



## PARENT'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS SEXUAL EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU

## Social Science

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## ABSTRACT

This paper made an attempt to explore the Parent's perception towards sexual education. Totally 529 respondents were interviewed from five districts of Tamil Nadu. A multistage sampling method was adopted to select the target population - ever married couples living with at least one child in the age group of 13-19 years. Majority of the study population had either moderate or low level of perception on sexuality education. The analysis indicates that the young respondents, respondents live in nuclear type, females, Hindus, degree/diploma holders, high income group people, respondent's working in private/public sectors and highly media exposed respondents were little more understanding about sexuality education than the respective counterparts. It is also noticed that the respondents' degree of religiosity increases their perception towards sexuality education was decreases. It is recommended that conducive environments should be created to promote debates on the importance and benefits of sexuality education across the country and this study strongly emphasizes the necessity to formulate appropriate policy regarding family life education so as to address the unmet need for scientific learning on matters of sexual life among youth.

## KEYWORDS:

Sexual education, religiosity,

**Introduction:** Latest National Youth Policy 2014 of India aims "to empower the youth of the country to achieve their full potential and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations" (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014). There are five key objectives listed in the policy of which two strongly focus on gender and SRH issues. The recently introduced National Adolescent Reproductive Health programme, 2014 (Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram – RKSK) also envisages that all adolescents in India will be able to realise their full potential by making informed and responsible decisions related to their health and well-being (MoHFW, 2014). RKSK highlights the importance of holistic development of adolescents and stresses the need for a health promotion approach through a peer education model for different grades in schools and for families and communities. In addition to SRHR issues, its coverage extends to mental health, nutrition, substance misuse, gender-based violence and non-communicable disease prevention education. Despite having a number of such policies and programmes for young people, their sexual and reproductive health needs and issues have not been adequately addressed in the country (Tripathi and Sekher, 2013). Under this scenario this paper made an attempt to explore the Parent's perception towards sexual education.

**Methodology:** This study was conducted in Tamil Nadu state located at the southern part of India during 2016. In order to cover entire Tamil Nadu state, it is proposed to select one district from each of the five geographical divisions. The simple random method was applied to select one district from each of the geographical divisions. Trichy, Kancheepuram, Thirunelveli, Cuddalore and Dharmapuri were selected as study districts. It is intended to select half number of the taluks from each of the selected districts by the lottery method. In order to represent the rural and urban locations, the purposive sample method was adopted to select one urban/one rural area from each of the 22 taluks as sample study locations. As a first step in the selection of study population, house listing was conducted to identify the ever married couples living with at least one child in the age group of 13-19 years. Totally 1960 households were identified in 11 urban locations (towns) and it was decided to select one-fifth of the respondents from each of the urban locations. Total number of respondents who cooperate and completed the entire interview episode was 303 at the urban area. A similar method was applied to select the rural households. Totally 226 rural households' respondents were cooperate and completed the entire interview episode. Therefore the total sample size is 529.

**Socio-economic and demographic profile of the study population:**

The study was conducted among the middle-aged parents - the mean age of the study population was 39.72 years. The sample population was dominated by females. The rural and urban representation was

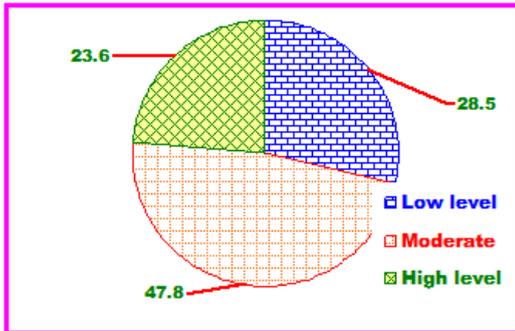
well administrated by selecting samples from the respective locations however the urban residents were slightly dominated than the rural residents. The sample population was dominated by Hindus and the lowest proportion was shared by the Forward Caste population. Overwhelming majority of the respondents were literates, however just thirty percent of them holding the Diploma or Degree. The average monthly income of the study population was about Rs. 16,052/- and the mean monthly expenditure was Rs. 11,977/-. Sex wise media exposure analysis shows a wide gap with respect to proportion of respondents in the highly exposed category. Overall, the socio-economic conditions of the study population reflect or exactly represent the state population of Tamil Nadu.

**Parents' perception towards Sexuality education:** In order to assess the respondents' perception towards Family Life Education (FLE)/Sexuality Education few statements as listed below was prepared and the same was posted to the respondents during the survey. Statement A Any student that talks about sex is a bad student Statement B Sexuality education should be taught in School Statement C Sexuality education refers only to sexual behavior (sexual intercourse) Statement D It is necessary to teach about the functions of Sex organs Statement E Students need Sexuality education so that they can grow to become responsible adults Statement F Schools should not teach Sexuality education because it is against my religious principle Statement G Learning about Sexuality education will encourage students to have premarital sex Statement H How to have a healthy relationship with the opposite sex should be discussed in Sexuality education lesson Statement K How to prevent pregnancy should be taught during Sexuality education lesson In the study locations, about thirty percent of the respondents agreed the statement A and another about one-fifth of them had no idea about the statement. It indicates that majority of them stick on the cultural stigma relating to sexuality. With respect to statement B, more than half of the respondents not agreed nor no idea about to teach the FLE/Sexuality education at schools. It indicates that teaching of sexuality education in schools was not strongly emphasized by the parents. More than half of the respondents believed that providing sexuality education will help them to become responsible adults. Majority of them not had clear idea about to teach the functions of sex organs to the students. By and large, more than half of the respondents in the study locations had inaccurate knowledge or little confused state over the sexuality education.

**Composite Index on Perception on sexuality education:** In order to assess the study population's overall perception on sexuality education, a composite index on perception of sexuality education was developed. Totally 9 statements (as listed above) relating to sexuality education were used to measure the perception about sexuality education. There were two answers (agree and disagree) structured for

each statement, which were given scores 1 and 0 respectively. The total score obtained by each respondent was ranging from 0 to 9 which can be classified into 3 categories as “low level of perception on sexuality education”, “moderate level of perception” and “high level of perception”. The respondents who had positive or correct answer for any of the 6-9 statements were grouped as 'high level perception on sexuality education' and the respondents who had the positive or correct answer for any of the 1-3 statements were grouped as 'low level perception on sexuality education'.

**Percentage distribution of Respondents by FLE Perception Index**



It is witnessed from the diagram that of the total 529 respondents, more than one-fourth of them (28.5percent) had low level of perception on sexuality education – respondents agreed or had correct understanding with at least any of the 1-3 statements. At the same time around 24 percent of the respondents agreed with any of the 6-9 statements – high level of perception. It can be concluded that majority of the study population had either moderate or low level of perception on sexuality education. Otherwise the study population had poor understanding on sexuality education.

While analysis the **influence of socio-economic and demographic condition** of the respondents on their perception towards sexuality education, respondents' perception level is increases along with their age. The proportion of high level of perception was slightly higher for young respondents (less than 35 years - 25.6 percent) than the old age respondents (45-47yrs - 21.3 percent). However, the relationship between age of the respondents and the level of perception on sexuality education is statistically insignificant. With respect to sex of the respondents, it is quite interesting to note that the female respondents somewhat higher understanding on sexuality education than the male respondents. Data on level of perception on sexuality education by residence did not show any major differences particularly with respect to proportion of person fall in the high level of perception category. The respondents live in the nuclear type of family had more understanding about sexuality education than the counterpart. Statistical analysis shows a significant association between the level of sexuality education perception and type of family.

The influence of religion on the level of perception of sexuality education is empirically evident that Hindus stood at top, followed by Christians with respect to the proportion of high level perception (24.6 and 23.0 percent respectively). Muslims recorded the lowest among the religious group with respect to the proportion of high level perception (21.8 percent). Chi-square test has also established a statistical significance of association between the two factors at 1% level. SC and MBC categories sample population understand more about sexuality education than the counterparts – majority of the respondents fall either in moderate or high level perception groups. It is noticed that the educational attainment of the respondents had a positive relationship with their level of perception on sexuality education - when the respondents' educational status increases, the proportion of respondents who fall in the higher level of perception was also increases. Similarly, monthly income and level of perception on sexuality education data shows a positive association. Data shows a marginal increase in the level of perception while the respondents' exposure on media increases. Chi-square test has established a statistical insignificant association between the two factors. It can be stated that the media exposure was not effectively influenced on the level of perception on sexuality education among the study population.

**Table No. 1 Percentage distribution of Respondents by Level of Perception on Sexuality Education with their Background Conditions**

Characteristics of Respondents	Level of Perception towards FLE/ Sexuality Education			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
<b>Age<sup>NS</sup></b>				
Less than 35 yrs	27.3	47.1	25.6	121
35-40	25.4	49.7	24.9	197
45-47	32.2	46.4	21.3	211
<b>Sex<sup>NS</sup></b>				
Male	31.6	47.2	21.2	212
Female	26.5	48.3	25.2	317
<b>Place of Residence<sup>NS</sup></b>				
Rural	30.1	46.0	23.9	226
urban	27.4	49.2	23.4	303
<b>Family Type*** 12.356</b>				
Nuclear	24.8	49.5	25.8	400
Joint	40.3	42.6	17.7	129
<b>Caste** 15.080</b>				
SC	19.5	60.2	20.3	123
MBC	27.3	43.0	29.7	128
BC	33.9	45.4	20.6	218
FC	30.0	41.7	28.3	60
<b>Educational Level<sup>NS</sup></b>				
Illi/Primary	30.5	51.2	18.3	82
Middle	30.4	46.6	23.0	148
Secondary	23.2	47.9	28.9	142
Degree/Diploma	30.6	47.1	22.3	157
<b>Occupation* 14.598</b>				
Not working	39.1	39.9	31.2	199
Public/ Private	35.8	32.4	33.6	178
Self employed	17.2	12.6	12.0	73
Former/Wage labourer	7.9	15.0	23.2	79
<b>Monthly Income* 12.629</b>				
Up to 5000	22.5	54.1	23.4	111
5001 - 10000	34.0	50.0	16.0	156
10001 -20000	27.7	46.6	25.7	148
Above 20000	28.1	40.4	31.6	114
<b>Media Exposed</b>				
Less Exposed	23.2	53.2	23.7	190
Moderately exposed	34.2	43.8	21.9	146
Highly exposed	29.5	45.6	24.9	193

\*\*\*Sig. at 1% level, \*\*Sig. at 5% level, \* Sig. at 10% level; NS Not significant; (R) Reference category

The analysis indicates that among the study population, the young respondents, respondents live in nuclear type, females, Hindus, degree/diploma holders, high income group people, respondent's working in private/public sectors and highly media exposed respondents were little more understanding about sexuality education than the respective counterparts.

**Table No. 2 Percentage distribution of Respondents by Level of Perception on Sexuality Education with their Level of Religiosity**

Level of Religiosity	Level of Perception towards FLE/ Sexuality Education			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
<b>Religious Involvement Index* 9.496</b>				
Less Involvement	20.2	56.2	23.6	89
Moderate Involvement	27.1	45.7	27.1	258
High Involvement	34.6	46.7	18.7	182
<b>Religiousness Index*** 17.848</b>				
Less Religiousness	16.9	45.5	37.7	77
Moderate Religiousness	26.2	51.5	22.3	202
High Religiousness	37.3	43.8	18.9	169
<b>Religious Association Index* 7.239</b>				
Less association	26.7	45.5	27.8	255

More association	30.0	52.4	17.6	233
<b>Religious Influence Index<sup>NS</sup></b>				
Less influence	27.1	47.7	25.2	258
High Influence	30.0	48.9	21.1	227
<b>Degree of Religiosity** 11.458</b>				
Low degree of religiosity	18.8	46.3	35.0	80
Moderate degree	27.5	50.4	22.2	284
High degree of religiosity	35.2	44.2	20.6	165

\*\*\*Sig. at 1% level, \*\*Sig. at 5% level, \* Sig. at 10% level; NS Not significant; (R) Reference category

An attempt is made to assess the **influence of respondents' degree of religiosity** on respondents' perception about sexuality education. The respondents' degree of religiosity was measured by different indices such as religious involvement index, religiousness measure index, religious trust index, religious hope index, religious commitment index, religious association index and religious influence index. Data shows that the respondents' level of religious involvement increases their perception towards sexuality education was decreases. It can be stated that the respondent's degree of religiosity have a negative impact on the respondent's perception on sexuality education/family life education. As expected when the devoutness of the respondents towards their respective religion was high, their perception on sexuality education was less. A similar trend is noticed to the analysis of religious hope index. A negative association was witnessed between religious association index and the respondents' perception on sexuality education. Overall, it can be stated that the respondents' degree of religiosity increases their perception towards sexuality education was decreases.

**Sum up:** It is found that the study population had poor understanding on sexuality education. The background characteristics of the respondents not shown any major influence on their perception towards sexuality education however, the caste and family income of the respondents have some influence on their perception towards sexuality education. And at the same time the respondents' degree of religiosity was much influenced on their perception.

The following **recommendations** are proposed based on the findings of the study

- Conducive environments should be created to promote debates on the importance and benefits of sexuality education across the country
- This study strongly emphasizes the necessity to formulate appropriate policy regarding family life education so as to address the unmet need for scientific learning on matters of sexual life among youth

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