

Attitude on Premarital Sex and Knowledge on Contraception among the Teenage Girls

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Premarital sex and lack of knowledge regarding contraception are the main causes of teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is directly related to high incidence of pregnancy related complications contributing to maternal morbidity and mortality and social problems.

Objectives: The objectives of the study were

1. To assess the attitude of teenage students towards premarital sex
2. To assess the knowledge of teenage students regarding contraception
3. To find the correlation between attitude regarding premarital sex and knowledge on contraception of teenage students

Materials and methods: A descriptive survey was done among 100 teenage students using attitude scale and structured knowledge questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: The findings of the present study revealed that all the teenage students (100%) were having negative attitude towards premarital sex and more than half of the subjects (55%) had very good knowledge on contraception. The study also found a weak positive correlation between attitude towards premarital sex and knowledge on contraception ($p = 0.033$).

Conclusion: The study concluded that none of the teenager had positive attitude towards premarital sex and majority had very good knowledge on contraception.

Key words: Attitude, Knowledge, Premarital sex, contraception, teenage students

INTRODUCTION

In Indian society, sexual relations are regulated through the institution of marriage and hence premarital sex is disapproved of and discouraged. [1] However under the influence of mass media, rapid modernization, economic expansion, and exposure to new ideas, sexual attitudes and norms have been changing among adolescents and young people in developing countries. [2]

The relationship between sexual attitudes and behavior is a vital linkage for young adults to decide whether to engage in

premarital sex. Premarital sex among adolescents and youths predispose them to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, pregnancy-related complications, and sexually transmitted infectious (STI) including HIV/AIDS. The United Nations estimated that about half of new HIV infections worldwide occur among young people aged 15-24 years. [3] A cross-sectional study in 2001 showed that 5.4% of a total number of 4500 students aged between 12 and 19 years old reported having had sexual intercourse. [4]

A study which was conducted to assess the magnitude of teenage pregnancy and its associated factors among teenage females found that high proportion of (46.8%) teenagers had engaged in premarital sex. [4] A study which was conducted to assess the factors associated with attitude toward premarital sexual activities among school-going adolescents found that being less religious and younger age group increased the risk whereas having good knowledge on sexual and reproductive health was a protective factor against permissive sexual attitude. [6]

More than half of young men and a quarter of young women who participated in a 2009 survey displayed serious gaps in knowledge about common contraceptive methods, according to "Young Adults' Contraceptive Knowledge, Norms and Attitudes: Associations with Risk of Unintended Pregnancy," by Jennifer Frost et al. of the Guttmacher Institute. The authors found that the lower the level of contraceptive knowledge among young women, the greater the likelihood that they expected to have unprotected sex in the next three months, behavior that puts them at risk for an unplanned pregnancy. These findings come on the heels of a study that found that women in their 20s have the highest risk of experiencing an unintended pregnancy. [6]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey was conducted among 100 teenage students in a selected college Mangalore. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data collection instruments used were baseline proforma, attitude scale and knowledge questionnaire. Reliability of the tool was carried out among 10 students. The reliability of attitude scale was $r=0.94$ and knowledge questionnaire was $r=0.80$.

The baseline proforma consisted of 7 items such as age, type of family, area of residence, family income, parents discipline, religious status, source of previous knowledge. Attitude scale had 16 items under the domains of personal and family,

marriage and religion and society. The scoring for each positive item was given as: 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= undecided, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree. Reverse scoring was given for the negative items.

Knowledge questionnaire consisted of 15 items that was divided into 3 sections such as meaning, physiology and barrier methods, Intrauterine devices and oral hormonal methods and permanent methods and natural methods. The knowledge score was arbitrarily classified as excellent(13-15), very good(10-12), average (5-9) and poor (0-4).

Formal written permission was obtained from authorities concerned of the college before data collection. All the subjects were gathered into one class room and an informed consent was taken. The data collection tools were given after proper instructions. Subjects took on an average 20 minutes to complete the tools. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

The findings of the study were discussed under the following headings:

Description of Sample Characteristic

The analysis of the baseline characteristics presented in table 1 show that 49% of subjects were 18 years old and 43% were 19 years. Majority of the subjects (93%) belonged to nuclear family. More than half of the subjects (51%) were from urban area. Majority of the subjects (76%) had strong religious belief. Most of the subjects (69%) had previous knowledge regarding premarital sex and the source of knowledge was from school.

Description of attitude regarding premarital sex

All the subjects had negative attitude towards premarital sex.

Description of level of Knowledge regarding contraception

The data presented in table 2 figure 1 shows that out of 100 subjects, 55 of them had very good knowledge, 44 subjects had

average knowledge and only 1 subject had poor knowledge on contraception. But none had excellent knowledge on contraception.

Table 1: Percentage of variables.
N=100

Variables	Percentage (%)
Age(in years)	
18	49
19	43
20	8
Type of family	
Nuclear family	93
Joint family	7
Single parent	0
Area of residence	
Urban	51
Sub urban	16
Rural	33
Average household monthly income	
Below 10,000	27
10,000-50,000	63
Above 50,000	10
Parents' discipline	
Permissive	38
Authoritative	29
Strict	33
Religious status	
Very religious	76
Somewhat religious	24
Not at all religious	0

Area wise knowledge score (Table 2) showed that the highest mean percentage was in the area of permanent methods and natural methods (79.67%). This shows that teenage girls had more knowledge regarding

permanent methods and natural methods compared to other areas.

Relationship between attitude on premarital sex and knowledge on contraception

The relationship between knowledge on contraception and attitude on premarital sex was computed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. It revealed that there was a weak positive correlation ($r=0.227$, $p<0.05$) between knowledge and attitude, which indicates that as knowledge on contraception increases the negative attitude towards premarital sex also increased.

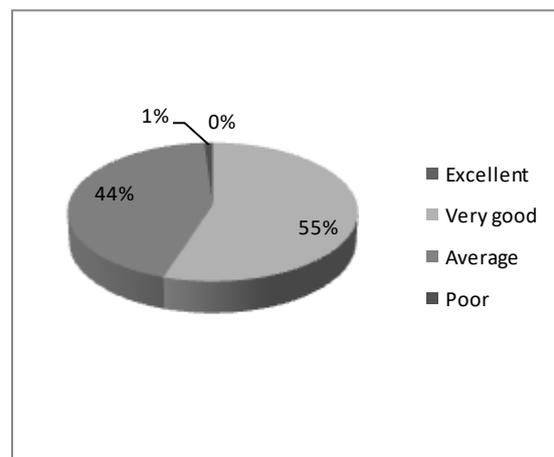


Figure 1: Pie diagram showing distribution of subjects according to the knowledge on contraception

Table 2: Area wise knowledge on contraception

Sl. No	Area	Maximum possible score	Mean ± SD	Mean%
1	Meaning, physiology and barrier methods	6	3.89±1.07	64.83%
2	Intrauterine devices and oral hormonal methods	6	2.42±0.87	40.33%
3	Permanent methods and natural methods	3	2.39±0.9	79.67%

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to assess the attitude on premarital sex and knowledge on contraception among the teenage girls. The findings of the study show that all the teenage girls had negative attitude towards premarital sex. This negative attitude could be because most of the girls had strong religious belief and very good knowledge regarding contraceptives because a weak positive correlation was found between knowledge on contraception and attitude on premarital sex.

This finding is supported by another study which was conducted to assess the

factors associated with attitude toward premarital sexual activities among school-going adolescents found that being less religious and younger age group increased the risk for premarital sex whereas having good knowledge on sexual and reproductive health was a protective factor against permissive sexual attitude.

The above findings are contradicted by another study finding which was done to assess the attitude towards premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy in which among the total respondents, 32.4% mentioned premarital sex is appropriate and 25% had premarital sex. [6]

CONCLUSION

Teenage students had a negative attitude towards premarital sex and having good knowledge on sexual and reproductive health was a protective factor against permissive sexual attitude.

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