

# Impact of a Course on Human Sexuality and Adolescence

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**Abstract.** **Objective:** This study was conducted as part of a course on Human Sexuality and Adolescence for school children to ascertain the prior knowledge of children, source of their knowledge and whether the course was a felt need of the children. **Method:** Students were given a questionnaire before the course. Few selected questions were asked again after the last session. The course was conducted in a private co-educational English medium school in urban Bangalore involving 360 students 13 - 15 years of age. The course was designed by the authors and dealt with anatomy, physiology, social and psychological aspects of growing up, HIV and contraception. **Results:** 66 - 70% of class VIII, IX and X students had learnt about sex from friends, 30% from movies, 15% from text books and only 10% from parents. Misconceptions about anatomy, childbirth, HIV were common. 60% of tenth class students felt that education in human sexuality was necessary. **Conclusion:** In spite of chapters on reproduction in textbooks, children turn to peers or media to gather information on sexuality. Education in human sexuality is required in our schools, as this need is currently not being addressed adequately in our society. *(Indian J Pediatr 2000; 70 (3) : 303-306)*

**Key words:** Adolescence; Human sexuality; Sex education in Indian schools

A course in human sexuality for school children was designed by the authors who are practicing gynaecologists for 30 years and have adolescent and growing children of their own. The need for such a course was felt because parents in general, and in India in particular, find it difficult to address their children's sexuality and natural curiosity regarding reproduction. School curricula offer a very clinical view of the subject, not taking into account the psychological aspects of growing up. Media exposure is tremendous and in the absence of any guidance, children are often misguided. Added to this is the very real threat of HIV. As gynaecologists, we handle the consequences of this ignorance. Hence this course was conducted and relevant information collected and analyzed.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The course was conducted in a private English medium co-educational school in urban Bangalore catering to children from the upper middle class. The course consisted of three one-hour sessions, each 3-3 weeks apart. It covered the basis of the human reproductive system and anatomy, physiology and the puberty changes in both sexes in the first session. The second session consisted of emotional aspects of adolescence, peer pressure, values and attitudes, dangers to avoid (drugs, smoking, casual sex), child sexual abuse and molestation. The last session covered HIV, AIDS, and

contraception overview (without encouraging sexual activity by emphasizing abstinence and failure rates of contraceptives) and was open for questions. The students were given a questionnaire before the commencement of the course. The Test paper had 12 multiple choice questions. Multiple answers were allowed only for the first and last question. Few selected questions were repeated after all the sessions were over.

## The Questions

1. I learnt about sex from ... 2. Sex is ... 3. A baby is born naturally through ... 4. Fertilization of the egg by the sperm occurs in ... 5. The only 100% sure way of avoiding pregnancy is ... 6. Menstruation is ... 7. A girl can get pregnant if she ... 8. AIDS is ... 9. During menstruation a girl ... 10. During adolescence, children and parents have arguments because ... 11. During adolescence girls and boys are attracted to each other because ... 12. Education in human sexuality is ...

Each question had four choices (not written here due to lack of space).

Questions 5, 8, 11 and 12 were repeated after all the sessions were over.

## RESULTS

The results of some of the questions in the questionnaire are tabulated in Table 1 as percentage of responses (in bracket). Results of post session questionnaire are given in the same table.

Class X had 112 students, Class IX had 135 students and class VIII had 145 students. Girls and boys were

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