

## **Understanding Youth Sexuality- A Study among Women College Students at Tiruchirappalli**

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**Abstract:** Youth comprise about 45% of Indian population and increasingly more of them are initiating sexual activity at an early age. Several behaviors related with youth like masturbation, expression of masculinity/femininity, life style habits like attending late night parties, and consumption of alcohol have been variously concerned in initiating sexual activities. In view of few worthwhile studies from India that have dealt with these issues this study was undertaken. The study describes the result of understanding sexuality among college going youth in Tiruchirappalli. The study examines their knowledge about crucial aspects of sexuality and their source of sex related information, attitudes regarding sex education, premarital sex and homosexuality as well as sexual behaviors engaged in by youth. The study also seeks to recognize the consequences of the sexual behavior of youth in terms of future health risks, such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases etc. Descriptive cum diagnostic research design was adopted and the sample comprised 40 women college students studying in the final year of under graduation in Tiruchirappalli district. Respondents were selected by simple random sampling using lottery method. Self-prepared interview schedule and a standardized scale namely 'Knowledge and attitudes of youth regarding sex' by Y.R.Gaitonde (1996) was administered. Statistical tests were administered and the results indicate that majority of the respondents were not aware about the various aspects of sexuality. Their level of misconception about sexuality is high. Salient findings and suggestions pertaining to the study have been discussed which indicate the need for implementation of effective programs regarding sexuality. In addition the role of social workers are also been discussed.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Misconception, Sexuality, Sexual knowledge, Youth.

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### **I. Introduction**

In India, rapid socio-economic development, rising way in to education, higher standards of living, rural-urban migration, urbanization, and modernization, as well as the influence of Western culture, have contributed to the increased occurrence of sexual activity among Indian youth, especially college students. The invasion of modern technology and multimedia has also made the Indian youth more flexible towards sexuality over the Internet and mass media. Living in an increasingly permissive environment, sexual curiosity among youth is commonly encountered. Having lack of knowledge about topics related to sexuality, reproductive health, contraception, condom use, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)—many young people are susceptible to social consequences such as unwanted pregnancy and diseases. From this point of view, it is the purpose of the study to investigate and understand the youth's current health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in regard to sexuality. It is hoped that findings from this study may provide implications for possible sexuality education and sexual health policies and practices in the field of youth sexuality. In other words, the study will serve to support the government to further consider national programs for sexuality education for youth, which in turn may help educate youth with proper knowledge about sexual health, unwanted pregnancy, STIs (including HIV/AIDS), responsible sexual attitudes, and safe sex-related behaviors.

The period of youth can be considered a critical time in the process of human development. Sexuality can be considered as a key factor in the process of a young person's growth. Sexual health knowledge, sexual attitudes, and sex-related behaviors are three very important aspects in the sexual health development of youth. Youth are defined as individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. The stages of youth include early youth (16–18 years of age), middle youth (19–21 years of age), and late youth (22–24 years of age). During the early youth stage, young teenagers may care very much about acceptance from their peer group. By middle youth, the intensity of their involvement with the peer group may give way to more personal intimacy, such as love and friendship. Friendships generally begin in the same sex, but with maturing age, many youth may become interested in the opposite sex (or indeed the same sex). As a generation, this is the time when young people begin to transfer some of their affection onto the opposite sex (or the same sex) from family (i.e., parents), and start dating. It is often in this dating stage that youths begin developing romantic relationships and sexual intimacy.

## **II. Literature Survey**

- 2.1 J.Pak Med,Assoc (2000) conducted a study on the perceptions about female sexuality among young Pakistanis. This study is administered to 188 young Pakistani men between the ages 18-30 years who presented to family physicians at the outpatient department of the Agra Khan University hospital, Karachi. The age of the study population was uniformly distributed between 18-30 years. Results show that more than 40% of the respondents thought that experiences in women in comparison to men are less enjoyable. 22% believed that women cannot enjoy sex during pregnancy, while 20% thought they can't enjoy sex after menopause. 58% of respondents were aware of the phenomenon of orgasm in women. 6.4% believed that the imitation of sexual experience ties with husband only.
- 2.2 Mohan Ghule et al (2007) analysed the risky sexual behaviour, misconceptions and attitudes regarding sexuality and sexual health among rural youth in India. In order to understand these aspects, quantitative data were collected among 1,500 rural college students (800 male and 700 female) in the age group 15–24 years in the Thane district of Maharashtra, Analysis of variance and regression analysis were performed using the total mean score of attitude towards sexuality as the dependent variable to determine the association and relationship, respectively, with background and familial characteristics. The results clearly showed that the majority of the students in the study expressed conservative attitudes towards premarital sexuality. Mean score indicated that male students had higher mean scores compared with their female counterparts and senior students compared with junior students, indicating more liberal attitudes towards sexuality. Multivariate analysis showed that female students studying in the commerce and science faculties were more liberal in attitude towards sexuality when compared with female students from the arts faculty. Overall, the majority of the students expressed conservative attitudes towards premarital sex.
- 2.3 Joshi, Priyanka Dheerendra (2010) conducted a study among urban youth to examine their knowledge about crucial aspects of sexuality and their source of sex related information. A questionnaire was administered to 182 adolescents from the city of Mumbai in the age group of 17-21 years in order to The survey also accessed attitudes regarding sex education, premarital sex and homosexuality, as well as sexual behaviors engaged in by the youth. Results showed that sexual knowledge about physiology of sexual response, conception and pregnancy was less than other areas such as masturbation and contraception. Peers, books, and magazines were the most frequently used source of sex information. Boys reported more liberal attitudes and more frequent sexual behaviors than girls.
- 2.4 Amit S Mutha et al (2014) conducted a cross sectional survey to determine the knowledge and awareness of college students regarding sex and related matters and the factors affecting the prevalent outlook and practices of youth towards the same. 500 male and female college students were selected for the study and the results show that the female students lacked basic information about sexuality and related concepts whereas male students had a casual attitude towards sex with multiple partners. The study highlights the need of sex education to guide the youth to develop and adopt healthy sexual practices.

## **III. Objective**

To study the opinion about sexual practices, level of misconception about sex and the awareness about sexuality among women college students in Tiruchirappalli

## **IV. Hypothesis**

- 4.1. Women students perceive less knowledge about sexual practices
- 4.2. Women college students perceive low level of misconception and awareness about sexuality

## **V. Materials and Methods**

The study attempts to describe the level of understanding about sexuality among the women college going students at Tiruchirappalli, hence descriptive research design was adopted. The size of the universe was 325 final year under graduation girls studying in Holy Cross College at Tiruchirappalli, of which 40 students were selected through simple random sampling method. A self-prepared questionnaire was used to get the subjects personal data and to understand their knowledge about sexuality a questionnaire by Y.R.Gaitonde (1996) namely 'Knowledge and Attitudes of youth regarding sex' was administered to the students.

## VI. Major Findings

**Table 1** Respondents level of Misconception about Sex

S.No	Level of Misconception about Sex	No. of Respondents (n:40)	Percentage
1.	Low	18	45.0
2.	High	22	55.0

The above table shows that a majority (55%) of the respondents have a high level of misconception about sex, whereas 45% of the students have low level of misconception about sex.

**Table 2** Respondents' knowledge about Sexual practices

S.no	Sexual Practices	No. of Respondents (n:40)	Percentage
1	Condoms prevent STD		
	True	9	22.5
	False	5	12.5
	Do not know	26	65
2	Masturbation is normal		
	True	15	37.5
	False	19	47.5
	Do not know	6	15.0
3	Homosexuality is normal		
	True	1	2.5
	False	12	30.0
	Do not know	27	67.5
4	Knowledge about condom		
	To prevent contact	29	72.5
	Contraceptive Tablet	2	5.0
	Balloon	4	10.0
	Do not know	5	12.5
5	Condoms use		
	During sexual intercourse	6	15.0
	Before sexual intercourse	26	65
	After sexual intercourse	1	2.5
	Do not know	7	17.5

The above table infers that the majority(65%) of the respondents do not know whether condoms would prevent STD, nearly half (47.5%) of the respondents say that masturbation is not a normal phenomenon. More than half (67.5%) of the respondents have no idea about homosexuality. Moreover nearly (72.5%) and (65%) of the respondents agreed that condom helps to prevent contact but they don't have enough knowledge about when to use the condom.

## VII. Suggestions

From the present study it is noted that the women college students show less knowledge about sexual practices, low level of misconception and lesser awareness about sexuality. In spite of advancement in science and technology, and in spite of having access to various networking sites, girls have high level of misconceptions, lower level of awareness about sexuality. The following suggestions are recommended for this cause.

1. Supportive services related to adolescent and youth sexuality need to be established in the community by trained social workers.
2. A conducive environment for free discussions on sex among students as well as between students and teachers need to be developed in colleges.
3. Appointing social workers in rural and urban areas to work with higher secondary students about sex education.
4. Premarital counseling can be given to youth to know the real facts in marriage life.
5. Future research which gives detailed insight not only about the knowledge and behavior of young people but also broader aspects of sexuality need to be promoted.
6. The education curriculum in both schools and colleges can be revised to include a chapter on sex education which is age appropriate for the students.

7. Experimental studies using base line data followed by intervention programs with detailed sessions on anatomy and physiology, male and female reproductive system, method of contraception, pregnancy and child birth can also be done.
8. Openness and interaction between parents and children. Reducing gender disparities and creating equitable socialization patterns and ways of developing closer interaction with both daughters and sons could ensure a supportive environment to the youth.
9. Individual level factors related to sexual beliefs, attitudes and skills can be influenced by behavior change communication programs with involvement of other sectors that deal with youth along with provision of youth friendly services.
10. Sexuality education must be made universal and should address relationship issues as well as consent and safety from an early age in schools and other settings in which young people congregate. The common programming framework developed globally by WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF for youth has included four issues namely information and life skills, services and counseling, safe and supportive environment and opportunities to contribute and participate.
11. There are multiple players to contribute towards this framework namely health, education, media and other social sectors .The challenge is therefore for programs to ensure that multiple stakeholders work in unison and facilitate the process whereby young women and men are fully informed and equipped to make safe choices and negotiate wanted outcomes.

**In addition Social workers can consider the following suggestions for action.**

1. Programmes intended for to parents that explain them of existing conditions and the need to inform and commune with their adolescent children about sexual and reproductive health issues as a means of protecting them from unsafe and unwanted sex are essential.
2. Findings suggest the need for programmes that provide, for both young females and males, extensive sexuality education, that aid communication between adolescent partners as well as between adolescents and their parents on sexual matters, and that seek to redress gender imbalances and double standards influencing their own autonomy and ability to exercise informed choice.
3. Programmes are required that provide life-skills training aimed at both informing young people of safe sex and available facilities, as well as in negotiating safe outcomes within their social relationships.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

Youth is a very exciting phase of life burdened with many challenges like sexuality. Understanding them is important in helping the youth grow up healthy. In recent years sex has yielded most of its identity as a impious activity. Thus in this present study, we see that women college students have knowledge about sexuality but lack adequate knowledge in this regard. Students, teachers and parents need to understand various aspects of sexuality to be able to help youth healthy sexual development.

The findings on sources of sexual and reproductive health information shows that in the absence of consistent sources of information youth rely on films and peers of the same sex for information. As a result, they are likely to be poorly informed or misinformed on these issues. In addition, despite evidence that relevant and correct information delays sexual initiation prevents unwanted pregnancies and lowers rates of Sexually Transmitted Infection transmission, social norms discourage discussion of issues related to sexuality in family settings, as parents often believe that this would entail approval of sexual activity. Lack of communication with parents and trusted adults keeps young people ill- informed and unlikely to receive parental support or counsel in relation to sexual matters. Sex education remains insufficient and irrelevant to young people's needs, and reproductive health services remain unreachable, unaffordable and of low quality. In addition, for future research the study points out that an in-depth qualitative follow-up on some of the findings from this study would be an important avenue

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