



KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION REGARDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS IN URBAN ROHTAK, HARYANA

Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a dynamic period of physical, psychological, reproductive and behavioral changes. It is a phase in which the adolescents attain reproductive capacity. Sexual experimentations and lack of information regarding reproductive health during this period expose adolescents to various health risks. The present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and perception regarding reproductive health among school going adolescents.

Methods: A Cross- Sectional descriptive study was conducted among 202 school going adolescents studying in class 9th and 10th in a private school of Urban Rohtak in October-November 2018. A pre-designed, pre-tested, structured interview schedule was used to interview the students individually.

Results: There were 106 girls and 96 boys' participants and the mean age of participants was 14.30 ± 0.756 years. Mean age of menarche among girls' participants was 12.81 ± 0.735 years. More than half participants (56%) knew the correct legal age of marriage. Most of the study participants (90%) felt that reproductive health education should be given to them and near about half (49%) think that teacher should give this education. Most of the participants have heard about AIDS (95%) and knew about its transmission correctly (74%). More than two-third of participants (36.7%) have heard about family planning and only 52.5% have heard about sexually transmitted disease.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that there is a lack of reproductive health awareness among adolescents which make them vulnerable to many health risks. The participants felt that they should receive reproductive health education preferably by their teachers in the school and necessary provision for the same should be emphasized.

KEYWORDS

Adolescent, Reproductive Health, Awareness

INTRODUCTION:

WHO defines 'Adolescents' as individuals in the 10-19 years age group and 'Youth' as the 15-24 year age group while 'Young People' covers the age range 10-24 years.¹ Adolescents comprise 20% of the world's total population.² Out of 1.2 billion adolescents world-wide, about 85% live in developing countries.³ Nearly 20% of the 1.5 million girls married under the age of 15 years are already mothers. Twenty seven percent of married female adolescents have reported unmet needs for contraception. Over 35% of all reported HIV/AIDS infections in India occur amongst young people 15-24 years age.⁴

Adolescence is a dynamic period of physical, psychological, reproductive and behavioral changes. It is a phase in which the adolescents attain reproductive capacity.⁵ Sexual experimentations and lack of information regarding reproductive health during this period expose adolescents to various health risks. Legislation and policies which prevent sex education taking place, or which restrict its contents, prevent many young girls and boys from maximizing their sexual and reproductive health.⁶ Skill based health education programs delivered through schools is one way through which young people can be helped to face these challenges and make such choices.⁷

Almost all adolescents in this vulnerable age group have many apprehensions and queries about sexual changes, giving rise to worry and stress. Also our present education system is failing in providing this knowledge to the adolescents, and this leads to many misbeliefs and indulgence into unsafe or risky sexual activities by this group of individuals.⁸ Thus, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancies, substance abuse, and unsafe abortions are important problems in adolescents. Girls are more vulnerable in this group because of marked unawareness and biological susceptibility to STDs.⁹ Appropriate reproductive health education in the schools should be pressing priority.

There are relatively scarce literature regarding knowledge and perception of reproductive health among adolescents. Hence the present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and perception regarding reproductive health among school going adolescents.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Study Area: A senior secondary school in the urban area served by department of Community Medicine, PGIMS Rohtak, Haryana.

Study Population: School going adolescents studying in class 9th and 10th.

Study Design: School based cross- Sectional study.

Study Period: October-November 2018.

Study Sample: 202 school going adolescents studying in class 9th and 10th.

Inclusion Criteria:

Students whose parents gave consent to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

Students who were not present in school on the day of visit (3 consecutive visits).

Study Tool: A pre-designed, pre-tested, structured interview schedule was used.

Methodology:

One day prior to the data collection, the school was visited and consent forms were distributed among the students with the help of class teacher, so that the students can get it signed from their parents. From the total 250 students enrolled in classes 9th and 10th, 48 students did not get permission letters from parents the next day so could not be included in the study. The remaining 202 students were interviewed in a different class room individually. Confidentiality was maintained by not mentioning the name or any other identity. The data thus collected was appropriately analyzed.

Observations

A total of 202 school going adolescents were enrolled in the study. Majority of study participants were girls (52.5%) followed by boys (47.5%). The mean age of the participants was observed as 14.30 ± 0.756 years. Mean age of menarche among girls was 12.81 ± 0.735 . Nearly half of the students (51.5%) belonged to joint family, followed by nuclear (34.7%) and three generation family (13.9%). 36.6% belonged to upper class followed by upper middle (20.8%) and lower middle (22.8%) respectively. Lower class constituted the least of cases (3%). Majority of the students' fathers were educated up to graduate level (35.6%) , followed by senior secondary (24.8%) and

post graduate level (20.8%). Similarly, majority of students' mothers were educated up to graduate level (31.7%) , followed by senior secondary (25.7%) and post graduate level (22.8%).

82.2% of the students had no adequate knowledge of pubertal changes. Only nearly half (56.4%) of the study participants had correct knowledge regarding the legal age of marriage for males and females. Around 92.1% of participants believe that 2 or less than 2 children constitute appropriate family size. 90.1% of study participants were of belief that reproductive education should be provided in school.

Regarding the knowledge of study participants about HIV/AIDS. 95% of study participants had heard about AIDS. While only 74.3% were aware of the route of HIV/AIDS transmission and majority (93.1%) of study participants believed that HIV/AIDS should be taught in schools.

Only 36.6% of study participants have heard about atleast one family planning method/ contraceptives. Only 29.7% study subjects had heard about condom and 5% about Oral Contraceptive Pills. Nearly half of the participants (52.5%) had ever heard of sexually transmitted diseases as described in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of study participants as per their knowledge and perception regarding reproductive health (N=202)		
QUESTION	Correct/ Appropriate answer	% of participants who gave correct/ Appropriate answer
1. Legal age of Marriage	Male : 21 years Female : 18 years	114 (56.4%)
2. What should be the appropriate family size?	2 or less than 2 children	186 (92.1%)
3. Should Reproductive health education be given in the school?	Yes	182 (90.1%)
4. Heard about AIDS?	Yes	192 (95.0%)
5. How HIV spreads?	Blood/ mother to child/ needle stick injury/ sexual contact	150 (74.3%)
6. Should AIDS/ HIV be taught in schools?	Yes	188 (93.1%)
7. Is sex before marriage right or wrong?	-	Right- 14 (6.9%) Wrong- 188 (93.1%)
8. Heard of Family Planning/ Contraceptives?	Yes	74 (36.7%)
9. Should there be compulsory Family Planning?	-	Yes- 166 (82.2%) No- 36 (17.8%)
10. Heard of sexually transmitted diseases?	Yes	Yes- 106 (52.5%) No- 96 (47.5%)

Regarding the Preferred method of impacting Reproductive Health Education maximum (48.5%) preferred teacher as the source of education followed by doctors (33.7%), family (14.9%) and friends (2.9%) as described in figure 1.

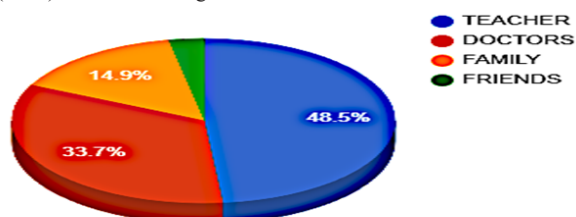


Figure 1: Distribution of study participants as per their preferred source of obtaining Reproductive health education.

DISCUSSION

In our study, students had favourable attitude towards Reproductive health education as majority (90%) of them recommended RHE to be given to them in school and near about half (49%) think that teacher should give this education. Small family norm was favoured by most

(92.1%) of the students. Similar observations were also noted by a study conducted by Borkar et al.¹⁰

Mean age of menarche of the adolescent school girls in this study was 12.81 years. This was in consonance with study conducted by Agarwal A et al (2009)¹¹ conducted in Singapore and Shoor P et al (2017) in Tumkur.¹²

Only 36.6% of adolescents were aware of at least on method of contraception, 95% had heard about AIDS and 52.5% had heard of sexually transmitted diseases. In the study conducted by Gupta et al¹³ among adolescents less awareness was noted, only 19.8% were aware of at least on method of contraception, 39.5% had heard about AIDS and 18% had heard of sexually transmitted diseases.

The preferred sources of reproductive health awareness in our study were teachers (48.5%), followed by doctors (33.7%) and family (14.9%). Similar observations were reported by Bhasin et al¹⁴. In the study conducted by Kotecha et al¹⁵ in Vadodra city, the preferred sources were mothers (33 percent), doctors (25 percent) and teachers (15 percent). In the present study, adolescents' attitude towards small family norm was positive as majority (92.1%) favoured small family norm. Similar findings were reported by Borkar et al,¹⁰ Mukherjee CG et al¹⁵ and Durge PM et al.¹⁶

Only near about half participants (56%) knew the correct legal age of marriage which shows their lack of awareness. Though reproduction and reproductive system were part of the curriculum in classes 9th and 10th, these topics were rarely taken up in the classroom because teachers themselves were uncomfortable and hesitated in teaching these topics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that there is a lack of reproductive health awareness among adolescents which make them vulnerable to many health risks. The participants felt that they should receive reproductive health education preferably by their teachers in the school and necessary provision for the same should be emphasized.

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