

**Original Article**

**Knowledge and needs about various aspects related to adolescent health in school going Adolescents**

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**Abstract:**

Adolescents have their specific problems and needs. This cross-sectional study was conducted among 187 students of class X-XI. About 51 (43.2%) boys and 43 (62.3%) girls were aware about the components of the Female Reproductive System. Only 1 (0.8%) boy and 1 (1.4%) girl were aware about the components of the Male Reproductive System. Total 89.8% adolescents were aware that HIV/AIDS is a STD. Nearly 50% of the respondents thought that they were given adequate sex education. A total of 48.9% of the respondents were aware about the different forms of violence which included physical, mental and sexual abuse.

**Keywords:** adolescents, reproductive health, violence, psychosocial health

**Introduction**

WHO defines adolescents as young people in the age group of 10 -19 years.<sup>1</sup> They form a special group in society and have their own specific needs. Adolescence has become a more clearly defined developmental stage in human life and there is currently a greater recognition of this group biological, psycho-social and health needs than before<sup>2</sup>. Exploration and experimentation, the hallmark of adolescent behavior, often propel adolescent towards risk taking, exposure to unwanted pregnancy, STD infections, substance abuse and unintended injuries<sup>3</sup>. At the same time adolescents often face constraints in seeking services including their own misperceptions about their needs, having to deal with shame and embarrassment in disclosing their problems and provider's attitudes<sup>4</sup>. To overcome these constraints to care seeking behavior, it is imperative to develop specially designated services for adolescents. The adolescents in class X and XI may have different issues due to hormonal and physical changes as well as due to the stress of study as going through board examination (Class-X) and upcoming major board examination in the class- XII (Class-XI). So, it was decided to take this age group for the study.

**Objectives:**

1. To assess the health awareness, knowledge and health needs of the adolescents.
2. To study the factors associated with health, reproductive aspect, psychosocial aspect and violence of the adolescents.

**Methodology:**

It was a cross-sectional study conducted in M.K. higher Secondary School, Ahmedabad. The study was done among all students of class X-XI. Thus total 187 students participated in the study. The information was collected through pre-tested questionnaire. After taking the oral

consent, all students were explained about the questions and the responses given in the questionnaire. The anonymity was maintained. The study was conducted in June 2009.

### **Observations and Results:**

Total 187 students participated in the study. All the students were in the age group of 14 – 16 years. Total 118 (63%) male and 69 (37%) female students participated.

### **Reproductive health:**

51 (43.2%) boys and 43 (62.3%) girls were aware about the components of the Female Reproductive System. Only 1 (0.8%) boy and 1 (1.4%) girl were aware about the components of the Male Reproductive System.

It was found that more common sources of information in males were television and books while parents and friends were main sources in females.

**Table – 1: Main sources of information about Reproductive Health**

Main Source of information regarding Sexuality*	Male (N=118)		Female (N=69)		Total (N=187)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Friends	73	61.9	46	66.6	119	63.6
Television	83	70.3	22	31.9	105	56.1
Books, Magazines, Newspaper	79	66.9	36	52.2	115	61.5
Parents	37	19.8	65	94.2	102	54.5

\* Multiple responses hence percentages may add up to more than 100

### **Awareness about contraception:**

**Table – 2: Awareness about contraception**

Contraceptive methods known	Male (N=118)		Female (N=69)		Total (N=187)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Condom	95	80.5	61	88.4	156	83.4
IUD	68	57.6	52	75.4	120	64.2
OCP	83	70.3	49	71.0	132	70.6
Vasectomy	60	50.8	47	68.1	107	57.2
Tubectomy	59	50.0	50	72.5	109	58.3

\* Multiple responses hence percentages may add up to more than 100

The adolescents were aware about various contraceptive methods as 80.5% males and 88.4% females had written about condom as the contraceptive method. The other methods like IUD, OCP and permanent sterilization like tubectomy and vasectomy were also mentioned as the methods of contraception.

**Awareness about STDs:**

**Table – 3: Awareness about STDs**

STDs Known	Male (N=118)		Female (N=69)		Total (N=187)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
HIV/AIDS	107	90.7	61	88.4	168	89.8
Hepatitis B	51	43.2	32	46.4	83	44.4
Cancer	60	50.8	39	56.5	99	52.9

\* Multiple responses hence percentages may add up to more than 100

Total 89.8% adolescents were aware that HIV/AIDS is a STD. About 44.4% of total students knew that Hepatitis B can be transmitted sexually. Surprisingly, 50.8% males and 56.5% females believed that cancer can be transmitted sexually.

**Psycho-social aspects:**

Out of 187 respondents, 52 (27.8%) thought that boys and girls are treated differently in their families. Out of these 52 respondents, 29 (55.8%) thought that boys are treated better than girls. More than 90% of the students believed that they get satisfactory love and care from their parents. When asked about cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, 166 (88.8%) of the students did not think that smoking or drinking helps handle stress or anger or enhances one’s personality. It was also found that male students were facing less difficulty in communication with the individuals of the opposite sex as compared to their counterparts. On the other hand, speaking in front of a group or on stage was easier for girls as compared to boys.

**Health needs:**

Nearly 50% of the respondents thought that they were given adequate sex education while the rest disagreed. 122 (65.2%) believed that they require further sex education.

Although only 17 (9.1%) of total students were not happy with the way their body looks, 52 (27.8%) wanted to lose weight while 33 (17.6%) wanted to gain weight.

Out of total 69 girls, 56(81.2%) were told about menstruation before menarche. 75.4% girls experienced problems during their menses and the major problems were stomach ache, body ache, tiredness and laziness.

Problems related to sexual development have been rated as the most common problems faced by the adolescents and most preferred person for information related to sexual development and sex education was teacher for boys while was mother for girls followed by doctor and friends.

Females had more awareness about issues related to puberty, infertility, sexual intercourse, incest, abortion and homosexuality; whereas males had more awareness about masturbation, safe sex, impotency and sexual abuse.

About 148 (79.1%) students felt that specialized adolescent clinic should be established for solving adolescent problems. When asked about the most suitable place for establishing a special adolescent clinic, 71.2% considered government health centers as the most suitable place, followed by government hospital, school/colleges, private clinics and community center.

**Violence:**

Many acts of violence are never recorded because they do not come to the attention of authorities / parents. A total of 48.9% of the respondents were aware about the different forms of violence which included physical, mental and sexual abuse.

**Table –4: Places suitable for specialized adolescent clinic**

Place	No.	% age
Government Health Centre	133	71.1
Government Hospital	115	61.5
School / College	109	58.3
Private Doctor	107	57.2
Community Centre	57	30.5

\* Multiple responses hence percentages may add up to more than 100

Majority of boys and around 67% girls admitted that they were involved in the act of violence. Majority acts of violence inflicted or suffered include minor brawl or fights including slapping, beating and verbal abuse with friends or siblings and 74% of injuries inflicted and 64% injuries suffered required nothing. Very few required either first aid at the school medical room or help of a doctor. 4 (2.1%) required hospitalization of the victim.

**Discussion:**

It was found that knowledge about the reproductive health was inadequate. Only 1 boy and 1 girl knew about components of Male reproductive system. The sources of information were not appropriate as friends, printed materials and mass media (Television) has been found to influence majority. Lack of communication with parents, teachers or other health professionals including counselors may contribute to their ignorance. Awareness about barrier method

(Condom) is more prevalent (83.4%) as compared to other contraceptive methods. 89.8% students knew about HIV/AIDS and were aware about the transmission of the disease. About 29 respondents thought that boys are treated better than girls. More than 90% were satisfied about the love and care received from their parents. 122 (65.2%) believed that the sex education was unsatisfactory and they wanted further sex education preferably from teachers in case of males and from mothers in case of their counterparts, followed by doctor and friends. Requirement of specialized adolescent clinic was felt by the respondents and government health centre was most preferred suitable place for such clinic followed by government hospitals.

### **Limitations:**

The study was conducted in the age group of 14 -16 years so, the results can not be generalized to all the adolescents. The study was carried out to find various health related issues of adolescent appearing in the board examination or are about to appear next year.

### **Refernces:**

1. [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) accessed on 18/09/2009
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3. [www.smilefoundationindia.org](http://www.smilefoundationindia.org) accessed on 15/09/2009
4. [www.icmr.nic.in](http://www.icmr.nic.in) accessed on 15/09/2009

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