

Parents Attitude Towards Imparting Sex Education to Their Adolescent Girls

Payal Mahajan and Neeru Sharma

*P.G. Department of Home Science, University of Jammu, Jammu 180 006,
Jammu and Kashmir, India*

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ABSTRACT To study the Attitude of Parents of Adolescents towards imparting Sex Education the present study was undertaken. The sample of the study consists of 200 parents (100 urban and 100 rural areas of Jammu) of adolescent girls. A random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Interview Schedule was used to collect the data. Results of the study revealed that these mothers were reluctant to talk about sex education to their daughter as they found it embarrassing to discuss these issues. Generally, they avoid any mention to sex in their day-to-day relationships with their children. Also sex is still considered as a taboo subject in our Indian society. Another reason is because parents themselves lack scientific knowledge about it. Adolescents need to be taught about this topic since ignorance perpetuates myths and mis-belief.

INTRODUCTION

Sex is probably one area of our lives about which we know so little. And whatever little we happen to know about sex in bits and pieces through sources like friends, acquaintances and cheap sex books (Hoshi, 1987; Tjaden, 1988; Kumar, 1993). It is indeed ironical that while sex is such an important in our life, parents, elders and teachers in India hardly play any significant role in providing scientific knowledge.

Since talking about sex is a taboo in the Indian society, the adolescents cannot freely approach his/her parents for guidance. Also, those who seek guidance from parents are not satisfied because the latter try to evade discussion or are not able to give satisfactory answers. A few of them try to gather information through books, films or from friends but a majority does not have access to such an information. Many a time, the adolescent receives wrong information and these myths and misconceptions are carried throughout their lifetime. Therefore, there is a need to provide adolescents with information so as to enable them to cope better with these changes. Though there is a need to educate the adolescents on sex education, parents oppose such educational programmes due to the fear that imparting sex education would lead to experimentation with sex.

Many research studies have revealed that adolescent girls generally lack adequate knowledge about sexual matters and contraception which results in early pregnancy, increased pre-marital sexual activity, increased risk of STD infections including HIV/AIDS, maternal morbidity and mortality and unsafe abortions. They are growing up in the world in which they experiment more, make choices and take risks and learn by their own experiences than by those of others. In a study conducted by Hovell (1994) on Family Influences on Adolescents Sexual Behaviour, it was revealed that conservative maternal attitudes about sex delay the development or sex behavior. Other study was done by Savara and Sridhar (1992) and they noted that parents and teachers act as a source of providing sex knowledge in only 16.30% of urban educated Indian men. Looking at the above, it is clear that adolescents have to be provided knowledge regarding sex and related issues. Sex education aims at helping the growth of positive feelings among children about sex, imparts to children the truth that one needs love to nourish love, ensure that feelings which interfere with sex and love don't pile up inside the minds of youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to study the Attitude of parents of Adolescent Girls towards imparting Sex Education. The sample of the study consists of 200 parents of adolescent girls of Jammu

Address for correspondence: Payal Mahajan, F-6, Rani Park, Kachi Chawni, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India
E-mail: payal_research@rediffmail.com

(J&K). Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Interview Schedule was used to collect the data. The data after being collected and coded systematically tabulated and percentages were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that 70% of the urban and 86% of the rural parents believe that their daughters came to know about menstruation after experiencing it; 100% of the urban parents believe in prior knowledge regarding menstruation whereas only 30% of the rural sample favoured the same with 15% saying no to it. These mothers perceived that girls should be told about menstruation only after attaining menarche. The mothers told them that it was a monthly occurrence, and how they should maintain personal hygiene. They should not let their fathers and brothers know about it.

Table 2 reveals that majority (89%) of the rural parents of these adolescent girls do not feel necessary to impart sex education to their children; 75% of the rural parents believed that not much information should be imparted and only negligible percent (3%) of them in favour of imparting full knowledge to their children. In fact they were not providing them knowledge in this regard whereas almost all the urban parents were in favour of providing the same. Table reveals that 65% of the urban parents believe in verbal communication method while imparting sex knowledge; whereas others use different methods for providing the related information (TV, magazines etc); majority of the urban sample considered all the components of FLE to be important, rural sample were also in favour of the same except for providing knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS and Reproductive system and organs; 100% of the rural mothers

Table 1: Knowledge regarding menstruation (N=100)

Responses	Urban		Rural	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Come to Know About Menstruation</i>				
After experiencing it	70	70	86	86
Before experiencing it	30	30	14	14
<i>A Girl Should Know About Menstruation Before She Experiences It?</i>				
Yes	100	100	30	30
No	-	-	30	30
Not Aware	-	-	40	40

Table 2: Importance of sex education

Issues	Issues		Parents	
	Urban		Rural	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>1. Acc to you, is it Important to Impart Sex Education to Children?</i>				
Yes	80	80	11	11
No	20	20	89	89
<i>2. If Yes, to What Extent are You in Favour of Imparting the Same?</i>				
Full information	54	54	3	3
Not much	14	14	75	75
Acc to the age	12	12	15	15
Required information	20	20	7	7
<i>3. Do You Provide This Knowledge to Your Children?</i>				
Yes	60	60	20	20
No	40	40	80	80
<i>4. What Method do You Apply for Imparting This Knowledge?</i>				
Magazines	10	10	-	-
TV	12	12	-	-
Verbally	65	65	20	-
Any other	13	13	-	-
<i>5. What Components do You Consider Important for Imparting Information?</i>				
Health & Hygiene	79	79	68	68
Nutrition	85	85	95	95
Puberty	65	65	45	45
HIV/AIDS	69	69	12	12
Reproductive system & Reproductive organs	88	88	10	10
All above	98	98	44	44
<i>6. Do You Feel Comfortable While Imparting Sex Knowledge?</i>				
Yes	57	57	-	-
No	10	10	100	100
Not Much	33	33	-	-

and 10% of the urban mothers feel hesitant towards providing sex knowledge to their children.

According to them, the girls can get information through their friends and elder sisters. Sex education should be imparted to girls only after attaining menarche. The physiology of menstruation, conception and maintaining good interpersonal relationships with family members, especially those of the husband, should be taught to the adolescent girls as perceived by the mothers. They were found quite biased in the matter of providing healthy information regarding sex and related issues to their adolescent children. Also schools are inadequately equipped to meet the challenge. A study was conducted by Mahajan (2004) and found that parents expressed their disinclination towards providing Family Life Education aspect and also feel embarrassed to teach. Adolescents lack adequate knowledge

about sexual matters and contraception which results in early pregnancy and sexual disharmony (Gupta, 1994; Meyer, 1930; Russel-Brown et al., 1992).

No information was given about other physical changes. The girls were told at the time of marriage how they should behave with their parents-in-law, sister-in-law and husband. Whereas they believe that boys need not such instructions as they are the girls should listen to them and do whatever they say. No information was given to the girls about what is intercourse, how conception occurred or what family planning measures were available. The teacher, parents and the community have a tremendous responsibility to prepare children for normal sex adjustment. Children should be encouraged to grow up in natural friendliness and love. Necessary cautions can be introduced quietly where and when necessary.

There is a pressing need for providing Family Life Education (FLE) to all the adolescents who are almost unaware about the sex knowledge and related issues. A well trained counsellor can help in doing the same. It would not only be acceptable to the parents but would also empower tomorrow's women and potential mothers. It will further make pregnancy special and safe.

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