

Sexual Health Education for Adolescents in India

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Abstract:

Teenagers are predominant in the adolescent period. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. (Montessori, 2014). Adolescents feel curious and embarrassed about the changes that occur during this period and they find themselves drawn to the members of the opposite sex and may feel self-conscious, excited, and nervous, these teenagers try to experiment with their desires out of social and ethical norms to fulfill their sexual desires. In Indian society, sex is morally permitted only after marriage (sodhi,2004) and sex relation outside marriage is morally condemned by society(Jessica ,2015). Ethically it is clear that any kind of exploitation of sex is undesirable. But in pandemic situations like in Covid 19, teenagers spend most of their time with laptops, mobile phones, and tabs with an internet connection, the pictures lured by the youth are very much influenced by them. Due to the impact of media and peer group pressure, and they sometimes rebel against their parents and elders and seek the approval and companionship of their peers. In addition to that technological awareness and advancements in development have forced this youth to move one step toward the abolition of family customs and traditions. In this context, sexual health education is very important for teenagers to create awareness about the harmful effects of improper sexual relationships (Swayam , 2021).

Keywords: Adolescence, secondary sexual changes, Indian society, harmful effects, sexual health education.

Introduction:

In Adolescent period, children are very anxious to fulfill their sexual desires because of physical and psychological changes (Measer,2000) and also influenced by the media and friends. And sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS, genital warts, herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis, etc., (Sharma,2012) are very much prone in this age because of improper sexual relations (Swayam et al.,2021; Feldman & Middleman, 2002) and children need guidance from parents and elders to overcome these issues. In this context sex education is one of the important means of helping the growing boys and girls to create awareness about the role of sex in human life and therefore, it is the task of the adults and teachers to guide the growing youngsters in the development of a capacity to resist the physical and psychological changes occur in adolescent period and make them understand these changes.

Need of the Study

Adolescence is a period of hyperactivity, sense of trust, autonomy, initiative and sometimes rebellious, moody, and irritable. The sudden bodily changes may create a chaos. Boys and girls at this stage may

respond to their elders with irritation, distrust, and suspicion because of hormonal changes. They are easily offended and are quick to complain that the adults do not understand them. Many of their frustrations arise out of conflicts with their parents and peers.

Lack of understanding during this period may lead to considerable damage not only to the parent-child relationship but also to others. The parents and teachers must understand and teach the children about the sexual changes that occur during this period are very common and treat them as independent adults, allow them to make their own decisions, refrain criticizing them when they made mistakes, and guide them in the right direction.

The objective of this paper is:

1. To make aware of changes that are taking place during the adolescent period
2. To identify the factors which misdirect the behavior of teenagers
3. To facilitate the acquisition of socially desirable behavior

Changes in the Adolescent Period

Puberty is a Latin word that comes from *puberta's* which means the age of manhood. It is a period of development characterized by the functioning and maturation of the sex organs. (Dolgin, 2011). In girls, menarche bodily changes occur with first menstrual cycle, enlargement of the breast, widening of hips, and appearance of pubic and underarm hair, and in boys' growth of long bones of arms and legs, the appearance of mustaches and pubic and underarm hair and change of voice and nocturnal emissions (Paul, 1998) all these marks the beginning of sexual functioning in boys and girls.

The physical changes during adolescence produce rapid changes in body image. The adolescents find it difficult to accept their physical changes like height, weight, pimples, pubic hair, etc., they become a central concern. They feel completely bewildered and may not understand what to do and how to behave on his own and often lead to self-rejection. (Lohar2020)

Some adolescents try to search for new role and identity through increased self-consciousness. They are concerned about their body, stature, and size (Measer et al.,2000). The girls are concerned with facial features, complexity, and shapeliness and the boys wish to develop muscular strength. They experiment with various sexual, occupational and educational roles to understand who they are and what they can be.

At this stage the teachers and parents must play constructive role in helping adolescents through this identity verses confusion crisis (Hurlock 1994) Lack of information makes them anxious, and sometimes misinformed. So the parents need to discuss the bodily changes occur in adolescent period and maintenance of healthy habits.

Factors effects on teenagers

There were many factors influence the Adolescent either they are positive or negative. Some factors misguide the adolescents.

1. lack of parental guidance

As the child matures into adolescence, family influence on their behavior remains important. The home environment is the basic and essential nurturing support system for the young ones. (Black, 2004) So parents must spend some time with the adolescents to discuss the issues related to sexual health and give proper guidance to the young ones (Schwartz, 1999).

The parental role is very important for guiding the children in this teenage. In many developed nations, minimum guidance is provided either by the teacher or parent, but in India, very less scope is given for the child to discuss the issues related to sexual health (Jessica et al.,2015)so the child seeks the help of their friends and others to clarify their doubts(Shireen,1998). The guidance from parents is very essential at this period.

2. Influence of peers:-

In adolescence period, teens are very much influenced by their peer group (Cordova et al., 2015) and they sometimes neglect the suggestions given by their parents and teachers (Shajahan et al.,2015). And they are curious to know the physical and psychological changes that occur in adolescent period (Shireen,1998), and they search information from media and social networking sites(Shalley,2000). Without the proper knowledge, these peer groups misguide their friend which may cause many problems. If they are misinformed may sometimes leads to conflicts and psychological disturbances, and some induce antisocial activities like acid attacks, murders, threatening others, etc. may be seen. The teenagers who try to experiment for fulfilling their desires may sometimes end up as victims

3. Teen pregnancy.

Strong friendship ties with members of their sex continue to grow and at the same time increased awareness about the members of the opposite sex (Swayam et al.,2021). They have now begun to learn about establishing heterosexual relationships. If the parents and society deny addressing the problems related to sexual health and behavior, there is much scope in society to misguide the relationship, and the boys and girls are greater interested to fulfill their sexual desires which may lead to teen pregnancy (Joseph,2016).

4. Watching porn videos:-

As we live in the world of technology our techno generation spends most of their time using electronic gadgets like smartphones, laptops, computers, tabs as information resources, but sometimes they lured with intermitted pictures and videos. Using electronic media is one of the major factors that influence the youth (Strasburger, 1995). Many young people are attracted to the deleterious aspects of media and they spend most of their time watching movies, video games, other pornographic films, etc., and they try to experiment with what they have seen in those films.

5. Role conflicts:-

The role conflicts may arises if the sexual desires are not fulfilled, these conflicts may arise either inter-individual or intra-individual and they may sometimes lead to sexual violence. These conflicts in roles, expectations, and loyalties create anxiety, boredom, and tensions among adolescents (Pinhas,2002). If it continues for days and months, they become ineffective and lose their respect and status which naturally deserve in society. And lack of guidance and counseling the adolescents are exposed to the risk of being turned into maladjusted or abnormal person. So the teachers and parents have to perceive their conflicting roles and expectations and stimulate for functioning in their best form.

Design of the study

On reviewing the literature related to sex education in secondary school, it is strongly felt that the present study is unique in its way and is not a repetition of any previous studies and projects. Therefore, the researcher proceeds with the preparation the of plan and action of the study

Population:

The population selected for the study is the total number of students who are studying in Secondary

schools in the Visakhapatnam District

Sample:

The researcher surveyed 300, 8th grade, and 9th-grade students studying in secondary schools of Visakhapatnam District which is located in Andhra Pradesh, India. The researcher adopted stratified random sampling. It is the combination of both random sampling and purposive sampling. Under this system, the population is divided into several strata's and from each group, certain numbers are taken randomly.

Class	Frequency	Percent
VIII	152	50.67
IX	148	49.33
Total	300	100.00
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Boy	146	48.67
Girl	154	51.33
Total	300	100.00
Locality	Frequency	Percent
Urban	174	58.00
Rural	126	42.00
Total	300	100.00
Management	Frequency	Percent
Government	164	54.67
Private	136	45.33
Total	300	100.00
Medium	Frequency	Percent
English	150	50.00
Telugu	150	50.00
Total	300	100.00

Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in awareness about changes during the adolescent period, peer pressure and knowledge about sexual health.
2. There is no significant difference between rural and urban students in awareness of changes during the adolescent period, peer pressure and knowledge about sexual health.
3. There is no significant difference between English and Telugu mediums in awareness about changes during the adolescent period, peer pressure and knowledge about sexual health.
4. There is no significant difference between students studying in different managements like government, private, and Aided schools in awareness about changes during the adolescent period, peer pressure and knowledge about sexual health.

Selection of tool

A self-administered questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The questionnaire was developed on suggestions taken by the experts in the field of education

Keeping with the views expressed by different prominent educationalists the researcher reviewed questions under three themes. The investigator constructed a closed-ended questionnaire with 28 questions to collect the information from the secondary school students

Statistical computations

After the quantification of data, various statistical measures such as **Mean, Standard Deviation, ‘t’ - Value** have been used by the investigator and were administrated with the help of the SPSS package and presented in this chapter.

Table 1: Overall perceptions of students towards the Need for Sexual Health Education for Adolescents

Area	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Mean Percent	Std. Dev.
Awareness about secondary sexual changes	300	16	48	20.44	42.58	4.39
Teen Pressure	300	12	36	19.24	53.44	4.29
Knowledge about sexual health	300	28	84	39.68	47.23	6.35

Table 1 revealed that; students expressed low perceptions with respect to the areas viz., Awareness about secondary sexual changes, and teen pressure and knowledge about sexual health. The mean values for all the areas were 20.44, 19.24, and 39.68 the mean percentages for all the areas were 42.58%, 53.44%, and 47.23% on their total score.

Graph-1: Overall perceptions the of students towards Need for Sexual Health Education to Adolescents

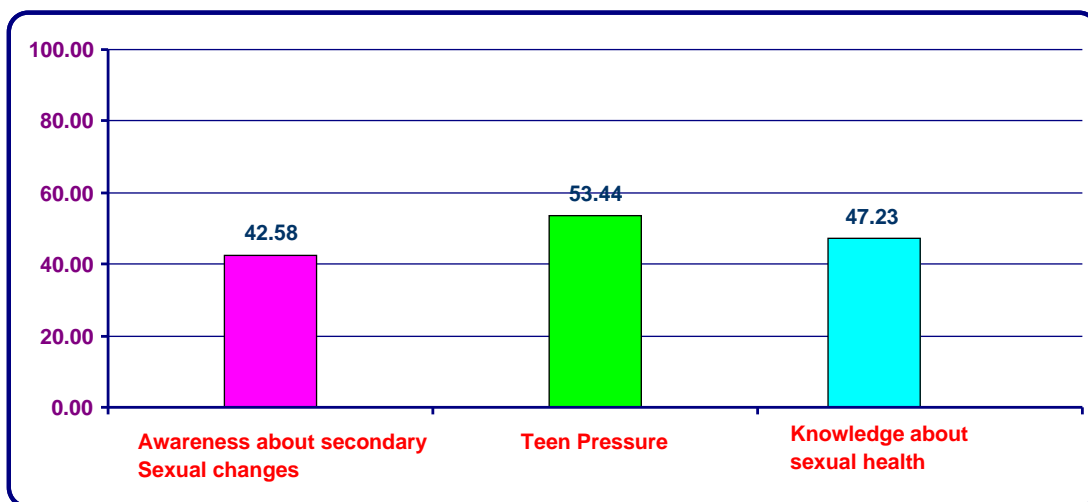


Table 2: Significant difference between perceptions of students based on their demographic variables towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Class	VIII	152	18.81	3.78	5.68**	0.00
	IX	148	21.59	4.44		
Gender	Boy	146	21.13	4.59	2.92**	0.00

	Girl	154	19.66	4.03		
Locality	Urban	174	21.37	4.51	5.36**	0.00
	Rural	126	18.63	3.51		
Management	Government	164	21.71	4.66	5.24**	0.00
	Private	136	19.17	3.70		
Medium	English	150	21.16	4.20	2.87**	0.00
	Telugu,	150	9.72	4.47		

**Significant at 0.01, *Significant at 0.05 level and NS : Not Significant

Table 2, revealed that mean perceptual scores of students based on their class with respect to Awareness about secondary sexual changes, the mean perceptual was of VIII class students was 18.81, whereas for IX class students were 21.59 and the SD values are 3.78 and 4.44 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 5.68 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of VIII and IX class students and VIII class students perceived high towards Awareness About secondary sexual changes than that of IX class.

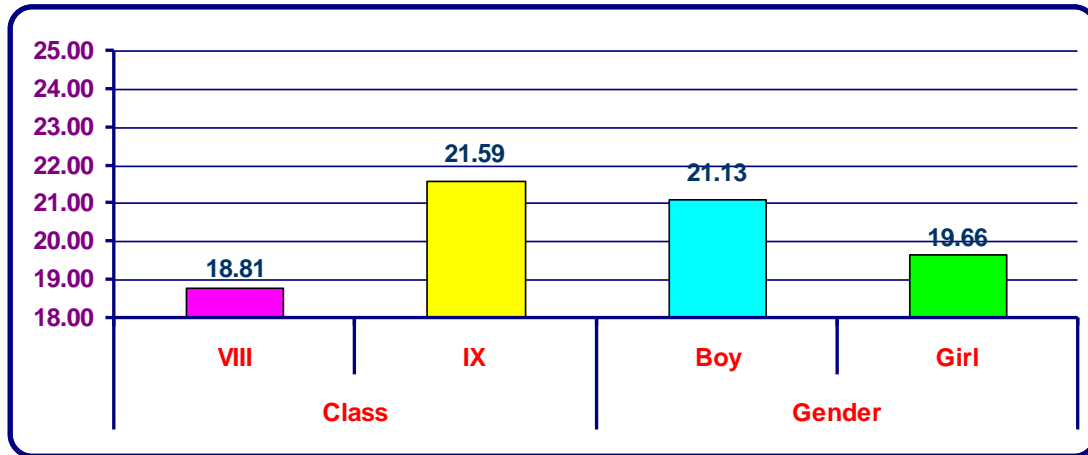
With regard to Gender, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Awareness about secondary sexual changes, the mean perceptual scores of boys were 21.13, whereas it is for Girls were 19.66 and the SD values are 4.59 and 4.03 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.92 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at a 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Boys and Girls and Girls perceived high towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes more than that Boys

With regard to Locality, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Awareness about secondary sexual changes, the mean perceptual scores of urban areas students were 21.37, whereas it is for rural area students were 18.63 and the SD values are 4.51 and 3.51 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 5.36 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of urban and rural area students and rural area students perceived high towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes than that of urban area students.

With regard to School Management, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Awareness about secondary sexual changes, the mean perceptual scores of Government school students were 21.71, whereas it is for Private school students were 19.17 and the SD values are 4.66 and 3.70 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 5.24 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at a 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Government and Private school students and Government school students perceived high towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes than that of Private school students.

With regard to Medium of Instruction, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Awareness about secondary sexual changes, the mean perceptual scores of English medium students were 21.16, whereas it is for Telugu medium students were 19.72 and the SD values are 4.20 and 4.47 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.87 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of English and Telugu medium students and Telugu medium students perceived high towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes than that of English medium students.

Graph 2 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Class and Gender towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes



Graph 3 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Locality, School Management and Medium towards Awareness about secondary sexual changes

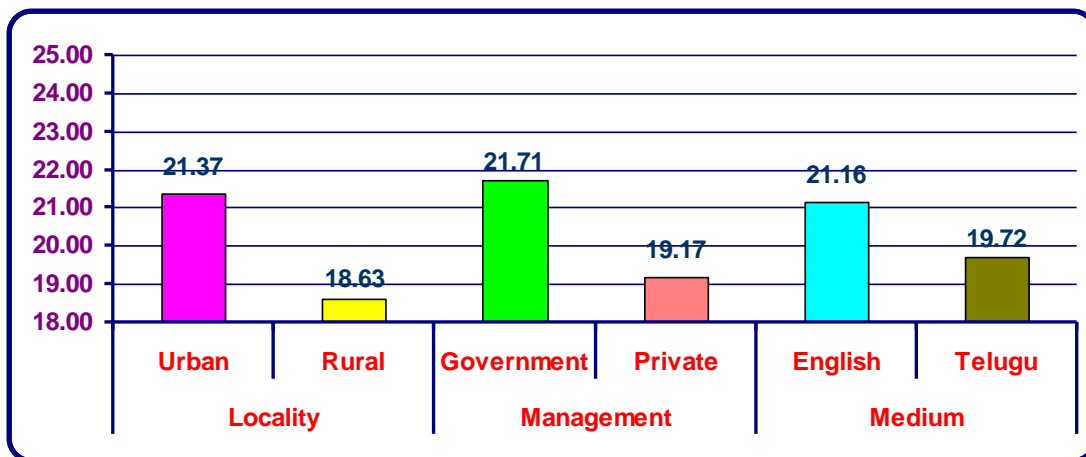


Table 3: Significant difference between perceptions of students based on their demographic variables towards Teen Pressure

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Class	VIII	152	18.47	4.22	2.63**	0.00
	IX	148	19.78	4.27		
Gender	Boy	146	20.24	4.82	1.98*	0.05
	Girl	154	18.23	3.61		
Locality	Urban	174	20.29	4.13	2.01*	0.03
	Rural	126	18.14	4.60		
Management	Government	164	20.59	4.00	2.44*	0.01
	Private	136	18.88	3.55		
Medium	English	150	18.56	4.56	2.76**	0.00
	Telugu	150	19.91	3.90		

**Significant at 0.01, *Significant at 0.05 level, and NS: Not Significant

Table 3, revealed that; the mean perceptual scores of students based on their class with respect to Teen Pressure, the mean perceptual scores of VIII class students were 18.47, whereas it is for IX class students were 19.78 and the SD values are 4.22 and 4.27 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.63 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of VIII and IX class students and IX class students perceived high towards Teen Pressure more than VIII class students.

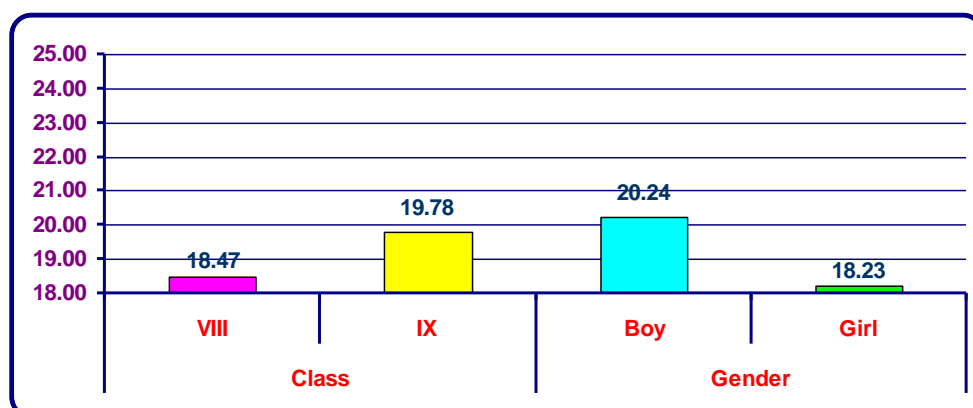
With regard to Gender, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Teen Pressure, the mean perceptual scores for boys were 20.24, whereas it is for Girls was 18.23 and the SD values are 4.82 and 3.61 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 1.98 and the p-value was 0.05, which was significant at a 0.05 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Boys and Girls and boys perceived high towards Teen Pressure more than that of girl students.

With regard to Locality, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Teen Pressure, the mean perceptual scores of urban area students were 20.29, whereas it is for rural area students were 18.14 and the SD values are 4.13 and 4.60 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.01 and the p-value was 0.03, which was significant at the 0.05 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of urban and rural area students and urban area students perceived high towards Teen Pressure than rural area students.

With regard to School Management, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Teen Pressure, the mean perceptual scores of Government school students were 20.59, whereas it is for Private school students were 18.88 and the SD values are 4.00 and 3.55 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.44 and the p-value was 0.01, which was significant at the 0.05 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Government and Private school students and Government school students perceived high towards Teen Pressure more than Private school students.

With regard to Medium of Instruction, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Teen Pressure, the mean perceptual scores of English medium students were 18.56, whereas it is for Telugu medium students were 19.91 and the SD values are 4.56 and 3.90 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.76 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of English and Telugu medium students and Telugu medium students perceived high towards Teen Pressure more than English medium students.

Graph 4 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Class and Gender towards Teen Pressure



Graph 5 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Locality, School Management and Medium towards Teen Pressure

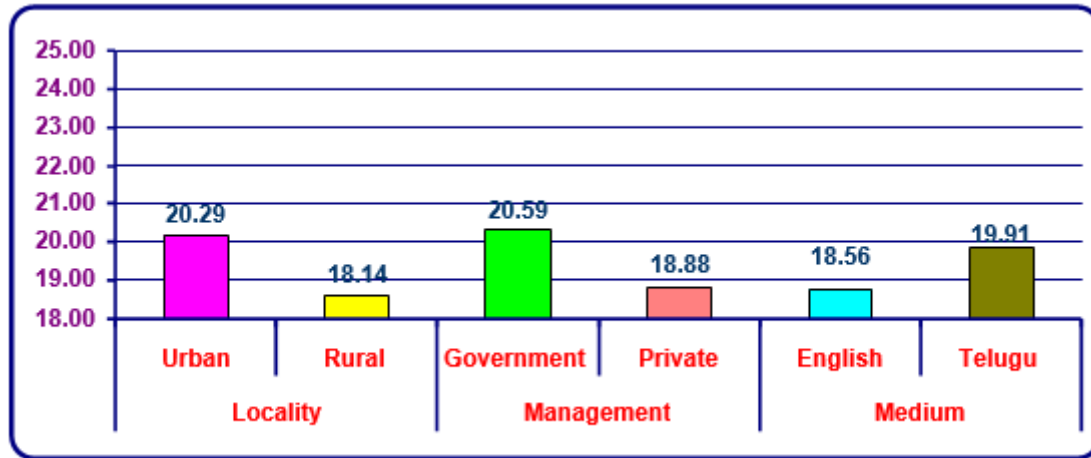


Table 4: Significant difference between perceptions of students about Knowledge on Sexual Health.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	t-value	p-value
Class	VIII	152	37.27	5.43	5.80**	0.00
	IX	148	41.37	6.42		
Gender	Boy	146	40.37	7.22	2.03*	0.04
	Girl	154	38.89	5.09		
Locality	Urban	174	40.66	6.96	3.83**	0.00
	Rural	126	37.76	4.39		
Management	Government	164	41.31	7.00	4.60**	0.00
	Private	136	38.05	5.15		
Medium	English	150	41.72	6.48	3.12**	0.00
	Telugu	150	37.63	5.25		

**Significant at 0.01, *Significant at 0.05 level and NS : Not Significant

Table 4, revealed that, the mean perceptual scores of students based on their class with respect to knowledge about Sexual Health Education to Adolescents, the mean perceptual scores of VIII class students were 37.27, whereas it is for IX class students were 41.37 and the SD values are 5.43 and 6.42 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 5.80 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of VIII and IX class students and IX class students perceived high towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education more than VIII class students.

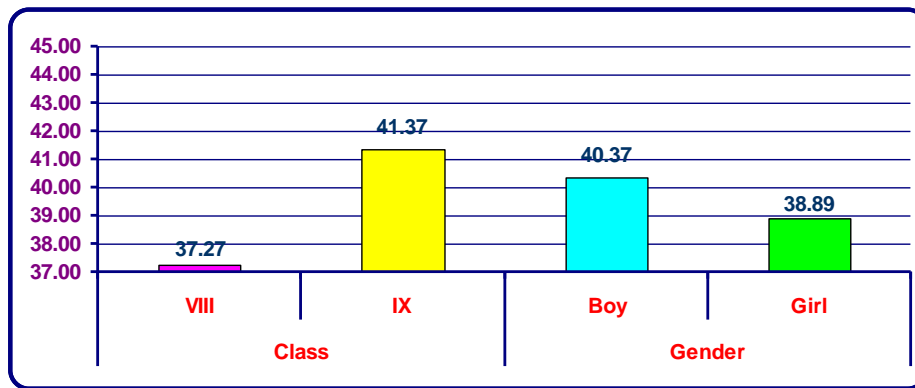
With regard to Gender, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to knowledge about Sexual Health Education, the mean perceptual scores of boys were 40.37, whereas it is for girls were 38.89 and the SD values are 7.22 and 5.09 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 2.03 and the p-value was 0.04, which was significant at a 0.05 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Boys and Girls and Boys perceived high towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education than Girls. With regard to Locality, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to knowledge about Sexual Health Education, the mean perceptual scores of urban area students were 40.66, whereas it is for

rural area students were 37.76 and the SD values are 6.96 and 4.39 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 3.83 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of urban and rural area students and urban area students perceived high towards Knowledge about Sexual Health Education than that of rural area students.

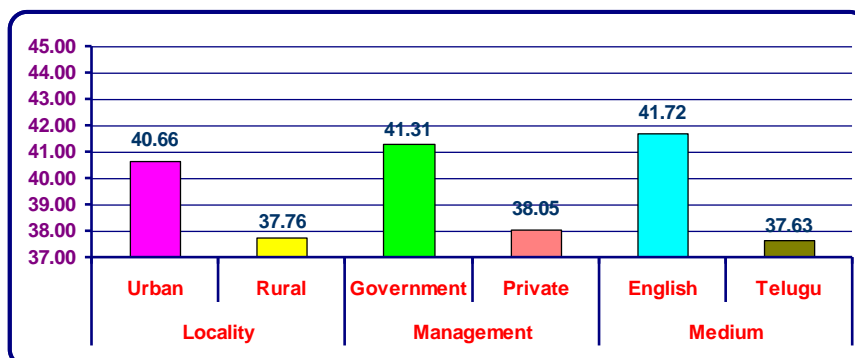
With regard to School Management, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to Knowledge about Sexual Health Education, the mean perceptual scores of Government school students were 41.31, whereas it is for Private school students were 38.05 and the SD values are 7.00 and 5.15 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 4.60 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Government and Private school students and Government school students perceived high towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education than that Private school students.

With regard to Medium of Instruction, the mean perceptual scores of students with respect to knowledge about Sexual Health Education, the mean perceptual scores of English medium students were 41.72, whereas it is for Telugu medium students were 37.63 and the SD values are 6.48 and 5.25 respectively. The ‘t’-value was 3.12 and the p-value was 0.00, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that; there is a significant difference between the perceptions of English and Telugu medium students and English medium school students perceived high towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education than that Telugu medium students.

Graph 6 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Class and Gender towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education



Graph 7 : Mean comparison between perceptions of students according to their demographic variables i.e., Locality, School Management and Medium towards knowledge about Sexual Health Education



Major Findings:

- There is a significant difference that occurred between the variables like sex, class, locality, type of management, and medium of the school. Among those variables, VIII-class girls in rural areas studying in government schools with Telugu medium show a minimum level of awareness.
- Regarding awareness about secondary sexual changes class VIII girls in rural areas studying in government schools with Telugu medium shows a minimum level of awareness.
- About teen pressure IX class boys in urban areas studying in government schools with Telugu medium show a minimum level of perception.
- The girls studying class VIII in rural private schools with Telugu medium has very low knowledge about sexual health compared to others.
- The overall perception shows that very low awareness of sexual health and there is a need for guidance and knowledge for every teenage boy and girl who is living in rural and urban areas.

The best solution for all these problems are

Adolescents need guidance for a clear understanding of the problems that arise out of the adverse effects of unsafe sex. so they need access to information, counseling, and service that will help them to establish healthy relationships and protect them from teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

A. Home Environment:

Home and family are the basic and essentially nurturing system for every young one and family influences their behavior (Joseph,2019). When the child matures into adolescents, parents must spend some time with them to discuss the issues related to sexual problems and issues and give proper guidance to the youth which helps to clarify their doubts and unanswered questions and becomes truly productive and sometimes it might be a boon for the troubled world

B. Value Education:

Value Education is very crucial because the value system is degrading day by day because of changing scenario of the world and the value education must be given importance and should be taught in schools as like other subjects and there is a much scope for applying those values in society. (Bandari,2010). And the teachers must create practical experiences through role-plays, dramatization, discussions, puppet shows, mime, etc to imbibe positive values about the role of sex in human life and how to maintain dignity with the other sex (Reddy,2017)

C. Encourage creative ideas:

Creativity is a novel character. Children in the adolescent period are very creative. The creativity can be expressed in different ways like discoveries, innovations, music, arts, painting, literature, sculpture, drama, science, technology, industry, engineering, or even in fashion.

Teachers must provide a platform to showcase their talents by using different techniques like conducting brainstorming sessions, mind mapping exercises, solving critical problems(Vander, 2020) taking initiative in doing projects, and cultural programs like Edu-fests, Edu-fairs, etc.,to encourage students to think in a creative and innovative way. Which can helps to divert their minds from the undesirable sexual relationships to productive work.

D. Awareness about social issues related to sex:

Teachers and parents must create awareness among their students about physical and psychological changes (Bhan,2004) and also the harmful effects of experimenting with their desires outside social and

ethical norms by explaining the real-life incidents that happen in the past and through newspaper cutting, telefilms, short films, etc., which may help to understand the situations and circumstances.

E. Abstinence Education:

Abstinence means any kind of sexual activity like vaginal, oral, and anal sex will not be allowed before marriage (Rector,2004).It is an important way to control unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The emphasis has to be made on abstinence education which helps to avoid many negative impacts on society and made every youth or teenager being abstinent until marriage because they get maturity about sexual health.

F. Yoga and meditation:

The physical and sexual changes in the body, excessive inhibition of emotions, aggressiveness, role confusion, and conflicts, might cause distress among adolescents. In such situations, teachers and parents should guide the youth to tackle the situations effectively by adopting suitable methods and techniques in yoga and meditation which might relieve the stress (Chung , 2018) exerted due to sexual desires and concentrate on other socially useful issues.

G. Spiritual development:

Different religious practices like reading scriptures, and following customs, traditions, and values can divert young minds from undesired behavior to desirable behavior and there is a greater chance of inculcating the values of tolerance, sacrifice, love, selflessness, sympathy, etc emanate mind when it gets enlightened which in turn change the behavior(Hardy,2019).

Conclusion

Sexual health education should be adopted as a means to empower adolescents in challenging situations. It believes that early intervention and support at key moments in the lives of generations are vital. Therefore, sexual health education is a need in Indian society. Every school education should impart it as a part of its curriculum as it is capable of developing positive interpersonal relationships among adolescents. Policymakers and teachers must put their efforts to improve healthy relations that are socially desirable for the upcoming generations too

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