



MYTH ON SEXUALITY AMONG COLLEGE YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Sex myths have direct linkages with the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS. Mass media and peers instead of promoting sexual knowledge, spreads most of the time false messages and misconceptions. Today's youth becomes prey to these illuminations and finally land up beyond repair. The present study was conducted with the objective is to identify and differentiate myth and facts on sex so as to provide proven facts and information to the youth which could provide solution to their sexual queries and guide them in proper direction. A pre-tested structured questionnaire containing statement on myths and facts was administered among the rural college youth covering the areas sexual relations, health aspects of sex, motivation towards sex, pregnancy, male and female differences and orgasm. This explorative study adopted systematic random sampling method and samples are drawn from undergraduate and post-graduate students. The findings revealed that the youth are not aware on female sexuality, pregnancy, sexual intercourse, STD. It is suggested that sex education and sex education through peer education becomes vital.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

It's true that in the complicated and convoluted world of sex, myths will always abound (Andrea Black, 2013), It is really dark for the average Indian that the world of sexuality and HIV/AIDS is masked with mystery and misconceptions. There are hundreds of myths and 'false beliefs' on sexuality and HIV/AIDS have been added and even cultivated each and every day by various agents and more so by the web world. Sex related issues are seldom focused or discussed by scientific and authenticated agencies and institutions. They believe in the knowledge they acquire and one of the chief source is their peer group. Due to the lack of scientific knowledge, people are easily driven unscientifically on cause and effect equations (UNESCO, 2002).

The role of parents and teachers in promoting scientific knowledge on sex related information is the need of the hour. Though India is culturally and religiously dominant in every respect; the nation has its own dynamism in the field of sex education. There are barriers for parents, youth and teens to talk and confer about sex. Hence, there are many such misconceptions or myths prevailing on sex and sex related issues (Abel, 1997; Karen Gelb, 2007).

It has been observed that the prominent factor that increases women's vulnerability to HIV infection is gender biased myths regarding sexuality, STD, HIV/AIDS. Some misbeliefs prevent them to go for checkup (Majumdar, 2002). A lot of myths are generated due to lack of autonomy for gaining knowledge. Moreover the influence of societal norms on one hand and myths and misconceptions on the other make a large section of Indian men and women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, as unprotected sex is the most important route of HIV transmission (UNESCO, 2002). Anna North (2011) has reported a number of sex myths between men and women.

In a number of studies, it has been proved that young people have serious misperceptions about STDs and HIV/AIDS (Kumar, 1995). The various sources either available or accessible by the target group are not scientific or self-reliant. The information so received is seldom tested and proved. The youth have faith in the information they acquired from other sources. Though there are lot of sources where in youth obtain sex and related information; majority are from their peers (VHAI, 1990).

Under these circumstances, it is of a great need to make an individual aware of the MYTH. Serious attempts are necessary to educate – what is a fact against the myth. There are fifteen such myths have been selected and tested among the student

population at the higher education level.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the areas of myth on sexuality among the college youth
- To estimate whether the youth are able to differentiate between myth and facts on sexuality
- To suggests suitable measures to curtail myths and misconceptions

METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of the study is to explore the knowledge and awareness on sex myth prevailing among the college students and hence the design of the study is explorative in nature. The study was conducted in a rural college which is an autonomous higher educational institution located in a socially, economically and educationally backward area. The college is situated 21 KM away in the western direction from Madurai, Tamilnadu. The students to these institutions are mostly from rural areas and more than 80 per cent are first-generation graduates.

CRITERIA FOR SAMPLES SELECTION

1. The final year under graduate and post graduate students
2. Must have stayed in the hostel for a minimum period of two years.
3. Must be first-generation graduates.
4. They must belong to villages.

The samples are selected using systematic random sampling method based on these four criteria's. The samples are selected after obtaining the list of inmates from the hostel authorities. The samples belong to the age group from 19 to 22 and all are male. There are five samples selected with these same criteria and pre-testing was done to improve the questionnaire.

DESCRIPTION OF TOOL

The major areas of the tool consists of the statements regarding sexual relations, health aspects of sex, motivation towards sex, pregnancy, male and female differences and orgasm. The statements such as the following are included:

- Semen is the essence of life; its loss damages one's health
- Sexual Intercourse during pregnancy harms the health of women
- Most men lose their sexual drive around the age of 50
- Masturbation is restricted almost exclusively to males
- There is something wrong with a person who hasn't had sex by

- the time he is 18
- Nocturnal Emissions is a sign of STD
 - A women doesn't get pregnant during her first sexual intercourse
 - Men have stronger sex drives and are more interested in sex than females

DISCUSSION

From the randomly selected male student youth, it is observed that the mean age of the respondents is 23.5 of which their educational qualification ranges from Under graduation to Post graduation. Majority of the respondents belong to Nuclear family and all are unmarried.

Amongst the fifteen myths in the questionnaire the following are identified as myth and fact by the students.

Table No.– 1 Identified clearly by respondents' as Myth

S. No.	Myth	F	%	Rank
1.	Sexual intercourse during pregnancy harms the health of women.	37	78.72	1.0
2.	Semen is the essence of life; its loss damages one's health	34	72.34	2.0
3.	Most men lose their sexual drive around the age of 50	32	68.08	3.5
4.	Men always want and are always ready to have sex.	32	68.08	3.5

The above table explains about the most important myths prevailing among the respondents. A clear picture is seen that, 78.72% of the respondents believe in the myth, **“Sexual intercourse during pregnancy harms the health of women”** whereas 72.34% of the respondents have not identified, **“Semen is the essence of life; its loss damages one's health”** as a myth. Other common myths found among 68.08% of the respondents are, **“Most men lose their sexual drive around the age of 50”** and **“Men always want and are always ready to have sex”**.

Table No. -2 Identified clearly by respondents as Fact

S. No.	Fact	F	%	Rank
1.	Masturbation is restricted almost exclusively to males.	46	97.87	1.0
2.	There is something wrong with a person who hasn't had sex by the time he is 18.	45	95.74	2.0
3.	Nocturnal Emissions is a sign of STD.	40	85.10	3.0
4.	Men have stronger sex drives and are more interested in sex than females.	36	76.59	4.5

This table (Number – 2) amplifies the important myths which have been identified by the respondents as fact. On the whole 97.87% of the respondents strongly believe, **“Masturbation is restricted almost exclusively to males”** as a myth. There are 95.74% of the respondents have identified that, **“There is something wrong with a person who hasn't had sex by the time he is 18”** as a myth shows that there is an appreciable amount of awareness among youth.

There are also 85.10% of them who felt that “Nocturnal Emissions is a sign of STD” is a myth. **“Men have stronger sex drives and are more interested in sex than females”** and **“All teenagers are having sexual intercourse these days”** is identified as myth by 76.59% of the respondents.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- It is strange to observe that majority of the student respondents believe in the myth, **“Sexual intercourse during pregnancy harms the health of women”**. Hence the knowledge level on pregnancy and sexual intercourse is very

- much lacking.
- The Fact that, **“Semen is the essence of life; its loss damages one's health”** has not really reached most of the rural student sample youth.
 - The myth such as, **“Most men lose their sexual drive around the age of 50”** and have found commonly among the student youth.
 - It is strongly routed that **“Men always want and are always ready to have sex”** among the student youth. Though it is a myth it has a strong truth in the minds of the youth either due to peer influence, mass media and other factors
 - Almost all the student youth believe in the myth that **“Masturbation is restricted almost exclusively to males”** which enforces that they have completely no knowledge on female sexuality.
 - There are 95.74% of the respondents have identified that, **“There is something wrong with a person who hasn't had sex by the time he is 18”** as a myth shows that there is an appreciable amount of awareness among youth.
 - It has also been observed that the knowledge on STD and HIV is lacking among majority; as it is evidently identified that the Myth on **“Nocturnal Emissions is a sign of STD”** was not identified as a myth.
 - The respondents are stronger in the areas of sexual behaviour among teens as they know that not all teenagers have sex these days. This finding proves to be an eye opener against those who generalize that today's teenagers are indulged in pre-marital sex.
 - In the area of comparative male female sexuality, respondents have a better understanding as they were able to identify the myth **“Men have stronger sex drives and are more interested in sex than females”** as a myth.

Generally it has been observed that most of the myths are not identified as myths by these college youths. It requires serious interventions to be taken by the parents, teachers, institutions and the development organizations.

CONCLUSION

Under the strong influence of culture, discussions on sex have become a taboo subject. It narrows down the space to talk about sex and sexuality and therefore hinders sex education. Lack of positive language on sex makes sex a more hidden and obscure subject for the adolescent population. Due to the absence of proper sex education, sex becomes an issue of uninformed discussion among peers, which, in turn, results in unscientific and incorrect information among young boys and girls. The lack of knowledge on sex continues even in later phases of life.

The absence of clearly-defined, transparent and socially-accountable, sexual mores, and the prevalence of fostered myths and secrecy, spells disastrous implications not only for the spread of HIV/AIDS in India, but also in the way it is confronted.

It is also to be observed that the level of awareness could still be low if such studies are to be conducted among the non-educated population. Finally this research paves way for future researches with rural population, girls and other productive groups.

It is necessary to give a basic knowledge in the form of awareness programmes to eradicate myth on sex among youth. There were various strategies required to educate against myth among the youth. Some of the techniques such openness in communication, parental readiness to discuss the issues, beginning discussions at an early stage, positive messages, sex education, research and training would prove to be successful.

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