

A study of exposure to sexual contents in print and audio-visual media and trends of sexual behaviour of late adolescent boys

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Abstract

Objective: To study the relationship between exposures to sexual contents in print and audiovisual media and attitude and sexual behavior of late adolescent boys. **Methods:** This study was undertaken in the Department of Pediatrics of a tertiary care centre in the year 2017. All respondents who gave informed consent were assessed using a preformed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of six sections. **Results:** The study consisted of 500 late teen boys aged between 17-19 years, 350 from government and 150 from public schools. Mean age of onset of puberty was 12.47 in both groups. Majority of respondents were exposed to media (94.8%). High percentage of respondents from public schools (74.67%) watches pornography. Only 17% of respondents were educated about pubertal changes. Presence of depression was witnessed in 16.6% of respondents. **Conclusion:** Development of normal sexual behavior during the late adolescent phase of life has lifelong impact on the life of the adolescent and later on his family. Media use is rampant in all strata of society. Pediatricians, parents and teachers can help the adolescents realize the importance of media and incorporate basic principles of media literacy into their sex education program.

Keywords: Sexual contents, late adolescents, sexual behavior

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Introduction

The peer pressure, family pressures, pressure from teachers and siblings, all make adolescents frustrated. Emotions, desires, new found independence, pressure, rebellion and wish to get to the top tend to confuse the adolescent. India has the largest population of adolescents in the world and they constitute 20% of the world's 1.2 billion adolescents and more than 50% of India's current population is below the age of 25 years.[1] Ignorance or half or ill informed family and friends, groundless messages depicted through the internet, TV serials, advertisements or films and publications carrying partially false and confusing information lead to confused perceptions in the adolescents and the misconceptions may ultimately end up with personalities of negative and perverted thoughts. The present study was undertaken to assess the impact of sexual content on the sexual behaviors of the late adolescent boys.

Methods

This study was undertaken in the department of Pediatrics of a tertiary care centre in the year 2017. The calculated sample size for this study was 500 respondents from government and public schools population of late adolescent school boys. The sampling frame included two public and one government school. Schools were recruited after prior consent of the Principals of respective schools.

Inclusion criteria

- All late adolescent school going boys aged 17-19 years.

Exclusion criteria

- Early and middle age adolescent boys were excluded.

Pre-formed questionnaire was given which comprised of six sections namely personal information, family background, media use, sexual practices, sexual health and depression. Statistical analyses were done using computer software (SPSS version 23 and primer). The qualitative data were expressed in proportion and percentages and the qualitative data expressed as mean and standard deviations. The difference in proportion was analyzed by using chi square test. Significance level for tests were determined as 95% (p<0.05).

Results

The study consisted of 500 late teen boys aged between 17-19 years, 350 from government school and 150 from public schools. Mean age of onset of puberty was 12.47 years in both the groups and there was not much difference in onset of various changes during puberty in both the groups. Of the two groups more married teenagers belonged to government schools than private schools (2 vs1). Respondents from government schools were not allowed to stay awake till late nights but respondents from public schools (39.33%) used to stay awake after midnight. TV, movies, net were the more favorite leisure activity (24%) in respondents from public schools while outdoor activities was the favored leisure (37.43%) in respondents from government school. 94.8% of the respondents had media exposure and 36.67% of the respondents had the media sources of TV, magazines and internet at their disposal while in the government school boys TV alone (41.14%) was the main source of media exposure. Higher number of respondents used to smoke, take alcohol and drugs in public school

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(23.3%, 8.67% and 2% respectively) compared to government school (11.43%, 1.71% and 0.57%). A very high percentage of respondents were watching adult films/pornography (49.4%) and the percentage was more in public school respondents (74.67%) compared to government schools (38.57%). More respondents from public schools used to have dreams at night (16%), experienced morning stiffness (32%), ejaculated (16%) while sleeping and got aggressive after watching sexual content (3.33%). Higher percentage (9.33%) of students from public schools had sexual relations before marriage as compared to 3.43% of boys from government school. Less number of

respondents from government schools (40.57%) knew about safe sexual practices compared to public schools (65.3%) and main source of information were friends (65.3% in public school boys and 41.43% in government school boys). Only 17% of respondents were educated about pubertal changes and again main source of information were friends (82.57%) in government school boys and teacher (72.33%) in public school boys. Depression was present in 16.6% of respondents and of these more were in public school (26%). None of the respondents had suicidal tendencies. (Table1)

Table 1: School wise comparison of the study participants

VARIABLES	GOVERNMENT SCHOOL	PUBLIC SCHOOL	P Value
TOTAL STUDENTS	350	150	
PUBERTAL ONSET (mean age)	12.47	12.47	
• 12 year	185(52.86%)	79(52.67%)	0.95
• 13 year	165(52.67%)	71(47.33%)	
Married			
• Yes	14(4%)	2(1.33%)	0.202
• No	336(96%)	148(98.67%)	
Late night awaking (After 12 am)	6(1.71%)	59(39.33%)	<0.001
Leisure Activity			
• Tv,Music,Net,Movies	35(10%)	36(24%)	<0.001
• Outdoor activities	131(37.43%)	23(15.33%)	<0.001
Substance Abuse			
• Smoking	40(11.43%)	35(23.33%)	<0.001
• Alcohol	6(1.71%)	13(8.67%)	<0.001
• Drugs	2(0.57%)	3(2%)	0.32
Watching Adult Movies/Pornography (49.4%)	135(38.57%)	112(74.67%)	<0.001
MediaExposure (94.8%)	324(92.57%)	150(100%)	<0.001
Sources			<0.001
• TV only	144(41.14%)	0(0%)	<0.001
• TV/Magazine/Internet	24(6.86%)	55(36.67%)	
Attitude towards Sex & Sex Related Behaviour			
• Dreams at night	9(2.57%)	24(16%)	<0.001
• Morning Stiffness	58(16.57%)	48(32%)	<0.001
• Ejaculation(while sleeping)	6(1.71)	5(3.33%)	0.42
• Aggressive after getting exposed to sexual contents	5(1.43%)	5(3.33%)	0.29
• Sexual relation before marriage	12(3.43%)	14(9.33%)	0.012
Knowledge/Educated (Safe sexual practices)	142(40.57%)	98(65.3%)	
Educated about Sexual Knowledge Sources			
• Friend	145(41.43%)	98(65.3%)	<0.001
• Teacher	120(34.23%)	58(38.7%)	0.43
• Internet	61(17.43%)	58(38.7%)	<0.001
• TV	89(25.43%)	35(23.3%)	0.7
• Others	16(4.57%)	18(12%)	
Knowledge about Pubertal Changes 85(17.14%)	59(16.85%)	26(17.43%)	<0.001
Educated about Pubertal Changes Sources(multiple responses)			
• Friend	289(82.57%)	105(70%)	<0.002
• Teacher	204(58.9%)	108(72.33%)	<0.005
• Internet	89(25.43%)	65(43.3%)	<0.001
• TV	89(25.43%)	19(12.7%)	<0.002
Presence of Depression 83(16.6%)	44(12.57%)	39(26.0%)	<0.001

Discussion

The study was a cross sectional questionnaire based study conducted with a sample of 500 adolescents of age group 17-19 years; 350 from government school and 150 from private school. The mean age of puberty was 12.47 years in both the groups which was similar to a study by Shashi Kumar et al.[2] A significantly higher percentage of respondents were married in government schools (4%) as compared to public schools (1.3%). Bhattacharya et al.,[3] reported 80% of the subjects to be married even though the average age of subjects was 17 years. Maximum respondents did not answer when asked about substance abuse. Substance abuse was found higher in respondents from public schools as compared to those in government schools ($p < 0.001$). This could be due to higher percentage of public school respondents have exposure to media as cited later which was statistically significant in comparison to government schools. Media usually shows alcohol consumption and smoking as fashion trends. Majority of the respondents from both the groups had some source of media exposure in the current study ($p < 0.001$). Huston et al., reported that exposure to television and frequency of reading popular magazines and watching films was significantly higher in rural school going adolescents.[4] In the current study the main source of information regarding sex was friends in both groups followed by media and then teachers ($p < 0.001$) which was similar to a study by Sharma in 2013 where she also mentioned that none of the schools in Rajasthan impart sexual education.[5] Only a small number of respondents were counseled about the pubertal changes and ejaculation and friends were again the major source of information for this too. One noticeable difference was that in public schools, knowledge about pubertal changes, sex and safe sexual practices was given by the teachers. Higher percentage of respondents of public school admitted to having a girlfriend and quite a high percentage of respondents from both groups admitted to having had sexual relationship. 16% of respondents from public schools had sexual dreams and 32% experience morning stiffness as compared to 2.57% and 16.57% respectively in respondents of government school. 3.33% boys from public school and 1.43% from government school said that they got aggressive after exposure to sexual content. Ramaduga et al.,[6] reported an incidence of sexual contact in 30.8% boys and 45% indulged in masturbation while 22.4% had experienced nocturnal emission. Depression in the present study was evaluated by using PRIME MD scale, scoring system was used i.e 0,0-5, >5 and according to calculated result it was found that higher percentage of respondents from public schools were suffering from some kind of depressive disorders(26%) as compared to that of government school boys. Bansal et al reported that 15.2% of school going adolescents was found to be having affirmation of distress (GHQ-12-score $e14$),

18.4% were depressed 5.6% students were detected to have positive scores on both the instruments.[7]

Conclusion

Adolescent period consists of a very important phase in development of child. Development of normal sexual behavior during this phase of life has lifelong impact on the life of the adolescent and later on his family. Parents and adolescents both shy away from discussing these matters and schools do not provide proper sex education hence major sources for such information are friends and media which often give them incomplete and inaccurate knowledge. Premarital sex is no longer a taboo in the Indian society. Media use is rampant in all strata of society. Our study shows increased rate of viewing pornographic sites.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study several recommendations may be made to improve the current scenario. Pediatricians can help parents and adolescents realize the importance of media and the hours spent on various sources. Pediatricians should counsel the parents to exert control over the children's media choice and should keep their bedroom free of TV and internet connection. Adult supervision is highly recommended when children access the internet. Parents should urge schools to insist on comprehensive sex education programmes that incorporate basic principles of media literacy into their sex education programmes.

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