

Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Sex Education among Adolescents of Kolhapur

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Abstract

Background: During adolescence knowledge regarding puberty, reproduction, pregnancy and sexual health is very limited. The lack of knowledge and being sexually active during this phase increases the risk of or sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

Objectives: To assess the knowledge and attitude regarding sex education, to determine its association with demographic variables and also to assess the correlation between the knowledge and attitude regarding sex education among the adolescents of Kolhapur.

Methodology: A total of 109 adolescent students from two randomly selected junior college were enrolled for this quantitative survey research. The students of any stream within the age group of 16-19 years and willing to participate were involved. Questionnaire was used to collect data regarding demographic data, knowledge and attitude regarding sex education. Answers given by participants were evaluated and analysed. Descriptive analysis was done in MS Excel(2016). Chi square test was used to assess the associations in R software (version 3.6.1).

Results: Twenty-eight percent participants had adequate knowledge. Most participants either given incorrect answers (35%) or responded as they don't know the answer (37%). Majority of participants held uncertain attitude (66%) Knowledge of the participants were significantly associated with education ($P=4.11E-08$), stream of education ($P=1.54E-05$) and their residential area ($P=7.93E-06$). Attitude was not significantly associated with any of the demographic variables ($P<0.05$). No significant correlation was found between knowledge and attitude towards the sex education ($r= -0.0224$; $P=0.8250$).

Conclusion: There was a considerable lacunae in knowledge and the attitude towards sex education. Therefore, there is need to increase awareness about sex education among the adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent, Pregnancy, Sex education.

Introduction

Adolescence is the period when the body undergoes lot of physical, emotional, behavioural and psychological

changes.^[1] During this phase, huge amount of doubts and questions related to sexual health arises which gives rise to anxieties and worries.^[2] The mixture of this anxieties, inadequate knowledge, negative messages received from social media and peers increases the misconception about contraception use and STIs and leads unprotected sex,unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and damage relationships.^[1,2]

In India, these problems are considered as taboo subjects and are seldomly discussed.^[3] Due to this, the high prevalence of unprotected sex and STIs is seen in India of which adolescents makes a huge figure.^[4-8] Hence, there is necessity to have an appropriate knowledge

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regarding the changes that occurs during this phase, sexuality, sexually transmitted disease (its transmission mode and preventive measures), prevention of unwanted pregnancies and maintaining safe and healthy sexual life among the adolescence.^[1]

Health and sex education plays vital role in providing adequate knowledge and creating an awareness regarding maintaining health, sexual activities, precautionary measures, and also it increases the self esteem.^[1,9] Hence, the study was designed to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding sex education, to determine its association with demographic variables and also to assess the correlation between the knowledge and attitude regarding sex education among the adolescents of Kolhapur.

Methodology

Study design and sampling: The Quantitative survey Research was conducted in two randomly selected junior colleges at Kolhapur in September to December 2019. The purpose and details of method used in the study were explained to all the students. A written informed consent was obtained prior to the study. Students between 16-19 years studying any stream and willing to participate were included. The students who were absent and not willing to participate were excluded. A total of 109 adolescent students of both the colleges following inclusion criteria were randomly selected.

Data collection and analysis: A structured questionnaire comprised of questions related to socio demographics along with multiple choice questions to assess knowledge and attitude was used to collect data. The participants answered the questions in complete anonymity. The answers provided by the participants were evaluated and the collected data was subjected to descriptive analysis in MS Excel (2016).

Results

The questionnaire was divided into three sections i.e. Section A, B and C. Section A comprised of socio demographic proforma which included demographic variables such as age, gender, residential area, education, stream, parent's education & occupation, family type, family income, number of siblings along with source of information, sexual experiences and known Contraception method.

Section B, knowledge questionnaire, comprising of 27 questions (Table 1). Section C, fivepoint Likert scale to assess attitude comprised of 12 statements (three positive and nine negative).

Table 1: Distribution of questions (n=27)

Content	No of Questions
Physiological changes	08
Contraception method	13
STD and prevention	06

STD- sexually transmitted diseases

Response rate of the study was 91.74% (n=100). Average time taken to fill the questionnaire was 20 minutes. Average age of the participants was 16.84±0.744 years. Demographic distribution of sample size is given in table 2.

Distribution of sample size with respect to their sexual knowledge and experience is given in table 3.

Table 2: Distribution of sample size with respect to their sexual knowledge and experience (n=100)

Variable	Frequency
Source of Information Regarding Sexuality	
Friends	39
Parents	09
Social media	24
Teacher	28
Sexual Experiences	
Masturbation	
Yes	06
No	94
Heterosexuality	
Yes	02
No	98
Homosexuality	
Yes	01
No	99
Known Contraception Method	
Condom	49
Contraceptive Pill	03
Diaphragm	02
Intrauterine Device	03
Spermicide	03
Withdrawal Method	01
Others	02
None	37

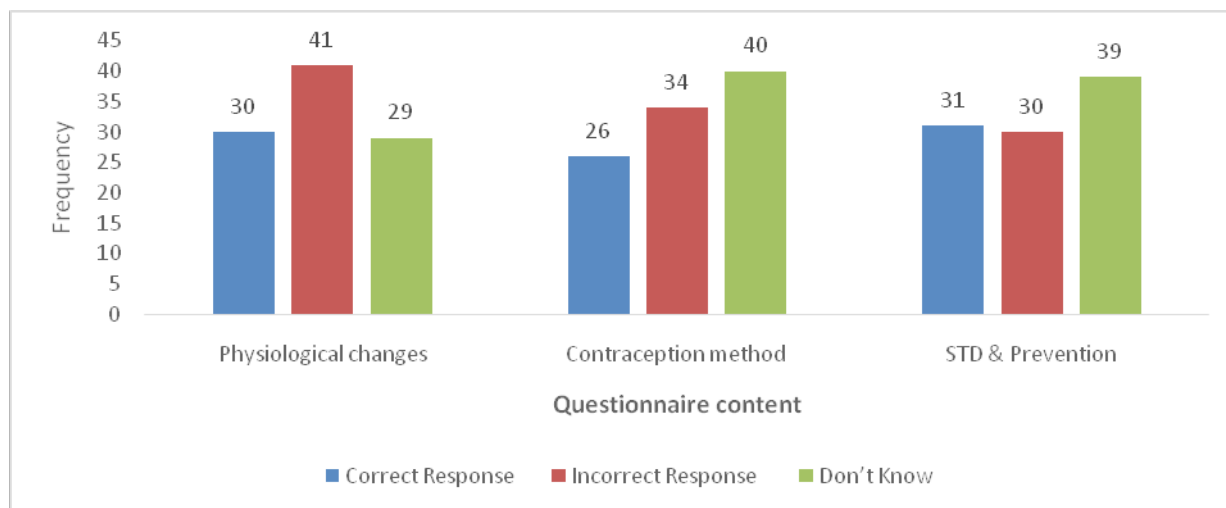


Figure 1: Knowledge regarding physiological changes, contraception method and STD & prevention (n=100)

Correct responses regarding physiological changes, contraception method and STD & prevention were obtained only by 30%, 26% and 31% adolescents respectively (Figure 1).

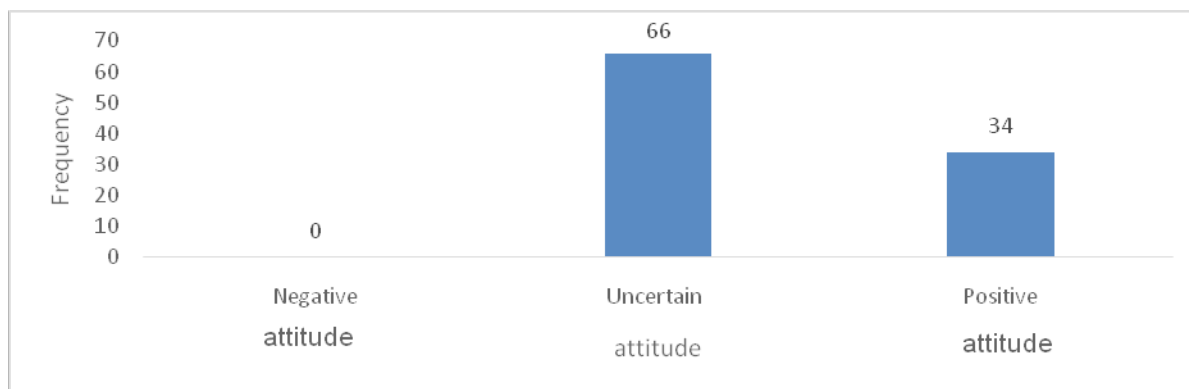


Figure 2: Attitude of adolescents towards sex education (n=100)

Majority of adolescents held uncertain attitude (66%) towards sex education (figure 1).

Knowledge of the participants was significantly associated with the demographic variables such as education ($P=4.11E-08$), stream of education ($P=1.54E-05$) and their residential area ($P=7.93E-06$). However, the attitude was not significantly associated with any of the demographic variable ($P>0.05$). Also there was no significant correlation found between knowledge and the attitude towards the sex education ($r= -0.0224$; $P=0.8250$).

Discussion

The evidence of benefits offered by sex education is shadowed by the lack of knowledge and attitude towards the sex education.^[10] Adequate knowledge

about sex education and a favourable attitude towards it, plays a major role in accepting it as a part of academics. The demographic distribution of the sample size is comparable to similar studies.^[1] Sex as a topic is taboo in India and sex education at school level has gained strong opposition from the society, including parents, teachers, and political leaders. Six states in India including Maharashtra have banned sex education at school level which must have contributed towards low awareness about sex education among the adolescents^[11] Government reports suggest that adolescents account for a huge proportion of new STI cases. This highlights the need for sex education among this demography.^[12]

A high number of participants received the information from their friends as against family members in spite of majority of participants having literate parents, belonging to joint family and 50% being

science students. This indicates a lack of discussion on sex education in the family. This is comparable with similar studies.^[13-14]

Majority of students did not have any sexual experience- masturbation/homosexual/heterosexual and attraction towards same or opposite sex. This highlights the level of taboo and the fact that they may not be comfortable talking about sex. In a similar study by Sathe A *et al*^[15] nearly half of the boys had indulged in masturbation. However, 1 homosexual encounter and 2 heterosexual encounters were observed which can be solely due to the hormonal and developmental changes in the adolescent phase of life. To have sexual encounters of either kind without appropriate knowledge and protection is risky behaviour. This again shows the importance of the necessity of sex education to prevent transmissible sexual diseases that are already increasing and to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

Thirty-seven percent of the participants were unaware of the contraceptive method contrasting to previous studies where the numbers were much higher.^[4] Unawareness of contraceptive method and lack of knowledge among the young adults is an issue that must be dealt with if we want to maintain the health of our country. Young adults and adolescents may not be aware of an existing STI. This can negatively impact their reproductive health and further spread of the infection.^[12]

Majority of the participants either gave wrong answers (35%) or responded as they don't know the answer (37%). Only 28% had adequate knowledge which clearly indicates that the participants have inadequate knowledge. This is comparable to study done by Ajibade BL *et al*.^[16]

An uncertain attitude towards sex education was seen in 66% of participants and is contradictory to the findings of Myeza NP.^[17] This can solely be attributed to society for considering sex as a taboo subject and also to the source through which the knowledge was obtained. This is something that should be changed.

Knowledge was significantly associated with education, stream of education and the residential area concurrent with previous findings.^[18] Also, no significant correlation was found between knowledge and attitude towards sex education. This contradicts previous reports where liberal attitude towards sex education was attributed to high knowledge.^[19,20]

The findings of the study highlight the need for sex education at this level in Kolhapur. An uncertain attitude towards sex and the lack of knowledge on the topic itself is alarming. Sex education will prevent the spread of sexually transmitted disease, tackling it on a large scale. Sex education for adolescents should be implemented by all schools and an initiative should be taken by the government.

Limitation: The study population was the primary limitation. Hence, similar study with large population size could provide better insight on knowledge and attitude regarding sex education among adolescents.

Conclusion

There was a considerable lacunae in knowledge and the attitude towards the sex education. Hence, need of sex education among the adolescents is felt.

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