Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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Historically, adolescent sexual behavior has been viewed through one of two fairly limited approaches: the theory of biological unfoldment or the social-learning paradigm. The theory of biological unfoldment views adolescent sexuality through a physiological and developmental lens, explaining sexual behavior in terms of bio-chemical drives, hormonal urges, and pubertal stages (Udry, Talbert, & Morris, 1986). The social-learning perspective, on the other hand, sees sexual behavior as learned through influences such as cultural indoctrination and parental modelling (Werner-Wilson, 1998). Each of these paradigms tends to take one side of the classic nature vs. nurture debate.

But the ecological approach considers factors from both biological and environmental realms to form a more complete picture of adolescent behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Schweiger & O’Brien, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) Ecological Systems Theory, risk factors that contribute to increased likelihood of maladaptive outcomes can come from many places in a child’s environment, both proximal and distal. The most specific and proximal level of environmental influence is that of the microsystem, or the factors present in an individual, both physically and psychologically (Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1989). Examples of microsystem influences include personal beliefs and cognitions, or physical conditions.

The next system level is the mesosystem which involves immediate contextual factors present in the individual’s environment and includes examples such as parental levels of education, growing up in a single-parent or two-parent home, and peer influence and educational aspirations. The most distal level is the macrosystem, which includes the most broad-reaching factors, such as cultural practices and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1989).
Examples of *macrosystem* variables include socio-economic status, the nation in which one lives, and cultural views on violence etc.

Recently, the ecological systems framework has been applied to understanding youth sexual behavior (Small & Luster, 1994). In the present study, the framework is ecological. The study takes into consideration the factors pertaining to the physical and psychological levels in the adolescents and also the family, school and social factors influencing the sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Adolescent sexuality has always been and still is, to a large extent, a problem for both parents and professionals world-wide. Irrespective of cultural assumptions, great effort is put into defining the limits of normal sexuality in childhood compared with deviant/problematic behaviour. The solutions vary depending both on family norms and the prevailing social and cultural context (Heiman, 1998). Everyone has an attitude to sexuality and the way this is expressed. We may be negative, positive, possibly reluctant or embarrassed but never entirely indifferent. In particular, expressions of sexual desire, curiosity and behaviour in children have aroused many feelings in adults. Since Freud, almost a century ago, we have to a certain extent, accepted that children are sexual beings from birth. How this sexuality can and should be expressed has interested teachers, doctors, behavioural scientists, sociologists and other professional groups for a century. Despite this, empirical research on adolescent sexual behaviour has been lacking.

The present study on the ecological correlates of sexual behaviour in adolescence was intended to find out the real nature of sexuality among the adolescents in the concerned locale.
5.1 THE PROBLEM

The study aimed to identify the specific ecological correlates of adolescent’s sexual behaviour and thus the problem for investigation is entitled: “Sexual behaviour in adolescents: a study on the ecological correlates”.

5.2. OBJECTIVES

The study was undertaken with an aim to investigate the ecological correlates of sexual behavior in adolescence. In order to accomplish this aim, the following specific objectives were framed:

5.2.1. To identify the nature of sexual behavior in adolescents.

5.2.2. To find out the relationship between the urban and rural life setting in the sexual behavior of adolescents.

5.2.3. To find out the relationship between the male and female adolescents in their sexual behavior.

5.2.4. To find out the relationship between occupation of parents and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

5.2.5. To find out the relationship between education of father and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

5.2.6. To find out the relationship between education of mother and sexual behaviour of adolescents.

5.2.7. To find out the Correlation of sexual abuse in childhood with sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.2.8. To find out the Correlation of religious adherence with sexual behavior in adolescence.
5.2.9. To find out the Correlation of parenting style with sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.2.10. To find out the Correlation of exposure to media with sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.2.11. To find out the correlation of academic interest with sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.2.12. To find out the Correlation of peer influence with sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.2.13. To find out the counseling themes (needs) as emerging from the study.

5.3. HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature, design and objective of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

5.3.1. There is no significant difference between the male and female adolescents in their four measures of sexual behavior.

5.3.2. There is no significant difference between the urban and rural adolescents in their four measures of sexual behavior.

5.3.3. There is no significant relation between education of father and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

5.3.4. There is no significant relation between education of mother and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

5.3.5. There is no significant relation between occupation of parents and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

5.3.6. There is no significant correlation between academic interest and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

5.3.7. There is no significant correlation between sexual abuse in childhood and sexual behaviour in adolescence.
5.3.8. There is no significant correlation between parenting style and sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.3.9. There is no significant correlation between religious adherence and sexual behavior in adolescence.

5.3.10. There is no significant correlation between the exposure to media and sexual behavior in adolescents.

5.3.11. There is no significant correlation between the peer influence and sexual behavior in adolescents.

5.4. SAMPLE

In view of accomplishing the objectives of the study, the investigator selected the descriptive method. Among the different approaches that may be used in descriptive research, the survey method was selected for the present study. The target population of the study consisted of adolescents from three districts of Kerala namely Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Allappuzha. The study focussed on boys and girls of high schools and higher secondary classes in the government and private institutions of urban and rural areas in Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Allappuzha districts of Kerala. Stratified sampling technique was utilised to draw sample units for the study. The survey was conducted among 45 schools in central Travancore namely Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Alleppuzha. Out of these, 25 schools were situated in municipalities/corporations and the rest in panchayats. In effect, the sample for the survey consisted of 1500 children of age group ranging from 13-19, drawn from 18 government schools and 27 management schools. Out of total number of 45 schools, 18 schools had Malayalam, the regional language of the state, 20 schools had English and 7 schools had both the languages, as the medium of instruction.
5.5. TEST MATERIALS

One major problem encountered in the planning stage of the study was the selection of tools, best suited for the purpose of the study. Review of literature provided information regarding few scales that could be used to measure some of the variables of the present study. However, a number of reasons prevented the use of these tests in the current study. The scales standardised in other cultures could not yield valid results in our culture. For a test to be a reliable and valid one, its items must be suited to the contexts familiar to the subjects who respond to them. The non-availability of adequate and valid tools to measure the variables included in the study prompted the investigator to go in for the construction of tools. The following are the different psychological measuring devices used in the present study.

1. Socio demographic information schedule. (SDIS): This was primarily to collect the information on the gender of the adolescents, the locality of their residence, education of their father and mother, and occupation of their parents.

2. The sexual behaviour inventory for the adolescents. (SBI): The scale was designed to measure the sexual behaviour of adolescents. The sexual behaviour was considered in four measures such as: measure 1: Engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites, measure 2: Behaviour of masturbation, measure 3: Behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by talking sex with the opposite sex, touching and fondling the sexual organs of the opposite sex, measure 4: Behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex.

3. Parenting style inventory for the adolescents. (PSI): This scale was designed to measure the style of parenting the adolescents experience at present. There were three measures included in the scale such as measure 1: Autocratic style of parenting,

4. Academic interest inventory for the adolescents. (AII): This scale was designed to measure the interest towards academics among adolescents.

5. Religious adherence inventory for the adolescents. (RAI): This scale was designed to measure the religious interest of the adolescents.

6. Media exposure inventory for the adolescents. (MEI): This scale was designed to measure the adolescent’s intensity of exposure to media.

7. Peer influence inventory for the adolescents. (PII): This scale was designed to measure the intensity of peer influence among adolescents.

8. Sexual abuse inventory for the adolescents. (SAI): This scale was designed to measure the experiences of various aspects of sexual abuse in childhood.

5.6. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

After the consolidation, coding, and scoring of the data collected from the sample of children and their parents, they were subjected to various statistical techniques to enable testing of the various hypotheses formulated. These statistical procedures included: (1) Reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) (2) t-test (3) Pearson’s correlation test, and (4) Chi-square test.

5.7. RESULTS

The important results of the study are summarised below.
5.7.1. Socio Demographic parameters:

The study has taken into account the information on the gender of the adolescents, the locality of their residence, education of their father and mother, and occupation of their parents.

5.7.1.1. Gender Difference and sexual behavior:

It is found from the study that the male adolescents have higher frequency of engaging in sexual behaviour while they are compared to the female adolescents when all the four measures of sexual behaviour are taken into consideration together. The frequency of engaging in sexual behaviour is significantly high in male adolescents as they are compared to the female adolescents while all the four measures are taken one by one as well.

5.7.1.2. Locality and sexual behavior:

The study proved that the adolescents living in urban life setting have higher frequency in engaging in sexual behaviour while they are compared to the adolescents living in rural life setting when all the four measures of sexual behaviour are taken together. Adolescents living in rural set up has high frequency in engaging in sexual behaviour measure one, that is the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites. While it is found that the adolescents living in urban life setting has higher frequency in engaging in the sexual behaviour measure two and three, that is the behaviour of masturbation and the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by talking sex with the opposite sex, touching and fondling the sexual organs of the opposite sex. Regarding the measure four of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse...
with the same sex people and with the opposite sex, the difference among the urban and rural adolescents is not statistically significant.

5.7.1.3. Education of father and sexual behavior

The study found that when the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the four measures, the adolescent children of fathers who are more educated involve more frequently in the sexual behaviours than the adolescents whose fathers are less educated. The result is same when the measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately as well. There is high frequency of engaging in the sexual behaviour as the education level of the father is high.

5.7.1.4. Education of mother and sexual behavior

It is found in the study that there is significant relation between education of mother and sexual behaviour of adolescents in certain aspects of sexual behaviour. Regarding the measure 2 and 4 of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of masturbation, and engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex, it is found that the adolescents of mothers who have the education level of +2 or degree showed significantly high frequency while they are compared with the mothers who are less educated than that level and more educated than that level. Regarding measure 1 of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites, it is found that the frequency of involving in that behaviour increases in accordance with the increase of the education of mother.
But the study reveals that there is no significant relation between the education level of the mother and the sexual behaviour of adolescents, when all the measures of sexual behaviour are taken together. It is also not significant when the measure 3 of the sexual behaviour is considered.

5.7.1.5. Occupation of parents and sexual behavior

The study found that the occupation of parents is significantly related to the measure 1 and 4 of the sexual behaviour. That is the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites, and the behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex. The frequency of engaging in this behaviour is high in the families where either the father is employed or both the parents are employed.

But on the other hand, the measure 2 and 3 of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of masturbation, and the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by talking sex with the opposite sex, touching and fondling the sexual organs of the opposite sex, are not significantly related to the occupation of parents. The sexual behaviour, when all the four measures are taken together, also is not significantly related to the occupation of parents.

5.7.2. Academic interest and sexual behavior:

It is found that the academic interest is significantly related to the sexual behavior when the sexual behavior is taken together inclusive of all the four measures. The frequency of involving in sexual behaviour diminishes, as the academic interest increase. The finding is same with the first three measures of sexual behaviour as well.
However, regarding the measure four of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex, there is no significant correlation. Academic interest is not significantly related to this behaviour of adolescents.

5.7.3. Peer influence and sexual behavior:

It is found that there is a positive correlation between the peer influence and the sexual behaviour of adolescents. The frequency of engaging in the sexual behaviour is high as the peer influence become high. The same is found when the sexual behaviour is taken together inclusive of all the measures and also when the measures are taken separate as well.

5.7.4. Religious adherence and sexual behavior:

The findings prove that there is a significant negative correlation between the religious adherence and the sexual behavior while the sexual behavior is taken inclusive of all the four measures together. The frequency of engaging in sexual behaviour decreases as the religious adherence increase.

While the measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately, it is found that regarding the measure 1, 2, and 3 of the sexual behaviour, there is a significant negative correlation. Which means sexual behaviour such as the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites, behaviour of masturbation and the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by talking sex with the opposite sex, touching and fondling the sexual organs of the opposite sex, decreases as there is an increase in the level of religious adherence among adolescents.
However, it is found on the other hand that there is no significant relation between measure 4 of the sexual behaviour, that is the behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex, and religious adherence.

5.7.5. **Exposure to media and sexual behavior:**

It is found from the study that when the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the four measures, there is an increase of involving in to sexual behaviour as the media exposure increase among the adolescents. The result is same when the sexual behaviour is taken as separate measures as well. All the four measures of sexual behaviour increases among the adolescents, as the media exposure also increase.

5.7.6. **Sexual abuse and sexual behavior:**

There is a significant positive correlation between the sexual abuse and sexual behaviour in adolescence. The study reveals that when the sexual behaviour is considered as inclusive of all the measures together, the frequency of involving in sexual behavior increases as there is high level of sexual abuse among adolescents.

The result is same while the measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately as well. All the measures of sexual behaviour are found to be positively correlated with the experience of sexual abuse in childhood. Each measure is found to be increasing as the sexual abuse level increase among adolescents.

5.7.7. **Parenting style and sexual behavior:**

The study reveals that the frequency of involving in sexual behaviour (when it is taken generally) is significantly varied in relation to the styles of parenting. There is more
frequency of sexual behaviour in the balanced type of parenting (13.58%) and less in the permissive style (8.36%) of parenting and statistically nil in the autocratic parenting style.

There is statistically significant difference between the parenting styles as it is related to the sexual behaviour measure 1 of adolescents. When the behaviour of engaging in sexual feelings by reading pornographic books, watching pornographic television programmes and frequent visit to the internet sex sites is considered, there is a higher frequency (52.94 %) among the adolescents who experience autocratic parenting style. The frequency of engaging in this behaviour is less in balanced parenting style (21.94%) when it is compared to autocratic and permissive (25.52%) parenting styles.

There is a significant difference in the sexual behaviour measure 2 as it is related to the styles of parenting. There is absence of this behaviour when there is autocratic parenting style. The behaviour of masturbation is less in permissive parenting style (9.62%) as well as it is compared to the balanced style (10.93%) of parenting.

The study also reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between the parenting styles as it is related to the sexual behaviour measure 3 and 4. Measures mentioned here denotes the behavior of engaging in sexual feelings by talking sex with the opposite sex, touching and fondling the sexual organs of the opposite sex, and the behaviour of engaging in sex by intercourse with the same sex people and with the opposite sex.

5.8. TENABILITY OF HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the results of various statistical procedures employed, the hypotheses formulated for the study and presented in chapter I could be re-examined to evaluate their tenability. The conclusions arrived at in this regard are presented in summary form:
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Tenability of the Hypotheses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is no significant difference between the male and female adolescents in their four measures of sexual behaviour.</td>
<td>It is found from the study that the male adolescents have higher frequency of engaging in sexual behaviour while they are compared to the female adolescents. The result is same when the sexual behaviour is taken as inclusive of all the measures and also when the four measures are taken separately. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There is no significant difference between the urban and rural adolescents in their four measures of sexual behaviour.</td>
<td>Study found that the adolescents living in urban life setting have higher frequency in engaging in sexual behaviour while all the four measures of sexual behaviour are taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. While the four measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately, it is found that the adolescents living in urban life setting have higher frequency in engaging in sexual behaviour measure two and three as well. On the other hand, adolescents having rural set</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. There is no significant relation between education of father and sexual behaviour in adolescence.</td>
<td>The study found that when the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the four measures, the adolescent children of fathers who are more educated involve more frequently in the sexual behaviours than the adolescents whose fathers are less educated. The result is same when the measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately as well. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is no significant relation between education of mother and sexual behaviour in adolescence.</td>
<td>It is found in the study that there is no significant relation between the education level of the mother and the sexual behaviour of adolescents, when all the measures of sexual behaviour are taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. While the four measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately, it is found that there is significant relation between education of</td>
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mother and sexual behaviour of adolescents in certain aspects of sexual behaviour. Regarding the measure 2 and 4 of the sexual behaviour, it is found that the adolescents of mothers who have the education level of +2 or degree showed significantly high frequency. Regarding measure 1 of the sexual behaviour, the frequency of involving in that behaviour increases in accordance with the increase of the education of mother. But the study reveals that it is also not significant when the measure 3 of the sexual behaviour is considered.

| 5. There is no significant relation between occupation of parents and sexual behaviour in adolescence. | The study found that the occupation of parents is not significantly related to the sexual behaviour of adolescents when all the four measures are taken together. Therefore the null hypothesis accepted. But on the other hand, the occupation of parents is significantly related to the measure 1 and 4 of the sexual behaviour. However the measure 2 and 3 of the sexual behaviour, are not significantly related to the occupation of |
6. There is no significant correlation between academic interest and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

It is found that the academic interest is negatively correlated to the sexual behavior when the sexual behavior is taken together inclusive of all the four measures. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. However, academic interest is negatively correlated to the first three measures of sexual behaviour and there is no significant correlation between academic interest and the measure four of the sexual behaviour.

7. There is no significant correlation between the peer influence and sexual behaviour in adolescents.

It is found that there is a positive correlation between the peer influence and the sexual behaviour of adolescents. The same is found when the sexual behaviour is taken together inclusive of all the measures and also when the measures are taken separate as well. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

8. There is no significant correlation between religious adherence and sexual behavior in adolescence.

The findings prove that there is a significant negative correlation between the religious adherence and the sexual behavior while the
9. There is no significant correlation between the exposure to media and sexual behavior in adolescents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. There is no significant correlation between the exposure to media and sexual behavior in adolescents.</th>
<th>It is found from the study that there is a significant positive correlation between the media exposure and the sexual behaviour. The result is same while the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the four measures, and also while the sexual behaviour is taken as separate measures as well. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.</th>
</tr>
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10. There is no significant correlation between sexual abuse in childhood and sexual behaviour in adolescence.

| 10. There is no significant correlation between sexual abuse in childhood and sexual behaviour in adolescence. | There is a significant positive correlation between the sexual abuse and sexual behaviour in adolescence. The result is same while the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the measures and also while the |
measures of sexual behaviour are taken separately as well. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

11. There is no significant correlation between parenting style and sexual behavior in adolescence.

The study reveals that the frequency of involving in sexual behaviour is significantly varied in relation to the styles of parenting when the sexual behaviour is taken inclusive of all the measures together. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

The frequency of sexual behaviour is significantly varied while the measure 1 and 2 of the sexual behaviour are considered. But it is not significantly varied as it is related to the sexual behaviour measure 3 and 4.

5.9. IMPLICATIONS

The question of adolescent sexual behaviour has become increasingly relevant in recent years due to the attention paid to the sexual exploitation and sexual deviant behaviours. Many professional groups working with adolescents are faced with situations where they are expected to be able to assess the behaviour of adolescents and take the action
necessary. It is therefore important to seek to reduce the uncertainty in interpreting behaviour, by increasing awareness of the psychosexual development of adolescents.

Sexuality can be seen from various and, to a certain extent, opposing viewpoints, on the one hand as biologically based and thereby guided by biological processes which can be encouraged or disturbed during adolescence. The opposing theory is based on sexuality being a social construct determined by the structure of the surrounding society. In between these lie various modified theories on biology interwoven with social constructs. What is “normal” and “deviant” behaviour is thus not set in stone but changes over time, place, society and culture.

It is easy to make adolescent sexuality invisible in our society. This can lead to children becoming confused and left to more impenetrable sources of information to try to understand their sexuality. It is vital that in particular those who encounter adolescents in a professional capacity are aware of how the sexual behaviour of boys and girls can be expressed so as to be able to identify natural psychosexual development.

The present study brings out the significant difference between the male and female adolescents in their sexual behaviour. This will definitely be a contribution to the field. In traditional developmental psychology gender has been practically absent but in recent years empirical studies have shown that there are major differences in the development of boys and girls through childhood and adolescence. Gender socialisation addresses how biological gender gradually becomes social and psychological gender, i.e. how our thinking and behaviour is shaped on the basis of the expectations for our gender. A child is not only a child but also a boy or a girl.

Theories of sexuality as a social construct have gained ground in recent years. According to this view the social system and the economic, religious, medical, social as well as the cultural spheres determine the position held by and the nature of sexuality. From a
constructivist point of view, sexuality is a relational and contextual concept, in which social processes are assumed to control as well as construct sexuality. A modified form of the constructivist approach accepts that the child has a biological body with the opportunity to react to physiological sensations, but still sees social processes as the most important element in the child’s development into a member of society. The impact of media and the peer influence carries a great amount of significant in the formation and development of sexual behaviour and the finding of the present study substantiates the same. The impact of the media and the peer group influence is thus a valuable contribution to the field of adolescent behaviour studies.

The standard of living depends on the education of parents and also on the financial wellness of the parents and the present study reveals that there is significant impact of the locality where the adolescents stay and the education of father upon the sexual behaviour of adolescents. The reactions of parents to children’s sexual behaviour often depend on the level of education, socio-economic status, ethnicity and culture and personal experience of the parents. It is more likely that parents with a liberal attitude to sexuality notice sexual behaviour in their children. Parents with a high level of education have generally more open attitude to child sexuality and it is more common for parents in this type of family to talk more with the child about sex, reproduction and related areas.

The experiences of child abuse especially sexual abuse leave a long lasting impact upon the children. The present study reveals that there is a significant relation between the sexual abuse and the sexual behaviour of adolescents. Each society constructs and shapes a suitable and rewarding sexuality for its own society. The sexuality of adolescents develops on this basis in interplay with their surroundings, in accordance with society’s expectations and assumptions. They are part of the society in which they grow up and thus internalise its norms and values concerning sexual behaviour.
The styles of parenting such as autocratic, balanced and permissive styles are found to be influencing the sexual behaviour of the adolescents significantly. Our assumptions on sexuality also form the basis for the way in which we address children’s sexual behaviour and their socialisation in becoming women and men which is consciously or unconsciously part of our child-rearing. Adolescents learn the rules of sexuality in the same way as they learn everything else, by picking up hints from their parents. In this way children learn which sexual activities are permitted, just as they learn that knives are sharp, that ovens are hot or that one should not belch at the dinner table.

The present study also gives a significant contribution towards the impact of mass media in the sexual behaviour. The incidents of sexual behaviour are found to be increasing in accordance with the increase of the impact of mass media. Adolescents in today’s society are exposed to a great deal of influence from the mass media and thus see sexual scenes and attitudes on the television, on video or on the Internet which they then recreate. This may in turn be associated with adolescents lacking adequate adult supervision. Clinical experience indicates that children can use masturbation to reduce tension related to loneliness, fear, boredom or anxiety for some reason. In homes where parental arguments are frequent, associated with sexual jealousy and sexualised language, and where the environment is considerably sexualised in that the child is allowed to be present when the parents or other adults are watching pornographic films or to witness other examples of boundaries being exceeded, the adolescents may act this out in sexual behaviour in his or her turn.

Large studies on child sexual behaviour have long been conspicuous by their absence, possibly partly due to ethical difficulties in directly observing such behaviour. Very few studies on children and sexuality were carried out in the subsequent decades. Those studies which do exist have primarily investigated the teenage pregnancy as well as sexually
transmitted decease. Studies on the sexual behaviour and the ecological correlates of sexual
behaviour in adolescents will definitely enlighten the professionals and parents in helping the
adolescent in developing a healthy sexuality.

5.10. SUGGESTIONS

Sexuality is not something given once and for all; it changes over time, place,
generation, culture and society. What is considered normal sexual behaviour in children can
vary from one period to another. Therefore it is important to build up an up-to-date
knowledge base on adolescents and the conditions in which adolescents in our country live.
Empirical research as well as tried and tested experience in the field is important pieces of the
jigsaw.

It is important that both adolescent boys and girls have the chance to learn the nature
of their sexuality. It is also important to respect the stage of transformation of the adolescents
as they are learning to be sexual and carefully deal with questions concerning sexuality. The
absence of knowledge about one’s own body and its physical and emotional sensations may
help to make the adolescent more vulnerable and encourage secrecy should an adolescent be
the victim of some form of abuse. At the same time sexuality is an area for privacy and
intimacy, which makes talking about it charged and sometimes not even desirable. The
confusion in the adult world surrounding sexuality can, however, mean that children are often
left to attempt to decipher what is acceptable or not themselves.

As the study revealed that parental styles are intimately related to sexual behaviour of
adolescents, an intervention strategy for the management of sexual behaviour shall include
programmed efforts at attitudinal change, which may bring about desirable changes in
parental behaviours and also in the sexual behaviour of adolescents. Since parent attitudes are
found to be more critical than their behaviours in the genesis of behavioural problems,
attitudinal change is an important remedial step in modifying adolescent problem behaviours attributable to parenting.

The identification of family variables such as the education and occupation of parents as important correlates of sexual behaviour has direct implications for the identification as well as management of sexual behaviour in adolescents. The aspect of communication and the time and effort spent for sexual education at home carries a great importance in helping adolescents grow in healthy sexual behaviour.

It is furthermore of crucial importance that professional groups who come into contact with adolescents in their work are aware of how the sexual behaviour of girls and boys respectively may be expressed to be able to determine both what is natural psychosexual development and which behaviours indicate that an adolescent behaviour deviates from the norm. Professionals in the field who deal with children and sexuality need arenas in which they can meet to be able to communicate their own knowledge and to create and maintain a broad perspective.

The results of the present study also indicate that adolescents who underwent sexual abuse have higher frequency in involving in sexual behaviour than the other adolescents. Hence, early identification of such predisposed or high-risk children may enable one to take some precautionary measures like giving proper advice to the parents on how to deal with children who had the sexual abuse experiences, how and to what extent parents can play a positive role in improving the sexual health of the adolescents, etc.

Professional groups who in some way came into contact with questions of sexual behaviour are: 1) medical students attending a human sexuality program, 2) social workers, psychologists, and nurses who were facilitating the human sexuality program, 3) therapists involved in a sexual behaviour training program and 4) sexual abuse experts. The insights
drawn from the present study will work as a useful database for these groups in determining
behaviour needing modifications and developing strategies to intervene.

5.11. LIMITATIONS

Inevitably, the present study suffers from certain limitations, which deserves special
mention. Some of them are presented below:

1. Though the study succeeded in identifying the ecological correlates of sexual
behaviour in adolescence, and a workable sexuality educational package (for
adolescents, parents, teachers and professionals) could be evolved, owing to time
considerations no systematic attempt at implementing and studying the effectiveness
of the educational intervention package could be made.

2. The survey conducted could not cover all the districts in kerala due to various
limitations. Therefore the study is not sufficient to make generalisations without
reservations.

3. The adolescent sexuality is a very vast area of study. The researcher took only a
limited area out of it namely the ecological correlates.

4. The survey conducted could not cover all the different sections of the target
population adequately.

5. As the present study is basically a correlation study, it has limitations with respect to
identifying the cause-effect relationships involved.
5.12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. A large scale survey, which ensures adequate representation of all the strata of the population can be made, which may help in validating the findings of the present study.

2. A longitudinal study on a sample of children from school age to adolescence can be made, in order to determine the initiating of the sexual behaviour and various aspects correlating with the same.

3. Studies making use of variables other than those used in the study, like the personality of the parent and the child, school environment, family environment variables not used in the study, etc., may be helpful in supplementing the conclusions drawn from the present study.

4. Studies focussing on adult sexuality are meagre in number and hence further attempts may be made to study the psychosocial correlates of sexual behaviour in adults.

5. Study can be made to compare the sexual behaviour with other behaviour correlates in adolescence.