

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

India is home to 253 million adolescents; young people in the age group of 10-19 years who comprise 21% of the country's population (Census, 2011). Not only does this cohort represent India's future in the economic realm, but its experience, attitudes and behaviors will largely determine whether India is able to realize the vision of an equitable civil society envisaged in its constitution.

Fortunately for all of us, adolescents see the challenges before them in fresh ways and are responding with enthusiasm and imagination. With the right investments, they can reach their full potential as individuals, leaders and agents of progress. And the world clearly needs their energy, participation and skills. But delivering this transformation requires collective action on education, health, employment and a commitment to real civic engagement by diverse stakeholders including, Government Departments, academic, development partners and civil society organizations.

Sixty one percent boys and 53% girls in the age group of 15-19 (National Sample Survey, 66th Round, 2013) are enrolled in schools and these numbers are likely to increase making schools important spaces for reaching out to adolescents. In school settings, students not only acquire knowledge but also imbibe values, develop an understanding of social norms that finally influence their behaviors. School education also plays an important role in reinforcing or challenging stereotypes among young people. School-based interventions are feasible and cost effective as school going adolescents are easily accessible. Importantly, schools also have a social standing and recognition as institutions of learning. Hence, any intervention implemented through schools has enhanced credibility and acceptability.

Need for Adolescence Education:

Adolescence Education has been conceptualized as an educational response to the need for support, encouragement, clarifications and information that adolescents often express in order to make sense of their rapidly changing world.

Adolescence Education is guided by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 which recommends that education should instill ‘independence of thought and action, sensitivity to others’ well-being and feelings, learning to respond to new situations in a flexible and creative manner, predisposition towards participation in democratic processes, and the ability to work towards and contribute to economic processes and social change.’” Based on these principles, Adolescence Education aims to provide young people with accurate, age appropriate and culturally relevant information; promote healthy attitudes and develop skills to enable them to respond to real-life situations effectively.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Adolescence

Adolescence is a Latin word *Adolescere* which means to grow. Adolescence refers to a stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence covers the period of life between 10 and 20 years of age. In this study, adolescence refers to a

transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, in which males and females between the ages 12 and 15 years experience physiological, psychological and social changes.

Adolescent

Adolescent refers to a boy or girl between the ages 10 and 20.

Culture and Adolescence

Culture has a great impact on the matters of belief, practices and behaviors of its followers. How adolescents are raised, how they need to behave, and how openly they can discuss the private matters depends on the culture. Conservative societies forbid the discussion on the adolescent problems, and exhibit more gender inequality. Sexual taboos have their root in cultural beliefs and have important implications in the health and morbidity. Elders never educate on the basic concepts of bodily changes that occur during adolescence, keeping them in dark. There has always been an issue of comfort regarding sharing of knowledge on sexuality with offspring in India. The social regulations and pattern of cultural response is quite different in our country in comparison to developed countries like the USA

Indian Culture and Adolescence Education

India is one of the oldest cultures to study physical intercourse and seems to be quite open in appraising it as an art and science. The different attitudes and practices regarding the

same first appeared in historic texts of various religions, which are examples of oldest literatures. Somewhere in between 1st and 6th century the classical 'Kamasutra' (Aphorisms of love) was written which included 'Dharma', 'Artha' and 'Kama'. They represented religious duty, welfare of the world and aspects of life which are sensual. Paintings on Ajanta caves, sculptures of Khajuraho are few examples of the deep interest and admiration Indians have towards intercourse. But with foreign invasion later, much of the ancient literature went missing and gradually new norms were set.

Till date, our society is ridden with many myths and taboos like Dhat Syndrome, and masturbation in females. There is no provision for adolescence education either at home or in school and no specified health service addressing adolescent health problems exists. On top of it, in their day to-day lives, common Indian people are very traditional and conservative in their outlook.

the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) acknowledges, "despite 35 percent of the population being in the 10-24 age groups, the health needs of adolescents have neither been researched nor addressed adequately; particularly their reproductive health needs are often misunderstood, unrecognized or underestimated. Limited research shows that adolescents are indulging in premarital sex more frequently at an early age, the incidence of pregnancies among them is rising and most of them face the risk of induced abortions under unsafe conditions, and contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV". In fact, what young people are confronted with is what is referred to by ICMR as a "state of oblivion, without the prospect of a decent career or education and unable to fulfill the duties that adult life requires them. They are unsure about their capacities and lack of long-term goals for the future".

These are compounded by the challenges posed by cultural mores, patriarchy and gender discrimination and also other forms of discrimination based on caste, religion and ethnicity. Besides, sexuality and discussions around this issue is a taboo in most Indian societies.

This hypocrisy resulting in disapproval and denial is reflected in the ban that several states have imposed on the provision of Adolescence Education Programs (AEP) in state-run schools which had been introduced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2005 in all the 28 States and 9 Union Territories collaboration with NACO as a follow up of the decision taken by the inter-ministerial meeting held in October, 2004.

Having critically analyzed the problems and the services for the adolescents two questions arise in our minds: Are we going in the right direction? Is it enough to deal with the target population alone? To address this current scenario, we should consider redefining our approach; the target population should include elders like parents and teachers also in defining, planning, implementing and evaluating specific programs for adolescents.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study could be used to educate adolescents and their parents on importance of adolescence education in government schools of Bhopal. Furthermore, the findings of this study will help educators, health care professionals, and other professionals involved with adolescents to understand the prevalence of adolescence education, associated morbidities and most importantly, to develop effective evidence-based strategies and policies that could be used to control the lack of knowledge and awareness regarding sexuality and reproductive health among teenagers.

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of this research are to: Investigate how it came about adolescence education. Investigate the complexities of Adolescence education and understanding among a small group of adolescents from government schools of Bhopal. Explore what adolescents know about adolescence education and its importance. Identify the family structure and the social environment in which the adolescents live. Identify strategies to provide better adolescence education and environment for better understanding among adolescents.

DEMARCATIION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in government schools of Bhopal only. Adolescents attending school, their parents and two biology teachers were participants in this study, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to adolescents in other parts of city. However, the results may be used to develop policies and intervention strategies for adolescence education.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the study, including the background to the research problem, rationale for the research, significance of the study, aims of the investigation, statement of the problem, research strategy and research methods, ethical considerations, demarcation of the study, definition of concepts, and outline of the study. Adolescents are in the most vulnerable stage of development. Adolescence education creates a concern among parents, educators and other professionals, thus, effective evidence-based

intervention strategies to address issues related to socio cultural factors in adolescence education among adolescents need to be implemented. The next chapter discusses the literature review.
