

Awareness Level of Urban-Rural Adolescent Girls Regarding Population Problem

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ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to know the attitude of adolescents towards population problem. This study has been conducted on 400 adolescent girls (200 adolescent girls were taken from rural areas and 200 adolescent girls from urban areas of Jammu). Random sample technique was used to select the sample. For data collection, Family Planning and Birth Control Attitude Scale (FPBCAS) was used which was devised by Dr. Rajamanickam. Chi-square values reveal that there is a significant difference in the awareness level of adolescent girls of urban and rural areas of Jammu, regarding population problem. But urban adolescent girls have comparatively better knowledge regarding these issues than rural adolescent girls. So there is a need to teach adolescents about these issues since ignorance perpetuates myths and mis-belief. In societies such as ours where parents do not normally discuss such matters with their children, this could be achieved by incorporating family life education/ sex education in school curricula.

INTRODUCTION

The population problem has thrown a challenge the world over to change the outlook, attitude and behavior of individuals, families and nations towards life. Today one finds that the very existence of mankind is threatened by the sheer force of its numbers. As a result, today the pace of population growth is faster than of increase in production of commodities. The large family has become not only an aparchronism but an undoubted handicap in the socio-economic progress of the country.

India's gloomy population picture poses a severe threat to the nation. There is no doubt that family size in India has reached proportions which severely strain every national resource. Increasing unemployment, pressure on land, shortage of housing, inadequate education and health facilities and shortage of every kind of human resource have made the population problem a daily experience for the people of India. It is also common knowledge that while we have been able to introduce population control measures in differential measure in various states, the large rural sector lies unreached and still impregnable (Verma and Achhpal, 1980).

Therefore, the Indian union government had decided to promote Family Planning and Birth

Control Programme for modernizing and improving the economy of nation in the interest of better living to people. Also, National Population Education Projects (NPEP) has been implemented since 1980 with UNFPA assistance by the national council of educational research and training. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and Directorate of Adult Education (DAE) have implemented 2 other projects. The population education programmes were designed to help people(adolescents) understand the nature, causes and implications of population process as they affect, and are affected by individuals, families, communities and nations (UNFPA, 1998). The Programme follows an inclusive approach wherein components of population education are integrated into existing subjects such as biology, civic education, home economics etc. However, Population Education has mainly concentrated on macro demographic issues and has not been designed to prepare adolescents for their future roles and demands. It doesn't include adolescents' experiences of sexual awakening and sexuality and very rarely cover subjects such as HIV/AIDS, Sexual violence, abuse, gender equity (Thapar, 1998).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The core group consists of 400 adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 years belonging to both rural and urban girls of Jammu city.

Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. It was done to know the attitude of adolescents towards population problem with the help of Family Planning and Birth Control Attitude (FPBCAS) Scale devised by Rajamanickam. One component of it i.e. Population Problem has been taken to collect the data for the study. Instructions were given to them before administering the scale. This scale was in English version so exact translation was done for rural sample although, the statements were not so difficult to understand, yet necessary assistance was provided to them when they were unable to understand some items. Attempt was made to stick to the given procedures as far as possible. The data after being collected and coded systematically tabulated and percentages were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that 75.5% of the urban respondents and 70% of the rural sample were agreed that our nation is facing a serious problem of over population and it should be reduced without any delay; It shows that majority of the sample from urban (74%) and rural (80%) area disagree with the statement that the increase in population will not cause any problem to the happiness of the people in the country; It is clear from the table that 90% of the urban and 75% of the rural respondents are agreed with the statement that every citizen of the nation has the responsibility of solving the population problem by lending his/her cooperation to the nation; It also reveals that 71.5% of the urban and 65% of the rural respondents were not in the favour of increase in population, 10% of the urban and 20% of the rural respondents were in the favour of

increase of the population whereas 6% of the urban and 7.5% of the rural respondents were unable to answer for the same; It also shows that almost equal % of respondents both from the urban as well as rural area agreed with the statement that if nothing is done to reduce the population now, the whole mankind's future including your children and grand children will found no food and shelter; 65% of the urban and 55% of rural respondents disagreed with the statement that Instead of reducing the population, facilities must be made to meet the increased population; Almost equal % of respondents from the urban as well as rural area agreed with the statement that food scarcity, non-availability of houses and unemployment problems are all due to only the increased population, which can be solved only by reducing the population; and 92% of the urban and 87.5% of the rural respondents agreed with the statement that the rapid increase of population in our country is the indication of giving births to more number of children, more than what is needed for the country at present, which should be reduced.

The attitude of adolescent girls towards Population Problem was poor among the rural as well as urban adolescent girls. However, urban adolescent girls were having relatively more awareness on the subject (as chi-sq values reveal a significant difference between urban and rural adolescent girls).

It is evident from this study that even urban adolescent girls in Jammu do not possess sufficient knowledge regarding Population Control. Also schools are inadequately equipped to meet the challenge. Their lack of adequate knowledge about sexual matters and contra-ception results in early pregnancy and sexual disharmony (Gupta,

Table 1: Attitude of adolescents towards population problem

Issues	Aware		Unaware		Chi-sq value
	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	
Overpopulation and need to control it	75.5	70	24.5	30	234.7*
Increase of population and its negative impact on our happiness.	74	80	26	20	35211.29*
Responsibility to control population problems	90	75	10	25	2350.9*
Facilities provided by Government to increase the nation's population.	71.5	65	28.5	35	3886.45*
Control of population to save resources for future	91.5	95	8.5	5	4289.9*
Instead of reducing the population size provide facilities to the increased population	65	55	35	45	415.11*
Impact on resources due to over population and it must be controlled	90	80	10	20	1357.47*
High fertility rate must be controlled	92	88	8	12	6674.39*

* Chi-square values reveal significance difference between the awareness level of urban and rural adolescent girls.

1994; Meyer, 1930; Russel-Brown et al., 1992). So they should be provided with unbiased, unmoralistic information so that they are better informed and better adjusted to their changing physical, biological and emotional needs.

There should be appropriate knowledge component for younger age groups dealing not with family planning and its methods only but basic causes and effects of population growth and the desirability of adopting new family and social norms (Dhanu, 1998). Also this topic should be there in the school curricula so that girls can acquire correct knowledge from reliable and socially accepted sources rather than from pornography and knowledge about the related issues. (Lottes, 1993).

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