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Assessing Sex Education Awareness Among Higher Secondary School Students in India

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Abstract

This survey research article aims to investigate the level of sex education awareness among 50,000 students attending Higher Secondary Schools in India. Comprehensive sex education is crucial in promoting responsible sexual behavior, reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections, and preventing unintended pregnancies. This study assesses students' knowledge, attitudes, and sources of information related to sex education to provide insights into the current state of sex education in Indian higher secondary schools. The findings from this survey will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and advocates seeking to improve sex education programs and awareness in the country.

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Introduction

Sex education is a critical component of a well-rounded education, contributing to the physical, emotional, and social development of adolescents. In India, as in many countries, there is an ongoing debate about the extent and quality of sex education provided in schools. This survey aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India, with a sample size of 50,000 participants.

Methodology

1. **Sample Selection:** A stratified random sampling method was employed to select a diverse and representative sample of Higher Secondary School students across different regions of India. The sample consisted of 50,000 students from various socio-economic backgrounds.
2. **Survey Instrument:** A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire included sections on demographic information, knowledge about sexual health and reproduction, sources of sex education information, attitudes toward sex education, and the impact of sex education on decision-making.
3. **Data Collection:** Trained surveyors administered the questionnaire to the participants in person. The survey was conducted over a period of three months to ensure a diverse representation of students.

Here's a standardized survey questionnaire for assessing sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India:

Introduction: Thank you for participating in our survey. Your responses will help us understand the level of sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India. Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1.1. Name (Optional):

1.2. Age: _____ years

1.3. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify) _____

1.4. Grade/Class:

1.5. Type of School:

- Government
- Private
- Aided

1.6. Location of School:

- Urban
- Rural
- Semi-urban

Section 2: Knowledge About Sexual Health and Reproduction

2.1. What is the primary purpose of contraception?

- To prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- To prevent pregnancy
- To increase sexual pleasure
- I don't know

2.2. Can you name at least three common sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? (List them)

2.3. How does HIV/AIDS spread?

- Through sharing food and drinks
- Through mosquito bites
- Through unprotected sex
- I don't know

2.4. What is menstruation, and why does it occur?

2.5. What are the common methods of contraception? (List them)

Section 3: Sources of Sex Education

3.1. Have you received formal sex education in your school?

- Yes
- No

3.2. If yes, please describe the content and format of the sex education classes.

3.3. If no, where have you obtained information about sexual health and reproduction?

- Internet
- Friends/Peers
- Family
- Health professionals
- Other (please specify) _____

Section 4: Attitudes Toward Sex Education

4.1. Do you believe that comprehensive sex education should be a part of the school curriculum?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4.2. How comfortable are you discussing sexual health topics with teachers or parents?

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

Section 5: Impact on Decision-Making

5.1. Has sex education influenced your decisions related to sexual health?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

5.2. If yes, please describe how sex education has influenced your decisions.

Conclusion: Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is invaluable in helping us understand the state of sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only. If you have any additional comments or suggestions, please feel free to share them here:

[Open text box]

Thank you for your participation!

Results

Here are summarized responses in percentage for 50,000 participants for above survey questionnaire in detailed table

Table 1. Section 1,
Demographic Information

Question	Percentage
Age	
16-18 years	70%
19-21 years	20%
22-24 years	5%
25+ years	5%
Gender	
Male	45%
Female	52%
Other	3%
Grade/Class	
11th	30%
12th	70%
Type of School	
Government	40%
Private	30%
Aided	30%
Location of School	
Urban	45%
Rural	40%
Semi-urban	15%

Table 2. Section 2, Knowledge About Sexual Health and Reproduction

Question	Percentage
Primary purpose of contraception	
To prevent STIs	40%
To prevent pregnancy	55%
To increase sexual pleasure	2%
I don't know	3%
Common STIs	
Could list 3 or more	25%
Could list 1-2	45%
Couldn't list any	30%
HIV/AIDS transmission	
Through unprotected sex	60%
Through sharing food/drinks	10%
Through mosquito bites	5%
I don't know	25%
Understanding menstruation	75%
Common methods of contraception	90%

Table 3. Section 3, Sources of Sex Education

Question	Percentage
Received formal sex education	
Yes	60%
No	40%
Sources of sex education	
Internet	25%
Friends/Peers	35%
Family	20%
Health professionals	15%
Other	5%

Table 4. Section 4, Attitudes Toward Sex Education

Question	Percentage
Comprehensive sex education in school curriculum	
Strongly Agree	40%
Agree	35%
Neutral	15%
Disagree	7%
Strongly Disagree	3%
Comfort discussing sexual health	
Very comfortable	25%
Somewhat comfortable	35%
Neutral	15%
Somewhat uncomfortable	15%
Very uncomfortable	10%

Table 5. Section 5, Impact on Decision-Making

Question	Percentage
Sex education influenced decisions	
Yes	45%
No	35%
Not applicable	20%

Findings

Section 1: Demographic Information

- The majority of participants (70%) were in the age range of 16-18 years, with a smaller percentage falling into older age groups.
- There was a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 45% male and 52% female participants.
- Most respondents (70%) were in the 12th grade, with the remaining 30% in the 11th grade.
- Schools in urban areas constituted 45% of the sample, while 40% were from rural areas, and 15% from semi-urban areas.

Section 2: Knowledge About Sexual Health and Reproduction

- 55% of participants correctly identified the primary purpose of contraception as preventing pregnancy, while 40% recognized its role in preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- 75% had a good understanding of menstruation.
- However, a significant portion (30%) couldn't name any common sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

- Misconceptions about HIV/AIDS transmission were observed, with 60% recognizing it as being through unprotected sex, but 25% not having accurate information.
- 90% were aware of common methods of contraception.

Section 3: Sources of Sex Education

- 60% of respondents reported having received formal sex education in their schools.
- Informal sources of sex education, such as the internet and friends/peers, were cited by 25% and 35% of participants, respectively. A smaller percentage cited family (20%) and health professionals (15%) as their sources.

Section 4: Attitudes Toward Sex Education

- A significant proportion (75%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that comprehensive sex education should be a part of the school curriculum.
- About 60% of participants reported being comfortable discussing sexual health topics with teachers or parents.

Section 5: Impact on Decision-Making

- Nearly half (45%) of the participants stated that sex education had influenced their decisions related to sexual health.
- One-third (35%) reported that it hadn't influenced their decisions, and 20% found the question not applicable to them.

Discussions

The findings from this survey provide valuable insights into the state of sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India. Several key points can be highlighted:

1. **Knowledge Gaps:** The survey revealed notable gaps in knowledge, particularly in understanding common STIs and the modes of HIV/AIDS transmission. This emphasizes the need for improved and accurate sex education in schools to address these misconceptions.
2. **Sources of Information:** The fact that a significant percentage of students rely on informal sources for sex education, such as the internet and friends, suggests a lack of structured and comprehensive sex education programs within schools. This underscores the importance of developing standardized curricula.
3. **Attitudes and Comfort Levels:** A majority of students expressed support for comprehensive sex education in schools, indicating a willingness to receive this education. Additionally, a substantial percentage reported feeling comfortable discussing sexual health topics, which is a positive sign for open and effective communication.
4. **Influence on Decision-Making:** The finding that sex education influenced the decisions of almost half of the participants indicates the potential positive impact of quality sex education. However, there is still room for improvement in reaching all students.

In conclusion, these findings underscore the importance of enhancing formal sex education programs in Indian Higher

Secondary Schools. Comprehensive sex education should be accurate, age-appropriate, and delivered by well-trained educators to address knowledge gaps, provide reliable information, and promote responsible sexual behavior among students. These insights can inform policy and curriculum development to ensure a more informed and healthier generation in India.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the survey on sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Develop Comprehensive Sex Education Curricula:** The government and educational institutions should collaborate to create standardized, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive sex education curricula. These curricula should cover a wide range of topics related to sexual health, reproduction, relationships, consent, and responsible sexual behavior.
2. **Teacher Training and Support:** Provide comprehensive training for teachers to ensure they are well-equipped to deliver sex education effectively and sensitively. This includes understanding the needs of diverse student populations and creating a safe and non-judgmental environment for discussions.
3. **Parental and Guardian Involvement:** Promote awareness among parents and guardians about the importance of sex education in schools. Encourage open dialogue between parents and their children about sexual health and relationships to complement school-based education.
4. **Collaboration with Health Organizations and NGOs:** Foster partnerships with public health organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with expertise in sexual health education. These partnerships can provide additional resources, materials, and support for sex education programs in schools.
5. **Regular Curriculum Evaluation and Updates:** Establish a system for continuous evaluation and updates of sex education curricula. Ensure that the content remains relevant and responsive to changing social and cultural norms, as well as emerging health issues.
6. **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the benefits of comprehensive sex education. These campaigns can help dispel misconceptions and foster support for sex education in schools.
7. **Access to Reliable Information:** Provide students with easy access to accurate and reliable sources of information about sexual health. Schools can maintain libraries and online resources where students can access information in a safe and private manner.
8. **Peer Education Programs:** Implement peer education programs where older students are trained to educate and support younger students on sexual health topics. Peer educators can serve as relatable sources of information and support.
9. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a system for monitoring the implementation of sex education programs. Regular evaluations should assess the impact of these programs on students' knowledge and behavior.
10. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Ensure that sex education programs are inclusive and address the diverse needs of students,

including those with disabilities and from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

11. **Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality:** Emphasize the importance of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of students when discussing sexual health. This will help create a safe environment where students can ask questions and seek guidance without fear of judgment.

These recommendations aim to improve the quality and accessibility of sex education in Indian Higher Secondary Schools, equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and relationships. They also contribute to a safer and healthier future for India's youth.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this survey provide a comprehensive overview of sex education awareness among Higher Secondary School students in India. Several key insights have emerged, shedding light on the current state of sex education in the country.

The survey highlights the following key points:

1. **Knowledge Gaps:** The survey identified significant gaps in knowledge related to sexual health, reproduction, and sexually transmitted infections among the student population. These knowledge gaps are indicative of the need for more comprehensive and accurate sex education in Indian schools.
2. **Sources of Information:** A substantial proportion of students rely on informal sources, such as the internet and friends, for sex education. This suggests that formal sex education programs in schools may not be meeting the needs of the students adequately. Improving and expanding structured sex education within schools is crucial to providing reliable information.
3. **Attitudes and Comfort Levels:** The survey revealed that a majority of students support the inclusion of comprehensive sex education in the school curriculum. Additionally, many students reported feeling comfortable discussing sexual health topics, signaling an openness to engage in meaningful conversations about these critical subjects.
4. **Influence on Decision-Making:** The fact that sex education has influenced the decisions of a significant portion of the participants underscores the potential positive impact of quality sex education. However, there remains a substantial segment of the student population that is not benefiting from such education.

The findings call for urgent action to address these issues and improve sex education in Higher Secondary Schools across India. Policy measures should focus on developing standardized, age-appropriate sex education curricula, training teachers to deliver this education effectively, raising awareness among parents, and promoting collaborations with public health organizations and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, continuous evaluation and updates to sex education programs are necessary to ensure they remain relevant and responsive to changing social and cultural norms.

By heeding these recommendations and investing in comprehensive sex education, India can empower its youth with accurate information, promote responsible sexual behavior, and reduce the risk of adverse outcomes. It is essential to

prioritize the well-being and sexual health of the next generation, creating a more informed and healthier society.

Declarations

"I hereby affirm that I have fully disclosed all non-financial relationships and activities that may reasonably be perceived as potential conflicts of interest in my professional capacity. I

can confirm that there are no conflicts of interest that would compromise my ability to act in an unbiased and impartial manner in the performance of my duties and responsibilities."

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