the area of lesbianism adolescents from Hindu community have highly positive attitude comparison to other both groups but in the homosexuality area Schedule Tribe adolescents showing the more positive attitude, adolescents from Muslim community were showing less positive attitude in above both sub area of scale. Previous study conducted by Andrew and Patel (2002) among students on higher secondary school and they found that 11% boys and 5% girls reported homosexual feelings, and 6% boys and 2% girls reported intimate homosexual relationships. Major source of information on sex for urban students was a friend or blue film, but for rural students it was either the kin or the doctor, and they were more likely to indulge in homosexual relationships than urban students.

Parental socialization of children's behaviour might be the single most important influence in the lives of the children and adolescents, because behaviour is influenced by social context, with parent child relationship contributing to the shaping of adolescent sexual behaviours; parents exert significant influence on sexual risk related beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of adolescent (Szapocznik & Coatsworth, 1999). Miller et. al. (1997) studied family influence on adolescent's sexual behaviour and found that young peoples social influence affect their risky sexual behaviours. Family influence, especially mother's behaviour, may also affect the adolescent girl's own sexual behaviours.

### Conclusion:

Adolescent sexuality is influenced by many factors, including gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, and how body develops. During the teen years, there is sense of development of sexuality, one that will lead to satisfying, mature sexual relationships later in life. Although it is normal for youngsters to begin experiment with physical intimacy, most of teens are not able to understand the consequences of sexual activity for themselves and their partner. By taking it slowly, getting reliable information, and delaying sex until they are mature, will make sure sexuality is a healthy, positive aspect of life.

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