

Understanding Gender-Based Violence through an Adolescent Lens: Qualitative Findings from Delhi, India

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Abstract : Gender-based violence (GBV) or gendered violence refers to violence inflicted on a person because of their gender. Majority of men who perpetrate gender-based violence, first do so during their teenage years. Further, the first sexual experience of most girls is coerced. In order to reduce the widespread occurrence of GBV, it is vital to intervene and reach people, especially boys, when their attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and gender are developing. This study aims to understand GBV through an adolescent lens, focusing on their knowledge, attitudes and experiences regarding gendered abuse. This is a cross-sectional, qualitative study. The respondents are Delhi based students in grades 11th and 12th, recruited via snowball sampling. Sixteen in-depth, telephonic interviews were carried out in the month of April, 2020. The data was transcribed verbatim into MS Word and qualitative coding was undertaken in Atlas.ti 8. Twelve out of sixteen respondents admitted experiencing sexual GBV. Out of these, a little more than half of the victims reported it to somebody. Thematic analysis revealed key themes of: (i) Introduction and reinforcement of a patriarchal structure (ii) Violence in teen dating (iii) Acceptability and normalization of violence and (iv) Justice System. Findings reflect a process wherein GBV becomes an intricate part of adolescents' lives. Participants showed a moderately well-informed understanding of gendered abuse whereas attitudes reflected a complex combination of internalized patriarchy and a desire to bring positive societal reform. The results of this study highlight a need for health promoting, gender-equitable interventions.

Keywords : adolescents, gender, health, violence

Conference Title : ICWGSS 2021 : International Conference on Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Conference Location : Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Conference Dates : March 22-23, 2021