

## A Study on Attitude of Teachers and Adolescents towards Sex Education

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### Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate attitude of teachers and adolescents towards sex education. The sample consisted of 50 teachers and 100 adolescent students from Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. Descriptive survey method was used for the present study. Simple random sampling method was used for collection of data. Attitude scales entitled "Attitude Scale towards Sex Education", for teachers and adolescents were used for the study which was developed by Dr. Usha Mishra. From the results it was found that mostly teachers have favourable attitude towards sex education. Majority of the teachers reported that teachers need special training in discussing sexuality with students. Findings also showed that male teachers had a significantly more favourable attitude towards sex education as compared to female teachers. The attitude of boys towards sex education is significantly more favourable as compared to girls.

**KEYWORDS:** Sex education, Attitude and Adolescent Students.

### BACKGROUND:

Sex education in India is need of the hour. Based on HIV Sentinel Surveillance 2008-09, it is estimated that India has an adult prevalence of 0.31% with 23.9 lakh people infected with HIV, of which, 39% are females and 3.5% are children. We have to launch programmes in the right directions, such as disseminating knowledge about sex and the dreaded disease AIDS, about its social impact etc. The primary goal of sex education is promotion of sexual and reproductive health. There is a pressing need to raise the levels of information among the young people who are embarking on sexually active life. It can help to prevent physical, psychological, marital and social problems related to sexuality. Sex education should be given or not given is always a topic of discussion among teachers, parents and community members. It is a fact that in present scenario it is much required to teach adolescents about healthy and positive sexual situations as well as life skills. However, arguments are often raised on what, when and how the message of sex education should be given to adolescents. Before taking any step towards sex education among the various parties, it is most essential to study the attitude of teachers, parents and adolescents towards sex education so that their attitude may be changed if required. It is important to have a positive attitude towards sex education in the school curriculum so that parents and teachers may feel comfortable to impart such education and adolescents can learn about sexuality without hesitation. Education should be organized in such a way that it may enable the adolescents to face and solve the problem of life. They may feel inadequate, because they are unfamiliar with the correct terminology. So, it is necessary for the school to work in close cooperation with the home. In this sense teacher has great responsibility for imparting sex education. Sex education would help students to develop positive attitude towards sex when their queries are satisfied honestly and scientifically.

Sex education is required for adolescents to provide them positive direction, right information, which would avoid unnecessary worries and tensions. It was felt that accurate information and improved understanding of sexuality were definite to

adolescents (Sherriffs & Dezelsky, 1979) and therefore amenable to education because it is the basic responsibility of education to educate children about their health, sex, organs, morality and behaviour. Parents and teachers have to be very tactful so that their adolescents do not obtain wrong information as misconceptions may lead to many sexual diseases. Sex education is needed for freedom from sexual dysfunctions and organic disorders, to create awareness about sexual-social issues like gender discrimination, child marriage, dowry, prostitution etc. Having a programme of sex education in the schools will not be panacea for all social ills, nor will facts necessarily be a motivation for improved behaviour because adolescents have requirement to know the truth, the right answers, and factual knowledge to counteract the fantasies and half-truths which they are getting from their peers. Education to sexuality is an extension of education for life itself. Adolescents have so many myths about their organic development systems, bodily changes, hormonal effects on reproductive system, chronological maturity and its physiological impacts, when they become anxious, stressful and over pressurized, nobody is there to help, guide and to explain different facts of boy-girl relationship to cope with her/his felt sexual urges.

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Sex education influences contraceptive knowledge and behaviour (Dawson, 1986). Sex education is necessary for students and it plays a very important role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS (Tilakavathi, S., Divekar, A.D. & Mehendale, S.M. (1997). Studies have shown that parents, teachers involved in sex education should have some special personal characteristics as well as good training and the attitude towards sex education to be encouraging in their behaviour .(Badhan, S.K., Lal, P. & Kashyap, G.L. (2002). A majority of parents, teachers and students supported that sex education should be introduced in school curriculum that will help prevent unwanted pregnancies, enhance healthy relationship between opposite sex, parental transmission of HIV/AIDS infections and STDs and toward providing the knowledge of sex interactions, consequences and responsibilities (Orji and Esimai, 2003). The attitude of youth on sex education was very high and positive, and youth wants sex education ( More.C.B. 2012). Study conducted by Bhutia.Y.(2014) shown that students have high positive attitude towards sex education and only teachers had low and moderate attitude towards sex education.

#### **RATIONAL OF THE STUDY**

One of the much-debated topics in India is whether sex education is necessary in India. But considering the lack of awareness among the youngsters, particularly adolescents in the age group of 16 to 19 and their involvement in sex in a rather primitive way, considering it as an act without any responsibility, has spoiled the individuals concerned, with early pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, mental tensions, stress, torture, desertion from their families, loss of social respect and in the end resulting in utter failure in their studies and becoming a wayward in life.

While the “UNAIDS 2011 World Aids Day” report shows that the rate of HIV infection has fallen by 56% in India, the country still has the third largest number of people with HIV/AIDS in the world. The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)’s 2011 annual report shows that young people in the age group of 15-24 account for 31% of the HIV/AIDS burden. An older study, UNICEF’s 2003-08 analysis, found that only 20% of adolescent girls and 36% of adolescent boys in India had any knowledge of the disease. This is unfortunate for two reasons—first, because a large percentage of those infected with HIV in India are between the ages of 15 and

24 and second, 80% of HIV infection among Indians is transmitted through heterosexual contact, not through men having sex with men or through the use of contaminated needles, as is often popularly assumed. While there are many programmes that impart education about HIV/AIDS to adults, children are often ignored because it is not considered kosher to talk to them about sex—and certainly not about an illness that can be related to sex. But to check HIV/AIDS, it is imperative to spread awareness among youth.

So the question remains how can you provide information to children on HIV/AIDS that's accurate, sticks in their minds and will benefit their sexual health in the long term? The approach, however, can pose a bit of a problem since several states are ambiguous in their attitude to sex education. Teachers and school authorities need to constantly determine what can be taught and what cannot, and this is what hampers the spread of awareness about HIV/AIDS.

M.K.C. Nair and colleagues from the Child Development Centre, Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, conducted a sex education study—published in May in the *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*—on 996 teenage boys and 560 girls from three urban schools in Kerala. They found that teenage boys and girls had limited information on sexual health and HIV/AIDS, but their awareness levels improved dramatically after a class on the subject. The children were taught from what the research group called the “Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health Education (ARSHE) package” and their knowledge was assessed before and after the package was taught. The Arshe package has been examined by the Indian Council of Medical Research. Before the class, 64.1% of the girls and 37.7% of the boys had limited knowledge on sexual health and HIV; after the class, only 8.3% of the girls and 3.5% of the boys remained in that category.

The number of people living with HIV rose from around 8 million in 1990 to 33 million by the end of 2009. The overall growth of the epidemic has stabilized in recent years. The annual number of new HIV infections has steadily declined and due to the significant increase in people receiving antiretroviral therapy, the number of AIDS-related deaths has also declined. Since the beginning of the epidemic, nearly 30 million people have died from AIDS-related causes. In those of statistics the most of infected are the youths, which have needed the sex education by which some levels prevention must be taken. Before applying sex education we have needed to know the attitude of youth.

Question arises to us “Why sex education is important?” so first of all we wants realize that in 1951 Indian population was 36,10,88,000 and now in current situation we reached to 1,21,01,93,422 (1.21 billion) from 2011 census, more that sixth of the world population. The demographic of India are inclusively of the second most populous country in the world and growth rate is 1.41% which are 93<sup>rd</sup> in the world. If we successes to aware our youth from present situation, we reached to controlling target of population. But not only by population education got and controlling the target of population but also for this most important factor is sex education by which adolescent got appropriate knowledge of sexual health. They understand and know their attitudes, needs & weakness.

Keeping in mind above circumstances the investigator selects the following problem for the study.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem under the investigation is “**A Study on Attitude of Teachers and Adolescents towards Sex Education**”.

### CONCEPT OF SEX EDUCATION:

Sex education as defined by Sex Information and Education Council of the United States(SIECUS)is “a lifelong process of building a strong foundation for sexual health through acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values about identity, relationship and intimacy”. The European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection, as part of 'The SAFE Project: A European partnership to promote the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people. The project is a partnership between IPPF European Network, WHO Regional Office for Europe and Lund University. They stated, “*All young people have the right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, to be active citizens, to have pleasure and confidence in their sexuality and to be able to make their own informed choices*”. In order to meet these rights, we seek to promote a model of sexuality education that considers the various inter-related dynamics that influence sexual choices and the resulting emotional, mental, physical and social impacts on each person's development. This positive approach to sexuality education includes an emphasis on sexual expression and sexual fulfilment, representing a shift away from methodologies that focus exclusively on the reproductive aspects of adolescent sexuality. They also suggest, sexuality education must help young people to

- **Acquire accurate information:** On sexual and reproductive rights; information to dispel myths; references to resources and services
- **Develop life skills:** Such as critical thinking, communication and negotiation skills, self-development skills, decision making skills; sense of self; confidence; assertiveness; ability to take responsibility; ability to ask questions and seek help; empathy
- **Nurture positive attitudes and values:** Open-mindedness; respect for self and others; positive self-worth/esteem; comfort; non-judgmental attitude; sense of responsibility; positive attitude toward their sexual and reproductive health.

Sex education covers a broad range of issues relating to both the physical and biological aspects of sexuality and the emotional and social aspects. It recognizes and accepts all people as sexual beings and is concerned with more than just the prevention of disease or pregnancy.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM

### 1) Attitude:

Attitude is feeling or view of teachers and adolescent students either in a positive negative way concerning sex education.

### 2) Sex Education:

The sex-education is defined as education which provides the adolescent an opportunity to have an access to authentic information and knowledge about the

growth, development and physiological processes of male and female sex organ separately.

### **3) Adolescent:**

Here adolescent refers to students who are studying in college level.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the attitude of teachers towards sex education.
2. To study attitude of teachers towards sex education in relation to gender.
3. To study the attitude of adolescent towards sex education.
4. To compare the attitude of male and female adolescent towards sex education.

## **HYPOTHESES**

1. There exists significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards sex education.
2. There exist significant difference in the attitude of male teachers and female teachers towards sex education.
3. There exists significant difference in the attitude of adolescent towards sex education.
4. There exist significant difference in the attitude of adolescent boys and girls towards sex education.

## **METHOD**

Descriptive survey method was adopted in the present study. In some cases interview method were also adopted. The data were selected by simple random sampling method.

## **SAMPLE**

The population of the study comprises teachers and students of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. Total numbers of sample were 100 students (out of which 50 were boys and 50 were girls) and 50 teachers from Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS).

## **TOOL AND PROCEDURE**

For measuring the attitude of teachers and adolescents towards sex education Dr. Usha Mishra's standardized scale entitled "Attitude towards Sex Education", for teachers and adolescents were used for the study. The scale consisted of 32 items. The reliability of the test computed by Split Half was 0.86 and the scale has content and face validity. The attitude scales were administered to the teachers and adolescents by researcher herself. They were explained about the purpose of the study and after establishing a good rapport and ensuring clear understanding of instructions, they were asked to respond on the scale. The attitude of teachers and students were assessed on each item of the scale on which percentage analysis was done. After that their attitude towards sex education were compared by employing t-test.

## **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study limited in the following area:

1. Attitude of 50 teachers on sex education were taken as sample in the study.
2. Adolescent students in the age group 19 have been taken in the study.

3. Commerce degree students (50 boys and 50 girls) of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences were taken as sample of the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Attitude of Teachers towards Sex Education**

The findings of item wise analysis showed that many teachers did not talk with their students about sexuality. Only 10% of teachers reported they had discussed sexuality with their students. Only 13% of teachers were able to use biological vocabulary while teaching. 18% were comfortable in discussing sexuality with their students. 62% of the teachers were of view that teachers needed special training in discussing sexuality with the students. 90% of teachers believe that it is important to learn how to talk with children about sexuality. 82% believe providing sexual education could prevent sexually transmitted disease. Majority (84%) believed that specific training should be given to teachers involved in teaching sex education in school. Mostly teachers (75%) showed positive attitude towards introduction of innovative methods of teaching sex education as a subject in schools. 60% believe there should be workshop on sex education. 74% teachers believe that mass awareness should be created for sex related issues. A great majority, 92% believe that there should be special counselling of sex related queries of students. 86% teachers were of the view that parents should be involved in mass awareness programs conducted in schools. 56% teachers support comprehensive approach to sex education. 72% believe that teaching information about sexuality in schools is as important as teaching, reading, writing and arithmetic. 82% teachers were of the view that there should be special committees in the school to plan and conduct activities for the students to know how to avoid STDs. 83% believe that student should be punished for using bad words. 80% think that student should learn about AIDS. 69% think that boys and girls in co-education should be taught together. 72% think that for imparting sex education magazines are the best method. 70% teachers believe that children shouldn't have access to Internet at home because it is easy source to find sexual material and wrong information related to it. Overall the teachers dominantly show positive attitude towards sex education.

### **Attitude of Teachers towards Sex Education in Relation to Gender**

The mean score of attitude towards sex education for male teachers was 59.56 with SD 8.13 and for female teachers was 50.24 with SD 4.80. The t-value of 4.95 which was significant at 0.01 level of significance. It implies that there had significant difference in attitudes of male and female teachers towards sex education. Male teachers showed significantly more favourable attitude than the female teachers toward sex education. Hence the hypothesis that "There exists significant difference in the attitudes of male and female teachers towards sex education" is accepted. The results may be seen in the light of finding of Kumar (2007) who showed that there was significant difference among pupil teachers in relation to gender and academic stream regarding HIV/AIDS awareness. These findings are contradictory to the findings of Badhan et al. (2002) who found that attitude towards sex education was observed as encouraging but only (70%) teachers had positive attitude towards HIV positive person and (60%) of the teacher have ever discussed the issues of HIV/AIDS with their students.

### **Attitude of Adolescents towards Sex Education**

92 per cent students viewed that sex education is very important; this subject must be taught in each and every school. It is informative and makes the student aware of the misconception prevalent in our society. Most of the students (70 per cent) suggested

that in the present time many students are not aware of the bodily changes and may get wayward. It produces awareness of different sexually contaminated diseases and the way to utilize their knowledge in a proper manner. 96 per cent students viewed they felt positive in classroom teaching. 12 per cent students had suggested that sometimes their teacher did not explain the facts properly. 88 per cent student had given their view that sex education makes aware of about the basic changes at the age of puberty and sexually transmitted diseases and its prevention.

#### **Attitude of Adolescents towards Sex Education in Relation to Gender**

The mean score of the attitude towards sex education of boys was 57.70, which was higher than the mean score of the girls i.e. 52.62. The t-value came out to be 9.88 which was significant at 0.01 level and shows that boys had a more favourable attitude towards sex education than girls. Thus, the hypothesis, "There exists significant difference in the attitude of adolescent boys and girls towards sex education is accepted". Awareness among boys was found to be significantly more than girls regarding communicability, modes of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS (Chakrovarty, A., Nandy, S., Roy, R., Sengupta, B., Chatterjee, S. & Chudhuri R.N. (2007) Such difference may be due to the fact that girls were not expected to discuss sex-related topics. In Indian society male supremacy exists in various parts of life including freedom of speech. The sexual needs of men are justified in relatively positive terms than of women (Bhatt & Dhoundival, 1998). Sexual norms for women's sexual lives are rigid and women are often expected or encouraged to suppress their sexuality. According to traditional Indian beliefs, girls were expected to obey their parents and generally they are not allowed to discuss sex prior to their marriage. This may explain why open communication, opinion on school based sex education, and knowledge about sex related activities were lower among girls when compared to boys.

#### **FINDINGS**

1. Overall the teachers show positive attitude towards sex education. Majority of the teachers were of view that teacher needed special training in discussing sexuality with students.
2. There had significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards sex education. Male teachers scored higher than the female teachers showed their significantly more favourable attitude towards sex education as compared to female teachers.
3. Adolescents students had positive attitude towards sex education.
4. The attitude of adolescent boys and girls towards sex education differs significantly. The attitude of adolescent boys was significantly more favourable than girls towards sex education.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

- Since this study was conducted on a sample of 100 students and 50 teachers of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, it is suggested that the findings of the present study may be verified through replication over a large number teachers and students in other states of India.
- In the present study attitude of teachers on sex education have been investigated. It is suggested that attitude of parents on sex education can be investigated.
- In the present study attitude of adolescents (College students), have been taken as sample. It is suggested that attitude of higher secondary students can be taken as sample of the study.

- In the present study self-constructed sample have been used for collection of data. It is suggested that other tools and techniques can be used for collection of data.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the study it is concluded that school teachers have a positive attitude towards sex education but they require special training in discussing sexuality with students. Male school teachers have more favourable attitude towards sex education as compared to female teachers. Gender of school going adolescents has significant effect on attitude towards sex education. The attitude of adolescent boys is significantly more favourable towards sex education than girls. Adolescent is the period of strain and stress. They form the largest part of our society and will form the future parenthood. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers and society as a whole to give them right knowledge regarding sex.

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