

## Awareness regarding self-protection measures and strategies adopted for self-protection among adolescent girls: A cross sectional survey



### Medical Science

**KEYWORDS** :self-protection; strategies; adolescent girls.

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### ABSTRACT

*Nurturing a sense of awareness in adolescents, providing knowledge of how to meet life's challenges and encouraging and reinforcing healthy choices help them develop the social competence. A cross sectional survey was conducted with the aim to assess the awareness regarding self-protection and strategies adopted by adolescent girls studying in GHSS Venjaramoodu, Trivandrum. Random sampling technique was used to recruit 100 samples from the selected setting. Semi structured questionnaire was used to find out the awareness regarding self-protection and strategies by adolescent girls for their self-protection. The findings of the study indicate that the majority of the adolescent girls (65%) have high awareness regarding self-protection and about 52% of adolescent girls using law as strategy for their self-protection. Certain demographic variables such as educational status of the father, educational status of the mother, siblings and income have a relationship with awareness regarding self-protection and strategies adopted by the adolescent girls for their self-protection. More students are aware about their self-protection but unfortunately not practicable to the current situation.*

### Introduction:

The term adolescent comes from the Latin word 'adolescere, meaning "to grow" or "to grow to maturity." It includes mental, emotional and social maturity as well as physical maturity. Adolescence is a phase of rapid physical growth, psychosocial development and sexual transformation. Adolescents are full of energy, have significant drive and new ideas. The adolescence does have a range of health problems that cause a lot of morbidity as well as definite mortality. Piaget said "psychologically adolescent is the age when the individual becomes integrated in to the society of adults, the age when the child no longer feels that he/she is below the level of his/her elder but equal at least in rights".

Adolescence is age of emotional instability, being a transition period from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence has an unconscious beginning to give into their dependency needs and also a time of movements towards independence. Beginning of adolescence can mean facing up to some very adult psychological problems. Physical and psychosocial needs of adolescence are mutually related. Both have equal and significant importance in the development of adolescent personality. Nurturing a sense of awareness in adolescents, providing knowledge of how to meet life's challenges and encouraging and reinforcing healthy choices help them develop the social competence and sense of responsibility needed for personal growth, academic achievement and competence at work.

Self-protection is the action by which person protect herself from any bodily harm arising out of an encounter. Five key categories necessary to the development of self-protection are skills, safety, fears, help and confidence. Self-defense is a preventive measure that can be used at a critical time in girls lives. The right to self-defense is limited to situations where the immediate threat of violence cannot be prevented by those authorized to do so (in practice, because no police force is present at the moments of the threat). The right to self -ranted by law to the private citizen is strictly limited.

In our modern world violence is the most important problem faced by the adolescent girls. There are many reason why dating violence goes unnoticed, or un reported. One reason is many teens and young adults are unaware of the potential for physical and sexual assault in the context of a relationship; they may not recognize the signs of impending abuse and don't know where to go for help if abuse occur. More girls reported

being harassed than boys (56% vs. 10%). According to a new study almost 50% of 8-12<sup>th</sup> graders experience sexual harassment.

In a nationwide survey of 1965 students by the American Association of University Women, the majority (87%) of the harassed students reported negative effects such as absenteeism, poor sleep and stomach aches. Regardless of the media type more girls were victims, 52% of girls had been harassed by person and 36% by outline (American Association of University for Women).

A study conducted by (American Psychological Association) on perception of adolescent girls in different levels found out that girls psychological development and friendship can be a source of both knowledge and strength of adolescent girls.

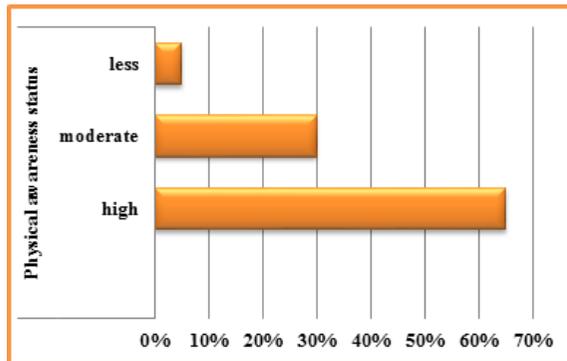
Since the adolescents are considered as the future builders of India, the researchers are prompt to do this study to understand the adolescent girl's awareness regarding their surroundings to avoid danger and the extent to which they use self defense mechanisms to protect themselves from hidden danger.

### Materials & Methods:

The study used a quantitative approach with a cross sectional survey design. The setting of the study was Government Higher secondary School Venjaramoodu. 100 adolescent girls studying in 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> standard were recruited from the setting using random sampling technique. Tools used to collect data were; a socio demographic Performa to collect sample details, pre tested and validated semi structured questionnaires prepared by researcher for assessing the awareness regarding self-protection and strategies adopted by them. The main study was conducted after the approval of research committee of the college. Permission was obtained from the head of the institution. The purpose and details of the study was explained to the study subjects and assurance was given regarding the confidentiality of the data collected. Data was collected for a period of 6 days from 17/06/2015-22/06/2015. After developing a good rapport the investigators gradually introduced the questionnaire to the students with adequate privacy, confidentiality and convinced the students. Then the researchers interviewed the respondent by using the questionnaire and collected the data from students and noted their responses. After collecting the data it was entered in a master sheet for analysis.

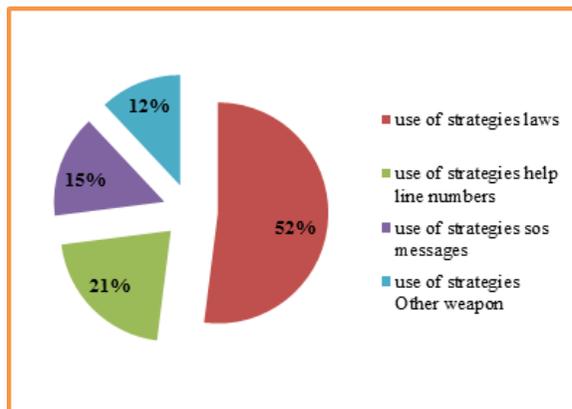
**Results:****a. Socio demographic data of subjects**

Maximum 59% of respondents are 13-15 years of age, belongs to nuclear family (85%) and 96% lives in rural area. 59% of them gathers information from newspaper. 84% belongs to Hindu religion, 96% of them having parents and 99% of them are staying along with parents. About 62% of their parents have high school education, Majority 48% father were laborers and 70% of student's mothers are unemployed. 75% of students having 1 sibling and 51% of them have monthly income of 1000-4000 rupees.

**(b) Awareness among adolescents regarding self-protection**

**Figure 1: percentage distribution of samples based on awareness of physical self-protection**

Figure reveals that majority of subjects (65%) are having high awareness regarding physical self-protection. Results also elicited that 56% of subjects have high psychological awareness about self-protection.

**c. Strategies used by adolescents for self-protection**

**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of samples according to usage of strategies for self-protection**

From figure 2 it is clear that majority of subjects (52%) rely on laws as safe guard for self-protection.

**Association of awareness regarding self-protection and strategies adopted by subjects for self-protection with selected socio demographic variables**

Chi square test was used to compute the association awareness regarding self-protection and strategies adopted by subjects for self-protection with selected socio demographic variables.

Findings revealed that; educational status of the father, educational status of the mother; no of siblings and income have a relationship with strategies adopted by the adolescent girls for

their self-protection. Some selected demographic variables such as presence of parents; current stay and monthly income have a relationship between awareness regarding self-protection.

**Discussion:**

Present study elicited awareness among adolescent girls to be high in majority of subjects and very few subjects to be having less awareness. Self-awareness about self-protection has been assessed in two domains; as awareness about physical self-protection and awareness about psychological protection. Majority of subjects (65%) are having high awareness regarding physical self-protection. Results also elicited that 56% of subjects have high psychological awareness about self-protection. Very little literature has been in accordance of the present study findings. As one watches the news about the rape of a young 22-year-old photo journalist in Mumbai, and the television debates that follow, one feels a sense of having heard it and seen it before. With a sickening feeling in the pit of the stomach you feel nothing, it seems nothing at all, has changed and nothing ever will.

On assessment of strategies adopted by adolescents the given strategies they rely for were; use of law, help line numbers, emergency messages and use of weapons. From results it is clear that majority of subjects (52%) rely on laws as safe guard for self-protection, 21% rely on help line numbers, 15% emergency messages and 12% rely on use of other weapons. Self-protection is the action by which person protect herself from any bodily harm arising out of an encounter. Self-defense is a preventive measure that can be used at a critical time in girls lives .The right to self-defense is limited to situations where the immediate threat of violence cannot be prevented by those authorized to do so (in practice, because no police force is present at the moments of the threat).The right to self -ranted by law to the private citizen is strictly limited. The study depicted that more adolescents were aware about their self-protection but unfortunately not practicable to the current situation faced in Indian scenario.

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