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Awareness study of adolescents girls of Beawar, Rajasthan

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Abstract

Adolescence is the period of transition from puberty to maturity. The age group 10 -19 years identifies the period of adolescence. Reproductive health means a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity in all the matters relating to the reproductive system functions and processes.

Reproductive health needs, especially adolescent's reproductive health needs are poorly understood and ill served in India. Adolescents are poorly informed regarding their own sexuality and physical well being their health and their bodies. Their knowledge about reproductive health is incomplete and confused. Early and unprotected sexual relations amongst unmarried adolescents may lead to unwanted pregnancies and repeated abortions leading to poor health and maternal health.

Present study was conducted in Beawar which is small town ship area in Rajasthan. The age of adolescents was 17-19 years and belonged to middle income group. They were well informed about menstruation but did not know the importance of menstruation. Their knowledge about marriage and pregnancy was adequate but not aware about the different contraceptive methods. They were well informed about HIV/AIDS. These findings suggest that we should plan some training session for adolescents so that they can get appropriate knowledge about reproductive health.

Keywords: Reproductive health, menstruation, contraceptives, HIV/AIDS

Introduction

Women are the principal providers of care and support for infants and children. Women are also a key to the provision of health services for the family and society. They provide exclusive informal health care to families and communities in their roles as wives, mother, grand mothers and daughters. In our traditional societies women are viewed as a source of reproduction and their fertility is prized. The health status of women in India is an area which has received inadequate attention. Women face health problems throughout their life cycle, starting from sex preference in infancy, discrimination in feeding practices to biological vulnerability during the reproductive period and the ill effect of repeated pregnancies.

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health has been overlooked historically despite the high risks that Countries face for its neglect. Some of the challenges faced by adolescents across the world include early pregnancy and parenthood, difficulties accessing contraception and safe abortion and high rates of HIV/AIDS

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood during which adolescents develop biologically and psychologically and move towards independence. Adolescents reproductive health refers to the physical and emotional well-being of adolescents and includes their ability to remain free from unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, STD (HIV/AIDS) and all forms of sexual violence and coercion.

Adolescence girls constitute about one fifth of total population. Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period of their life cycle that requires specific and special attention (Bharatlakshmi, Govindaranjan, Ethirajan and Felix 2014). Adolescent girls across the country are a particularly disadvantaged group in relation to sexual and reproductive health due to cultural norms mandating early marriage and early child birth.

Reproductive health is not just about sex. It is all about to understand the anatomy and physiology of body. Adequate information and knowledge regarding reproductive health, contraceptive information and services can reduce the number of girls becoming pregnant

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giving birth at too young age and HIV/AIDS and STD's. Adolescents health needs should be taken care as the health of the next generation is dependent on them. The present study was conducted in Beawar which is small township area. Though this town is nearby Ajmer district but not much work on Reproductive Health has been done. The purpose of this study is to assess the knowledge and awareness level of adolescent's college girls about reproductive health and also compare the knowledge level of town girls with metro city girls who get more exposure than town girls.

Aims and objectives

Present study was conducted in Beawar area and the aim of the study is to know the awareness and knowledge of college girls who becoming a mother of a tomorrow so that we can arrange training programme for these girls. In this study we examine the attitude of adolescent girls towards reproductive health. This study is conducted just to know the awareness of adolescent girls regarding health issues and assess the awareness of adolescent girls regarding services available for reproductive health.

Methodology

In the present investigation the interview method has been used to enable the researcher to collect an in depth Information on the awareness level of adolescent girls on reproductive health issues. The study was conducted in Beawar small town in Ajmer distt. of Rajasthan. This study is conducted for college going girls of Shri Vardhman Girls College. In this college three faculties are running. Total no. of students are 564. Out of this only 100 students were selected for study. 30 students from Commerce, 40 from Arts and 30 from BCA extreme Students were selected from Random sampling method. Interview method was considered as appropriate for data collection. A semi structured Interview Schedule was, therefore prepared for study.

Bearing in mind the objectives of the study, the schedule covered the following aspects

Socio economic background of respondents

General awareness regarding adolescence

Menstruation

Marriage and pregnancy

Family planning

HIV/AIDS Reproductive health education

The data was collected through random sampling method. The students were individually interviewed. The data so collected was analysed using scoring. To assess the knowledge of girls about reproductive health, the responses were given scores. Each right response was given one score and the incorrect response a zero score. The total score was arrived by adding the individual.

Table 1: Data analysis

Variables	Frequency
Monthly Income	
Below 20000	44
20000-50000	37
50000 & above	19
Total	100
Age of respondent	
17 years	15
18 years	35
19 years	50
Total	100

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

The data presented in the table shows that majority of the respondents (50%) were in the age group of 19 years 35% of respondents were in the 18 years and only 15% were in the age group of 17 years.

Majority of the respondents were from nuclear families but the size of the family was large. The family income of majority of respondents were below 20000. Only few of the respondents were from higher income group. Mothers of respondents were educated.

Table 2: General awareness regarding adolescence

Variables	Frequency
Age of onset of adolescence(years)	
9-11	2
11-13	23
13 onwards	75
Total	100
Puberty is the period of life	
When physiological changes take place	14
When reproductive organs fully mature	11
From the physiological changes till the time when reproductive organs mature	65
Not known	10
Total	100
Main changes in girls	
Beginning of menstrual cycle	75
Becoming sensible	12
Attraction towards boys	5
Not known	8
Total	100

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Majority of the girls were able to correctly tell the age at which adolescence began: 13 years. One fourth of the respondents were not able to correctly tell the age of onset of adolescence. Majority of respondents were knew that puberty is the period of life from the physiological changes till the time when reproductive organs mature. Rest of them had not correct knowledge about puberty. Three fourth of the respondents knew that during puberty the onset of menstrual cycle take place amongst girls. Majority of the girls knew that attraction between boys and girls is natural and girls mature earlier than boys.

Similar study was conducted in year 2002 in Mumbai revealed that knowledge about age of onset of adolescence and main changes in puberty was same. It showed that metro city girls had also knowledge about general awareness regarding reproductive health because they got more exposure in their school.

Table 3: Menstruation

Variables	Frequency
Menstruation	
A natural process	90
An unnatural process	2
A process due to some disorder or disease in reproductive organs	3
No response	5
Total	100
Importance of menstrual cycle	
For becoming a mother	12
Girls come to maturity	2
Not known	86
Total	100
Menstrual blood impure	
Yes	85
No	15
Total	100

Menstruation is a normal physical phenomenon in healthy women. Majority of respondents knew the menstruation is a natural process but it is very sad to know that they did not know the importance of menstruation. Almost two third of the respondents acquired knowledge about menstruation from their mother. In our society there are certain misconception prevailing about menstruation, that exercising during

menstruation is harmful, height of a girls stops increasing after menstruation, menstrual blood is impure. Majority of respondents believed in this myth. Study conducted in 2002 revealed that knowledge of adolescents regarding reproductive health issues were better than present study. They were all aware about menstruation and did not believe in myth.

Table 4: Marriage and Pregnancy

Variables	Frequency
Ideal age of marriage(years)	
Boys	
21 - 25	85
25 and above	15
Total	100
Girls	
18 – 22	79
22 and above	21
Total	100
Ideal age of conception	
20 – 22	26
23 – 24	17
25 – 26	32
26 onwards	7
No response	18
Total	100
Determinate of baby’s sex	
Egg from the mother	7
Hormones in the mother	2
Sperm from the father	80
God gift	11
Total	100

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

The government has declared the ideal age of marriage for boys and girls as 21 and 18 years respectively. Two third of respondents believed that ideal age of marriage for boys was 21 – 25 years and for girls was 18 – 22. The ideal age for conception was 25 – 26 years because now girls are aware about the harmful effect of early pregnancy. Half of the majority believed that a girls can get pregnant if she has sex once. Girls had studied biology in school so they have

knowledge that sex of the baby is determined by sperm from the father and teenage pregnancy is harmful. Now a day’s women are empowered but still they don’t know about reproductive rights. They were not aware that in certain condition Abortion is legal in India. Similar studied had done in 2002 and that time also girls were not aware that Abortion is legal in India. Three fourth of the respondents believed that planning for pregnancy is necessary.

Table 5: Family Planning

Variables	Frequency
Meaning of family planning	
When child birth does not take place	4
Makes the men and women unable to reproduce	6
Planning the birth of one’s child according to one’s choice not by chance	55
Not known	35
Total	100
Ideal gap between two children(years)	
1-2	23
3-4	64
5 onwards	5
No response	8
Total	100
Contraceptive known	
Condom	14
Oral pills	17
IUD	4
Other	11
No response	54
Total	100
Stage of contraceptive use	
Immediately after marriage	45
After the birth of first child	9

After having desired number of children	5
Any other	27
No response	14
Total	100
Advantages of family planning	
Happy life	10
Avoid unwanted pregnancy	7
Population control	24
Not known	59
Total	100

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Due to exposure of mass media now a day’s girls have knowledge about family planning. Half of the respondents knew meaning of family planning but in previous study 90% of respondents knew the meaning of family planning. Girls had knowledge about Ideal gap between two children. They were in favour of 2 or 3 years-But it was seen that they didn’t knew about the contraceptive method. Only few of them have knowledge about contraceptive.

The opinion of majority of girls as to who should use contraceptive was favourable. They said that both men and women should use contraceptives. It was interested to note that almost half of the respondents said that contraceptives should be used immediately after marriage but in previous study three fourth of the respondents were not aware about the advantages of family planning. Only few of them were aware that family planning is necessary for population control, happy life and avoid unwanted pregnancy.

Table 6: HIV/AIDS

Variables	Frequency
Meaning of AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrom)	
Correct	55
Incorrect	45
Total	100
Modes of transmission	
Sexual contact	26
Blood transfusion	25
Infected mother to child	11
Not known	38
Total	100
Preventive measures	
Condom	15
Use of disposable needle/syringes	3
Any other	1
Not response	81
Total	100

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

HIV is a virus which causes impairment to the immune system in Human. AIDS is a condition caused by a virus. The most common route of transmission is unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner.

Almost half of the respondents were aware of the fact that AIDS was an abbreviation for Acquired Immune

Deficiency Syndrome. They knew the modes of transmission like sexual contact, blood transfusion and from infected mother to child.

Media play an important role in spreading knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Almost half of the respondents got information about AIDS through mass media. Books and teachers were the other sources from whom information could be sought. Similar finding was also seen in previous study.

Reproductive health education is essential for boys and girls. All the respondents had a favourable attitude and felt that

reproductive health education should be provided to both boys and girls. This education should be provided by Doctors, Parents and Teachers.

Conclusion

Women faces health problems especially problems pertaining to her reproductive system. Well being of the reproductive system is specially important in the adolescence stages in girls, because they give birth to the future generation. Early and unprotected sexual relations amongst adolescents may lead to repeated abortions and consequently to poor health in mother so it is mandatory in every school to impart reproductive health education. Now a day’s mothers also feel that their daughter should have knowledge about menarche so adolescent were well informed about menstruation. Due to exposure of mass media they had knowledge about pregnancy but very poor knowledge about contraceptives. Their knowledge about HIV/AIDS was moderate.

This finding suggest us that we should arrange some training session and work shop for school going girls because if we will impart education during this time, adolescent will get adequate knowledge about reproductive health. This knowledge about reproductive health save their future health.

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