

Students Awareness on Reproductive Health Education in Sri Lanka

Authors : Ayomi Indika Irugalbandara

Abstract : Reproductive Health (RE) education among Sri Lankan Adolescents (comprising one fifth inner population) remains unsatisfactory despite 91.8% of them completing primary education & 56.2 % receiving post secondary level education. The main reason for this large population not receiving satisfactory RH education is traditional values and longstanding taboos surrounding sexuality. The current study was undertaken with these objectives. The relevance of achieving them being to formulate RH educational policies and programs that address a sizable and sensitive chunk of the population thereby achieving the goal of mental and social well being and not merely the absence of reproductive disease or infirmity. This research was a descriptive study, using random sampling technique, sample of the study consisting of 160 adolescent in the age group of 16-19, studying in government schools in Sri Lanka. Questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection, qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in data analysis. According to the data it was revealed that a majority has some idea about RH education. While this awareness had been provided by the school, the source of information had been Health and Physical Education. The entire sample mentioned that more RH information, than was provided, should be given and everybody wanted further knowledge regarding sexuality, and in depth information on it was essential. About 96 adolescents were of the opinion that their behavior was respectful to elders and 64 felt embarrassed while communicating with elders regarding RH issues. About their preferred sources of information, both genders named health providers as their first choice, followed by family members and friends. The internet was cited by a few boys; less than 5 percent cited religious figures. More than 50% of respondents had no knowledge about abortion and they were unaware of dangerous abortion. The practice of abortion was reported among zero percent. Although every member of the sample did not possess knowledge of the scientific process involved in abortion, all of them totally rejected the idea of destroying a foetus. Adolescence is a critical period in the life of girls and boys and sexuality education empowers young people to protect their health and well-being. Schools have the proper staff, and environment for learning. It might be stated that the greater segment of individuals entering adolescents and going through their adolescence are still in the school. This becomes the reason why it is mandatory that the school should be geared to handle this critical stage of the students. Adolescents or those approaching adolescence are best educated by the relevant parents, but this being quite a sensitive issue in the socio cultural context, it is somewhat doubtful whether all parents are prepared to handle this candidly, due either to lack of knowledge or absence of the appropriate state of mind. As such it is best that seminars/workshops be conducted to enlighten parents on handling HR issues related to their adolescent children. Apart from the awareness on HR provided through the school curriculum a greater impact can be brought about through street dramas, exhibitions etc. specific to HR. Finally the researcher would like to suggest that Sunday schools be harnessed for the provision of HR education linked with cultural values, ethics, and social well-being.

Keywords : reproductive health, awareness, perception, school curriculum

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