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Psychosocial and behavioral problems in male adolescents in Amritsar, India

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Background: Adolescence is defined by WHO as the age group of 10-19 years. Today, India has a population of adolescents that is among the largest in the world. Adolescents suffer from psychosocial problems at one time or the other during their development. Many of these problems are of a transient nature and are often not noticed. Further, they may exhibit problems in one setting and not in other (e.g. home, school). Body image stereotypes and misconceptions related to physical appearances give rise to various psychosocial and behavioral problems among the adolescents. Adolescents and youth with their penchant for experimentation and exploration are particularly vulnerable to drugs and sexual misadventures.

Objective: To study the prevalence of psychosocial and behavioral problems, among male adolescents in rural and urban areas of Sri Guru Ram Das Medical College, Amritsar, India.

Material and Methods: The present study was undertaken on 500 male adolescents of age group 12-18 years, selected equally from rural and urban areas of Amritsar. All the adolescents were studied for their socio-demographic profile, body image concerns, awareness of dieting and exercise and psychological response to these problems. Maintaining a positive confidential environment, questions were asked to elicit the information about the psychosocial problems including depression, suicidal thoughts and suicidal attempts. Association of academic performance, family problems, psychological problems and substance abuse was also included. Using a pre-tested structured questionnaire, information about the habits of smoking and alcohol intake in them, their sexual experiences was collected. Association of academic performance, family problems, psychological problems and substance abuse was studied. The data was collected and analyzed using SPSS-17. Multivariate analysis of association was also done between school, family, psychosocial, substance abuse and sexual activity among themselves using chi-square test. For all statistical tests, a p-value of >0.05 was considered nonsignificant, a p-value of <0.05 was considered significant and a p-value of <0.001 was considered highly significant.

Results: More than one third (39.6%) adolescents were having psychological problems. These problems were significantly higher in middle adolescence (14-16 years), large extended families (>8 members) and lower socioeconomic status. On correlation, these adolescents with psychological problems were having significantly more academic problems, family disputes, domestic violence, a lesser number of close friends and greater substance abuse. Teasing and subsequent psychological consequences was a common problem for Male adolescents, irrespective of socioeconomic status, family size and age group. The adolescents with substance abuse problem showed a positive correlation with more academic problems, domestic violence, less close friends, depression and suicidal thoughts along with the greater sexual activity.

Conclusion: To sum up, it may be said that adolescence is the stage of an identity crisis when the individual is neither a child nor an adult. Considering the preponderance of problems of substance abuse and sexual activity in male adolescents from large families with lesser education and lower income, it is essential for healthcare planners to design comprehensive family and health education programs for the adolescents. The family support and communication should be improved through these education programs to develop healthy psychosocial and sexual attitudes and counteract unsafe behaviors in the adolescents.

Biography

Manmeet Kaur Sodhi is presently working as Associate Professor and in charge of a pediatrics unit IV at Government Medical College Amritsar, Punjab, India. She completed her MD in pediatrics from Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot, India, with a research thesis submission on the prevalence of obesity in school going children. She is a university designated examiner for MBBS and MD exams. She has authored more than 15 papers in reputed journals. Her area of prime interest is the Adolescence and its problems.

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