



Significance of Health Education among Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT: Adolescence is the period of storm and stress due to rapid changes in various aspects of growth. It is the most challenging phase of development especially in the physiological aspect. Awareness on growth and development among adolescent girls is essential to build a healthy personality. It helps to prevent them from unhealthy lifestyles and teenage pregnancy. The present study focuses on analyzing the level of awareness among adolescent girls about the major physical changes like menstruation and reproduction. The sample consists of 100 adolescent girls from government and aided schools of Kerala. The study found that the awareness related to menstruation is satisfactory. But the awareness related to sex is at below average level. Thus the study highlights the need of health education among adolescents with more focus on sex education.

Keywords: Adolescent girls, Health education, Teenage pregnancy)

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the phase of tremendous changes occurring both internally and externally. External changes in physical aspects are parallel to the changes of attitude and behaviour among adolescents. The external bodily changes occur during this stage are changes in height, weight, body proportions, maturation in the size of sex organs and secondary sex characteristics. The internal bodily changes influence the rapid increase in the growth and capacity of digestive system, circulatory system, respiratory system, endocrine system and of bodily tissues. [1] Due to these rapid changes, sometimes adolescents experience dissatisfaction with some parts of their bodies. According to Dion (1972) "A person's physical appearance, along with his sexual identity, is the personal characteristic most obvious and accessible to others in social interactions" [2]. As adolescent stage is the progressive stage of maturation, they need care and guidance to their proper development. Measures have to be developed to enhance their knowledge on growth and developmental aspects and their protection.

Even if the Right to Education Act is powerful enough for the betterment of literacy and knowledge level on subject matters, the adolescent girls are incapable of safeguard themselves and become the prey of their unhealthy life situations. Sometimes they become helpless due to people who deny their rights include their caregivers. Child Rights are not enhanced in such a level to terminate Child Marriage which leads to many complexities in the health of adolescent girls. Also uncared life situations and lack of proper knowledge on health among adolescent girls breeds teenage pregnancy. Health education and life skill education are provided to the adolescents at school levels. Albeit, these programmes are executed, lack of proper implementation sustains the predicament as such.

Based on the report of Mathrubhumi Daily, 12% of the total pregnancy registrations in Kerala are belong to the adolescent group. Child marriage is considered as the major reason behind this increased ratio. [3] The details showed in the report are given in the table 1 as follows;

Table 1 Number of Adolescent Pregnancy cases during the last three years

Year	Number of Adolescent Pregnancy cases
2014-2015	61,574
2015-2016	58,137
2016-2017	52,800

The data in the table shows that the number of teenage pregnancy could not be reduced significantly for the last three years even if the health department has taken measures to reduce the same.

The total number of teenage pregnancies during the last three years is diagrammatically presented in Figure 1.

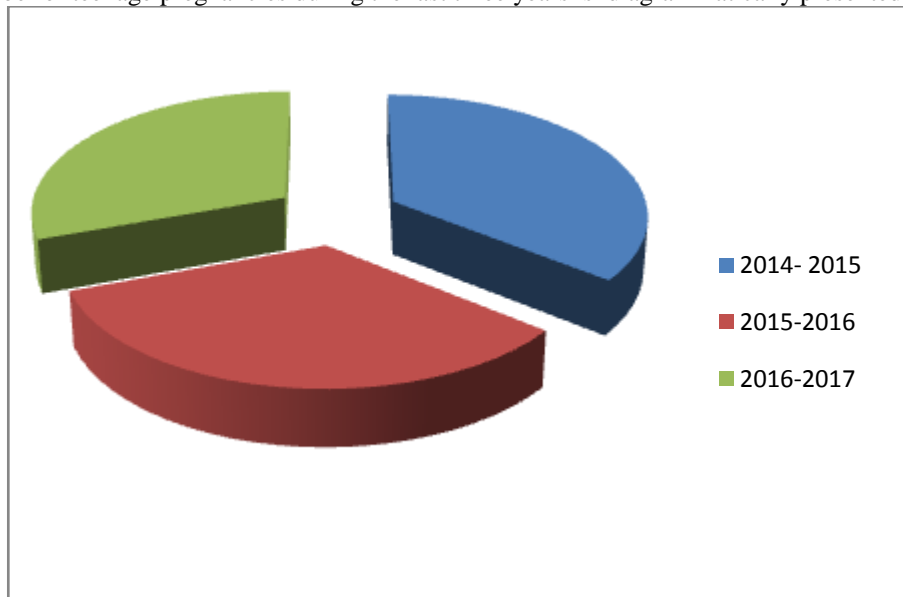


Fig. 1. Number of Adolescent Pregnancy cases during the last **three years.**

The total number of teenage pregnancy cases reported during the last three years are around 1.72 lakhs. There is variation in the number of cases in various districts. The graphical representation of the district wise details is given below.

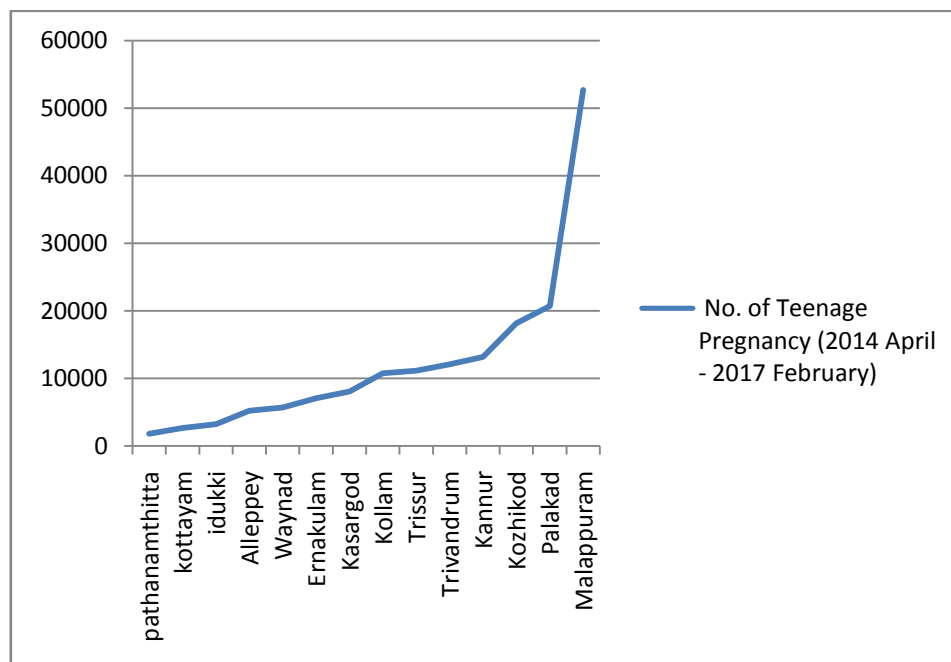


Fig. 2 Number of Teenage Pregnancies registered in each districts during the period from April 2014 to 14 th February 2017

It is revealed from the graph that number of teenage pregnancy cases are more in Northern parts of Kerala. It is in the highest and constant rate in these districts. It is reported that child marriage is the reason behind this ratio.

Adolescent pregnancy cases are more dangerous during delivery as the uterus of adolescents has not attained full growth. This tragic report on major health related issues of adolescent girls point towards the little effect of health awareness programmes and interventions among adolescent girls in Kerala.

Adolescents are the vulnerable group of the society. They are also the future of the nation. The education must focuses on guiding them to mature appropriately. The knowledge they gain must help them to

build their life. They should be wise in their health choices to develop a healthy personality. This paper focuses its attention on the awareness on health aspects of adolescent girls especially on menstruation and teenage pregnancy. It analyses the kind of knowledge they are acquiring through the health education programme.

II. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Healthy young generation can contribute more to the society. Healthy mind dwells only in a healthy body. Thus health education is an important factor to foster healthy mind and body among adolescents. More opportunity and accessibility for education has proved no significant effect on the rate of adolescent pregnancy for the last three years. Teenage pregnancy should be considered as the most horrible ill treatment towards the girl child as the teenager may not be aware about the impact of this incident in her life. Many cases have revealed that girl children are not safe even at their homes. Many of them are being abused by their own close relatives. In most of the cases adolescent girls could not continue their school education due to pregnancy related issues. These are the factors which has made the researcher to analyze the role of health interventions in raising awareness on growth and development among adolescents. The study focuses on their level of awareness regarding major health aspects like awareness on menstruation, teenage pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD).

III. Objectives of the study

The study was conducted with the following objectives ;

- 1) To find out the level of awareness on Menstruation and Hygiene among adolescent girls .
- 2) To find out the level of awareness on Issues of Adolescent Pregnancy, STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) and Preventive Measures to Pregnancy among adolescent girls .

Hypotheses of the study

- 1) The level of awareness on Menstruation and menstrual hygiene will be high among adolescent girls.
- 2) The level of awareness on the issues of adolescent pregnancy will be high among adolescent girls.
- 3) The level of awareness on pregnancy preventive measures will be high among adolescent girls.
- 4) The level of awareness on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) will be high among adolescent girls.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Normative Survey Method was used for the study. The sample consists of 100 adolescent girl students of government and aided secondary school by using random sampling technique. The data were collected through a Questionnaire on Growth and Development. The statistical techniques used for the study is Percentage Analysis.[4]

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The data were analyzed to find answers to the hypotheses set for the study. The major findings and discussion are presented below.

Table 2 Level of Awareness on Menstruation and Hygiene among Adolescent Girls

N	Items	Below Average	Average	Above Average
100	Awareness on Menstruation	26 %	23 %	51 %
	Awareness on Menstrual Hygiene	14 %	33 %	53 %
	Issues of Adolescent Pregnancy	56 %	14 %	30%
	Pregnancy Preventive Measures	64 %	25 %	30 %
	Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD)	59 %	17 %	24 %

The table shows that 26 % of the total sample of adolescent girls has below average awareness on Menstruation and 14 % have below average level of awareness on aspects of Menstrual hygiene. The result showed that above 50 % of the adolescent girls possess above average level of awareness on these matters. The table shows that 56 % of the total sample of adolescent girls has below average awareness on the issues of adolescent pregnancy, 14 % have average level of awareness and 30 % of the adolescent girls belong to the

above average level of awareness on this matter. The result also showed that above 64 % of the adolescent girls possess below average level of awareness on pregnancy preventive measures and 59 % have below average level of awareness on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). It is revealed that 25% of the sample possess average level of awareness on pregnancy preventive measures and 17 % have average level awareness on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) .

The graphical representation of the various dimensions of health awareness among adolescent girls are given as Fig.3

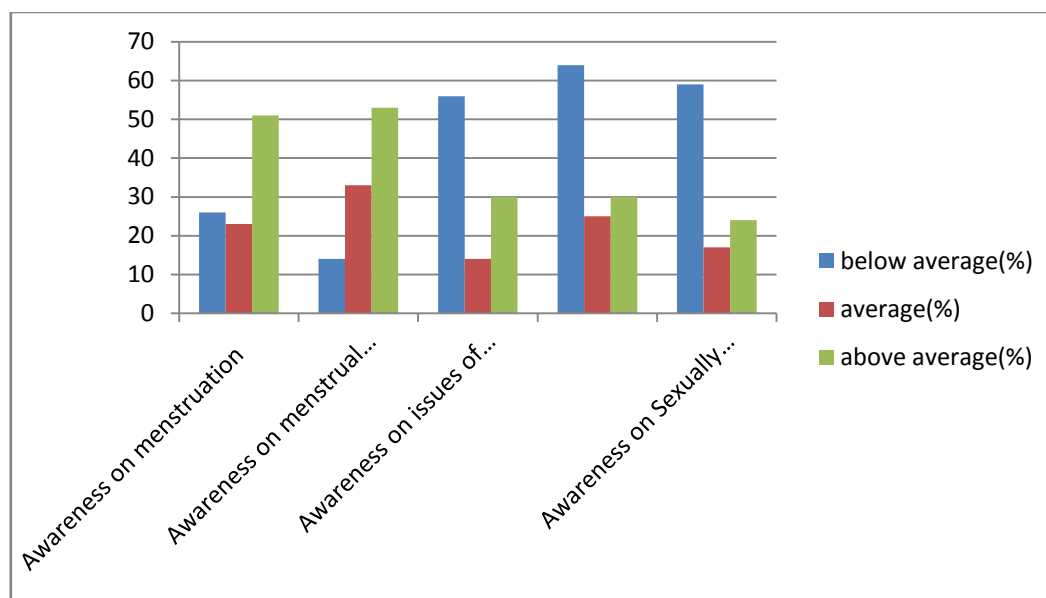


Fig. 3 Percentage of awareness on various health aspects among adolescent girls

The results of the study indicated that the adolescent girls' awareness on menstruation and menstrual hygiene is satisfactory. The level of awareness on issues related to adolescent pregnancy and STD and contraceptives are not satisfactory. Thus the study revealed that conscious effort is urgently needed for providing awareness on these matters.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the Health Education provided for adolescent girls is not sufficient in making them aware of the consequences of adolescent pregnancy and related matters. The Health awareness programmes focus on adolescent pregnancy and related issues in a very mild level. Naturally they are very shy to discuss or listen to such awareness classes. They do not get the correct and sufficient knowledge on these matters. Teachers also are reluctant to deliver sex education among students. The findings of the study showed that adolescent girls should be provided with this knowledge to reduce teenage pregnancy and other health related issues.

The adolescent girls are reluctant to say any cases of maltreatment they face. Thus it is essential to make them motivated to report such incidents with courage. For that there should be a supportive atmosphere at the school. The adolescent girls should be taught their rights and laws for their protection. They have to be trained for improving their life skills to safeguard themselves from all the issues they face in their life.

It is suggested from the director of Health Department that adolescent pregnancy issues can be minimized by the collective effort of various departments, Local institutions and Representatives of the local government bodies etc. The study also found that participation of such committed grass root level group interventions can protect the adolescent girls from the negative influences of situations. It is evident that Civic Education to society and Sex Education to adolescents can help in finding solution to Adolescent Pregnancy issues.

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