

# **Adolescent Sexual Behavior, Contraception, and Unsafe Abortion**

## **(A Study on the College Student in Mumbai, INDIA)**

By

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### **Introduction**

Adolescent sex has become a complex phenomenon among the researchers, due to high sensitivity of this area. The basic problems of such studies are gathering of reliable information. During the last two to three decades, the importance of this issue has increased because, its association with teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse such as rape and molestation, illegal birth, illegal and unsafe abortion and the risk of STD and HIV-AIDS among the adolescent.

With the advent of new millennium, urban adolescents are finding new forms of enjoyment. Even youth of low profile colleges, do have sex but are afraid to admit it and this situation is much more worse than that in high profile areas. Youth treating pre-marital sexual relation as the westernized way of life and covering it up in the envelop of modern way of living and leaving behind the tradition bindings, makes the situation more disastrous – far more that could ever be thought of. Youngsters, in some cases due to less sexual knowledge and some having full knowledge of sex with the availability of contraceptives, youth try to experiment with it in their life. Their excitement is further egged on by vast mass media exposure. Discarding the strong base of culture and tradition, adolescents with their unsafe sexual practice places themselves at themselves at higher risk of contracting STDs and HIV/AIDS (Ammie George: 1997).

The belief that homosexuality, premarital or extramarital sexual activity can never be deep rooted in our society makes it vulnerable in front of any incurable disease makes the situation more horrible. Due to sensitivity of the topic *saying “ do not talk about such things ”* brings us in front of the realistic problem of need for actual data on sexual behaviour pattern that is of crucial importance today (Mira Savera: 1992)

Influence of Films, Fashion and western “sexual culture” is more among college student in Mumbai City. This study is focusing the causes and consequences adolescent sexual activity, knowledge, attitude, behavior and practice of contraception, especially condoms which is highly advertised as shield against AIDS and its easy availability and its impact on reproductive health among the college students.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the adolescent attitude about sexual behaviour
2. To study the adolescent sexual behaviour
3. To study the adolescent knowledge of contraception and its use
4. To study the adolescent knowledge of modes of HIV infections and its prevention

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative nature of study and due to complexity and sensitivity of the study, information was collected through in-depth interviews and unstructured interviews with students. Other important relevant information were gathered from key informants through in- depth interview at *Paan* (bittle leaf) shop, Chemist shop and Medical Clinics near to colleges, where they sell condoms and perform cheap and unsafe abortion. This study is conducted in Mumbai. As Mumbai is the capital city of India, where highest number of Aids cases are recorded. Influence of films, fashion and western “ sexual culture “ is more among college student in Mumbai City. This study is focusing the causes and consequences of adolescent sexual activity, knowledge, attitude, behaviour and practice of contraception, especially condoms which is highly advertised as shield against AIDS and its easy availability and its impact on reproductive health of college students.

Three geographical areas were selected in the city for sampling purpose namely, South Mumbai (main city), Central Mumbai and Sub-Urban Mumbai, the areas belongs in the locality of higher to lower income groups of people respectively. Ten colleges were selected from each area and of which five technical colleges and five Non-technical colleges. In each college ten In-depth interviews were conducted, five with male and five with female students.

## **RESULTS**

Finding shows that today's adolescent believes that having sex during college life is westernized way of modern student life. Collage students freely discuss and they love to talk on this so-called sensitive topic. There is hardly any difference found in the attitude of students from technical or non-technical college. All have similar attitude to sexual activities and have great interest in sexual relation ship and believe that it is important to have relation with opposite sex.

Boys and girls of South Mumbai College are found to be more bold and open on this topic. They gave over enthusiastic response to all the sensitive questions and straightforward. They boldly accept that they were involved in sexual activities and they admit it proudly and as symbol of prestige. Now it's a prestigious issue having one or more girl friend or boy friend. If you don't go along with girls and then other underestimates you in the collage. Higher the number of girl or boy friends higher is your prestige in college. Having more physical relation than emotional does not matter. When the question was asked when they have their sexual experience? Most of the responses of masturbation among girls and boys as their first sexual activity. In girls, foundling of breasts by themselves and some lesbian activities with there close friends or some relatives. Boys had their first sexual exposure as Non- Penetrating sex such as mutual masturbation, oral sex among themselves. Anxiety leads them with initial experimentation with their relatives and even CSW (Commercial Sex Worker). It was also found the first heterosexual experience they had with their relative and friends but most of the cases were non--penetrating sex. The boys and girls have different partners at

college and at home. At home they had better opportunity for sex with their neighbours and relatives.

When the question was asked about where they go for sexual activities more at college, home or other places many response came at home where they go to friend place whose parents are working and in colleges during college festivals as they got permission for late night stays. Visiting CSWs as also found in small numbers. Adolescents under the influence of liquor in few colleges in the locality of higher socio-economic group. The main purpose of their experience with CSWs is to test their sexual ability. Adolescent from south Mumbai College said that they use hotels, discos, car, friend's place, beaches, and parks where less people comes. And they also sometime manages in college it self during festivals. Adolescents from central and sub-urban college's people also use public parks, friend's places, beaches, but very few said car and hotels, as they cannot afford it.

In central and sub-urban Mumbai colleges there is contrast in way of dressing, life style but similarities in sexual approach they also have similar response on their first exposure to sexual experiences. But in these colleges they were hesitating to accept it they have sex with their relative like cousin sister or brother, neighbors and relatives during family festivals like marriages and other festivals. Among these colleges having number of girl friend is limited as the girls are more reserved and college does not engage in college cultural activities so they get less opportunities in colleges. Girls from these colleges are having some emotional relation with boys but they are afraid of going physical as they are afraid of consequences as they gave example of some cases of pregnancy to their friends and their parents comes to know. Here girls and boys are found sitting in-groups but not like in south Mumbai college where they sit with their girl friend openly in separate corners. Shyness is commonly found in central college

Regarding sexual knowledge, the main sources are Films, Pornographic Literature and peer group in all the group of colleges. Non has reported any formal and informal sex education by parents and teachers. The south Mumbai college adolescent with higher purchasing power has better access to modern and good quality literature books on

sexuality. Many boys and girls are aware of playboy, debonair, fantasy magazines. And they can also afford frequent visits to theatre and access to modern electronic items like VCR, so they can play blue films at there or friends homes. In south Mumbai pornographic books are easily available and they don't find any big deal if they have access to it. Yes it is matter of shame for those who have not yet seen it. They were also aware of various sex accessories like medicine to boost your sexual power, dildo, and vibrator, bobble bum, scents and perfumes etc. Among central and sub-urban colleges they also have access to blue films but they know cheap books in vernacular language on sex which gives more fantasy than knowledge. Girls are also aware of such books and films but very few girls have seen or read these books in compare to south Mumbai colleges. But they say what ever they get these books from their boy friends or from some friend's brothers as male have easy access to these books in compare to females.

Initial information on sex all most all have got from peer groups in all type colleges and through some literature distributed by cheap clinics highlights masturbation as great weakness for student and they should get out of it. In south Mumbai College student hardly care about masturbation and they don't have any guilty for it but in central and sub-urban college student feel guilty and treat masturbation as a bad habit and always tries to avoid it. In south Mumbai they treat it as tension releasing exercise and many say that once you masterbed than you can concentrate in study properly. Non of them have never asked their parents, brother and uncles about sex. They say if they asked they be treated as bad boys or girls or may be ignored by saying you are very young to know all these. In most of response the films are the first mode of information and then discussion on these films among peer group is primary source of information on sex for college students and later they themselves explored other sources that too from the peer groups like organizing blue film show at friends house, going in group to see adults films and at later stage some response came of visiting CSWs.

Knowledge about contraception and safe sex is very poor among the students of the lower socioeconomic localities. Adolescence perception about sex is a manifestation of social and cultural values on sex, but a mix response is found on pre-marital sex, family size and extra-marital sex. Both girls and boys are only aware about condoms and

pill and abortions as contraceptives but do not have any proper knowledge about its use. During the college festivals and other occasions, adolescents ends up with unplanned sexual activities, because during these festivals adolescents boys and girls get permission from their parents to stay till late night or whole night in the college. Adolescents from all colleges are aware of abortion facilities easily available in the city. Adolescent from south Mumbai college's girls reported of using these services. There was a response from a girl that she have undergone two abortions and her mother didn't even know till now and there is no need tell when we are capable enough to take care of ourselves *Paan* (bittle leaf)/Cigarette shops who sell cheep quality imported condoms, sexy idols, pornographic playing cards, sprays, bubble gums etc, informed that, sale of sex accessories and Condoms increases, and medical clinics reported sudden increase in abortion among adolescent after these festivals. From the few private clinics it has been found that the illegal abortion among teenager are reported. Though the students have knowledge about contraception and don't have proper knowledge about its use. Many response came that for first time enjoyment they don't want to use any contraception like condom. From the south Mumbai college boys reported having sex without condom and they don't use it because they want to enjoy it. When asked about pregnancy and all they say when girls are willing to take that risk then why should we bother. When the girls are asked on contraception they know about all methods pills, copper-T, condom and they also treat abortion as contraception. They only use pills and at last abortion as their partner never wanted to use condom and neither do they. Knowledge about pills they have but they use it as emergency contraception and take large doses after having sex and sometimes it works and if it fails than abortion.

All collage students are aware about HIV and AIDS, but they are ignorant about their vulnerability and they don't think AIDS as a threat to them even if they indulged in unproductive sex with multiple partners. They believe that AIDS is spread through CSWs and they avoid it. But responses came that some of the boys have visited CSWs after consuming liquor as they are informed that they should hire a good and costly prostitute as they take full precaution and we also ask her to use condom. Adolescents from central and sub-urban college also aware about red light areas and they say that they don't go to

prostitutes but said some boys goes who don't get girls easily. But majority boys say that they always do sex with new and virgin girls. As they are easily available and there is no need to go to prostitute. The criteria for selecting new girl or fresh piece who don't have sex with any body or some time some time some friends recommends about fresh piece etc. If they ever have any doubt about a girl had sex before we don't go along with that girl. And when we take that much precaution in selecting new girl than we don't have chance of getting HIV as we always have sex new girls. Many boys says that they are so smart that they can make out by seeing a girl walking that she had sex or not as they believe a girl who had sex she will walk with spread legs. Boys also take it pleasure to have sex with new partners. In south Mumbai College there is group of boys who always have sex with multiple girls as they say they don't enjoy sex with the same partner for long time and plenty is available and they are also willing. The finding shows that adolescents sexual activities, behavior, knowledge and practice of contraception, especially male methods as it was boys who plays the decisive role in sexual activities among adolescents etc. are complex issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is observed that due to social stigma attached to sexuality in Indian society, it is not discussed in families, schools and collages among young adolescents. Right from the time of puberty they want information to understand about their body development. There is immediate need to interfere in the matter to provide more correct information centers at school and collages level. Still it is a matter of debate when should children be given sexual knowledge? Now there is no time for such debate, if proper formal and informal sex information not given when they ask, then they look for answers themselves and land up in some personality problems. Now in age of AIDS it is important for policy maker to focus their attention on preventive measures with adolescents now to save them for better tomorrow.

Some of the most alarming statement made by adolescents during the study, which shows the seriousness of the problem:

**Girls from the South Mumbai Colleges:**

“I was aborted twice and my parents does not know about it till now and even my partner does not know that I had aborted.”

“I got aborted after having an unplanned sex and I was aware of the services and my partner also help me in this. I don't find any reason to inform my parents and disturb them as I can take care of myself.”

**Girls from Central and Sub-Urban Colleges:**

“ It is very difficult to trust Mumbai boys as they all are flirt and only want to use girls for their sexual needs. There are bad girls also who also encourage boys”

“ One can have emotional relation with boys but never have sex with them”

“ Girls should not go out with boys to hotels or their homes alone as they will misuse her”

**Boys from South Mumbai colleges:**

“ Girls are easily available in numbers so there is no need to run after them, “ never run after girls and bus as you are sure there is always next coming”

“ Going out with girls is good healthy and new media of entertainment for both girls and boys as they both enjoys each other company”

“ Girls themselves responsible for this as they encourage boys to come after them and it will be insult to boys if some girl is calling and boy does not respond to her”



“ Girls parents are equally responsible when they allow their daughter to wear short cloths which appeal to boys in colleges and it gives clear indication that the girl is interested in having sex”

“ When new is available why stick to old one, till you get the new one old is gold”

**Boys from Central and Sub-Urban Colleges:**

“When girls are also interested than they should also face the consequences, and if they are ready to face the consequences than why should not we enjoy”

“ Why unnecessary go to red light area (prostitute areas) when plenty is available in your colleges and risk your life for HIV and AIDS”

All these phrases and beliefs of adolescent shows that how critical is the situation and need immediate intervention in prevention of adolescent form getting HIV and Aids infections.

There is need to conduct detailed studies among adolescents who are not enrolled in collages or school. This study focuses only a small section of adolescents. There is need have detailed in study in slums and rural areas as this problem have no boundaries.

It is important to understand these issues and develop intervention programs on HIV and AIDS prevention among adolescents.

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