

Modes of Communication & its Effectiveness in Creating Awareness about Sexual Health among Adolescents in Ranchi District of Jharkhand

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Abstract:- In India adolescents constitute about one-fifth of India's population and are one of the biggest assets of the growing economy. Hence, its necessary to ensure that they are supported to become a vibrant, constructive force that can contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. However, adolescence also brings with it challenges related to health, nutrition and hygiene, which are guided by variety of factors. The priority health needs of adolescents in India include awareness on Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV, substance abuse, mental health, risks with early/unwanted pregnancies etc. They require accurate and thorough knowledge on all aspects of sexual health, including contraception, STIs, and the significance of consent. To avoid unplanned births and guarantee healthy pregnancies when desired, access to reproductive health services is also essential.

The study has tried to understand the various modes of information platforms being used by adolescents & tried to explore the correctness & completeness of information being provided. The study further will through an insight on what should be the SBCC strategy to address adolescents sexual health needs.

Keywords:- Health Facility, Peer Educator, SBCC, Search Engine.

I. INTRODUCTION

The physical, mental, and social health of people between the ages of 10 and 19 is referred to as adolescent health. As it spans infancy and adulthood and establishes the framework for long-term health and development, this stage of life is vital. In India adolescents constitute about one-fifth of India's population and are one of the biggest assets of the growing economy. Hence, its necessary to ensure that they are supported to become a vibrant, constructive force that can contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. However, adolescence also brings with it challenges related to health, nutrition and hygiene, which are guided by variety of factors. The priority health needs of adolescents in India include awareness on Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV, substance abuse, mental health, risks with early/unwanted pregnancies etc. In addition, there is a need to change behaviors where seeking health services by adolescence should not be seen as taboo. They require accurate and

thorough knowledge on all aspects of sexual health, including contraception, STIs, and the significance of consent. To avoid unplanned births and guarantee healthy pregnancies when desired, access to reproductive health services is also essential. Adolescents use a variety of mediums for communication, such as social media, digital channels, radio, and television. Peers have a big influence on adolescents. Utilizing this peer influence, wholesome social standards, and peer-to-peer interaction is also one way through which the adolescents gain knowledge on sexual health. It is important to understand the ways which are most used by adolescents to develop an insight about their queries related to sexual health. The current study will help in understanding the mode of communication used by adolescents to gain insight on sexual health & this in turn will provide a direction for SBCC strategy development.

II. MATERIALS & METHOD

The study was conducted in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. Quantitative methods were used for data collection. The primary data was collected through the structured schedule of the selected sample and in-depth interviewing of respondents to understand the modes of communication & channels used by them for getting an insight on sexual health. The data was collected specifically on the various modes of communication adopted by adolescents. The questionnaire also had questions concerning factors such as source of information among adolescents to learn about sexual health. The questions on influence of peers on their choices & support from family on encouraging the youths on availing services & knowledge on sexual health was also assessed.

These respondents were interviewed for the quantitative data collection through a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire. The information was collected from each selected beneficiary in a one-to-one field-level survey with the defined questionnaire. The interview was focused on information gathering on Socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescents, information pertinent to sexual health. Systemic random sampling was adopted to select the 422 respondents for the study. The data collection followed Cochran's formula using a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence interval, and response distribution assumed at 50% (as no previous evidence was available for this setting).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection was carried what are the various modes of communication adopted by adolescents for discussing & awareness on sexual health. The first parameter which was assessed was in terms of the channels used by adolescents to gain awareness on sexual health related issues.

Communication channels	% contribution towards raising awareness
Search engine	55%
Peer to peer Contact	20%
Govt Service Providers	15%
Sessions conducted by NGO partners	10%

The data showed that 40% adolescents used search engine such as google, yahoo , youtube video links & Instagram posts as a mean to gain insights on their sexual health related queries . 30% asked the grassroot service providers like AWW & Asha to discuss their concerns where as 20% discussed their concerns with peer such as their friends, elders & relatives of same age group. The active NGO’s working in the domain of adolescent health also provided platform for addressing the concerns of adolescents.

The authenticity, correctness & completeness of information was also studied .The details gathered by adolescents through above mentioned modes of communication & whether it could provide complete information to them was studied.

Communication Channels	% correctness of information	% completeness of information
Search engine	40%	35%
Peer to peer Contact	30%	20%
Govt Service Providers	80%	95%
Sessions conducted by NGO partners	80%	90%

The information shared by government service providers such as Asha, AWW & the RSKK counsellors were found to be correct & complete. Similarly the information provided by NGO or development partners were also found to be correct & complete. However the information gathered by adolescents through search engine were found to be only 40% correct & 35% complete. Similarly, peer provided only 30% correct & 20% complete information.

The role of teachers in dissemination of messages related to sexual health among adolescents was also studied.

Responses	%
Asked to learn self	40%
Skipped	30%
Narrated briefly	10%
Conducted separate session for boys & girls	17%
Explained in detail	3%

The data showed that only 3% of teachers explained the topics in details to the adolescents. 40% of teachers asked the students to learn the topics on their own .There were 30% of cases where the teachers skipped the topic entirely & 10% narrated it briefly. Their were 17% cases where the teachers conducted separate sessions for males & females.

The perspective of family on encouraging the adolescents on remaining informed on issues related to sexual health were studied.

Responses	%
Encouraging always	10%
Never encouraged	55%
Sometimes allowed	35%

55% adolescents responded that they were never encouraged by their family to gain knowledge & awareness on sexual health. 35% reported that they were allowed sometimes however only 10% said that they were always encouraged by their families.

IV. DISCUSSION

Adolescents awareness on sexual health is dependent upon the modes of communication, the family & teachers support.

55% of adolescents depend upon the search engine to gather information about their queries related to sexual health. 20% depend upon their peers for gaining insights. Government service providers & looked upon by only 15 % of adolescents. However if the correctness & completeness of information is related to the popular modes of communications or information’s it shows that most correct & complete information is provided by development partners & government service providers. Search engine & peer’s provide incorrect & incomplete information which could result in wrong information gathering by adolescents & making them vulnerable. The role of teacher & family is also important for ensuring correct information being received by adolescents however the data showed that their involvement in imparting sexual health knowledge & awareness had remained limited.

V. CONCLUSION

There is an emergent need to strategize SBCC strategy for adolescent sexual health needs & information by making it a right mix of digital & traditional methods. Revival of traditional resources such as government service providers & involvement of NGO sector to disseminate information through most advanced & digital way to connect with adolescents & development of digital solutions inform of chatbots , educational reels , YouTube channels & Q& A sessions should be conducted & incorporated in adolescent sexual health awareness SBCC strategy.

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