

## ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

### SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTHS IN CHANDIGARH

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Two hundred and eighty male students at college level in Chandigarh were studied for their sexual behaviour. Role of parents in imparting sex education was found to be only 3.6%. Majority of these youths started masturbating by 15 years of age. The prevalence of indulging in sexual vaginal intercourse was noticed in 41.4% of the youths. Besides that, 52.5% experienced other sexual activities - oral intercourse (13.6%), anal intercourse (14.3%), fondling (14.3%), kissing (14.3%) alone and in other combinations. More than a third (37.1%) indulged in vaginal intercourse sex with commercial sex workers. Safe sex practices and sex education are the key elements in control of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases.

**Key words:** Sexual behaviour, Youths, Sexually transmitted diseases, Sex education

#### Introduction

Adolescents and youths are high risk groups for sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and unintended pregnancies yet many of them have a limited understanding of these risks and avoiding them. With the rapid spread of AIDS worldwide, the sexual behaviour of the society has become the most discussed issue in the last two decades. Nearly 75% of HIV infections are transmitted sexually<sup>1</sup>. Public health interventions stress at understanding sexual activities and promote safe methods in sexually active group. In India, the sex related activities are not discussed and sex education is not imparted in the traditional set-ups. Quite often distorted information and myths regarding

sexual activities are also developed in the young minds. Invasion of foreign media and exposure to western programmes on television has brought a change, in otherwise orthodox Indian society. In this transitional phase, the present study was an attempt to understand the existing sexual behaviour among the youths.

#### Materials and Methods

The sample of this study involved 280 unmarried, urban boys belonging to a middle and high socio-economic strata. These youths were studying at the graduation and post-graduate level.

The information was collected by young doctors who were attached to the Department of Community Medicine of the Medical College.

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The youths were contacted randomly and individually in their leisure time. The information was noted down by the subjects themselves on the selfadministered format.

**Results**

The present study among 280 university students was analysed in two groups - 172 (61.4%) in the social sciences and 108 (38.6%) in science

**Table I. Knowledge regarding sexual intercourse and std's**

Knowledge and source	Soc.science group n=172	Science Group n=108	Total n=280
A. Aware about sexual intercourse	172 (100)	108 (100)	280 (100)
<b>B. Source of knowledge</b>			
a. Friends	88 (51.2)	54 (50.0)	142 (50.7)
b. Television	16 (9.3)	10 (9.3)	26 (9.3)
c. Magazines	14 (8.1)	22 (20.4)	36 (13.6)
d. Combination of above	50 (29.1)	28 (25.9)	78 (27.9)
e. Others	4 (2.3)	2 (1.8)	6 (2.1)
<b>C. Exposed to pornographic material</b>			
	128 (74.4)	92 (85.2)	220 (78.6)
<b>D. Discuss sex with:</b>			
a. Friends	158 (91.9)	80 (85.2)	238 (86.6)
b. Parents	6 (3.5)	4 (3.7)	10 (3.6)
c. Others	3 (1.7)	8 (7.4)	11 (3.9)
d. None	5 (2.9)	16 (14.8)	21 (7.5)
<b>E. Knowledge about</b>			
STD's	114 (66.3)	94 (87.0)	208 (74.3)
AIDS/HIV	94 82.4	74 78.7	168 80.8
Syphilis	6 5.3	8 8.5	14 5.3
Gonorrhoea	8 7.0	6 6.4	14 6.7
AIDS + others	6 5.3	6 6.4	12 5.8

groups. It was observed that most of the students acquired the knowledge about sexual intercourse from their friends and feel comfortable in discussing among themselves. Role of parents in imparting any information to their children was found to be as low as 3.6% (table I).

Table II reveals that by 15 years of age over half of social science and two third science students came to know about masturbation though 44.4% and 62.6% students in the two groups started practicing it. A few students (16) developed cer-

**Table II. Behaviour of youths regarding masturbation**

Soc.science group n=172	group n=108		science Group n=280	total	
	No. & age		No. & age	No. & age	
A. Aware about masturbation	144	83.7	106	98.1	250 89.3
<b>B. Age at acquiring knowledge (in yrs)</b>					
8 - 9	6	4.2	4	3.8	10 4.0
10-11	14	9.7	13	17.0	32 12.8
12-13	30	20.3	24	22.6	54 21.6
14-15	24	16.7	28	26.4	52 20.8
16-17	44	30.5	22	20.7	66 26.4
18-19	16	11.1	8	7.6	24 9.6
>20	2	1.4	2	1.9	4 1.6
not mentioned	8	5.5	-	-	8 3.2
<b>C. Age at starting (in yrs)</b>					
10-11	8	5.5	14	13.2	22 8.8
12-13	32	22.2	18	17.0	50 20.0
14-15	24	16.7	34	32.1	58 23.2
16-17	36	25.0	26	24.5	66 24.8
18-19	24	16.7	4	3.6	28 11.2
>20	3	4.2	-	-	6 2.4
not mentioned	14	9.7	10	9.4	24 9.6
<b>D. Frequency of masturbation</b>					
daily	14	9.7	14	13.2	28 11.2
2-6times/wk.	16	11.1	26	24.5	42 16.8
infrequently	84	58.3	52	49.0	138 54.4
never	8	5.6	6	5.7	14 5.6
not mentioned	22	15.3	8	7.5	30 12.0

tain myths like weakness and guilt feeling about it as well.

It was also observed that 41.4% of the students had indulged in vaginal intercourse and it was higher in social science group. Whereas prostitutes and girl friends were common sex partners in social science students, it was reverse among science students. Majority of science students had first contact in vaginal intercourse by 17 years of age in comparison to 30.8% in social science group. (table III). Among 138 students staying in hostels, the practice of indulging in sexual intercourse was observed to be higher i.e.47.8% whereas it was 35.2% among 142 non-hostelers. and this relationship between intercourse and place of stay was found to be statistically signifi-

Table III. Practice of indulging in sexual activities among students

Sexual intercourse	Soc.science group n=172		Science Group n=108		Total n= 280	
	No.	% age	No.	%age	No.	%age
1) Had indulged in vaginal intercourse	78	45.3	38	35.2	116	41.4
A) Sex partner						
a) Prostitute	37	47.5	6	15.8	43	37.1
b) Girl Friend	20	25.6	26	68.4	46	39.7
c) Relative	7	9.0	-	-	7	6.0
d) Others	4	5.1	6	15.8	10	8.6
e) Prostitute+b/c	10	12.8	-	-	10	8.6
B) Age at first intercourse						
a) <17	24	30.6	20	52.6	44	37.9
b) 18-20	32	41.0	80	21.0	40	34.5
c) >22	12	15.4	2	5.4	14	12.1
d) Not mentioned	10	12.8	8	21.0	18	15.5
C) Protection by contraceptive						
a) Condoms	52	66.7	20	52.6	72	62.1
b) Other methods	9	11.5	1	2.7	10	8.6
c) None	17	21.8	17	44.7	34	29.3
II) Indulged in other sexual activity	93	54.1	54	50.0	147	52.5
a) oral intercourse	11	11.8	9	16.7	20	13.6
b) anal intercourse	12	12.9	9	16.7	21	14.3
c) fondling only	16	17.2	10	18.5	26	17.7
d) kissing only	42	45.2	9	16.7	21	14.3
e) oral intercourse and only fondling	2	2.2	8	14.8	10	6.8
f) oral intercourse and only kissing	5	5.4	5	9.2	10	6.8
g) other combination	5	5.4	4	7.4	9	6.1

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( $\chi^2 = 4.59$ , d.f = 1, p value <0.05).

## Discussion

In the present study among 280 male students, it was observed that role of parents was negligible in imparting sex education (3.6%). Parents and teachers were found to act as source of sex education in 16.30% of the urban, educated Indian men.<sup>2</sup> If parents do not discuss sex-related issues, children tend to acquire knowledge in bits and pieces from friends and other obscene material.<sup>3</sup> Sexual maturation during phase of puberty starts at the age of 11-12 years and is maximum

by 15 years of age in Indian boys.<sup>4</sup> More than a third of the youths reported to masturbate quite frequently (2-7 times per week) which was higher in the science group. The difference in the two groups is for the fact that human reproduction is part of the academic curriculum of most of these students and therefore, are less likely to develop myths regarding masturbation. Lesser frequency of masturbation among social science students could also be because youths indulged more in sexual intercourse. Thus masturbation at times prevents from indulging in sexual intercourse which is the safest practice in prevention of HIV infection.

In the present series, 41.4% of the respondents reported to have indulged in sexual intercourse. Of all the youths who had indulged in it, more than one-third had experienced it by 15 years and two-third by 20 years. In Republic of Korea 49% of female adolescents and young adults reported to have intercourse and 71% by age of 21 years. Chilean study found that sexual intercourse took place between 14 and 17 for 55% of adolescents. Peruvian study found it as 22% by 15 years of age.<sup>5</sup> The present study further revealed a large number of respondents (45.7%) indulging in sexual intercourse with a high risk group - commercial sex workers (CSW's). In Thailand, 44% of men had their first sexual experience with a prostitute at an average age of 18 years.<sup>1</sup> Not much of information is available in India.

Experience of anal intercourse by 14.3% and indulgence by one quarter of the youths in vaginal intercourse without condoms are high risk practices. Adequate education on safer sex practices and condom programming are essential elements of AIDS/STD control programme. By 100% condom programme in Thailand the prevalence

of STD's could come down dramatically from 13% to less than 0.5%<sup>1</sup>.

By staying away from home, more independence and fewer social restrictions have been demonstrated to influence the sexual behaviour<sup>1</sup>. This phenomenon was observed in the present Chandigarh study where hostel students had higher sexual relationship. Although more than three-fourth students were aware of AIDS, the knowledge about other STD,s was very low. Since transmissibility of HIV multiplies ninefold in presence of STD,s the integrated approach should be adopted to control them.

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