ABSTRACT

This article discusses the issues related to adolescence sexual and reproductive health among boys and girls having rural background of desert area of Rajasthan, India. The primary information was collected by interviewing 200 girls and boys each through structured schedule and focus group discussions. The study deals with the knowledge, attitude and behaviour on issues related to adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) in general and menstruation, night emission, masturbation, teenage pregnancy, legal age at marriage, gender discrimination, gender equity and equality and information needs pertaining to ARSH in particular. The responses of the adolescents boys and girls on these issues were analysed with respect to their education (school, going vs out of school), age (younger vs elder), sex (boys vs girls) and importantly their personality type (introvert vs extrovert).

The study would be useful in developing policies, activities and programmes by the government and non government organizations.

Key Words: Knowledge Attitude, Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual health.

Adolescence, the second decade of life, can be said to be one of the tumultuous periods of life, because between the ages of 10-19 years, many key biological and social events occur that set the stage for adult life. What happens during adolescence, whether good or bad, shapes how boys and girls live out
their lives as women and men – not only in the sphere of reproduction, but in social and economic realm as well. Yet, in spite of its relevance for human development, until recently, the needs of adolescents have been given less priority in research and policy matters in several countries.

Policy interest in adolescents began to grow after ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) held in Cairo in 1994, which called for specific efforts by governments and civic society to understand and meet the particular reproductive and sexual health needs of adolescents. It also observed that the number of adolescents in all the regions of world is increasing rapidly (however, their proportion in total population is declining due to declining fertility levels). Against the backdrop of a relatively early maturation of adolescents than ever in past due to greater exposure to information, growing complexities of modern life style problem has grown in scale, and needs urgent attention of all concerned. This observation has also led to increased concern for reproductive and sexual health of adolescents in two ways, firstly, because of real and perceived increase in their sexual activity, and secondly because of the high vulnerability of adolescents to HIV infection, due to their increased sexual activities.

Several factors contribute to the growth of adolescents. These factors range from the social, economic, cultural, geographical and political conditions of wider society, to those that characterise the conditions of adolescents including family education, income, and so on. In this context, improving access to appropriate health services can only be a partial solution to address the issues that concern their reproductive and sexual health. Programmes should also focus on assisting adolescents in acquiring education, skill building, and personality development, at homes, schools, work place or community settings.

India has nearly 200 million boys and girls in adolescent age group of 10-19 years. They comprise over one-fifth of entire population of the country. It is held that the adolescents have very little knowledge and awareness about the issues related to reproductive and sexual health. Their lack of understanding of issues like, physiological changes, menstruation, night emissions, masturbation, STDs, family planning, premarital sex, influence their overall quality of life. It has also been observed that most adolescents are least prepared for their adult life particularly in the sphere of family life. Not only the level of awareness for reproductive and sexual health is low, whatever they know is largely superficial.

It is estimated that around half of all new HIV infections occur in young people in the age below 24 years According to the National Family Health Survey-III the Prevalence of HIV among adult population (age 15-49) is 0.28 percent. Around 2.5 million Children and adults living with HIV/AIDS in 2007 (UNAIDS, Press release-6th July 2007). The figures are increasing with an increasingly rapid pace. In societies like India, where the epidemic is heterosexually driven, young women are more exposed to the risk of HIV infection than men for both physiological and social reasons.
Existing research and evaluation studies indicate that there is a poor fit between the current programmes and the needs of adolescents. From the limited data available on adolescents, it is apparent that their situations vary widely by region and gender. However, against the backdrop of large geographical, socio-economic and cultural diversities in India, these variations are inevitable. It is desirable that any programmed response to sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents be created in the realm of their real and felt needs and in the context of their socio-economic, environmental and cultural domains.

The broad objective of this study was to carry out a situational analysis to assess the level of information of adolescents both – boys and girls in selected sites in the desert district of Bikaner, Rajasthan on the issues related to Adolescence to suggest the policy makers, researchers and implementers to design their interventions accordingly.

**METHOD**

**Sample**

The study was carried out in the selected villages of one of the desert districts of Rajasthan, India. The research was exploratory in its nature; by using systematic random sampling method, the quantitative and qualitative information was collected for further analysis. The sample was distributed in the categories of adolescent boys, adolescent girls, school going, out of school, younger and elder, adolescent boys and girls. Age profile of the respondents was divided into two segments – one is early adolescent age from 11 to 15 years and another is later adolescent age from 16-19 years. The responses of the adolescents have also been analysed in terms of their ‘Personality’. ‘Introvert’ Vs ‘Extrovert’ personalities of the adolescents were viewed in the light of various questions on the knowledge, attitude and practices related to adolescent health and information need.

The adolescent in Rajasthan is characterized by low education, lack of access to mass media, large gender discrimination, early marriage and, early childbearing. Although social values strongly discourage sexual relations before marriage, available evidences suggest that premarital sex is not uncommon among adolescent boys and girls both in urban and rural areas.

**Tools**

Following tools and measure were used in the study:

1. **Quantitative tools & measures**
   a) Interview schedule
   b) Sex-Myth checklist
   c) Personality Pattern Test for Introversion – Extroversion

2. **Qualitative tools**
   a) Check lists for conducting focus group discussion
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study presented here is the outcome of quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Socio-economic and Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 200 girls and boys each were interviewed for this study. The age wise distribution presents that more girls fell in ‘younger’ category (girls 58.0%) while ‘elder’ boys were found more in numbers (boys 61.2%). Around half of the girl respondents were ‘school going’ while around three fourth boys were found to be studying in the school at the time of interview. Literacy status shows that higher percentage of girls was towards lower standard of schooling (Primary-44.5%) while boys were towards higher standard of schooling (Middle-35.8% followed by Secondary-37%) as compared to the girls. The mean age of marriage among boys was around 16 years while it was around 15 years among girls. Such low marriage age having it’s own repercussions on the growth and development of adolescents.

The personality wise distribution presents that the more girls (55.0%) than boys (49.0%) were found to be ‘introvert’ while only 45 percent girls had ‘extrovert’ personality compared to that of 51 percent boys.

It was found that more adolescent girls (53%) are working than boys (27%). The engagement of adolescents in their work shows that majority of the girls (33.0%) were engaged in ‘agriculture’ while majority of the boys (55.5%) were found to be ‘labourer’. A meagre percentage of adolescent boys and girls were engaged in ‘government services’ (Girls - 0.9%; Boys 1.8%) and ‘private services’ as well (Girls - 0.9%; Boys 7.4%). The data depict that more adolescent girls (53%) are working than boys (27%) but surprisingly higher percentage of boys out of the working boys (98.1%) are ‘earning’ compared to that of the girls (59.4%) in this regard. Although the overall number of earning girls are higher than the boys, the scenario is to be seen objectively i.e. percentage of ‘earning girls’ from the ‘working girls’ and likewise for boys. Similarly, education pattern shows that the girls are not considered not only for higher education but for middle level of education (class 8th and above) also. Percentage of illiterate girls was higher than the boys. This shows the prevalence of gender inequality.

Awareness Related to Puberty among Adolescent Boys and Girls

Boys and Girls both were asked about their knowledge regarding changes in the teen age. They were asked what changes occur among boys and girls during the age of puberty.

The data show that majority of the girls (89%) mentioned ‘beginning of the menstruation’ is the most important physical symptom of the adolescence among girls followed by ‘increase in height’ (40.0%), ‘Hair around genitals’ (26%); ‘Development of breasts’ (25.5%), and ‘Pimples on face’ (25.0%). However,
around 8 percent of girls mentioned that they do not know about such changes, which is somewhat surprising. Likewise, the girls were asked about the physical changes among boys during adolescence. The majority of the girl respondents labelled ‘heaviness in voice’ (65.3%) on top followed by ‘hair on face- moustache and beard’ (65.0%) and ‘pimple on face’ (20.4%). Surprisingly, around 20 percent girls mentioned that they do not know / can’t say about such changes among boys.

Responses of the boys regarding physical changes during adolescence among girls were also sought wherein they ranked ‘Hair around genitals’ (50%) as most common change followed by ‘Development of breasts’ (47.0%) and ‘beginning of the menstruation’ (46.0%). Likewise, the boys were asked about the physical changes among themselves during adolescence. Responses of boys on the changes among boys were ‘hair on face- moustache and beard’ (65.0%), ‘Hairs around genitals’ (52.5%) and ‘heaviness in voice’ (51.0%).

The personality wise analysis of the responses show that the girls and boys both, having extrovert personality, found to be more aware on these issues than those girls and boys who have introvert personality.

The analysis reveals that the correct and complete information is required among both boys and girls. The questions, asked to them, were deeply related to their own experience; even then they were not able to spell out the changes properly. It indicates their casual attitude towards the crucial changes during adolescence. It is desired that they should be more prepared for the important phase of life. Such importance needs to be communicated to them properly and effectively.

AWARENESS RELATED MENSTRUATION AND NOCTURNAL EMISSION & MASTURBATION

The level of information about menstruation and practices during menstruation period among ‘school going’ and ‘out of school’ adolescent girls was also sought. The data reveal that slightly higher percentage of ‘out of school’ (92.1%) girls were aware of the symptoms and occurrence of menstruation than that of the ‘school going’ girls (88.9%). All the ‘elder’ girls were aware of the menstruation; while around 84 % ‘younger’ girls were found to be aware of the same. Overall, around 91 percent girls were found to be aware of the menstruation. The statistical significance ($\chi^2 =15.203; \text{significance level}= 0.000; \text{df}= 1$) was found high for age wise difference among girls on ‘awareness level about menstruation’.

The girls having ‘extrovert’ personality (95.6%), found to be more aware of menstruation than those girls who have ‘introvert’ personality (86.4%). Statistically also, this difference was found significant ($\chi^2 =4.865; \text{significance level}= 0.027; \text{df}=1$).
Responding to the perception about the menstruation, most of the ‘school going’ girls mentioned that they perceive menstruation as ‘oozing of dirty blood’ on a regular interval (62.6%) compare to the ‘out of school’ girls (80.2%). Around 13 percent ‘school going’ girls perceived that menstruation is a ‘usual physiological phenomenon occurs every month’ and need not to worry anything about it, while near to 8 percent ‘out of school’ girls perceived the same. The Chi square value shows that difference between ‘school going’ and ‘out of school’ is not significant, while the difference was found to be is significant between ‘younger’ and ‘elder’ girls ($\chi^2 = 14.193; \text{significance level} = 0.014; \text{df} = 5$).

Regarding the knowledge given before the onset of the menstruation around 72 percent adolescent girls were informed about the menstruation before its onset. This ranged from 65.5% to 79.8% among ‘school going’ (67.7%), ‘out of school’ (75.2%); ‘younger’ (65.5%) and ‘elder’ (79.8%) categories of girls. The age wise difference was found significant ($\chi^2 = 4.851; \text{significance level} = 0.028; \text{df} = 1$).

Personality wise analysis reflects that more ‘extrovert’ girls were able to mention about the symptoms of menstruation than ‘introvert’ girls. Similarly, more ‘extrovert’ girls were in receipt of the information about the menstruation before its onset, than ‘introvert’ girls. However, the difference was found insignificant statistically.

Regarding the source of information about the menstruation, most of the adolescent girls were informed about the menstruation by their ‘friends’ (31.8%) followed by ‘sister/cousin sister’ (28.2%) and ‘mother’ (19.4%). Mass media i.e. TV, radio, magazines and newspapers etc. were found to have minimum role in educating about the phenomenon of menstruation. The data reveal that the getting education and dissemination of information is very high through peers.

Personality wise analysis reflects that more girls having ‘introvert’ personality got the information from sisters/cousin sisters while more girls having ‘extrovert’ personality got the information from ‘friends’ (37.5%) followed by ‘mother’ (22.5%).

Questions were asked pertaining to the hygienic practices during menstruation wherein around 63.5 percent girls mentioned that they use ‘clean clothes’ during menstruation period out of which 75 percent were from the ‘elder’ category and around 69 percent were ‘school going’ girls. Only 4 percent girls used ‘sanitary napkins’, and most of them were ‘elder’ (7.1%) and ‘out of school’ (5.9%). The age wise significance level on the ‘practice during menstruation among adolescent girls’ was found high ($\chi^2 = 28.327; \text{significance level} = 0.000; \text{df} = 4$).

Personality wise analysis in this regard illustrates that more girls having ‘extrovert’ personality were found to be using ‘clean clothes’ during menstruation period compare to the girls having ‘introvert’ personality. Personality wise no significant difference was found.
The data show that more ‘out of school’ girls were aware of the menstruation than ‘school going’ which prima-facie looks unusual. The data reveal that majority of the out of school girls are elder and experience menstruation periods on a regular basis, on the other hand, few ‘school going’ girls are younger and may not have experienced the menstruation periods so far. The difference may be due to the experience of having menstruation periods among the elders, however, it is important to understand the gravity of the situation as a whole. Such important information needs to be disseminated properly to the adolescents at the very beginning of their adolescent age so that they can be prepared for such crucial changes.

The boys were asked about their perception of ‘night emission’ and ‘masturbation’. There was high level of misconceptions observed among all categories of boys. Regarding ‘night emission’, most of the respondents perceived it as ‘causes of weakness’ (51%) followed by ‘causes of deformity in penis’ (50%) and ‘harmful for the health’ (48.0%). The percentage of such misconceptions was higher among ‘elder’ and ‘out of school’ boys. As a matter of fact, almost one third of the respondents were not able to put their views on the ‘night emission’, out of these the higher proportion was of ‘younger’ and ‘school going’ boys.

Regarding ‘masturbation’, most of the respondents perceived it as ‘causes of weakness’ (54.2%) followed by ‘harmful for the health’ (48.4%). The percentage of such misconceptions was higher among ‘elder’ and ‘out of school’ boys. As a matter of fact, around 42 percent respondents were not able to put their views on the ‘masturbation’ wherein the higher proportion was of ‘younger’ and ‘school going’ boys. A meagre percentage of the respondents mentioned these changes as ‘normal phenomenon’ in which the percentage of ‘elder’ and ‘school going’ boys was higher.

The analysis reveals that regardless to the personality type, the level of misconception is found to very high among the respondents as only 3 and 2 percents boys perceive Nocturnal Emission and Masturbation as a normal phenomenon, respectively.

The level of misconceptions among boys regarding the changes among boys during adolescence age is found to very high and at the same time the ignorance on the issues was equally prevalent.

During the focus group discussions also, some of the wrong perceptions expressed by adolescents were as follows:
• Only the young, the immature and the unmarried practice masturbation.
• Only men practice it.
• It leads to weakness, insanity, impotence, homosexuality and dark circles around eyes.
• People who masturbate are not sexually normal.

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• Frequent masturbation can lead to sexual inadequacy.
• Regular masturbation will lead to shrinkage of the penis.

Adolescent boys fear that it will cause weakness. “100 drops of blood make one drop of semen” – it is a famous myth. Some of them reported that since they have started it they feel mentally and physically weak. The erotic pleasure makes them seek it repeatedly and the guilt deepens. Some believe it will make them unfit for normal heterosexual relationships later in life with their partners. Others fear it will harm them – how precisely - they are not able to define.

It emerged out of the focused group discussions that the probable reason for having such misconceptions could be the lack of reliable and complete information on such issues. Most of the adolescents are dependent on unreliable literature, which rather increases their misconceptions than clarifying the things. The misconceptions and wrong information rotates from one to another person in their peer groups.

The fact is that masturbation is normal and does not render them physically and mentally or sexually weak. However, this fact is not digested by parents, and teachers who fear this practice will open gates to sexual promiscuity. So the vicious cycle goes on. It is resorted to release any kind of tension and some become so preoccupied with it that the ability to deal with difficult situations only ends up in masturbation. This hampers development of personality.

Knowledge about Teen Age Pregnancy among Adolescent Boys and Girls

Awareness level of ‘legal age at marriage’ among boys and girls were assessed, besides asking the issues related to risk of teenage pregnancy. Both boys and girls were asked about the legal age at marriage for boys and for the girls. Around 70 percent girls were aware of the legal age at marriage for boys and 77 percent girls knew about the legal age of marriage for girls. The boys were found to be more aware on this issue as around 85 percent boys were aware of the legal age at marriage for boys and 88 percent knew about the legal age of marriage for girls.

Personality wise knowledge of girls about the legal age at marriage of boys and girls indicates that more ‘extrovert’ girls were found to be aware of the correct legal age at marriage of boys than ‘introvert’ girls. Statistically, the difference was found insignificant.

Similar to the girls, the boys were asked about the legal age at marriage for boys & girls wherein it was found that more ‘extrovert’ boys were aware of the correct legal age at marriage of boys and girls than ‘introvert’ boys. Statistically, the difference was found insignificant in both the cases.

Regarding risk related to the teenage pregnancy, as many as 80.5 percent girls and 90 percent boys were aware about the same. The probable risks spelt out by them were ‘death of mother’ (Girls- 61.1%; Boys – 87.2%); ‘death of
child’ (Girls- 30.6%; Boys – 69.1%); ‘mother can become weak’ (Girls- 56.1%; Boys – 28.2%); ‘child remains ill/weak’ (Girls- 25.5%; Boys – 12.2%). Personality wise there was no significant difference observed among boys and girls.

However, regarding the awareness level of ‘legal age at marriage’ among boys and girls, the overall response was encouraging, but it is to be noticed that government and other development organisations spent lot of resources to educate the community on the legal age of marriage for girls and boys.

Nevertheless, as a matter of satisfaction, awareness regarding ‘teenage pregnancy’ was found to be high among both boys and girls and very minimal difference was observed within the sub groups. But at the same time, if we analyse the responses of boys and girls wherein they spelt out the ‘types of risks of teenage pregnancy’, boys responded the highest risk involved for mother and child i.e. death of mother or child; while girls responded largely ‘weakness among mother or baby’. Such mindset and understanding of the adolescent boys may be taken as opportunity and they may be counselled properly towards their behaviour change.

The early marriage and teenage pregnancy is prevalent in Rajasthan, the one of backward provinces of India, and efforts are made at various levels to address the issues for improving total fertility rate, birth rate and maternal and child health status. Low percentage of awareness on such important issue is to be addressed effectively. It is a fact that the causes of child marriage or marriage below the legal age is first and foremost social and economical issue but at the same time it is also to be understood that it has serious implications on health including psychological aspects of a person.

Child marriage has its serious background particularly economically and socially backward state of Rajasthan, but preventing teenage pregnancy, that too involving adolescent boys positively, may offer some relief from the consequences of child marriage and provide some workable solutions.

Addressing the issue considering age and educational status is less difficult than addressing it with ‘introversion’ personality. The policy makers and implementers have to put their head to reach this hidden but important segment of adolescents.

Perception and Practices regarding Gender Equity and Equality among Adolescent Boys and Girls

The issues related equity and equality and discrimination based on sex, play an important role in the development of an adolescent. The gender discrimination is common in Indian society. Several studies showed gender wise discrimination among Indian society. However, a few studies are available which presents the views of males towards the discrimination against female members of the family.

In this study, due emphasis has been given on the gender related discriminations against adolescent girls, wherein the aspects and views of
adolescent boys have also been sought. Questions were asked pertaining to
gender bias experienced by the girls in their family and boys were also asked
whether they observed such biases towards girls in their family. Besides,
adolescents were asked whether girls should given liberty to take their own
decisions for their own life. Since this study also studied the personality wise
influences on the issues related to ARSH including gender discrimination, the
data reveal that difference between ‘introvert’ girls and ‘extrovert’ girls was
substantial and significant, while, the difference between ‘extrovert’ boys and
‘introvert’ boys was found less substantial.

The data show that more than three fourth girl respondents mentioned that
being a girl, they experienced biases or discrimination in their own family
regardless to their age and educational status. Statistically also there was no
significant difference found between the age and education categories. Interestingly,
the difference between ‘introvert’ girls and ‘extrovert’ girls was substantial and
significant ($ \chi^2 = 3.866; \text{significance level} = 0.049; \text{df}=1$).

The responses of boys who observed discrimination against their sisters or
female relatives of their age in the family show that around 47 percent boys also
felt that their family is biased towards their girls regardless to the age and
educational status of the girls. Significant difference was found among ‘younger’
and ‘elder’ boys. ($ \chi^2 = 3.826; \text{significance level} = 0.050; \text{df}=1$). The difference
between ‘extrovert’ and ‘introvert’ boys was not found much visible.

Responding to the types of biasness experienced by the girls, they mentioned
two important biases viz. ‘education/study’ (45.3%) and ‘restrictions on movement
of girls’ (78.8%). More ‘school going’ (20.5%) and ‘younger’ girls (16.5%)
comparative to ‘out of school’ and ‘elder’ girls mentioned ‘Restrictions on
sports/entertainment’ as types of discrimination.

Regarding the types of biases/ discriminations towards girls observed by
the boys, they mentioned two important biases viz. ‘education/study’ (47.6 %)
and ‘restrictions on movement of girls’ (43.9%). Around 39 percent boys
mentioned discrimination in ‘love and affection’ towards girls. Surprisingly, a
large proportion of boys (47.7%) ‘can’t mention specifically’ the discrimination
towards girls.

Power of decision making by the adolescent girls by themselves is an
integral part of gender based discrimination. Efforts were made to find out the
perceptions of boys and girls towards this important aspect of gender equity and
equality. In response to the questions related to ‘give liberty to the adolescent
girls to take their own decisions for their own life’, both boys and girls responded
enthusiastically. As a matter of satisfaction, more than two third respondents,
both boys and girls responded enthusiastically. In general, personality wise
difference was not found significant.

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The study shows that three fourth girls were in favour of getting liberty ‘to choose their career’ by themselves. Category wise wide difference was not found among girls. Around 69 percent boys were in favour of giving liberty ‘to choose the career’ by girls themselves. Although the difference of percentage among the ‘school going’ and ‘out of school’ boys was not so visible, but among ‘younger’ and ‘elder’ the difference was found significant ($\chi^2 = 10.596$; significance level = 0.001; $df = 1$).

The personality wise difference was found to be visible among both boys and girls. The data describe that less ‘introvert’ girls mentioned that they should give the liberty to choose their career, while more number of ‘extrovert’ girls were in favour of getting such liberties. The difference was found significant ($\chi^2 = 9.724$; significance level = 0.002; $df = 1$). Likewise, the data show that less ‘introvert’ boys mentioned that girls should give the liberty to choose their career, while more number of ‘extrovert’ boys were in favour of giving such liberties to girls. However, statistically the difference was found insignificant.

Responding to the question regarding ‘living alone for job’, around 92 percent girls mentioned that they should be given the liberty for the same. More ‘school going’ girls were in favour of this liberty than ‘out of school’ girls. Also more ‘younger’ than ‘elder’ were mentioned the same. The education wise difference was found significant ($\chi^2 = 5.013$; significance level = 0.025; $df = 1$).

According to the data, as many as 66 percent boys were in favour of giving liberty to girls to ‘live alone for job”. The difference of percentage between ‘school going’ and ‘out of school’ boys was lesser than the difference between ‘younger’ and ‘elder’ categories of boys. The difference among ‘elder’ and ‘younger’ was found significant ($\chi^2 = 6.735$; significance level = 0.009; $df = 1$).

However, there was no visible difference observed among ‘extrovert’ and ‘introvert’ girls. On the other hand, high significant difference ($\chi^2 = 6.718$; significance level = 0.010; $df = 1$) between ‘extrovert’ boys and ‘introvert’ boys were observed in this regard.

Responding to the question regarding liberty given to the girls for ‘choosing their life partner as their own’, 80 percent girls mentioned that they should be given the liberty for choosing their life partner at their own. More ‘school going’ girls were in favour of this liberty than ‘out of school’ girls. Likewise, more ‘elder’ than ‘younger’ were in favour of giving such liberties ($\chi^2 = 4.205$; significance level = 0.040; $df = 1$).

Responses of the boys on their perception regarding the liberty given to girls to ‘choose their life partner’ at per their wish, as many as 61 percent boys were in favour of giving liberty to girls to ‘choose their life partner as per their wish”. The difference of percentage between the ‘school going’ and ‘out of school’ boys was lesser than the difference between ‘younger’ and ‘elder’ boys.
The difference among ‘elder’ and ‘younger’ was found significant ($F = 7.428; significance level = 0.006; df=1$). Also, the education wise difference was found significant among girls ($F = 4.205; significance level = 0.040; df=1$).

There was no visible difference observed among ‘extrovert’ and ‘introvert’ girls and boys in this regard.

It is very important to note that adolescent boys realized and observed the discrimination against girls in their own family. In addition to that, a large percentage of boys were in favour of giving liberty to the girls for taking important decisions i.e. “liberty to choose career”, “liberty to live alone”; liberty to choose their life partner” for their own life.

The policy makers and implementers should consider such crucial information for introducing effective awareness and informative programmes with adolescents to promote such thinking further and convert it into action. Such attempts will leads towards narrowing the gender based discrimination.

**Information Need on the issues related to Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health among Adolescent Boys and Girls**

The study also dealt with the information need on the issues related Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health among boys and girls. The data depict that high percentage of girls (76.5%) and boys (87.0%) expressed that they ‘want more information on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health issues’ regardless to their age and education status and personality type.

In response to the type of information needs, most of the girls wanted to know about ‘physiological change during adolescence’ (53.7%) followed by ‘menstruation’ (44.1%) and ‘family planning’ (36.2%) while among boys, the desire to know was more about ‘safe sexual behaviour’ (52.8%) followed by ‘RTI/STD’ (50.3%); ‘physiological change during adolescence’ (48.7%) and ‘family planning’ (37.9%).

**The suggestions and recommendations**, which may be useful for the policy makers, implementers of related programmes, Non Government Organizations working in the area of adolescent reproductive and sexual health and of course for the researchers. The broad suggestions and recommendations are as proposed:

1. The study reveals that the acquiring education and dissemination of information related to physiological changes and menstruation among adolescent girls through peers and family members i.e. mother and sisters is very high. The study also presents that age wise difference regarding the above issues was observed among adolescents; however, it is important to understand the gravity of the situation as a whole. Such important information needs to be disseminated properly to the adolescents at the very beginning of their adolescent years so that they
can be prepared for crucial physiological changes and menstruation. Age wise difference on knowledge, practices and behaviours related to ARSH was found to be significant hence “catch them young” policy needs to be adopted by the policy makers and the implementers working in the field of ARSH.

2. The study suggests that the knowledge and awareness level needs to be increased by furnishing correct information to adolescents since the onset of adolescent age. Informative programmes for adolescents at the school level should be introduced.

3. The study illustrates clearly that only a meagre percentage of the respondents mentioned the physiological changes among boys during adolescence age as ‘normal phenomenon’ in which the percentage of ‘extrovert’ ‘elder’ and ‘school going’ boys was higher. Besides the level of misconceptions, the ignorance on the issues was equally prevalent and of course a cause of concern.

4. Child marriage has its own and profound background particularly in economically and socially backward state of Rajasthan, but preventing teenage pregnancy, with the greater and positively involvement of adolescent boys, may offer some relief from the consequences of child marriage and provide some workable solutions. One of the suggestions might be deploying ‘counsellors’ to educate the adolescents so that their existing knowledge could be converted into action to prevent teenage pregnancy. For ‘out of school’ adolescents such interpersonal counselling may be given in a structured manner through ‘Anganwadi Centres’, or by forming ‘common interest groups’ of adolescents or by involving non government organisations’ interested and have capacity to work on the issues related to ARSH.

5. It is very important to note that adolescent boys realized and observed the discrimination against girls in their own family. In addition to that, a large percentage of boys were in favour of giving liberty to the girls for taking important decisions i.e. “liberty to choose career”, “liberty to live alone”; liberty to choose their life partner” for their own life. The policy makers and implementers should consider such crucial information for introducing effective awareness and informative programmes with adolescents to promote such thinking further and convert it into action. Such attempts will lead towards narrowing the gender based discrimination.

6. Personality wise significant difference related to the knowledge and practices pertaining to the menstruation, night emission/masturbation, teenage pregnancy, etc. suggest that the implementers needs to design the specific strategies to address the issues among such adolescents groups.
7. The personality wise differences in the health seeking behaviour of adolescents indicates that psychologist counsellor may be placed at the health and institutions to provide effectives and need based services wherein the myths and misconceptions related to adolescent reproductive & sexual health and their information needs can be addressed.

8. Addressing the issues related to legal age at marriage, teen age pregnancy, and adolescent reproductive and sexual health considering age and educational status of the adolescents are less difficult than addressing it with ‘introversion’ personality. The policy makers and implementers have to put their heads together to get through to this hidden but important segment of adolescents.

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