

Knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health in Shillong, Meghalaya

VIRGINIA THABAH AND JASMINE AHMED

Accepted : October, 2008

ABSTRACT

Reproductive Health is a crucial component of general health. It is a state in which people have the ability to undertake sexual activity safely. The present study attempts to assess the knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health. A total of 300 samples were taken belonging to three different locations of Shillong town. Data were collected with the help of questionnaire. Analysis of data revealed that both male and female respondents displayed poor knowledge on some of the desirable aspects of reproductive health. However, a non-significant difference was seen between the genders regarding knowledge on reproductive health. But a significant difference was found between different age groups of both male and female. The present study demands that knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health can be improved or raised by making them aware through dissemination of information on different issues related to reproductive health.

See end of the article for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to:

VIRGINIA THABAH

Krishi Vigyan Kendra,

Phek, PORBA

(NAGALAND) INDIA

Key words : Knowledge, Adolescents, Reproductive health.

The International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 defined the term reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity, all matters relating to the reproductive system and its functions and processes.

In India, adolescents reproductive health needs are poorly understood and ill served, while the needs of children or pregnant women are acknowledged in national programmes. Neither services nor researches have focused on the unique health and information needs of adolescents. Adolescent's ignorance about sexual and reproductive behaviour is compounded by reluctance among parents and teachers to impart relevant information (Watsa, 2004). Educating young people about reproductive health and teaching them skills in negotiating conflicts resolutions, critical thinking, decision making and communication improve their self confidence and ability to make choices, such as postponing sex until they are mature enough to protect themselves from Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and unwanted pregnancies (Singh, 2004). The present study attempts to assess the knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health with the objectives to assess the knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health, to study the gender difference if any in knowledge content on reproductive health and to study the age difference in knowledge content of adolescent boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

Study was conducted in Shillong town of the state of Meghalaya. Three hundred samples from three co-

educational higher secondary schools were selected including boys and girls from VIII to XII standard. The age groups of 13 to 19 years were selected as samples for the present study. A questionnaire was constructed for collection of data from respondents. The questionnaire included two aspects (1) Background information (2) Thirty five statements pertaining to different aspects relevant to reproductive health. Data were collected at schools in class rooms. The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire was 30 minutes. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed statistically by calculating the frequency and percentage, mean, standard deviation and standard error and by applying z-test for significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess the knowledge content of adolescents on reproductive health:

Distribution of respondents according to the knowledge content on reproductive health (Table 1) indicated that majority of male respondents (49.33%) and female respondents (60.7%) had good knowledge on reproductive health. This was attributed to the fact that the issues related to reproductive health have gained increasing importance over the last few decades. The media has played a vital role in making a vast change in the scenario at the school, college, family and social level. Children have free access to movies and programmes which are exclusively meant for adults. This was also supported by the findings of Singh, (1990) that more than 90 per cent of the students in each discipline had favorable attitude towards sex and sex education. Higher the levels of education higher were scores in knowledge section of